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THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE

(June 1941 to May 1945)



DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY ART AND ENGINEERING
UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY
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FOREWORD

This short account of the operations in eastern Europe has been prepared for use in the instruction of cadets at the United States Military Academy. It is based in large part on material furnished by the Historical Division, Department of the Army. In acknowledging this indebtedness, however, it is not desired to place on the Historical Division the responsibility for any factual errors or for the conclusions drawn.

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Milton Shulman, *Defeat in the West* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1948).

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August 1949

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THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE



INTRODUCTION

Jomini said, "Russia is a country easy to enter but hard to leave." Napoleon learned this lesson during the terrible winter of 1812; and in 1941, six months after he had launched his attack against the Soviets, Hitler also realized that he had seized a bear by the tail and could not let go. Thereafter the operations of World War II assumed a different character. The days of the blitzkrieg, with German panzer divisions running rampant over the battlefields of Europe, were over. Russia proved to be the vortex into which the bulk of Germany's military strength was drawn and dissipated.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS (Map 1)

Students of World War II characterize Hitler's decision to invade Russia as his greatest mistake, one of the "gravest strategical blunders in history". But with him it was no new idea. From the beginning he had been suspicious of the Soviet Union and covetous of her rich natural resources. In *Mein Kampf* he wrote: "If the Urals, with their immeasurable treasure of raw materials, Siberia, with its rich forests, and the Ukraine, with its limitless grain fields, were to lie in Germany, this country, under National Socialist leadership would swim in plenty. . . The new Reich must follow the paths of the ancient Teutonic orders. . . The end of Bolshevik power will be the end of Russia as a state." Nevertheless, in 1939 Hitler and Stalin signed a nonaggression pact; and Hitler gained freedom of action in Poland and the assurance that he would not have to fight on two fronts when he turned to the west. But his ultimate intentions toward Russia had not changed. In a remark to his military chiefs in August 1939, when he was describing what he would do to Poland, he added, "And in the final reckoning, gentlemen, as far as Russia is concerned, Poland's fate will be hers also."

On the other hand, Stalin, seeing profit rather than loss in another "capitalistic" war, had avoided alliances with the Western Powers in prewar negotiations. He correctly assessed the rising Nazi threat in Europe and signed the Russo-German pact to gain the vitally needed time to mobilize the Red Army and provide the materials of war which Russian industry was just then beginning to produce in quantity. Stalin explained to the Supreme Soviet that it was a question of "not allowing our country to be swept into conflict by the fomenters of war, accustomed to have others pull their chestnuts out of the fire." At the same time the head of the Comintern circulated the following statement to the Communist parties abroad: "The Soviet Government and the Comintern have . . . decided that it is best to hold aloof from the conflict, while remaining ready to intervene when the powers engaged therein are weakened by war, in the hope of securing a social revolution." Russia's attitude in 1939 was based on two considerations: complete lack of confidence in the Western Powers and insufficient preparation of the Red Army, particularly in armor and aircraft, to meet the growing threat of the Wehrmacht.

Mr. Churchill summarized the prehostilities Russo-German relationship when he said, "The two great totalitarian empires, equally devoid of moral restraints, confronted each other, polite but inexorable."

In the fall of 1939 Russia moved swiftly into Poland as that unfortunate country fell to the Germans. The Finnish campaign in the winter of 1940 pushed Russia's frontier beyond Leningrad to strengthen the defense of that important city. While Germany's armed forces were overrunning France and the Low Countries in the summer of 1940, Soviet troops occupied the three Baltic republics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania); and Rumania was forced to cede Bessarabia back to Russia. Mussolini became an active partner with Hitler, and Axis pressure began to strangle the British in Africa and the Mediterranean. Hitler and Stalin were both preparing for the inevitable struggle, despite their nonaggression pact.

Although Hitler held the initiative, circumstances forced his fatal decision in the summer of 1940. Operation Sea Lion, the invasion of Britain, had been ordered; and the Army was prepared for its part of the task. But joint planning with the Navy and Air Force was not going well, and by the end of July it appeared that the Navy might not be able to perform its allotted mission before the autumn storms struck the English Channel. Furthermore, the Luftwaffe had not yet destroyed the Royal Air Force.

At this time the commander in chief of the Army and his chief of staff had a long discussion on the future strategy of the war. Various alternate lines of action, including an offensive against the British in the western, central, or eastern Mediterranean or an offensive against Russia, were investigated; and such factors as the entry of the United States into the war, the capabilities of the German Navy, and the necessity of maintaining the military-political initiative were considered. They finally agreed that Germany should not go to war with Russia but should prepare for a long struggle with Britain, the first phase of which would be an offensive to break the British hold on the Mediterranean.

On 31 July 1940, however, Hitler held a conference with his military chiefs at Berchtesgaden at which the entire situation was again reviewed. At this conference Hitler announced his decision to destroy Russia,* a task that he assumed would be accomplished during the summer of 1941. With America tied down by Japan in the Pacific, Germany would then be free to devote her energies to the final destruction of Britain. When his generals argued that this plan meant war on two fronts, Hitler retorted that to overcome Britain would require an expansion of the Navy and Air Force at the expense of the Army and that this could not be risked while Russia remained a menace. He also hoped that the attack on Russia would produce a political upheaval that would hasten the overthrow of the Communists.

The general staff began preparing plans for the invasion of Russia, although its greatest concern during August and September of 1940 was still the invasion of England. When September passed and the Navy had not yet been able to guarantee the success of the invasion and the Luftwaffe had not won the Battle of Britain, Operation Sea Lion was suspended.**

* However, the plan to invade Britain was not abandoned at this time.

** During the winter other plans were developed, although most of them were later abandoned or postponed. They included:

Felix—German intervention in Spain to capture Gibraltar and drive the British from the western Mediterranean.

Attila—The speedy occupation of unoccupied France.

Marita—Intervention in the Balkans to keep the British from establishing air bases that would threaten the Rumanian oil fields.

Sonnenblume—German Army reinforcement for the Italians in Libya and air operations from Sicily against British naval forces and communications in the central Mediterranean.

On 18 December 1940 Hitler issued his first formal directive on the invasion of Russia. The directive began as follows:

Führer Headquarters

18 December 1940

██████████
Directive No. 21

OPERATION BARBAROSSA

The German Armed Forces must be ready to crush Soviet Russia in a rapid campaign, even before the termination of the war with Britain.

The Army will have to assign all available units to this task, with the reservation that the occupied countries must be protected against surprise attacks.

The Air Force will have to release forces for the support of the Army in the eastern campaign in such numbers that we can expect ground operations to be concluded rapidly and the east German area will suffer as little as possible through enemy air attacks. This formation of a focal point in the east is limited only by the necessity of keeping the entire combat and arsenal area which we control adequately protected against enemy air raids and of ensuring that the offensive operations against Britain, particularly against her supply lines, do not come to a standstill.

The focal point for the Navy's operations will definitely remain Britain, even during a campaign in the East.

If the occasion arises, I shall give the order for deployment against Soviet Russia eight weeks before the intended start of operations. Preparations which require a longer period, unless they have already been started, are to be commenced immediately and brought to a conclusion before 15 May 1941.

However, it is of decisive importance that the intent to attack should not become perceptible.

Preparations by the High Command are to be made on the following basis:

I. General plans:

The bulk of the Russian Army deployed in western Russia is to be destroyed in daring operations with deep penetrations of tank spearheads; no units should be permitted to remain intact and retreat into the wide Russian spaces.

Then, in fast pursuit, a line has to be reached from which the Russian Air Force is no longer able to attack German territory. The final aim of the operation is to erect a barrier against Asiatic Russia at a general line from the Volga to Archangel. Thus, if necessary, the Air Force can eliminate the last industrial region remaining in Russian hands, in the Urals.

As these operations progress, the Russian Baltic fleet will soon lose its bases and thus cease to be effective . . .

While the Balkan campaign was being conducted, in the spring of 1941, to consolidate German control of southeastern Europe and gain air bases from which to harass the British in the eastern Mediterranean, the German High Command completed preparations for the attack on Russia and began shifting troops to the east.

Having led armies that had been victorious for two years on every battlefield in Europe, holding deep contempt for the Russian High Command, and assured of the collaboration of Finland, Rumania, and Hungary, Hitler was confident that the Wehrmacht would make short work of the Red Army.

Hitler, however, had not informed Japan of his plan to attack Russia; and in April 1941 Stalin had concluded a five-year pact with the Japanese by which he gained a pledge of their neutrality in case of a war between Russia and Germany, thereby freeing the Red Army from the threat of a war on two fronts.

THE RUSSIAN ARMED FORCES

Hitler greatly underestimated the war potential of Russia. With her totalitarian government the Soviet State could be quickly and completely mobilized for war; and her tremendous resources, if efficiently exploited, could support powerful armed forces. Her population, three times as great as Germany's, provided a large reservoir of replacements for the Red Army; and although made up of a heterogeneous mixture of peoples of different races, languages, and customs, the better Soviet troops were to display a courage, tenacity, and toughness that would show them to be worthy successors to the Russian soldiers of 1812. Russia's natural resources were almost inexhaustable, but as late as 1920 they remained undeveloped. The exploitation of these resources and the development of industries therefore became one of the primary tasks of the new government after the Civil War of 1918-20. Through a series of five-year plans much progress was made;* but it was not until after 1941, when her industry was completely mobilized for war production, that the real strength of Russia was displayed.

In 1941 the Red Army was far behind the Wehrmacht in quality and quantity of modern military equipment and in cadres of experienced personnel. But from 1920 to 1941—through universal

* For example, in 1928 Russia's annual steel production was 4,300,000 tons as compared to Germany's 16,400,000; but by 1937 this had increased to 17,700,000, as against Germany's 19,700,000.

military training, introduction of improved agricultural methods that made possible the shift of much man power to industry, and by the establishment of new industrial centers in the coal and iron regions of the Urals and Siberia—Russia had laid the foundations upon which a powerful military force could be built. The German attack was launched before these preparations could be completed; but Russia sustained the initial German onslaught, and, as we shall see later, by 1943 a completely new and vastly superior Red Army was ready to drive back the invaders. But early Russian strategy was, of necessity, defensive—to gain time to produce the weapons needed to equip the new divisions that were being activated and to complete the training of those divisions.

The armed and auxiliary forces of the Soviet Union were of three types: military, semimilitary, and civil. The military forces included the Red Army and its air forces and the Red Navy and its air component.* The semimilitary armed forces included frontier and internal guards, local police, and other armed components maintained for the security of the nation in time of peace or war.** The entire strength of certain civil organizations, such as the People's Commissariats of Transportation, Maritime Fleet, River Transport, and Signal Communications, was mobilized in direct support of military operations. The authority and operations of these civil organizations extended not only throughout the Soviet Union but well into the zone of operations. Their uniformed personnel were subject to military law and discipline but remained under the direct control of their respective commissariats. Consequently, the Red Army did not have assigned to it many of the communications zone and zone of interior duties performed by the armed forces of other nations.

High Command.—The major elements of the Soviet High Command included the State Defense Committee, the General Headquarters, and the General Staff of the Red Army. The State Defense Committee, formed on 1 July 1941 as the supreme wartime governing body, had final authority over the armed forces as well as all the other commissariats of the Soviet Union. It issued directives on major issues of strategy. It was not equipped with a large staff but included a small group of key leaders responsible for decisions of policy and affairs of state.

* Because of the minor role played by the Red Navy in Russia's over-all war effort, little mention will be made of it in this account.

** These troops were under the direction of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD). They were known as NKVD troops.

The staff of the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces was known as the Stavka, or General Headquarters of the Armed Forces. Most of its members were chiefs of the major branches of the armed forces' command and administrative agencies, such as the Chief of Artillery Troops, Chief of Tanks and Mechanized Troops, Chief of the Rear Services of the Red Army, and Commander in Chief of Partisans. The GHQ was not equipped with special staffs, but the staffs of its members functioned as its working agencies. It was not a headquarters in the usual sense of the word but, similar to the State Defense Committee, was a council of the chief military and naval leaders that met periodically for the consideration of major strategic plans. Members of GHQ were sometimes detached to supervise the conduct of the major field operations—to coordinate the operations of two or more army groups or to assume active command of one army group. GHQ translated the policies and decisions of the State Defense Committee into military action and directed the prosecution of the war through the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army.

The General Staff of the Red Army was the executive and advisory agency of the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and GHQ. In cooperation with the staffs of the arms and the rear services, it was responsible for the detailed preparation of all operational plans. As were lower headquarters, it was organized into divisions covering such fields as operations, intelligence, signal communications, and topography.

As head of the Communist party, chairman of the State Defense Committee, and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, Stalin was the central figure in the Russian High Command. Unlike Hitler, whose strategic decisions were as often based on "intuition" as upon sound military reasoning, Stalin's early study and his role as organizer and strategist on the different fronts during the Civil War provided experience that was of value to him in organizing the Red Army and then conducting the war against the Axis. After their first meeting Winston Churchill had this to say of the Russian leader:

It is very fortunate for Russia to have had this rugged master as commander in the hour of her agony. He is a man of inexhaustible courage and energy, a man of direct and even rude speech . . . Premier Stalin left with me the impression of a cold and deep wisdom and of a complete absence of illusions of any sort.*

* Augustin Guillaume, *Soviet Arms and Soviet Power* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1949).

Field Forces.—Since the organization of most of the tactical units of the Red Army underwent a radical change during the first two years of the war, their characteristics will be mentioned only briefly at this time. The highest echelon of tactical command of the field forces was the army group or “front”, as the Russians called it. These fronts were the main planning and administrative agencies under the Supreme Command. In 1941 there were three fronts lined up against the Germans, as shown on the map. They were commanded by Field Marshals Voroshilov, Timoshenko, and Budenny, Stalin’s most faithful comrades since the days of the Civil War. Each front included two or more armies that controlled operations within their respective zones, handled administrative matters, and serviced the units assigned to them. Corps were temporarily eliminated in 1941; hence the principal ground formations below the army were the rifle (infantry), cavalry, and artillery divisions.

The rifle division included three rifle regiments, two artillery regiments, and reconnaissance, light tank, antitank, engineer, signal, and medical units. Its strength was about 11,000 men.* The cavalry division of 7,000 men included four horse cavalry regiments, one mechanized cavalry regiment, and a mixed artillery regiment. There were about twenty cavalry divisions in western Russia in June 1941. The artillery divisions apparently included one anti-aircraft, one light, and two heavy artillery regiments. Most of the artillery was of 76-mm., 122-mm., and 152-mm. calibers; but 280-mm., 305-mm., and 406-mm. howitzers were being developed as rapidly as possible, the value of heavier artillery having been learned in the Finnish campaign. The basic tank unit was the tank brigade of three tank battalions and a security battalion. The Russians had about 24,000 tanks at the beginning of the war, of which 4,000 were heavies; they estimated that the Germans had about 30,000.

Since the Soviet High Command was primarily concerned with halting the German advance during the early part of the war, it was necessary to activate many units of brigade or smaller size and send them to the front without taking time to organize them into divisions and train them as such. At the same time Soviet industry was redeploying to the east and curtailing or stopping production of some items of equipment. Consequently, during the first year of the war a great mixture of organizations existed, many of

* The rifle division had been reduced from about 18,000 men in April 1941 and was still in the process of reorganization when the war began.

which were not fully equipped with modern weapons. Furthermore, as a result of rapid expansion and initial heavy losses in officer personnel, many formations in 1941 were commanded by officers inadequately trained to employ efficiently the specialized units and heavy weapons assigned to them.

Stalin has said that Russia had 180 divisions at the outbreak of the war. Some of these, however, were well back of the front and could not be quickly concentrated. German intelligence* placed the Russian strength at about 150 divisions at the front. These divisions were not all committed to a cordon defense of the frontier but were deployed in considerable depth, particularly in front of Minsk and Kiev. The Germans estimated that, in addition, there were twelve divisions in the Caucasus, eight in reserve around Moscow, on the Volga, and in the Urals, and thirty-three in Asia.

Air Forces.—The Russian Air Force was divided into air armies, the Long-Range Force, and the Air Defense Force. Of these, the air armies were by far the most important, absorbing some 75 per cent of the total air strength. They operated under the army group commanders, and their sole purpose was to assist the operations of the ground forces. Each air army was composed of a number of air divisions of different types: fighter, bombardment, or assault. Each air division comprised four to six regiments, all of the same type. Fighter regiments consisted of four squadrons of twelve planes each. The zone of operations of an air army was normally the same as that of a ground front, but an air army might also be called upon to cooperate with several fronts.

The Long-Range Force, although independent in status, was in no way comparable to the strategic air forces of the Western Allies. Its equipment was the same as that of the air armies, and its function was more to assist specific offensives than to accomplish true strategic bombing. In spite of its name and independent status, it should be regarded as an additional supporting force for the army groups.

The Air Defense Force had anti-aircraft and fighter units assigned to it and was charged with the supervision of the air-warning system. In the combat zone its forces were organized into de-

* The information shown on the maps in this monograph has been derived principally from German (OKH) daily situation maps. Because of a lack of detailed information from the Russian side, most of their dispositions have also been taken from the German maps.

fensive fronts, consisting of antiaircraft and fighter armies, for the protection of major targets. Each defensive front had direct command of the air observation, signal intercept, early warning, and signal communication systems and of air defense operations in its zone.

The basic difference between the Soviet and Anglo-American conception of air power lay in the fact that the Russian air units were all used primarily for the support and protection of ground operations and were, therefore, normally subordinated to the ground commanders. When the war began, the Russians had some 8,000 planes; but since production of the new models was just beginning, they were far outclassed by the Germans.

THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES

The organization of the German forces had changed little since the Polish and Western campaigns. The High Command remained the same; but, intoxicated with his past success, Hitler had become more difficult than ever. His headquarters, the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces (OKW), interfered frequently in the affairs of the Commander in Chief of the Army,* who was charged with the conduct of operations on the eastern front.

During the winter of 1940-41 the Army had been expanded by calling up new and refitting old divisions. By reducing the tanks per division to 180 the number of panzer divisions was almost doubled. Maneuvers were held during the winter to prepare for the operations in the East. As far as training, equipment, leadership, morale, and combat experience were concerned, the German Army was still the best in the world.

By mid-March the railroads had begun moving troops and supplies to the East; in May the traffic reached an average of 300 trains a day. Of the total German supply transport, about 90 per cent was allocated to the forces on the Russian front. The preparations for the offensive had been conducted under the pretext of self-defense—that Russia was preparing to attack Germany and therefore German and satellite troops had to be shifted to the East as a defensive measure. As a cover plan, continued preparations for an invasion of England were simulated.

* Field Marshal von Brauchitsch was still Commander in Chief of the Army. His headquarters was known as OKH (Supreme Command of the Army). General Franz Halder was his chief of staff.

In June the build-up for Barbarossa was completed. At that time the German Army was deployed as shown on the map and in the following table:

EASTERN FRONT	DIVISIONS			
	<i>Panzer</i>	<i>Motorized</i>	<i>Infantry</i> (a)	<i>Total</i>
OKH reserve (Brauchitsch) _____	2	1	6	9
Army Group North (Leeb) _____	3	2	23	28
Army Group Center (Bock) _____	9	5	39	53
Army Group South (Rundstedt) _____	5	2	38	45
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total, eastern front _____	19	10	106	135
OTHER THEATERS				
Army Group Southeast (List) _____			7	7
Afrika Korps (Rommel) _____	1		1	2
Army Group West (Witzleben) _____	1		38	39
Denmark _____			1	1
Norway (Falkenhorst) _____			10 ^(b)	10
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total, other theaters _____	2		57	59
Total German divisions _____	21	10	163	194

(a) Includes six mountain, one cavalry, and nine security divisions.

(b) Includes four divisions in Finland.

In addition to the German divisions on the eastern front, negotiations had been completed for satellite nations to participate in the coming campaign, although they were not taken completely into Hitler's confidence until after the invasion was launched. Initially fourteen Rumanian and Hungarian divisions would be employed with the German army groups on the eastern front. (The Italians were preoccupied in the Balkans and North Africa.) Thus Hitler had a total of about 149 divisions concentrated along the Russo-German frontier and immediately available for his offensive against Russia.

The German Air Force was also concentrated in eastern Europe, where in June it had some 3,000 aircraft, including about 1,000 long-range bombers, 400 dive-bombers, 900 fighters, and 700 reconnaissance and patrol planes. This represented roughly two-thirds of the first-line air strength of the Luftwaffe. The First (Keller), Second (Kesselring), and Fourth (Löhr) Air Forces were placed in support of the North, Center, and South Army Groups, respectively. The Third Air Force (Sperrle) was in France, while the Fifth (Stumpff) covered Denmark, Norway, and Finland. Although the Red Air Force was numerically as strong as the Luftwaffe, the latter was vastly superior in mobility, in battle experience, and in the

technical performance of its aircraft. But the vast spaces of Russia forced the Germans to employ their tactical aircraft with fewer planes per mile of front than in any of their previous campaigns.

With its southern flank secure in the Balkans, with Italian forces to harass the British in the Mediterranean and North Africa, and with its submarines to tighten the blockade on England, the Wehrmacht felt equal to the task of conquering Russia and completing its domination of Europe. That Hitler was confident that he could quickly destroy the Red Army is indicated in a draft of a directive prepared early in June. This paper proposed the redeployment of the Wehrmacht to other theaters, particularly the Mediterranean, not later than November 1941.

THEATER OF OPERATIONS

In eastern Europe operations were to be conducted over an area extending 2,000 miles from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea and over 1,700 miles from the Elbe to the Volga Rivers. Throughout much of this vast territory communications facilities were poor or nonexistent. Since there were few hard-surfaced two-track roads in Russia, the railroads assumed great importance. But there were few good railroads; and since they were of a wider gauge than those of the Germans, their modification and maintenance presented a difficult problem to the Wehrmacht (Map 2). Stalin said that the Germans soon learned "that moving mechanized forces through Russia was very different from moving them over the boulevards of Belgium and France." The map shows some of the principal railroads of eastern Europe.

The river systems run generally northwest or southeast, forming difficult obstacles to an attacking army during the summer and providing natural defensive lines for the defender. This is particularly true in the south, where several large rivers flow into the Black Sea. Between the northern and southern river systems a natural avenue of advance to the east runs from Warsaw through Minsk and Smolensk to Moscow. Another avenue, farther south, extends from Lwow over the high ground between the Bug and Dnieper Rivers to the heart of the Ukraine and to the Crimea. These two corridors are separated near the Russo-German frontier by the Pripet Marshes. South of Lake Ladoga is another marshy area; and south of Lake Ilmen are the Valdai Hills and Valdai Lakes, the latter the headwaters of the Volga. In this difficult terrain, and in the vast forests that stretch from Moscow toward Leningrad and Minsk, cross-country movement of armor is difficult.

In addition to the communications systems and the terrain, the weather has always had an important influence on operations in Russia. Seasonal changes in temperature are extreme. The winters are long and the summers short.

Since the seasons influenced the condition of the roads, and hence the mobility of armies, the operations were generally classified as summer or winter offensives. During the winter the lakes, rivers, and swamps were frozen and provided solid footing for heavy vehicles, though snow and cold hampered operations in other ways. The Russians were generally better equipped and trained for this winter fighting and therefore gained some of their greatest successes in the winter months. During much of the year mud was a problem because of the lack of hard-surfaced roads, but it was particularly bothersome during the spring thaw. Both the Russians and Germans were practically immobilized during this season, and each year there was a general lull in the fighting during April, May, and part of June.

Another factor that was to handicap the Germans was their lack of accurate information of the terrain. In western Europe the Wehrmacht had fought over ground familiar to many of its commanders and well covered by accurate and detailed maps. Russia, however, was generally a great unknown. Field Marshal Rundstedt had this to say about the lack of accurate information:

I realized soon after the attack was begun that everything that had been written about Russia was nonsense. The maps we were given were all wrong. The roads that were marked nice and red and thick on a map turned out to be tracks, and what were tracks on the map became first-class roads. Even railways which were to be used by us simply didn't exist. Or a map would indicate that there was nothing in the area, and suddenly we would be confronted with an American-type town, with factory buildings and all the rest of it.*

A discussion of operations on the Russian front is influenced not only by the vastness of the territory over which the battles were fought but also by the magnitude of the forces engaged. On 1 January 1945, for example, the Germans had five army groups and fourteen armies on the eastern front, while the Russians had nine army groups and forty-two armies. Consequently, it is advisable to follow the operations of only the Russian army groups and the German armies, since a consideration of smaller units would lead to

* Milton Shulman, *Defeat in the West* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1948). Copyright, 1948, by the author.

confusion. It is convenient to use phase lines on the maps, but this should not lead one to visualize the operations as being conducted along definite front lines. In extreme cases the "front lines" had a depth of a hundred miles or more. German units would be holding out in advanced strong points while Russian units as large as armies might be operating far to the rear.

Although fighting on the Russian front was continuous from June 1941 to May 1945, it is convenient to discuss the operations in four phases. During the first year of the war the Germans invaded Russia and reached the gates of Leningrad and Moscow and overran the Ukraine. The second year, the year of Stalingrad, marked the turning point of the war, with Germany driving to the Caucasus Mountains and the Volga River during the summer, only to be stopped at Stalingrad and then thrown back behind the Donets River during the winter. In the third year a renovated and revitalized Red Army assumed the strategic offensive and drove the Germans back generally to the 1939 Russian border. Finally, during the last year of the war, while the Western Allies invaded western and southern France and overran western Europe, the Russians resumed their offensives, cleared the Balkans, Poland, and the Baltic coast, and met the Western Allies along the Elbe River in the heart of Germany.

THE GERMAN INVASION OF RUSSIA

(June 1941 to May 1942)

GERMAN PLANS

The basic plan of the Germans was first to seize Leningrad, Moscow, and the Ukraine. The final objectives of the campaign, the annihilation of the Red Army forces in western Russia and the establishment of a defensive barrier against Asiatic Russia, were stated in the Barbarossa directive. The details of just how the Red Army was to be destroyed were less firmly established, and differences of opinion in the High Command prevailed on this question throughout the campaign.

The map shows the initial distribution and strength of the opposing armies on 22 June 1941; not shown for the Russians are twenty-five armored brigades and four artillery divisions. Although each side had about 150 divisions, the Germans were free to select their main points of attack and were therefore able to obtain a heavy combat superiority at those points.

With the same army and army group commanders who had been so successful in the campaign in the West the year before, the Germans hoped to make the invasion of Russia a repetition of their spectacular successes in Poland and France. In general, the same tactics were to be employed; but the great spaces of Russia would require special efforts to prevent the withdrawal of the enemy into the interior.

Briefly, the operational plan provided for a series of main-effort penetrations by infantry, accompanied by secondary infantry frontal attacks. The breakthroughs would be exploited by armored enveloping forces. These tactics would pin the enemy troops in their frontier positions, cut off their escape to the rear, and force them to fight on an inverted front. As the armor developed its exploitation, it would become the outer ring of envelopment; the infantry would move up as rapidly as possible to form an inner ring and effect the destruction of the encircled hostile forces. The Germans dubbed these tactics "keil und kessel", or wedge and trap; essentially it was a process of taking huge bites out of the enemy position by means of multiple penetrations followed by double envelopments. It was hoped that these tactics would result in the annihilation of the Red Army divisions west of the Dnieper, in front of Smolensk, and south of the Dvina.

The initial plan set as the first goal of the operation the seizure of the line Dnieper River—Orsha—Leningrad. Subsequent plans would depend on the results of this first phase. The map shows the general plan of attack of the three German army groups.

In the south Field Marshal Rundstedt faced the largest Russian forces, which were evidently deployed to cover the Ukraine. Since these divisions could withdraw to the east behind successive river lines, the best method of preventing such a withdrawal appeared to be a strong attack with armor on the left, driving in a southeasterly direction to cut off the Russians before they could reach the Dnieper and to push them against the Black Sea. So Rundstedt concentrated his greatest strength in the sector between Lublin and the Carpathians. His main effort would be made by the Sixth Army, followed by the First Panzer Group. The latter would exploit in the direction of the Dnieper bend once the infantry had achieved a breakthrough. The Seventeenth Army would protect the First Panzer Group's right flank against an attack from the large enemy forces cut off in the south. The Carpathian sector would be held by the Hungarians; and the Eleventh Army, supported by the Rumanians, would launch frontal attacks across the

Prut to hold the Russians in the south. The Pripet Marshes, which separated the zones of action of the South and Central Army Groups, were expected to provide some protection for Rundstedt's left flank.

Field Marshal Bock, in the center, was to make the main attack on the eastern front. Consequently, he had the most panzer and motorized forces at his disposal and the bulk of the theater reserves. The Second Army, which was still reorganizing after the Balkan campaign, would be committed in his zone when necessary. Bock was to destroy the enemy forces blocking the direct route to Moscow. On his front the Russians held a large salient around Bialystok; so an attack that would consist of penetrations of the faces of the salient, followed by a double envelopment closing around Minsk, offered excellent prospects of encircling the large Red Army forces concentrated in White Russia. Accordingly, Bock concentrated his forces in two groups, the Ninth Army and Third Panzer Group around Suwalki and the Fourth Army and the Second Panzer Group around Brest-Litovsk. Kluge and Guderian had the largest force, since their attack would carry them along the main Warsaw-Moscow road. As on Rundstedt's front, the infantry would break through the enemy defenses on a narrow front and open gaps through which the armor could exploit deep to the rear. The rest of Bock's front would be covered only by weak security forces. For both Rundstedt's and Bock's main attacks the panzer groups were initially attached to infantry armies. After they had advanced far ahead of the infantry, they would assume an independent status.

In the north the enemy forces were weaker than in the other sectors, and the Baltic Sea provided an obstacle against which it was hoped they could be destroyed. This was to be accomplished by directing the main effort of Field Marshal Leeb's army group from East Prussia through the Baltic States toward Leningrad. The Fourth Panzer Group, in the center, would spearhead the attack, while the Eighteenth Army would cover Hoepfner's left flank and compress the isolated Russian forces against the sea. The Sixteenth Army would cover the more exposed right flank of the panzer forces.

As usual, the first task of the Luftwaffe would be to weaken and neutralize the Russian Air Force by aerial combat and attacks on forward airfields. Then it would operate in direct support of the army groups, particularly Army Group Center and the flank units of Army Group South. It was also to cut the railroads that were being used by the Red Army. The Luftwaffe was specifically di-

rected not to operate against strategic targets until the ground operations were completed; then it would be committed against the Russian armament industry.

With Russian strategy based on gaining time to complete the arming and modernization of the armed forces, and with mobilization and concentration of the armies not yet completed, her plans were initially based upon a defense of the frontier and selling space for time. This would be accomplished by defending in depth, executing delaying action at principal terrain obstacles, and avoiding retreat along the whole front after each new German breakthrough. Centers of resistance would be held along the flanks of the breakthroughs; and strong mobile reserves, abundantly supplied with antitank equipment, would resist from previously prepared secondary defensive positions. The Red Air Force was deployed well forward on numerous dispersed airfields, but only the older planes were to operate from these forward fields. The few modern Russian planes would be held back in the rear areas.

THE GERMAN SUMMER OFFENSIVE OF 1941

On the morning of 22 June 1941 the Wehrmacht unleashed its offensive against the Red Army along the entire length of the frontier. Again Hitler struck without a declaration of war. Events developed rapidly and simultaneously in all three attack zones, but for our purposes it is best to consider the operations of each army group in turn.

The Drive to Smolensk (Map 3a).—At 0300 hours the infantry divisions of Field Marshal Fedor von Bock's armies launched their attacks across the Russian border. Complete tactical surprise was achieved; and the Germans found the frontier for the most part only weakly guarded, with the Russian troops in their quarters. In the Brest-Litovsk area bridges over the Bug were seized intact, and north of Grodno bridgeheads were established over the Niemen. By the end of the first day advances averaging six or seven miles were scored all along the front, and gaps were opened for the panzer divisions to begin their exploitation. The Luftwaffe was equally successful the first day, destroying many Russians planes on the ground and shooting down entire bomber squadrons that were hastily committed without fighter escort.

By the morning of the 23d it was apparent that the German plan was unfolding as anticipated. Although the lack of resistance

the first day and a relatively small haul of prisoners * indicated that the enemy might be withdrawing to stronger positions in the rear, prospects appeared good for opening a wide gap in the center of the Russian line and destroying so many enemy divisions that the balance of strength would tip heavily in favor of the Germans and permit them full freedom of action. As Guderian's Second and Hoth's Third Panzer Groups moved forward, operations took on the confused pattern of open warfare. The Third Panzer Group scored the greatest gains; the Second Panzer Group, driving down the main road from Warsaw to Minsk, was checked time after time by local Russian counterattacks. After their initial success the Germans were surprised and rather confused at the determined resistance being put up by the isolated groups of Russians in the border areas.

Extracts from Halder's diary (entries of 24 June) indicate the general situation as viewed by the German High Command as the main attacks of the offensive gathered momentum:

Closing of the ring east of Bialystok, in the Minsk-area, is nearing completion. Hoth is only thirty kilometers from Minsk. He now stands in the rear of the last enemy reserve group which was thrown from Minsk toward Baranowice against Guderian's advancing panzer group. If Guderian makes headway in the direction of Baranowice, in the next few days the ring will be completely sealed. The Air Force must prevent any eastward retreat of the Russian forces . . .

In the further development of the battle Fourth Army must advance its left-wing corps toward Volkovysk, and Ninth Army its right-wing corps toward Lunna, in order to form an inner ring of infantry around Bialystok; this ring must be made as tight as possible by moving up additional infantry from the west. The time necessary to complete this will be utilized to allow the components of Guderian's and Hoth's armored groups to close up on the high ground around Minsk. Meanwhile strong advance combat teams can secure the crossings on the upper Dnieper at Mogilev and Orsha and on the upper Dvina at Vitebsk and Polotsk . . .

Generally speaking, it is now clear that the Russians are not thinking of withdrawing but are throwing in everything they have to stem the German invasion . . .

The enemy air force is completely out of the picture after the very high initial losses (reports speak of 2,000).

During the next week the panzer groups struggled to seal the ring by closing in on Minsk, but they were constantly harassed by the resurgence of hostile activity in their rear and on their inner

* About 2,000 prisoners were taken in each army zone.

flanks. The infantry units that were mopping up in the rear faced repeated counterattacks in the area Bialystok–Novogrodek and were therefore delayed in following the armor to Minsk. On the 27th the Russians evacuated Bialystok but in shifting eastward increased the pressure on Hoth's right flank and Guderian's left.

On the 28th heavy fighting developed in the Fourth Army zone southeast of Bialystok. To the east Hoth reached Minsk, but Russian attacks north of Novogrodek rendered his advanced position precarious. Guderian was still unable to close the gap from Baronowice to Minsk, but his right wing had moved on to the east to reach the Beresina near Bobruisk. The next day the Second and Third Panzer Groups gained contact near Minsk. But in spite of the efforts of the panzer groups, many Russians managed to escape to the east, where they joined with other troops moved down from the north to form a strong force in the vicinity of Smolensk.

By the end of the first week reports from the German armies revealed some of the fighting characteristics of their new opponents. Halder said:

The Russians are fighting to the last man. Sometimes treacherous methods are used, especially where Mongolians are among the troops. A singular note is that as a rule only very few soldiers are taken with captured batteries, etc. Some let themselves be killed, while others run away, get rid of their uniforms, and try to make their way back as "peasants". Morale of our troops everywhere is described as very good. Horses very tired.

The German newspapers contained many references to the Russian soldier:

The Russian soldier surpasses our adversary in the West in his contempt for death. Endurance and fatalism make him hold out until he is blown up with his trench or falls in hand-to-hand fighting. The mental paralysis which usually followed after the lightning German breakthroughs in the West did not occur to the same extent in the East. In most cases the enemy did not lose his capacity for action but tried in his turn to envelop the arms of the German pincers.

The dotted phase line on the map shows the general situation on 1 July. In the first ten days Bock's panzer divisions had moved over 200 miles through the Russian forward positions; but, strangely, they had not yet gained complete freedom of action, and stronger resistance was being met on all sides. In a wild melee around Novogrodek a mass of German divisions was busy trying to seal the inner ring around the enemy, who was breaking out in all directions. Minsk was captured on the 30th; but it was not until

10 July that the Germans announced the liquidation of the Minsk pocket and the capture of 323,000 prisoners, 3,000 tanks, and 1,800 guns. Total German casualties on the Russian front for the period 22-30 June were reported as 41,000.

Units were quickly regrouped and reserves brought forward for the drive to the next important terrain objective, the "dry route" to Moscow between the upper Dvina and Dnieper Rivers, which crosses the triangle Vitebsk-Orsha-Smolensk. The Fourth Army (Kluge) was given control of both the Second and Third Panzer Groups for the drive to Smolensk, and General Weichs moved up with the headquarters of the Second Army to assist the Ninth Army in controlling the divisions still fighting west of Minsk.

On 3 July the panzer groups launched a new attack to the east, and Guderian forced the Beresina in the afternoon. The next day Hoth's left wing crossed the Dvina west of Polotsk while Guderian's right wing crossed the Dnieper south of Mogilev. Heavy fighting developed on Guderian's left flank between the Beresina and Dnieper; but Hoth made better progress and captured Vitebsk, where he had to beat off repeated counterattacks for the next few days. The Second and Ninth Armies moved forward as fast as possible after clearing out the pockets in the rear, but congestion on the poor roads slowed their advance.

Bock's armor continued to press the attack toward the Smolensk area. By 16 July, as shown by the phase line on the map, Guderian's tanks had reached Smolensk, while Hoth had reached out east of Vitebsk in an attempt to link up with Guderian and to cut to the north toward Rzhev to trap those Russian forces still west of the swamp area south of Lake Ilmen. But again the panzer formations found themselves extended and with numerous enemy strong points on their flanks and rear. Particularly heavy counterattacks from the vicinity of Gomel were threatening Guderian's right flank. Plans for any further move toward Moscow had to be postponed until the infantry divisions had moved up and the situation in the Smolensk area had been stabilized by eliminating the Russian pocket of resistance forming to the west of the city.

Up to 16 July the total German casualties had mounted to 103,000. Although the Russian Third, Tenth, and Fourth Armies had been temporarily destroyed as cohesive fighting units in the Minsk encirclement, Timoshenko's West Front had apparently grown in strength. In addition to the Thirteenth Army, which had fallen

back to the vicinity of Roslavl, four new armies had been identified in front of Bock's forces.

By the middle of July the German supply situation had become critical because of the extended lines of communication. It was estimated that in Army Group Center's zone the troops had less than one issue of ammunition, three and a half fuel quotas, and seven and a half days' rations. Almost all these stocks were with the troops, with practically nothing in base dumps. This situation limited the radius of action of the panzer and motorized divisions to the Smolensk area and of the infantry divisions to the Dvina and Dnieper Rivers. Twenty-two trains per day were required to meet current logistical demands of the Fourth Army and Second and Third Panzer Groups in the forward areas, but only fourteen could be made available.

Consequently, during the period from 17 July to 16 August (Map 3b) little progress was made east of Smolensk; and the greatest gains were scored on the flanks, which had to be made secure before a new offensive could be launched toward Moscow. During this period the Battle of Smolensk was fought in the Vitebsk-Smolensk-Orsha triangle. On 10 August the Germans announced the elimination of the pocket and the capture of 310,000 prisoners, 3,200 tanks, and 3,200 guns. But again many Russians escaped, and the Germans found no undefended gap before them. Once more Smolensk had fulfilled its historic role as the shield of Moscow.

Early in August Guderian's Second Panzer Group launched a successful attack on Roslavl* but had difficulty holding the salient it had gained at Yelnya. A week later Weichs' Second Army moved up and launched an attack to the southeast to secure the army group's long south flank. After overcoming strong resistance around Rogatchev, the Second Army began to make good progress toward Gomel. On the northern flank Hoth's Third Panzer Group was driving toward the Valdai Hills; but repeated attempts to secure Velikie Luki had been unsuccessful, and the going was difficult in the forests and swamps. All along the front an increase in enemy artillery fire was noted; and the Germans sent back distress calls for more counterbattery fire; but ammunition was scarce, since supply points were sometimes 120 miles to the rear. At the end of the first week of August the German High Command estimated that

* However, the enemy escaped another attempted encirclement in this Roslavl attack. A German staff officer remarked, "The Russians have an uncanny ability for moving on roads impassable for our troops and building concealed river crossings."

the sixty divisions, including seventeen panzer divisions, of Army Group Center were opposing seventy Russian divisions, which included the equivalent of eight and a half armored divisions.

By 16 August Rundstedt's Southern Group of Armies had pushed deep into the Dnieper bend; but the huge salient that the Russians held in the Pripet Marshes was still a threat, not only to Rundstedt's left flank but to the south flank of Bock's army group as well. Therefore, during the last two weeks of the month Bock's interest was focused in that direction. On 21 August Hitler issued a new directive on the general plan of operations, and the next few days were spent in regrouping the Second Panzer Group for a strong attack to the south—toward Konotop. This was a risky maneuver, since it involved a flank march across the enemy front west of Bryansk. But no strong Russian attacks developed against Guderian's long eastern flank, and by the 26th he had captured a bridge over the Desna north of Konotop.

In the meantime the Second Army continued its drive to the east and southeast. Beginning on 19 August a major battle developed around Gomel, where the Second Army eventually captured some 80,000 Russians. By 1 September the right-wing armies of Army Group Center were closing up on the Desna in preparation for the next phase of operations, which involved a coordinated attack in conjunction with Rundstedt's armies.

While Bock's right wing was advancing to the Desna, the enemy strong points around Velikie Luki were finally overcome by his left wing, which then moved toward the Valdai Hills. However, the troops in the center—north and south of Smolensk—were hard pressed by repeated Russian counterattacks and made no progress during the latter half of August. By the end of the month the Germans estimated that Timoshenko had ten armies* facing Army Group Center.

Nevertheless, by 1 September the Germans could look on their drive on Smolensk as another successful campaign. Although their greatest gains had been made during the first three weeks of the offensive, they had exacted a terrific toll of the enemy, particularly in the great encirclements at Minsk and Smolensk and in the battle at Gomel. Not only had the Russian forces on the frontier been

* It should be remembered that during this early phase of the war the Russians did not have corps headquarters and that a Russian army controlled fewer divisions than did a German army.

largely destroyed, but their alternate defensive line along the Dvina and Dnieper Rivers had also been overwhelmed.*

But the price of these successes had not been small. The Germans estimated that their total casualties in Russia to 26 August had approximated 441,000 officers and men, and matériel losses had also been heavy.** The Luftwaffe had lost almost a third of its operational strength; and the supply services were strained to the limit to provide the armies with essential ammunition, fuel, and rations. The Germans had advanced 400 miles into Russia, and Moscow lay only 200 miles away. But even in this respect they had set no record; Napoleon was east of Viasma on 1 September 1812, he having crossed the Niemen near Kovno on 24 June. That the German High Command appreciated the realities of the situation is indicated in the reflections of the Army chief of staff, which were recorded in his diary on 11 August 1941:

On the fronts not involved in the offensive movement reigns the quiet of exhaustion. What we are now doing is the last desperate attempt to prevent our front line becoming frozen in position warfare. The High Command is greatly handicapped in its capability for modifying the situation, as the army groups are separated by natural obstacles (marshes). Our last reserves have been committed. Any regrouping now is merely a shifting of forces on the base line within individual army group sectors. This takes time and consumes the energy of men and machines . . .

The whole situation makes it increasingly plain that we have underestimated the Russian Colossus, who consistently prepared for war with that utterly ruthless determination so characteristic of totalitarian states. This applies to organizational and economic resources, as well as the communications system, and, most of all, to the strictly military potential. At the outset of the war we reckoned with about 200 enemy divisions. Now we have already counted 360. These divisions indeed are not armed and equipped according to our standards, and their tactical leadership is often poor. But there they are; and if we smash a dozen of them, the Russians simply put up another dozen. The time factor favors them, as they are near their own resources while we are moving farther and farther away from ours.

And so our troops, sprawled over an immense front line without any depth, are subjected to the incessant attacks of the enemy. Sometimes these are successful, because too many gaps must be left open in these enormous spaces.

* The Germans had feared that this alternate defensive zone, known as the Stalin Line and located generally behind the 1939 Russian border, would be a formidable barrier. Actually, the difficulty encountered there was caused more by the natural defensive strength of the terrain and the active defensive measures of the enemy than by any man-made permanent fortifications.

** For example, only 25 per cent of the tanks in the panzer divisions of the Second Panzer Group were reported as fit for combat on 14 September.

The Drive to the Dnieper (Map 3a).—Returning to the beginning of the invasion, let us next follow the advance of Army Group South to the bend of the Dnieper River, an operation that proceeded concurrently with Bock's drive to Smolensk. On 22 June Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt's armies achieved the same surprise as did the other German forces in breaking through the Russians' thin border positions. By noon the panzer divisions of Kleist's First Panzer Group had moved forward to the attack. By the 24th Kleist reached the Styr River with four panzer divisions. The next day he took Dubno, but on the 26th counterattacks by strong armored forces began to develop against the First Panzer Group's right flank. Nevertheless, the German panzer divisions continued to gain ground; and since they threatened the rear of the Russians around Przemysl, who had held the Seventeenth Army to small gains up to the 27th, those Russian forces began to withdraw, pursued by the Seventeenth Army. On the 27th the Seventeenth Army reached Lwow, at the same time that the First Panzer Group captured Rowne; but Lwow was strongly defended and did not fall until three days later. While the Seventeenth Army was held up at Lwow, an armored counterattack developed around Dubno that delayed the First Panzer Group for two days. By 1 July Rundstedt had made modest gains in comparison with those of Bock; but, having broken up the numerous Russian armored counterattacks, it was hoped he would now have greater freedom of action as he continued his drive to the east. The Sixth Army was supporting the panzer spearheads, and in the south the Eleventh Army and the satellite divisions were ready to launch their attack into the Ukraine.

During the next two weeks Rundstedt continued his offensive, with the main effort on his left. The First Panzer Group was still the spearhead, with the Sixth Army following behind to protect Kleist's flanks. Early in July the Russians began launching counterattacks from the Pripet Marshes against Rundstedt's north flank. Farther south the Seventeenth Army advanced on a broad front, with a Hungarian corps joining in on its right. In this zone the enemy executed a general withdrawal under cover of armored rear-guard action. Rain created road conditions that slowed down operations; but the First Panzer Group, moving forward in a wedge formation, continued to make steady progress.

On 11 July one panzer division reached the outer defenses of Kiev, but on that day heavy Russian counterattacks were launched against Berdichev from the south and against Zhitomir from the

north. For the next four days a furious tank battle was fought around Berdichev.* The Russian attacks from the north continued to harass Rundstedt's left flank and temporarily succeeded in cutting off the panzer divisions near Kiev. By 16 July the Germans had reached the line shown on the map, and Kleist was concentrating his armor south of Kiev to continue the attack to the southeast. By that time the Seventeenth Army had also pushed across the 1939 Russian border and was coming up more slowly on Kleist's right.

In the southern part of Rundstedt's zone the Eleventh Army launched its attack across the Prut on 2 July. The attack made slow progress as the Russians fell back to the Dniester River. By the 15th the Eleventh Army had reached the Dniester; and the Rumanian Army on its right, with about six divisions, was beginning to move forward as the Russians evacuated Bessarabia.

As a result of the first three weeks of fighting the Southern Group of Armies had pushed forward along its entire front, but it had not yet succeeded in executing any spectacular encircling maneuvers or in destroying any major parts of Budenny's armies. The Russians had suffered heavily in their counterattacks, but in general they had succeeded in withdrawing into the Ukraine and the area north and west of Kiev. They had also gained some time for the evacuation of the large industrial area in the Dnieper bend. The Germans were aware of the heavy rail movements in the rear areas; but the Luftwaffe was busy providing air cover for the German armies, and the significance of the evacuation of the Ukrainian industries to the east was not appreciated until much later in the war.

The period from 17 July to 16 August witnessed a shift in the breakthrough operations from the zone of Army Group Center to that of Army Group South (Map 3b). By mid-July the stage was set for the First Panzer Group to begin its drive to the south to get behind the Russian forces in front of the Seventeenth and Eleventh Armies. However, new developments further delayed this exploitation. The Russian Fifth Army, in the Pripet Marshes, had mounted such strong counterattacks against Rundstedt's left flank that much of the strength of the Sixth Army had to be diverted to Korosten to cover that flank. Gradually the bulk of the Sixth Army became tied down around Korosten and Kiev. To make matters worse, a new Russian army appeared southeast of Kiev on 19 July. This army, which consisted of about six infantry and two

* One panzer division alone suffered 2,000 casualties.

cavalry divisions, was a real threat to the left flank of the First Panzer Group; and so much of Kleist's strength had to be diverted to meet this new threat that initially he had only two panzer divisions to press his attack to the south toward Uman.

Nevertheless, all available German forces converged on Uman to trap the Russians before they could withdraw behind the Dnieper. On 1 August one of Kleist's panzer corps reached the Bug at Pervomaisk, and other corps from the First Panzer Group and the Seventeenth Army were closing in on Uman. In the meantime the Eleventh Army forced a crossing of the Dniester on 17 July, and by the end of the month it had reached the Bug southwest of Uman. Within this ring of German divisions elements of some twenty Russian divisions were trapped between Uman and the Bug River. By 3 August sizeable Russian forces were completely encircled northwest of Pervomaisk, although many enemy troops were observed streaming back toward the Dnieper River. Two days later the Uman pocket was sufficiently liquidated to permit Kleist to continue his advance to the Dnieper.

By the 7th the line of the Bug had been secured, and tanks were driving on toward Krivoi Rog and Kirovo as Korosten finally fell to the Sixth Army. As a result of the Uman encirclement, in which the commanders of the Russian Twelfth and Sixth Armies were captured along with elements of sixteen infantry and six armored divisions, Russian resistance in the Dnieper bend deteriorated rapidly. The most severe opposition that the Russians could offer was a counterattack by about six divisions west of Cherkassi on 7 August, which gained limited success and temporarily threatened to drive a wedge between the Sixth Army and the First Panzer Group. This attack, together with the pressure from Kiev and in the vicinity of Korosten, had so exhausted the Germans that on 10 August the Sixth Army was ordered on the defensive pending the arrival of reinforcements from the Seventeenth Army and the First Panzer Group.

By 16 August Rundstedt had reached the dotted phase line shown on the map, and his troops were busy clearing out the Dnieper bend. During the next two weeks this task was completed, and the armies were regrouped for the next operation. The Eleventh Army moved up to the coast of the Black Sea, and the Rumanians unsuccessfully attacked four Russian divisions that were holding the port of Odessa. In the Sixth Army zone the Russians held their positions around Kiev; but on the 19th the Fifth Army, threatened in rear by Bock's forces around Gomel, started withdrawing eastward from

the Korosten area. The Sixth Army followed up this withdrawal and on the 25th secured a crossing over the Dnieper north of Kiev. Attempts to push on across the Desna were blocked, however, and for the next week furious Russian counterattacks rendered the Sixth Army's bridgehead insecure.

The same day that the Sixth Army crossed the Dnieper the First Panzer Group secured a bridgehead at Dniepropetrovsk. This bridgehead also came under heavy Russian counterattacks, and little success was gained in expanding it during the next week. On 30 August the Eleventh Army forced a crossing of the Dnieper east of Kherson; and the next day the Seventeenth Army established another bridgehead east of Kremenchug, which it occupied with two divisions. Thus by 1 September Army Group South had closed up to the Dnieper along its entire front, except at Kiev; and each of Rundstedt's armies had secured a bridgehead across the river in preparation for a new offensive. On the south flank the Rumanians, who launched their first coordinated attack against Odessa on 18 August, made little progress toward capturing the city.

During the summer Rundstedt had overrun much of the Ukraine. But in doing so he had suffered heavy losses, and by the time he reached the Dnieper his troops were tired. Except for the Uman encirclement, in which 150,000 Russians were captured, the enemy had generally been successful in withdrawing his main forces. With repeated counterattacks, often supported by tanks, he was able to delay the German advance until the important cities in the Ukraine had been evacuated or demolished in a systematic "scorched-earth" program.

Perhaps the most significant development of the campaign in the south was the determined Russian resistance around Kiev. This unbalanced the entire German plan, which had originally envisaged a deep penetration followed by an encirclement of all the Russian forces in the Ukraine by the First Panzer Group, supported by infantry from the Sixth Army. Kiev had been reached by the Germans in mid-July, but two months later it was still held by the Russians. The Germans could not make up their minds whether to assault or lay siege to the city; and in the meantime Budenny, protected by the Kiev strong point, was massing a large counteroffensive force east of the Dnieper. The repeated counterattacks by the Russian armies near Kiev had drawn the infantry divisions of the Sixth Army away from their primary mission of supporting the panzer troops and had absorbed them in a costly battle to protect

the north flank of the army group. Consequently, when the moment arrived for Kleist to exploit his penetration by an enveloping maneuver toward the Black Sea, he had no support for his attacking panzer formations and had to be content with the encirclement of those Russian divisions which were around Uman. Had he been able to strike south faster and harder, Rundstedt's haul of prisoners in the Ukraine might have been staggering.

The Drive to Leningrad (Map 3a).—While the Southern Group of Armies was pushing the Russians behind the Dnieper and the Central Group of Armies was driving through Minsk and Smolensk on the way to Moscow, Army Group North was fighting a less spectacular campaign along the Baltic coast.

When Field Marshal Ritter von Leeb launched his armies out of East Prussia on the morning of 22 June, they also met little initial resistance; and the offensive got off to a good start. Although there were some local counterattacks by various Russian units, it appeared as though the enemy had planned to make a general withdrawal from Lithuania. The tanks of Hoepfner's Fourth Panzer Group moved out to the northeast and by the 26th had taken Dvinsk and secured a bridgehead across the Dvina River. During the next few days the rest of the panzer divisions closed up to the Dvina and established another bridgehead west of Dvinsk. The infantry divisions of the Eighteenth and Sixteenth Armies moved up behind the panzer units as rapidly as possible, one division reaching Riga by the end of the month.

Army Group North reported that its greatest trouble was caused by many scattered enemy groups that were roaming the forests and looting and burning villages in the rear areas. Effective countermeasures against these groups, which sometimes were still equipped with tanks, were frustrated by the vast expanse of territory the Germans had to cover with their limited man power. Nevertheless, by the end of June Leeb announced that his initial mission, the defeat of the enemy south of the Dvina, had been completed.

His next task was to push on to the high ground northeast of Opochna. On 2 July the Fourth Panzer Group resumed its attack out of the Dvina bridgeheads and on the first day advanced its left wing half way to Pskov. Hoepfner was then directed to occupy the area between Velikie Luki and Lake Ilmen to protect the army group against attacks from the east. To the rear the infantry of the Sixteenth and Eighteenth Armies was moving up to the Dvina

in good order. The Sixteenth Army had the bulk of its strength on the right flank of the army group and was maintaining close contact with the Ninth Army of Army Group Center.

On 4 July the panzer troops reached Ostrov, and to the rear the infantry began crossing the Dvina. As the infantry moved across the river, the Eighteenth Army swung to the left to clear the enemy out of Estonia; and the Sixteenth Army swung to the right to relieve the panzer divisions that were holding the lengthening right flank of the army group. This permitted the panzer divisions to concentrate to the north, east of Lake Peipus, for the attack toward Leningrad. But by the 10th counterattacks that had developed from the area around Nevel had slowed operations on the right; bad roads and difficult terrain were holding the panzer units to small advances, and the Eighteenth Army had run up against a Russian strong point at Dorpat.

Hoepfner began moving again on the 14th, with his two leading corps directed toward Narva and Novgorod. But after two days this attack was halted to allow more infantry to close up. At that time Leeb held the line shown on the map. The Germans had cleared two of the Baltic States and a part of the third and had captured some 35,000 Russians and 650 guns; but the bulk of the Soviet forces had escaped destruction, and their resistance was growing much stiffer on the east flank and in front of Leningrad.

During the next six weeks of the campaign Army Group North achieved only modest gains (Map 3b). By the end of July it was evident to the Germans that they would not be able to cut off Leningrad from Moscow by a quick armored breakthrough to the northeast. Mounting pressure on their right flank had prevented a build-up of armor for a drive to the north. Although Cholm and Lake Ilmen were reached at the end of July, increased resistance was met at those points. At Luga an enemy counterattack had absorbed several of Hoepfner's units that were preparing to resume the attack to the north. On 2 August the Germans estimated that of their total of 179,000 casualties to date, 42,000 had been suffered by Army Group North, 74,000 by Army Group Center, and 63,000 by Army Group South. Only about 50,000 replacements had been received.

The greatest gains during the first two weeks in August were made by the Eighteenth Army in Estonia. The coast between Tallinn and Narva was reached on 9 August, although Tallinn itself did not fall until the 28th. On the right flank Cholm was captured on the 3d, and Staraya Russa was reached on the 6th; but the Rus-

sians resisted these advances stubbornly, and the Germans were able to gain little more ground to the east. This Russian resistance was offered not only by units that had been pushed back by the Germans but also by new divisions that were being hastily organized and moved up from the interior.

The attack by the Fourth Panzer Group (Hoepfner) toward Leningrad, which had been postponed since the first of the month, was finally launched on 10 August; but it made slow progress because of bad weather and determined enemy resistance. Army Group North had seventeen battalions of medium and heavy artillery, in addition to the division artillery, available for this drive toward Leningrad. Also, the VIII Air Corps,* one of the best Luftwaffe units on the Russian front, had been shifted north to support this attack; but the weather so hampered its operations that it was unable to help the panzer divisions secure a clean breakthrough, although limited gains were made. Narva was captured on the 18th and Novgorod on the 19th, but a pocket of Russians who were encircled at Luga was not liquidated until the end of the month. One panzer and two motorized divisions were shifted from the Central Group of Armies to reinforce Hoepfner's right wing, which was driving toward Lake Ladoga. By 1 September this force had reached within twenty miles of the lake but had not yet succeeded in isolating Leningrad. Hoepfner's other forces were meeting increasing resistance as they approached the city from the south.

Throughout his summer campaign Leeb had been handicapped by the difficult terrain in his zone. Lakes Peipus and Ilmen had canalized his attack on Leningrad to a route that was strongly defended by the enemy, and the forests and swamps in the area had reduced the mobility of the armor. On his right flank the Volkov River, Lake Ilmen, and the swamps around the Valdai Lakes were skillfully used by the Russians to block any wide enveloping maneuver to the northeast. As on Rundstedt's left flank at Kiev, repeated counterattacks against Leeb's right flank had caused him to divert much of his strength to the east in a defensive role; this weakened his armored spearhead to such an extent that it was unable to exploit the initial German victories.

In the north the Germans' logistical situation had been better than in the other army group zones because Riga, which could be

* The VIII Air Corps, commanded by General Richtofen, was the principal German dive-bomber unit. It had been attached to the Second Air Force, where it had supported Army Group Center prior to joining the First Air Force and Army Group North.

reached by sea, had been quickly captured and converted into a large supply base. But wet weather and poor roads in the combat zone created supply problems even for Leeb's troops. Above all, the attrition in the German divisions, caused by the active defensive measures of the Russians, could not be immediately replaced by the Wehrmacht replacement system or German industry. Toward the end of August the German High Command estimated that the over-all combat efficiency of the infantry divisions in Russia had declined 40 per cent, while that of the panzer divisions had dropped 50 per cent.

During the first week of September Leeb continued his attacks against Leningrad; but as his divisions converged on the city, they encountered increasingly formidable defensive positions that held them to modest gains (Map 4a). Leaving one corps in Estonia to mop up scattered remnants of by-passed Russian forces and to undertake small-scale joint operations with the Navy to clear the islands along the coast,* the Eighteenth Army moved up through Narva and joined Hoepfner's panzer units in the assault.

On 8 September the Fourth Panzer Group captured Schluesselburg, a fortress on Lake Ladoga (Map 4b). This completely cut the land approaches to Leningrad from the south and east. By that time the Finns had closed in from the north, having advanced from the 1939 frontier to within a few miles of the northern outskirts of the city. The Eighteenth Army broke through to the shore of the Gulf of Finland, southwest of Leningrad, to tighten the ring. This isolated the Russian Eighth Army on the peninsula covering the naval base at Kronstadt. On 9 September the Germans renewed the assault on the outer line of Leningrad defenses. The ring was tightened on the desperate defenders; but their heroic defense of the city, in which the entire civilian population participated, proved too much for Leeb's troops.

By mid-September the Eighteenth Army and Fourth Panzer Group were employing two panzer, two motorized, and ten infantry divisions against elements of eighteen divisions of the Russian Eighth and Forty-second Armies. An army group, known as the Leningrad Front and commanded by General Govorov, took control of all Russian forces in the area: and since the Germans were unable to make headway against Govorov's troops, a stalemate developed. On 18 September General Halder said: "Considering the

Oesel and Dago were the most important islands, since they threatened German shipping entering the Gulf of Riga. Oesel was not cleared until 6 October and Dago not until the end of the month.

drain on our forces before Leningrad, where the enemy has concentrated large forces and great quantities of matériel, the situation will remain tight until such time when hunger takes effect as our ally." Exhaustion, miserable weather, and the Red Army had halted the Wehrmacht at the gates of Leningrad. The Russians had not employed a passive defense in front of the city but had mounted repeated counterattacks that had kept the Eighteenth Army in a constant state of uncertainty. On 12 September the Leningrad area experienced its first snowfall. This put new heart into the Russians, who welcomed the return of an historic ally.

To avoid wasting their precious panzer forces in siege operations, the Germans began shifting the Fourth Panzer Group to Army Group Center. By 21 September most of the armor was out of the Leningrad area, and the Eighteenth Army had taken over Hoepfner's zone. Three days later the VIII Air Corps was also sent to the south.

There are indications that the Germans never intended to actually occupy the city of Leningrad. A memorandum issued by the German naval staff on 29 September 1941, and later confirmed by OKW, expressed Hitler's intentions:

The Führer has decided to have Leningrad wiped from the face of the earth. The further existence of this large town is of no interest once Soviet Russia is overthrown. Finland has also similarly declared no interest in the continued existence of the city directly on her new frontier . . .

The intention is to close in on the city and blast it to the ground by bombardment of artillery of all calibers and by continuous air attacks.

Requests that the city may be handed over, arising from the situation within, will be turned down, for the problem of the survival of the population and of supplying it with food is one which cannot and should not be solved by us. In this war for existence we have no interest in keeping even part of this great city's population. If necessary, a forceful evacuation toward the eastern territories of Russia should take place* . . .

The map shows the situation around Leningrad on 1 October 1941. The area was divided into three sectors: the Kronstadt sector, to the west; the Leningrad sector, south of the city from the Gulf of Finland to Lake Ladoga; and the Ladoga sector, on the

* The Germans were never able to accumulate a sufficient preponderance of artillery or air power to accomplish the complete destruction of Leningrad. Although it has been estimated that during the four-year siege over a million Russians lost their lives, mostly by starvation, life and work went on.

right from Lake Ladoga to the Volkov River. The Kronstadt and Leningrad sectors were to remain practically unchanged until the Russians launched their great offensive in January 1944.

More activity developed on the Ladoga front as the Germans sought to complete the blockade of Leningrad by occupying the south shore of Lake Ladoga and joining up with the Finns east of the lake; but here, also, the changes in the front lines during the next two years were minor. The Germans never succeeded in sealing the ring around Leningrad, for during the summer communication was maintained with the rest of Russia by ship across Lake Ladoga and in the winter by a road over the ice to the mouth of the Volkov River. By 1 December the German Eighteenth Army was holding the Kronstadt and Leningrad sectors with eight infantry divisions.

On the right of Army Group North the going was also bad for General Busch's Sixteenth Army (Map 4a). By the middle of September the attacks of the two corps of his right wing had reached beyond Demyansk; but there, against the Valdai Lakes, the exhausted Germans were halted. The Russians had rushed more reinforcements to this area, and they had made good use of the difficult terrain to establish a strong defensive line. With the autumn rains to hinder their already extended operations, the Germans were pushed to the limit to repulse the inevitable counterattacks that the Russians threw against them. North of Lake Ilmen it proved impossible for the Germans to drive across the Volkov River, which Voroshilov had also turned into a formidable defensive barrier.

The Finnish Campaign of 1941 (Map 4c).—Although only minor operations were conducted in Finland from 1941 to 1945, the most significant of these were during the first six months of the war. Strategically the importance of Finland lay in the fact that from her frontiers Axis forces could threaten Murmansk and Archangel and the railroads joining them to the rest of Russia. Since these ports* were Russia's nearest links with the Western Allies, they assumed great importance as points of entry for lend-lease supplies from the United States and Great Britain.

Finland wanted to regain the territory she had lost to Russia in the 1939-40 campaign; so she cast her lot with the Axis, although she was hardly any more sympathetic to Germany than to Russia.

* Murmansk is open the year-round, but Archangel is generally icebound from December to June.

The major components of Field Marshal Mannerheim's Finnish forces were the Southeast Army of about seven Finnish divisions and the Karelia Army of one German and four Finnish divisions; both armies operated in southern Finland. In the north the Finnish III, German Mountain, and German XXXVI Corps, with a total strength of about three German and two Finnish divisions, operated under the over-all command of General Falkenhorst, whose headquarters was in Norway.*

On 10 July the Finnish Southeast Army launched an attack toward Viipuri. This key point in the Russian defenses of the Karelian Isthmus did not fall until the latter part of August; but then Mannerheim's troops moved rapidly ahead to the old Russo-Finnish border, which they reached by 1 September. This army then settled down to the siege of Leningrad with the German Eighteenth Army.

The Karelia Army also opened its attack on 10 July. Little progress was made initially; but on 15 August Sortavala, at the northern-end of Lake Ladoga, was captured. The Russians then had to shift some of their divisions from this front to the south to try to stem the great German offensive. This enabled the Finns to move rapidly down the east shore of Lake Ladoga and reach the Svir River on 7 September. Other troops moved eastward to capture Petrozavodsk on 1 September and occupy the west shore of Lake Onega. By 1 October they had closed up to the Svir River, but all further attempts to link up with Field Marshal Leeb's troops were blocked. This operation was the most significant of the entire campaign, since it cut the highly important rail connection between Murmansk and Leningrad. However, it only temporarily delayed traffic out of Murmansk because the Russians rapidly constructed a 240-mile auxiliary line from Soroka to Plesetsk that linked the Murmansk railroad to the main Archangel-Moscow line.

In northern Finland only minor operations took place. The Germans attempted to drive eastward to cut the railroad at Kandalaksha, and they tried to capture the Rybachi Peninsula and push on to Murmansk itself; but insurmountable terrain difficulties, weather, and stubborn Russian resistance held them and their allies to insignificant gains along the northern frontier. On 3 December the Russians evacuated Hango, the strategically located naval base at

* Early in 1942 the German divisions in northern Finland were strengthened and reorganized as the Army of Lapland, commanded by General Dietl. This force was redesignated the Twentieth Army about a year later.

the entrance to the Gulf of Finland that they had acquired after the 1939-40 campaign. During 1942 and 1943 operations in Finland consisted of only minor patrol activity.

The Kiev Encirclement (Map 4a).—Let us now return to the operations in the central and southern zones. It will be recalled that by 1 September Rundstedt had reached the Dnieper River from the Black Sea to north of Kiev. Army Group Center, however, was still in the vicinity of Smolensk, where it had been stalled for six weeks. This delay was caused not only by Russian resistance and the need to improve the logistical situation of Bock's armies but also by a state of indecision that had developed in the German High Command.

When the line Dnieper River-Vitebsk-Leningrad had been reached, the first phase of the German invasion was over; however, contrary to German expectations, the Red Army had not been destroyed. In August Stalin said that Russia had 240 divisions at the front and 20 in reserve, or 80 divisions more than she had when the war started. Faced with this growing enemy strength, Hitler could not make up his mind as to the direction of the next major effort. Guderian wanted to drive straight on to Moscow with his Second Panzer Group. He was convinced he could get there if no time were wasted; he believed such an attack would paralyze Russia's resistance by striking at her heart. Kluge wanted to take his Fourth Army to the south to assist Rundstedt in the vicinity of Kiev. Bock wanted to push on to Moscow with his entire army group. The Army High Command also favored directing the main effort toward Moscow, since it judged the Russians before that objective to be the greatest threat. A final all-out effort in the center, after rehabilitating the panzer divisions, might eliminate Timoshenko's group of armies, which would probably be reinforced by the bulk of the Soviet reserves in an attempt to protect the capital. In front of Moscow, then, Brauchitsch hoped to fight the decisive battle, leaving the flank army groups to dispose of the weaker enemy forces in their zones.*

* When these plans were under consideration, the Germans estimated that the opposed forces were distributed as follows:

	<i>German Divisions</i>	<i>Russian Divisions</i>
Army Group Center	60	70
Army Group South	50	50
Army Group North	26	23

At last, after issuing a series of conflicting orders, Hitler announced his final decision on 21 August. This directive began as follows:

The Army's proposal for the further conduct of operations in the East is not in accordance with my intentions.

I order as follows:

1. The most important aim to be achieved before the onset of winter is not to capture Moscow, but to seize the Crimea and the industrial and coal region on the Donets and to cut off the Russian oil supply from the Caucasus area; in the north the aim is to cut off Leningrad and to join with the Finns.

2. The exceptionally favorable operational situation arising from our having reached the Gomel-Pochep line must be promptly exploited for a concentric operation with the inner flanks of the Southern and Central Army Groups. Its aim must be not only to push the Russian Fifth Army across the Dnieper by means of an attack by our Sixth Army alone, but also to annihilate this army before it can withdraw behind the Desna-Konotop-Sula line. This is the only way for the Southern Army Group to gain a sure foothold east of the middle section of the Dnieper and to continue operations with its center and left flank in the direction of Rostov-Kharkov.

3. The Central Army Group, regardless of later operations, is to assign for this mission such forces as will assure that the aim of destroying the Russian Fifth Army will be accomplished; the army group must still be able to repulse enemy attacks against the center of its front from positions which permit economy of forces . . .

Thus the Caucasus, and not the Russian armies in front of Moscow, became the final objective, and the Russian armies around Kiev the immediate objective, of the next series of operations.

The preliminary moves for the Kiev encirclement—the advance of Bock's Second Army and Second Panzer Group to the Desna and the capture of the Kremenchug bridgehead by Rundstedt's Seventeenth Army—have already been discussed. By 2 September five German armies were converging on the Russian salient between the Desna and Dnieper Rivers. Available for employment in the battle were these forces:

	DIVISIONS		
	<i>Panzer</i>	<i>Motorized</i>	<i>Infantry</i>
Army Group Center (Bock)			
Second Panzer Group (Guderian)	3	3	
Second Army (Weichs)			8
Army Group South (Rundstedt)			
Sixth Army (Reichenau)			14
Seventeenth Army (Stülpnagel)			9
First Panzer Group (Kleist)	3	2	4
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total divisions	6	5	35

The Germans estimated that the Russians had in the Kiev salient five armies of about thirty-five divisions, all under Budenny's Southwest Front.

In brief, the German plan was for the First Panzer Group to strike to the northwest and the Second Panzer Group to the south for a junction on the Sula River and then jointly attack the enemy in the Desna-Dnieper area from the rear. After enlarging the bridgehead at Kremenchug, the Seventeenth Army would attack to the northeast on the axis Poltava-Kharkov to secure the southeast flank of the enveloping forces. The Sixth Army would hold the enemy in the vicinity of Kiev by continuing its frontal attacks to the east and southeast, and the Second Army would cover the Sixth's left flank by an attack to the southeast.

During the first week in September the German armies made their preliminary moves for the big attack. By the 10th the increased pressure was beginning to tell on the Russians, and on that day the Sixth and Second Armies began crossing the Desna on a wide front. At the same time the Second Panzer Group, making the greatest gains, reached Romny with its armored spearhead. The German evening situation report of 10 September stated as follows:

The Second Army and Second Panzer Group have inflicted a crushing defeat on the enemy and are now meeting only disorganized opposition. In Army Group South the weather is disappointingly bad again. In Seventeenth Army sector heavy enemy counterattacks against the Kremenchug bridgehead from the direction of Kharkov; partially successful.

On 12 September Guderian was ordered to gather up everything within reach and drive from Romny to Lohvitsa, where large-scale Russian withdrawal movements with three columns of vehicles abreast had been observed. At the same time Kleist had finally begun to move through the Kremenchug bridgehead and was expected to meet the Second Panzer Group momentarily. The Seventeenth Army moved one corps to protect the left flank of its bridgehead while two other corps began an attack toward Poltava. On 14 September the advance elements of the First and Second Panzer Groups met near Lubny. The dotted phase line on the map shows the approximate front line at that time. A German war correspondent who was with the Second Panzer Group described the last hectic days before the link-up in these words:

When the force commander [Guderian] arrived at the command post in Romny, a wild street battle was raging in the town. The tanks had rolled through the town and across the first wooden bridge

beyond, without trouble. However, the Russians opened fire from windows and cellars upon the unarmed supply vehicles following in the rear. A secondary wooden bridge at the exit of the town was stubbornly defended . . .

Romny was additional evidence that the tank thrusts had surprised the Russians. With ever-increasing frequency our point encountered the fleeing columns, which were shot up so that their wreckage lined the side of the road to the next town. On Friday evening, 12 September, some of our armored vehicles and riflemen entered Lokhvitsa. On Saturday our security forces were pushed out to the neighboring villages, only about forty kilometers from the tanks of von Kleist.

The pursuit over the last few kilometers was tense with excitement. On Sunday, 14 September, a strong reconnaissance detachment drove to Lubny, into which a panzer division from the Rundstedt group of armies had penetrated. In the meantime another detachment drove north from Lubny to Lokhvitsa by a different road. This double handshake was the lock and bolt which completed the huge trap around Budenny's armies.

By the 16th the ring was tightly sealed from the east by the panzer units; at the same time it was being further compressed from the north. General Halder described the situation on the 17th:

The encircled enemy units are ricocheting like billiard balls within the ring closed around Kiev, which now is being divided into an inner and outer ring by a deep thrust from the north on the part of the LI Corps [Sixth Army].

The Second Army headquarters had already been withdrawn from the battlefield; and, leaving some of its divisions with the Sixth Army, it moved back toward Smolensk for the next operation of Army Group Center. By the 18th chaos and demoralization seemed to overtake the enemy in the pocket; only a few organized attempts to break out were noted, although strong counterattacks were launched against Romny from the east. On 19 September the Germans reported:

The German flag was raised over the citadel of Kiev at 1200. The enemy commanders apparently have left the fortress by plane. The troops have thrown away their rifles. Wild chaos. All bridges are down. Three of our divisions have penetrated into the city, one from the north, two from the south.

The Germans claimed to have captured 665,000 prisoners, 3,718 guns, and 886 tanks in the liquidation of the Kiev pocket. The five armies of the Southwest Front were practically destroyed, and for the time being Budenny was without an effective fighting force. For the Russians the only thing on the credit side of the ledger was that the great battle kept the Germans occupied for a month and

provided time for strengthening the defenses deeper in the interior and for completing the evacuation of vital industrial personnel and equipment. Fortunately for the Germans, the enemy had been comparatively inactive in other sectors of the front while so much German strength was committed in the Kiev area. The Russians had assumed a more passive role even around Smolensk, while bringing up reinforcements and strengthening the defenses in front of Moscow. Guderian's left flank had been particularly vulnerable during his drive to the south, but no major counterattacks had developed against it.

During the latter half of September the Sixth Army completed the mopping-up of the Kiev pocket and by the 29th had started moving eastward to take up its position on the north flank of Rundstedt's army group. At the same time the Seventeenth Army made slow progress toward Kharkov. It captured the historic city of Poltava* on the 19th, but bad weather retarded its advance beyond that point. By the 22d the situation in the pocket had been sufficiently cleared up for both Guderian and Kleist to start moving their panzer units out of the area. While Guderian moved north, Kleist attacked to the southeast toward the Germans' Dniepropetrovsk bridgehead. By the end of the month he had reached this bridgehead and was preparing to advance to the south against a strong enemy force that had been built up on the Eleventh Army's east flank.

The Germans listed their total casualties up to the end of September as 551,000.** Although far greater damage had been inflicted on the Russians, the cost was proportionately much more to the Germans, who lacked Russia's man-power reserves. By the end of September the German units on the Russian front were short 200,000 men, and their only immediate replacements were returnees from hospitals.

* Poltava (Pultowa) was the scene of one of Creasy's *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*. Here King Charles XII of Sweden was defeated by Peter the Great in 1709. The powerful Swedish Kingdom, built by Gustavus Adolphus, then began to crumble before the slowly awakening "Muscovite Empire". As with Napoleon 100 years later and Hitler 130 years after that, Charles XII had entered Russia with a powerful army and had won a series of brilliant tactical victories. But finally, far from his bases, with inadequate lines of communication, and with exhausted troops and insufficient supplies, he was first checked and then destroyed before he could gain a strategic decision.

** Including 116,900 killed, 409,600 wounded, and 24,500 missing.

Considering now the general aspects of the air operations, we find that during the first two or three months of the war in the East the Luftwaffe operated at an intensity that it never equalled in any other campaign, including the campaign in the West and the Battle of Britain. Not only were the usual tactical-support aircraft used to facilitate the rapid advance of the ground forces, but twin-engine fighters and long-range bombers were also employed over the battle area to bomb and strafe the retreating Russians. This use of long-range planes in low-level attacks resulted in heavy losses, because Russian anti-aircraft fire had an intensity and accuracy that surprised the Luftwaffe. But even with the employment of long-range bombers and twin-engine fighters in close-support work, the German Air Force was insufficient to cover all the long lines of communication of the armies. With the Luftwaffe being committed in an offensive role, there was nothing left for defense against the frequent raids of the Red Air Force. In the first month of the campaign the Luftwaffe averaged 2,500 to 3,000 sorties per day, but such activity demanded the maximum exertion from crews and placed a heavy strain on aircraft.

On the other hand, the Red Air Force suffered heavy losses on the ground from sustained Luftwaffe attacks on its airfields. It was also constantly outfought in aerial combat and had to cope with all the attendant difficulties of withdrawals from forward airfields. But, conversely, the Luftwaffe was faced with the problem of moving bases forward to keep within range of the ground forces. As early as August there were signs that it was severely strained as a result of the initial ground operations, which had uncovered such a vast expanse of territory. Speaking of his air support, Kleist said:

At several stages in the advance my panzer forces were handicapped through lack of cover overhead, due to the fighter airfields being too far back. Moreover, such air superiority as we enjoyed during the opening months was local rather than general. We owed it to the superior skill of our airmen, not to a superiority in numbers.*

But the advantage of skill disappeared as the Luftwaffe lost its best pilots and as the Russians gained experience. The Red Air Force learned quickly, and what its personnel lacked in technical skill and training they made up in courage and a will to fight.

* B. H. Liddell Hart, *The German Generals Talk* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1948).

The first German attempt at strategic bombing in the East, an abortive attack on Moscow, is described as follows:

When the Luftwaffe first raided Moscow, on July 21, 1941, one month after the opening of the campaign, it was compelled to replenish its long-range bomber force in the East by drawing on some further 100 Heinkel III's from France. These included experienced fire-raising units who had led the main night attacks on British cities in the raids of the winter of 1940-1941. After an initial night assault by some 200 long-range bombers on Moscow the attacks petered out. Strong fighter opposition en route to the capital, the effective enthusiasm of Moscow's antiaircraft defenses, and the hungry demand by the German Army for the use of the long-range bomber units over the battle areas soon reduced the power of the Luftwaffe attacks. After two or three raids only harassing attacks were made by up to fifty long-range bombers; the attacks on Moscow subsided almost before they had got under way.*

During the summer Russian long-range night attacks on Berlin, East Prussia, Bucharest, and Ploesti (Map 2) proved equally ineffective. Thereafter attempts at strategic bombing by either side were rare.

The three months of intensive warfare in which it had averaged 1,500 to 2,000 sorties a day had seriously depleted the Luftwaffe on the Russian front. The original force of 3,000 aircraft had been reduced to 2,000 by the end of September, and the Germans were so pressed in the air in other theaters that no replacement squadrons were available. In short, the summer's campaigns had imposed such a severe strain on the Luftwaffe that by October the signs of deterioration were becoming apparent: low serviceability, tired crews, inaccurate close-support work, and a shortage of replacement aircraft.

Clearing the Ukraine and the Crimea (Map 4).—Before continuing with the final major German offensive of the 1941 campaign, the Battle of Moscow, let us follow Rundstedt's fall operations in the south. The campaign to clear the rest of the Ukraine had actually begun during the Kiev encirclement. The Eleventh Army's bridgehead east of Kherson, which had been established on 30 August, was steadily enlarged during the next two weeks as the Russians withdrew. By 14 September Manstein** had reached Perekop, where two Russian divisions were covering the isthmus to the Crimea, and was pushing on toward the Sea of Azov. At that time the Eleventh

* Asher Lee, *The German Air Force* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1946).

** Lieutenant General Fritz-Erich von Manstein had assumed command of the Eleventh Army after Schobert was killed in an accident on 12 September.

Army had one panzer, two mountain, and six infantry divisions across the Dnieper. On 26 September the Eleventh Army broke through some of the defenses on the Perekop isthmus but was unable to breach the last of the defensive lines covering the Crimea. Further progress in that direction was then temporarily delayed, since much of the artillery had to be rushed to Manstein's eastern sector, where strong Russian counterattacks had breached his lines. Back in the rear the Rumanians had made no progress toward capturing Odessa.

In the rest of Rundstedt's zone there was also activity. By 2 October the Kiev pocket had been cleaned up, the armies had completed their regrouping,* and attacks were underway toward the Donets bend, Kharkov, and Kursk (Map 5a). The Russians had not recovered from the Kiev disaster and offered less resistance to the German advances than before. Budenny was relieved of his field command, Timoshenko assumed control of the Southwest Front, and General Georgii K. Zhukov took over the West Front, covering Moscow. A general withdrawal toward the Don River took place between Kursk and Kharkov, although Kharkov itself was defended stubbornly. As the Germans rushed farther to the east, Russian air opposition became much stronger, particularly north of the Sea of Azov.

The First Panzer Army spearheaded Rundstedt's attack, breaking out into the Donets basin on 4 October. By the 6th Kleist and Manstein had encircled the few Russians remaining west of Mariupol, and on the 8th a panzer division captured that city. This eliminated the pressure on the Eleventh Army's eastern flank and permitted it to regroup for the drive into the Crimea. The Seventeenth Army moved down the Donets River on Kleist's left, and the Sixth Army advanced to the east on a broad front. On 16 October, just as the Rumanians (reinforced by German troops) were about to launch a new assault on Odessa, the Russians evacuated that city (Map 5b).**

For a time interest was focused on the Crimea. That autonomous Russian republic had a special strategic importance and had long been one of Hitler's most enticing objectives. The island-like Crimean Peninsula lies in the middle of the Black Sea, and an air

* The First and Second Panzer Groups were raised to the status of armies in October.

** Some of the defenders of Odessa were sent to reinforce the Russians in the Crimea.

force based on its fields can control the maritime trade routes across that sea. Furthermore, Russian planes based in the Crimea had already made harassing raids on the Rumanian oil fields, one of the most sensitive points of the German war economy.

On 29 October Manstein stormed the last defenses on the Perekop isthmus with seven German divisions. Two days later he had broken through to capture Simferopol, the capital of the Crimea. The Russians withdrew toward Sevastopol and into the Kerch Peninsula. With the fall of Kerch on 15 November Manstein was able to concentrate his army for the assault of Sevastopol, the great Russian naval base that the German press termed "the strongest single fortress of the world." Russian attempts to relieve the besieged fortress failed,* but they kept the Eleventh Army so busy that from December until May there was a lull in the operations against Sevastopol.

Although seven Russian armies were identified opposite Rundstedt's front, the Germans estimated that, on 20 October, their Sixth Army was actively opposed by only three divisions between Kursk and Kharkov, the Seventeenth Army by a like number between Kharkov and Stalino, and the First Panzer Army by two divisions in front of Rostov. Kharkov fell to the Sixth Army on 24 October and Kursk to the Second Army (Army Group Center) on 2 November. The First Panzer Army crossed the Mius River and reached the outskirts of Rostov.

Although a rare opportunity existed to launch a general pursuit of these weak and disorganized enemy forces, the exhausted Germans were unable to take advantage of the situation. Heavy autumn rains mired down their mechanized equipment, bad roads hampered troop and supply movements, and the Fourth Air Force was already far overextended. The Donets basin, one of Russia's greatest industrial areas, had been evacuated; and the Soviets had ruthlessly applied the scorched-earth policy to its resources.

* Taking advantage of Russian control of the Black Sea, in the latter half of December powerful Red Army forces were landed simultaneously in several places on the Crimean Peninsula. The city of Kerch was recaptured, as well as the towns of Eupatoria and Feodosia. For a time the entire German position in the Crimea appeared to be threatened. All German reserves had to be thrown toward Feodosia and Eupatoria, which were not cleared until January. In consequence, the German forces attacking Sevastopol had to be withdrawn to their blockading lines some miles in front of the outer Russian fortified lines. The Russians held the Kerch Peninsula until May and conducted active guerrilla operations against the Germans. These operations are shown on Map 7.

The Donets River proved to be the limit of the German 1941 offensive in the south, but in reaching it they had conquered the rich Ukraine.

The Battle of Moscow (Map 5a).—In September Hitler reversed his August decision, which was that the main effort be made in the south. Anticipating the annihilation of the Russian divisions of the Southwest Front in the Kiev encirclement, he believed that Rundstedt could continue the offensive toward the Caucasus unaided by troops from the center. In the north the Leningrad stalemate would permit the withdrawal of the Fourth Panzer Group for use elsewhere. Accordingly, the original OKH plan for the main effort toward Moscow was revived after a six-week delay. The campaign which followed, one of the most decisive of the war, came to be known as the Battle of Moscow, although it was actually a series of battles. These great battles, which lasted four months, were fought on a front 250 miles wide and 180 miles deep.

At the beginning of the campaign Bock's armies were grouped along a 480-mile front, from the Valdai Hills to Romny. At that time his army group had been built up to sixty-nine divisions:

	<i>Panzer</i>	<i>Motorized</i>	<i>Infantry</i>	<i>Total</i>
Ninth Army (Strauss)			11	11
Third Panzer Group (Reinhardt) ^(a) ..	3	2	7	12
Fourth Army (Kluge)			11	11
Fourth Panzer Group (Hoepfner) ..	6	1	4	11
Second Army (Weichs)			8	8
Second Panzer Army (Guderian) ...	5	4	7	16
	—	—	—	—
Total divisions	14	7	48	69

^(a) On 5 October General Hoth assumed command of the Seventeenth Army and was replaced in command of the Third Panzer Group by General Reinhardt.

At the same time Leeb had twenty-six divisions (two panzer, two motorized, and twenty-two infantry*) in his Army Group North, and Rundstedt had fifty-five divisions (four panzer, one motorized, and fifty infantry or mountain**) in his Army Group South. Bock estimated that he was opposed by about twelve active or reserve armies of some ninety understrength divisions in Zhukov's West Front. The Germans placed the total Russian strength at 177 divisions, with an effective combat equivalent of 83 divisions.

* Including one Spanish division.

** Including three Italian and twelve Rumanian divisions and five Hungarian brigades.

The German plan was to annihilate the enemy in front of Moscow by a double envelopment, the two arms of which would converge on Viasma. The northern enveloping arm would consist of the Third Panzer Group and the Ninth Army; the southern arm would have the Fourth Panzer Group and the Fourth Army. After their juncture at Viasma these forces would be prepared to pursue the enemy toward Moscow on a front bounded on the left by the upper Volga and on the right by the Oka. The plan also provided that as soon as the Second Panzer Army (Guderian) could disengage from the Kiev battle it would move north and attack on the axis Gluchoff-Orel, thus possibly forming an outer arc of the Viasma envelopment. It would then join in the final assault on Moscow. Guderian actually began his attack to the northeast on 30 September, and by 2 October he had already made some progress toward Orel.

Kesselring's Second Air Force, which was to provide the air support, had been built up to some 1,500 planes, including the dive-bombers of the VIII Air Corps.* The ground troops were tired after the summer campaigns, and personnel replacements were behind schedule; but the morale of the German soldiers was still high. The panzer divisions were in the poorest condition, since they needed more time for overhauling or replacing their worn tanks; but it was hoped the tanks would hold together for this "last" battle.** In general, the supply situation was satisfactory. Time was the important factor, since the Russian winter was approaching; the attack had to be launched immediately regardless of other considerations. On 24 September a conference was held at Smolensk that was attended by Brauchitsch, Halder, Bock, Kesselring, and the army and panzer group commanders. The final plans for Operation Teifun, as it was designated, were discussed and approved.

The Viasma and Bryansk Encirclements.—Hitler indicated the importance of the coming battle when he announced in an order of the day on 2 October: "At last the preliminary conditions have been achieved to enable us to carry out the final powerful blow which is going to lead to the annihilation of the enemy before winter.

* Early in October the Germans estimated that the Russians had about 680 fighters and 170 bombers on the central front.

** A report on the condition of the tanks in all the panzer divisions on 1 October indicated that the Second Panzer Army was at only 50 per cent of normal combat strength. The others were at 70 to 80 per cent of normal efficiency. The Fourth Panzer Group was in the best condition, having four divisions at full strength.

Already all preparations humanly realizable have been concluded. Today begins the last, the great battle of this year".* The progress of operations during the first week was recorded by General Halder in his diary:

(2 October) Favored by sparkling fall weather, Army Group Center opened the Teifun offensive today at 0530. Whereas Guderian had been gaining ground despite the handicap on his lagging right wing, the attacks of the other armies and panzer groups by noon had carried the advances only between six and twelve kilometers. In some sectors the enemy is retreating in great disorder.

(3 October) The Teifun front is making cheering progress. Guderian has reached Orel. Enemy resistance has been broken on the entire front, except in the sector of Second Army. The panzer divisions have carried their penetrations as far as fifty kilometers, the infantry divisions theirs as far as forty kilometers into enemy territory. The enemy is hanging on and defending himself as well as he can. Even reserves have been brought forward to the front. Nowhere are there any signs of deliberate disengagement.

(4 October) Operation Teifun is developing on a truly classic pattern. Guderian has reached beyond Orel and is now pushing into completely empty spaces. Hoepfner has broken through the enemy position and Hoth has pushed to [the upper Dnieper] and has gained elbow room to the north. The enemy is holding all parts of the front not under direct attack, a policy that bodes well for the encirclement of pockets.

Bock issues an order to Guderian directing him to seize the road Orel-Bryansk, to secure his line of communication, and to capture Mtsensk and the crossing at Byelev. For the rest he would have to undertake all preparations enabling him to continue his advances on both banks of the Oka River.

(5 October) The battle of Army Group Center continues along its truly classic course. Guderian is on the Orel-Bryansk highway. Enemy forces committed against his left wing have been beaten back and will eventually be encircled together with the rest. Second Army is advancing rapidly on its northern wing, meeting almost no resistance. Hoepfner is driving on Viasma, turning the big marshes to the west and east. His right wing, followed by the panzer corps of the reserve, which has not been committed so far, has no enemy before it any longer. Fourth Army is swinging north. Enemy resistance varies according to locality and unit. It is quite evident that the enemy wants to make a stand but cannot. Ninth Army has harder going. Panzer Group Three, after being held up by lack of fuel, will not start moving again until this afternoon. The infantry is closing up with magnificent speed, so that we may expect that enemy resistance, which is partly stubborn and evidently skillfully directed, will soon be broken. From the front fac-

* Guillaume, *Soviet Arms and Soviet Power*.

ing the northern wing of Ninth Army, which does not participate in the attack, the enemy is drawing all available forces to the south, against the northern wing of the offensive.

(6 October) Guderian's panzer army has come under heavy attack from the northeast on its way from Orel to Tula. Elsewhere on its right flank the enemy has remained curiously quiet, and so it was possible to bring up the lagging elements on the right and to move the infantry divisions to the right wing. One panzer division has succeeded in isolating Bryansk from the east. Although the division has no contact yet with Second Army, converging toward it from the west, we can be sure that the capture of Bryansk will not only within a short time secure for Guderian the essential supply road Roslavl-Bryansk-Orel, but also cause the enemy facing Second Army, who is already crumbling at some points, to split in two and so make it all the easier for us to liquidate him in local pockets.

Fourth Army and Fourth Panzer Group are swinging northward unchecked. Signs of enemy demoralization. Hoepfner's right wing and the left wing of Second Army have no major enemy forces in front of them and are advancing on and beyond Juchnoff.

Ninth Army and Third Panzer Group are now clean through the second line of enemy positions and have reached the motor highway north of Viasma. Ninth Army has gained elbow room also toward Rzhev. All in all, it can be said that the battle of encirclement conducted by Army Group Center is approaching its climax, i.e., the closing of the pocket.

(7 October) Second Panzer Army is hampered in its movements by bad weather. On its southern wing it will have to push one infantry corps on Kursk (but not farther for the time being). With one corps it is now advancing on the Tula axis. Capture of Bryansk and encircling of the enemy elements opposite Second Army from the east may yet give them a good deal of trouble.

Second Army will assume control of all units committed for the encirclement of the enemy at Bryansk, with the exception of armor.

Fourth Army has no more major enemy forces before its right wing, which has been reinforced by the left wing of Second Army. This group, which will be strengthened by a strong panzer combat team from the reserve corps of Hoepfner's group, will move on Kaluga.

Hoepfner linked up with Hoth at Viasma this morning. A brilliant success after a five-day battle. Next thing to be done is to push the infantry of Fourth Army sharply on Viasma to free Hoepfner at the earliest for the drive against the southeastern front of Moscow.

Ninth Army has gained elbow room in the direction of Rzhev and is already covering its wing swinging on Viasma with infantry both northeast and east. This is a magnificent feat of the troops and a demonstration of sure leadership. Toward evening it becomes apparent that the enemy is falling back before the northern wing of Ninth Army. Presumably he is retreating to the defense line Rzhev-Valdai Lakes district.

(8 October) Still no pressure on Guderian's eastern flank. The western flank is under attack but is covered. Advance beyond the Orel-Bryansk highway is delayed by bad weather but is being prepared. North of the highway enemy elements are retreating eastward and northeastward. Here, then, is the hole in the big encircling system. Pocket at Viasma is ringed and secured against attacks from the outside. Strong elements of the right wing of Fourth Army have already made great strides in the direction of Kaluga. Ninth Army is covering itself with comfortably strong forces in the direction of Rzhev and to the east, so that the danger of any attack on the flanks and into the rear is now dispelled.

In six days the Germans had completed another great encirclement at Viasma, and the Wehrmacht was once more rolling relentlessly toward Moscow. The dotted line on the map shows the general situation on 7 October.

During the next week the ring was tightened around Viasma and closed around the Bryansk pocket. The Germans announced the capture of 600,000 more Russians. Momentarily it looked as though Bock at last had a clear road to Moscow. But it took time to liquidate the enemy in the rear and regroup for the next phase of the campaign. By mid-October the Third Panzer Group had pushed its spearhead northeast to Kalinin on the Volga, and the Ninth Army had secured the army group's left flank by capturing Rzhev and establishing a strong northern front. Kluge had reached Kaluga on the Oka and was approaching Moshaisk, sixty miles from Moscow. Guderian was moving toward Tula in spite of mounting pressure on his long right flank.

But the isolated Russians in the rear were not cleaned out until late October, and in the meantime the heavy autumn rains impeded the entire pursuit operation. Again the problem of supply dominated the situation, the advance of the combat troops depending on the ability of the overworked railroads to provide the essential ammunition, fuel, and rations. Until freezing weather hardened the ground, the difficulties caused by the mud could not be overcome. The capability of supplying forward units by air transport had already been exhausted. Concentrations of Russian aircraft around Moscow became more menacing.

For the next month, from 15 October to 15 November, progress was slow along the entire central front (**Map 5b**). The swampy and heavily forested terrain channeled the advance of the German tanks into the highways that converge on Moscow. But these routes were barred by antitank ditches, mine fields, and field fortifications that had been hastily prepared by the civilian population

of Moscow, mobilized for the defense of the city by the Communist Party leaders. The Red Army conducted its desperate defense on successive lines, and the German attack advanced only a few miles a day.

By 15 November Kluge's Fourth Army had passed through Mozhaisk and had come within forty miles of Moscow, but there he was halted by the impenetrable defensive line of the Nara and Oka Rivers. Farther south Guderian's Second Panzer Army reached Tula with his battered tanks while the Second Army moved across his rear to cover his vulnerable right flank and capture Kursk.

The chief of staff of the Fourth Army, General Blumentritt, summarized the development of the first phase of the Battle of Moscow:

The first phase was the battle of encirclement around Viasma. This time the encirclement was perfectly complete, and 600,000 Russians were captured. It was a modern Cannae—on a greater scale. The panzer groups played a big part in this victory. The Russians were caught napping, as they did not expect a big drive for Moscow to be launched at such a late date. But it was too late in the year for us to harvest its fruits—for the operation was not completed until the end of October.

After the Russian forces had been rounded up, we pushed on toward Moscow. There was little opposition for the moment, but the advance was slow—for the mud was awful and the troops were tired. Moreover, they met a well-prepared defensive position on the Nara River, where they were held up by the arrival of fresh Russian forces.

All the commanders were now asking, "When are we going to stop?" They remembered what had happened to Napoleon's army. Many of them began to reread Caulaincourt's grim account of 1812. That book had a weighty influence at this critical time in 1941. I can still see von Kluge trudging through the mud from his sleeping quarters to his office and there standing before the map with Caulaincourt's book in his hand. That went on day after day.

The troops themselves were less depressed than their generals. They could see the flashes of the antiaircraft guns over Moscow at night, and it fired their imagination—the city seemed so near. They also felt that they would find shelter there from the bitter weather. But the commanders felt that they were not strong enough to push those last forty miles.

The generals expressed their doubts in conference, but Hitler overruled them; and Bock tended to agree with him. Hitler said he had good reason to believe that Russian resistance was on the verge of collapse. He gave the order for a final attempt to take Moscow. The order said that the Kremlin was to be blown up, to signalize the overthrow of Bolshevism.*

* Hart, *The German Generals Talk*.

In the meantime Army Group North had some success when Leeb launched an attack across the Volkov River in an attempt to link up with the Finns east of Lake Ladoga and seal the ring around Leningrad by cutting the last Russian lines of communication to the south shore of the lake. On 13 November the Sixteenth Army captured Tichwin, but this marked the limit of German advance in the Lake Ladoga area.

The Final Drive on Moscow (Map 6).—The last attempt to capture Moscow was to consist of another double envelopment coordinated with a frontal attack by the Fourth Army. The Fourth Panzer Group, protected on its left by elements of the Third Panzer Group, would form the northern enveloping arm. The Second Panzer Army would form the southern arm and attack from Tula toward Kalomna. The whole attack was to be directed by Kluge.

Supported by 3,000 pieces of artillery, the Germans attacked on 16 November. Pressing forward slowly, the northern forces reached the Volga–Moscow Canal on 25 November, where heavy fighting developed. On the right Guderian, unable to capture Tula, by-passed it on the east. Although in a very vulnerable position, with both flanks exposed, he pressed on toward Moscow. As the enveloping forces converged, they met stronger and stronger anti-tank units, which were equipped with guns that had just come from the factories. The Russian gunners would hold their fire until point-blank range insured the destruction of a German tank.* For the first time in the war the Luftwaffe was completely dominated by the Red Air Force. Soviet Yak fighters proved at least the equal of the Messerschmidts, and under fighter protection the Stormovik bombers attacked the German columns from low altitudes.** Intense night bombardments harrassed vehicle columns on the congested roads. Severe winter weather, with snow and temperatures of minus 40° C., punished the ill-equipped German soldiers.

A last effort was made on 2 December when Kluge launched a final assault, but this proved to be an abortive attack by exhausted troops that soon failed. Blumentritt gives an eye-witness account of the last German attacks on Moscow:

The offensive was opened on 16 November by Hoepfner's panzer group on the left. Its progress was slow, in face of mud and strong Russian counterattacks. Our losses were heavy. The weather then

* During this stage of the battle one antitank regiment destroyed 189 German tanks. Another regiment knocked out 22 tanks in one day, 24 November.

** The Russian Air Force claimed that it destroyed more than 400 tanks during one ten-day period in November.

turned adverse, with snow falling on the swampy ground. The Russians made repeated counterattacks from the flank across the frozen Moskva, and Hoepfner had to divert more and more of his strength to check these thrusts. The 2d Panzer Division succeeded in penetrating far enough to get a sight of the Kremlin, but that was the nearest it came.

These unpromising conditions raised the question whether the Fourth Army should join in the offensive or not. Night after night Hoepfner came through on the telephone to urge this course; night after night von Kluge and I sat up late discussing whether it would be wise or not to agree to his insistence. Von Kluge decided that he would gain the opinion of the front-line troops themselves—he was a very energetic and active commander who liked to be up among the fighting troops—so he visited the forward posts and consulted the junior officers and N.C.O.'s. The troop leaders believed they could reach Moscow and were eager to try. So after five or six days of discussion and investigation von Kluge decided to make a final effort with the Fourth Army. The snow was thick on the ground, and the earth was frozen to a depth of several inches. The hardness of the ground was more favorable for artillery movement than if it had been otherwise.

The attack was launched on 2 December, but by afternoon reports were coming back that it was held up by strong Russian defenses in the forests around Moscow. The Russians were artists in forest fighting, and their defense was helped by the fact that darkness came as early as 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

A few parties of our troops, from the 248th Infantry Division, actually got into the suburbs of Moscow; but the Russian workers poured out of the factories and fought with their hammers and other tools in defense of their city.

During the night the Russians strongly counterattacked the isolated elements that had penetrated their defenses. Next day our corps commanders reported that they thought it was no longer possible to break through. Von Kluge and I had a long discussion that evening, and at the end he decided to withdraw these advanced troops. Fortunately the Russians did not discover that they were moving back, so that we succeeded in extricating them and bringing them back to their original position in fairly good order. But there had been very heavy casualties in those two days' fighting.

The decision was just in time to avert the worst consequences of the general counteroffensive that the Russians now unleashed, into which Marshal Zhukov threw a hundred divisions. Under their converging pressure our position became daily more dangerous. Hitler was at last brought to realize that we could not check them and gave reluctant permission for a short withdrawal to a line in rear. We had been badly misled about the quantity of reinforcements that the Russians could produce. They had hidden their resources all too well.*

* Hart, *The German Generals Talk*.

On 5 December the Germans reached the limit of their penetration in the Moscow sector. The broken phase line on the map shows the front on 2 October, the day the Battle of Moscow began. In two months they had advanced a hundred miles nearer the Russian capital, but they were unable to gain the last few miles.* The situation around Moscow on 5 December is shown on the inset map.

Just as the course of World War I was turned on the Marne in September 1914, so the course of World War II was changed on the Nara in December 1941. Hitler's panzer divisions were no longer invincible. After two years of war and an unbroken series of victorious campaigns in which it overran the continent of Europe, the Wehrmacht had finally been stopped by the defenses of Moscow. The latent power of the Red Army, the stubborn and stoic will to resist of the Russian people, the insuperable vastness and ruggedness of the Russian terrain, and the cruelty of the Russian winter had broken, at least temporarily, the relentless tide of German aggression. The Battle of Moscow continued with unabated fury; but the scales of war had turned, and during the next two months the Germans were to try desperately to salvage what they could of their once proud Army.

THE RUSSIAN WINTER COUNTEROFFENSIVE OF 1942.

During the first five months of the war the Russian High Command failed to produce any brilliant tactical developments to cheer the Allies, but Stalin had been resolutely marshaling all the forces of the Soviet State against the invader. One field of early Russian resistance was the development of partisan activities behind the German lines. Such activities were in accord with the teachings of Lenin, who believed that the struggle of a people for its independence must not be limited to classic military organizations and methods. In July Stalin ordered:

In territories occupied by the enemy we must organize units of sharpshooters on horseback and afoot, as well as groups of partisans, to fight the enemy units, to take up guerrilla war everywhere, to blow up bridges and roads, to cut telephone and telegraph lines, to burn woods, supply depots, and foodstuffs.**

Hitler had directed a ruthless treatment of conquered civilians to eliminate such action; but this only kindled in the Russians a keener hatred of the invaders and a stronger determination to unite, despite political beliefs, to resist them.

* They placed their casualties during this period at 224,000.

** Guillaume, *Soviet Arms and Soviet Power*.

Another significant development of the first months of the war in eastern Europe was the beginning of cooperation between the Western Allies and Russia. Although our relations had been strained during the period of the Russo-German nonaggression pact, the German invasion changed things completely. If Russia could resist the invasion, the immediate strain on Great Britain would be much lighter; but if she should fall, then Britain and the United States would be left in a serious situation. Foreseeing the importance of keeping Russia in the war, President Roosevelt sent his personal envoy, Mr. Harry Hopkins, to Moscow in August 1941 to offer what material aid and moral support he could.

Mr. Hopkins had several personal conferences with Stalin. His report to the President told much about how the Russians were meeting the German invaders:

He [Stalin] said that in the battle now [August] in progress, very many Russian and German troops are fighting far forward from their respective lines because of the advance made by both sides with their mechanized forces. Stalin said that his soldiers did not consider the battle lost merely because the Germans at one point and another broke through with their mechanized forces . . . The Russians have many "insurgent" troops which operate behind the Germans' so-called front line. They constantly attack German aerodromes and lines of communication. The Russians are more familiar with the terrain and know how to use the natural cover which nature has provided better than the Germans. These "insurgent" troops are proving a great menace to the German offensive.

Hopkins also learned something of the potentialities and morale of the Red Army:

Stalin said that the Russian Army had been confronted with a surprise attack; he himself believed that Hitler would not strike, but he took all precautions possible to mobilize his Army. Hitler made no demands on Russia; hence they were forced to organize a defensive line of battle . . .

Mr. Stalin stated that he can mobilize 350 divisions and will have that many divisions under arms by the time the spring campaign begins in May 1942.

He is anxious to have as many of his divisions as possible in contact with the enemy, because then the troops learn that Germans can be killed and are not supermen. This gives his divisions the same kind of confidence that a pilot gets after his first combat in the air. Stalin said that "nothing in warfare can take the place of actual combat," and he wants to have as many seasoned troops as possible for the great campaign which will come next spring. He stated that the German troops seemed to be tired, and the officers and men that they had captured had indicated they are "sick of war" . . .

Hopkins' report concluded with a personal message from Stalin:

Finally, he asked me to tell the President that, while he was confident that the Russian Army could withstand the German Army, the problem of supply by next spring would be a serious one and that he needed our help.*

Stalin listed his greatest needs, in order of priority, as light anti-aircraft guns, aluminum for the manufacture of aircraft, 50-caliber machine guns, and 30-caliber rifles.

The Hopkins visit was revealing in that he found the Red Army stronger than commonly believed. The diversion of our resources to Russia would be a risk but not a hopeless one. Thereafter an important element of Anglo-American strategy was to keep Russia in the war. One observation that was to be verified in the years to come was that the Russians were difficult to do business with. Mr. Hopkins said, "There is literally no one in the whole Government who is willing to give any important information other than Mr. Stalin himself."

Later Lord Beaverbrook and Mr. Harriman went to Moscow and on 1 October 1941 signed the first protocol with Molotov. This officially joined the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union in the lend-lease program. The list of our new ally's needs contained over seventy main items—from tanks, planes, and destroyers down to Army boots (of which the Russians asked for 400,000 pairs monthly). However, the critical strategic situation that the Western Allies faced in 1942 limited for many months the quantities of equipment and materials that we could ship to Russia.

As far as the general strategic situation was concerned, the first week of December 1941 was a dark period for the Allies. Should Russia collapse under the pressure of the Germans converging on Moscow, Britain alone would be left to face Hitler. Then the disaster of Pearl Harbor temporarily stunned the United States in the Pacific while Japan ran rampant. Only in North Africa, where General Auchinleck was driving Rommel back to El Agheila, were the Allies meeting with any success. But, on the other hand, Pearl Harbor finally and irrevocably committed the United States to the war against the Axis. Our active participation had long been Britain's greatest hope—and one of Hitler's greatest fears. And in Russia it suddenly developed that, contrary to outward appear-

* Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948).

ances, the Red Army was far from the brink of destruction. As the year ended, Stalin was reviving the morale of the Allied world with a general Russian counteroffensive that gradually began to roll the Wehrmacht back over the frozen wastes of the eastern front.

The Russian counteroffensive actually began in the south in late November. The First Panzer Army had reached Rostov on 23 November, but it had exhausted its fuel in plowing through the mud of the Ukraine. The glamor of attaining the "gateway to the Caucasus" led Hitler to insist on holding that exposed position despite Rundstedt's protests. Within a week Timoshenko launched strong counterattacks from the north and from across the frozen Don River and threw the enemy back to the Mius. For a time the German situation was grave, but they finally managed to organize a defensive position that held against diminishing Russian attacks. Field Marshal Rundstedt described his situation as follows:

After accomplishing my first objective, which was the encirclement and destruction of the enemy forces west of the Dnieper, I was given my second objective. It was to advance eastward and take Maikop and Stalingrad. We laughed aloud when we received these orders, for winter had already come and we were almost 700 kilometers away from these cities. Hitler thought that with the frost making the roads hard we could advance toward Stalingrad very quickly. At the same time I was told to advance towards Maikop because oil was urgently needed, and I was also expected to clean up the Crimea in order to deprive the Russians of their airfields in this area. With my forces split in these three drives, we nevertheless managed to get a tank force as far east as Rostov. This meant that I had a terribly long left flank with nothing to protect it. The Russians attacked at Rostov and from the north and south about the end of November; and, realizing that I couldn't hold the city, I ordered it to be evacuated. I had previously asked for permission to withdraw this extended armored spearhead to the Mius River, about 100 kilometers west of Rostov. I was told that I could do this; and we began to withdraw very slowly, fighting all the way. Suddenly an order came to me from the Führer: "Remain where you are, and retreat no further", it said. I immediately wired back: "It is madness to attempt 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. I repeat that this order be rescinded or that you find someone else." That same night the Führer's reply arrived: "I am acceding to your request," it read, "please give up your command." I then went home.*

Soon afterwards Hitler flew down to the Ukraine and, after seeing the situation, authorized the withdrawal. But in the meantime he

* Shulman, *Defeat in the West*.

had temporarily lost one of his best field commanders, and the Germans had suffered their first major tactical defeat of the campaign.

The reverse at Rostov was soon followed by much more serious developments in the Moscow sector (Map 7). In spite of the brilliant German tactical victories during the summer and fall, the advantage had finally shifted to the Russians. They were operating close to their bases and on interior lines—the best railroad net in Russia radiates from Moscow. The Germans were hundreds of miles from their main bases, and their lines of communication were overworked and harassed by guerrillas. The Russians had mobilized sufficient divisions around Moscow to give strength to their attacks, while the Germans had committed their last reserves and had no depth to their positions. The Russians were acclimated and equipped for winter fighting, while many Germans were still in summer uniforms. The Russians were defending their homes and fighting on familiar terrain, but the Germans were in a strange and distant land. Perhaps most important was the morale of the troops. The Russians were encouraged by their success in stopping the enemy and by the knowledge that he was not invincible, while the Germans were worn out by the long months of fighting and were haunted by the memories of other invaders who had perished during the Russian winters.

The arrival of the exhausted Germans at the outskirts of Moscow was the signal for Stalin to launch his counteroffensive, which began on 6 December. Three fresh armies, which included several Siberian and cavalry divisions, had arrived to tip the scales in his favor. Initially two armies struck the northern enveloping wing of the Germans while another army struck the salient south of Moscow. The German panzer spearheads, attacked in flank and rear and under heavy artillery fire and air attacks, withdrew with the greatest difficulty and with the loss of 1,500 tanks.

By Christmas the enveloping wings that had threatened Moscow had been driven back, and Army Group Center was generally back to the position it had held prior to its final offensive. The experience of the Fourth Army illustrates the troubles that beset the Germans. After that army had been temporarily isolated north of Kaluga, Hitler had authorized a limited withdrawal to a position which it eventually reached and held throughout the rest of the campaign. The army commander described some of his difficulties:

The Fourth Army became isolated in its forward position and in imminent danger of encirclement. The rivers were all frozen, so that they provided an inadequate barrier against the Russian thrusts. Soon the danger became acute, for a Russian cavalry

corps pressed round our right flank well to the rear of it. This corps was composed of horse cavalry and sledge-borne infantry, while roping in all the men from the recaptured villages who were capable of carrying a rifle . . .

The situation remained very precarious, for Hitler still delayed a decision; and it was not until 4 January that he at last sanctioned the general withdrawal to the Ugra. . . The roads were so deep in snow that the horses were up to their bellies. When the divisions withdrew, part of the troops had to shovel a path by day along the route their transport was to move by night.*

By mid-January the tactical defeats of the Germans threatened to develop into a strategic disaster. Southwest of Kaluga the enemy forced a wedge between the Second Panzer and Fourth Armies, and a heavy attack by four Russian armies between Cholm and Rzhev threatened to separate the Center and Northern Army Groups. Should these Russian drives succeed in breaking through toward Smolensk, they might complete the encirclement of the Ninth, Fourth Panzer, and Fourth Armies in the Rzhev-Kaluga-Smolensk triangle. Against the advice of his generals, who since the beginning of winter had wanted to withdraw to a strong defensive position in the rear, Hitler directed his armies to stand in place.**

This proved to be the major decision of the campaign. Since the Germans were not strong enough to hold a continuous front, they had to defend themselves by establishing large strong points around the key communications centers. By denying these important areas to the enemy his advance would be difficult, and providing the troops to contain the German strong points would so dissipate the Russians' strength that their main penetrations would be unable to achieve strategic results. In their isolated positions the German armies "rolled up like hedgehogs" to protect themselves from attacks from any direction. The extensive use of field fortifications, the employment of their heavy weapons around the perimeter, and the use of available mobile forces to counterattack local penetrations enabled the Germans to hold these hedgehogs. Sometimes

* Hart, *The German Generals Talk*.

** For example, his order to Army Group Center stated:

Large-scale withdrawals cannot be undertaken, as they would lead to the complete loss of heavy weapons and equipment. Army commanders [and] all unit commanders and officers must, risking their own lives, compel the troops to fanatical resistance in their positions, regardless of enemy breakthroughs at the flanks or in the rear. Only such fighting will gain the time necessary to bring up from Germany and the West the reinforcements which I have ordered.

they were completely cut off, but they managed to survive during the winter.

In late January and February the battle became particularly severe between Lake Ilmen and Rzhev, where the Russians succeeded in opening a wide gap in the German line. Partisan activity was increased, and air landings were made behind the German Ninth and Fourth Armies. But the winter weather that was so disastrous for the Germans also restricted the operations of the Russians, who had not fully recovered from their losses of the summer and had not yet been able to develop a strong, coordinated military force. By holding the hedgehogs of Staraya Russa, Demyansk,* Cholm, Velikie-Luki, Vitbesk, Smolensk, Rzhev, Viasma, Orel, and Kursk the Germans prevented a strategic breakthrough to the vital Minsk-Smolensk line of communication. It was a life-or-death struggle for Hitler's armies, but by the end of February the situation was becoming stabilized. If the Russians had possessed the leadership and military skill in December 1941 that they acquired by 1943, the war might possibly have ended then and there. But respect for the skill of the German Army kept the Russian generals from pressing home their final blow, and the Germans managed to rally their forces.

In the meantime the Russian offensive had not been restricted to the central front. In December they counterattacked the enemy around Tichwin, on the northern front, and before the end of the month had succeeded in forcing the Sixteenth Army to withdraw behind the Volkov River. This reopened their communications to the south shore of Lake Ladoga and Leningrad, but the Germans managed to hold their Volkov and Leningrad fronts in spite of dangerous Russian penetrations. In the south the chief Russian success was scored at the end of January when they launched a heavy attack across the Donetz River at Izyum. Three Russian armies poured through the gap between the Sixth and Seventeenth Armies and drove over half way to Dniepropetrovsk and the main German bridges across the Dnieper. For a time the Seventeenth and First Panzer Armies were threatened with being cut off; but the Germans held the shoulders of the salient and eventually stopped the Russians, who failed to exploit their breakthrough.

During the winter the Russians reorganized and expanded their forces until they had eight army groups at the front, as shown on the map. The Germans made only minor changes in their organiza-

* At Demyansk the II Corps of the Sixteenth Army was completely isolated for about two months.

tion: the Third Panzer Army was pulled back to the left of the Ninth Army to hold the nose of the Russian salient around Vitebsk, and the northern boundary of Army Group South was shifted to the north to include the Second Army. By March both Russians and Germans were exhausted. Activity died down along the entire front as spring mud immobilized the troops, and both sides began preparations for their summer offensives. From March to May no major changes occurred on the long battle line.

One other development of the Russian winter counteroffensive of 1942 had far-reaching effects on the war as a whole. This was the reorganization of the German High Command. When the German offensive was stopped in front of Moscow, Hitler made Field Marshal von Brauchitsch the scapegoat and relieved him of his command on 19 December. Hitler then assumed direct command of the Army. The consequence of this action has been described as follows:

Never was a supreme commander more supreme than Hitler in December 1941. As leader of the state, War Minister, chief of the armed forces, and head of the Army, he could now declare war, decide how he was going to wage it, make the plans, and carry them out all by himself. While it undoubtedly shortened the chain of command, it made it rather difficult for Hitler the Führer to dismiss Hitler the Wehrmacht chief when Hitler the Army commander led his forces to disaster.*

This was the mortal stroke against the German general staff. The Wehrmacht ceased to be the well-oiled machine that had produced the great victories of 1939, 1940, and 1941; and instead it became, as far as the High Command was concerned, an army of fear and hatreds. For some time General Halder continued to act as chief of staff of OKH, but he was handicapped by Hitler's constant interference. During the winter all the German army group commanders were changed. In the south Reichenau replaced Rundstedt, in the center Kluge replaced Bock, who was relieved because of sickness, and in the north Kuechler replaced Leeb. Reichenau died in January; and Bock, who had been returned to duty, took command of Army Group South.

COMMENTS (Map 1)

The map shows the German gains—and losses—during the first year of the war with Russia. We have seen that the invasion surprised the Russians and caught them unprepared to meet the German blitzkrieg, which rolled relentlessly eastward in a series of

* Shulman, *Defeat in the West*.

spectacular tactical victories. It looked as though the Soviet Union was on the brink of destruction. It lost its richest and most populated areas, and the Red Army suffered terrific casualties in the German encirclements alone. But in December Operation Barbarossa ground to a halt, still short of its major objectives of Leningrad, Moscow, and the Caucasus oil fields.

For the first time Hitler had failed to gain his strategic aims. The Red Army had not been destroyed nor had the Russian State collapsed. Furthermore, the traditional danger of a two-front war became more real with the entrance of the United States into the conflict and the revival of the military strength of Great Britain. The Germans list the reasons for their failure as follows:

1. Politically, Hitler had underestimated the strength of the Bolshevik system and the will to resist of the Russian people. His ruthless treatment of conquered populations only increased their resistance.

2. Economically, Russia was much stronger than Hitler wanted to believe.

3. Militarily, the Russian troops surprised the Germans by their reckless readiness to fight, by their toughness, and by their ability to improvise in apparently hopeless situations. These qualities balanced out the initial inefficiency of the Russian High Command.

4. The German High Command made the grave mistake of deviating from its initial plan of making the main effort in the center, toward Moscow. In August this main attack was weakened by the diversion of forces to the south, and by the time these forces could return to the center the opportunity to deal the Red Army a death blow had passed.

5. The German Army was insufficiently prepared for the task of invading Russia. Its lack of motorized units handicapped the exploitation of its armored breakthroughs. If sufficient motorized units could have closed up quickly behind the armor, the encirclements might have destroyed the Russians in place; but during the time it took the infantry to close up on foot many Red Army forces managed to escape through the loosely held panzer rings to join the reserves in the rear. The logistical support was not strong enough to avoid frequent halts, which gave defeated Russian armies time to reorganize.

6. Once the Wehrmacht failed to destroy the Red Army on the frontier, it was not strong enough to operate over the vast hostile territory beyond.

7. The severe Russian climate, the difficult terrain, and the lack of communications facilities imposed insurmountable burdens on the Germans.

A popular belief has persisted that the delay imposed on the inauguration of the invasion of Russia by the Balkan campaign and an unusually early and severe winter in 1941 were the decisive factors in the German failure. However, a consideration of the above list discloses that actually the roots of failure lay much deeper.

When Hitler's offensive stalled in December, a war of attrition began in which the Germans were in no manner prepared to compete with the Russians. The Germans admit that their losses became heavy during the winter, both in men and matériel, vast numbers of their troops perishing from the cold. Some divisions in the hedgehogs were reduced to one-third strength, and companies were often down to fifty men. They reported their total casualties as increasing from 775,000 on 10 December 1941 to 1,183,000 on 10 May 1942. The winter also greatly weakened the Luftwaffe, since it had to be used to fly supplies and reinforcements into isolated hedgehogs. It was not trained or equipped for this type work under Russian winter conditions, and as a result the German air transport and heavy bomber groups suffered such severe losses that they never recovered.

On the other hand, most German generals believed that Hitler's decision to stand in place in December was good because it restored the confidence of the troops and avoided a major catastrophe in that black hour. One general said: "At this critical moment the troops were remembering what they had heard about Napoleon's retreat from Moscow and living under the shadow of it. If they had once begun a retreat, it might have turned into a panic flight." But there was also an indirect effect of the decision: its success encouraged Hitler to believe that it could be repeated in other circumstances with equally good results. Hence it marked the birth of his inflexible policy of holding at any cost every bit of captured territory. As we shall see, this policy of inelastic defense was eventually to bleed the Wehrmacht to death.

The Red Army came through the test of the winter stronger than ever, in spite of severe losses. Five more months had been gained for the training of new divisions. The Russians had learned how to destroy the tanks that no opponent had yet been able to stop, and the myth of the invincibility of the Wehrmacht had been destroyed. The senior Russian commanders had gained invaluable experience,

and their raw divisions had been moulded into strong fighting units in the crucible of combat. The odds still favored Hitler, but they were becoming shorter. In February 1942 Stalin declared:

The element of surprise and the unexpected . . . is now entirely exhausted. And it is thus that the inequality of war conditions due to the surprise nature of the German aggression no longer exists. Now, the result of the war will no longer be determined by this accident of surprise but by factors that will make their effect steadily felt: the solidity of the rear, the morale of the army, the number and quality of the divisions, the equipment and organizational capacity of the army cadres.*

THE STALINGRAD CAMPAIGNS (May 1942 to July 1943)

THE GERMAN SUMMER OFFENSIVE OF 1942.

Strategic Considerations (Map 8).—Early in 1942 the German High Command was faced with the major strategic problem of what to do during the coming summer. The Western Allies, hard pressed in the Pacific and North Africa, were not yet a serious threat to Germany; but in Russia the situation was different. Here the German losses could not be fully replaced, and the potential power of the Red Army presented a threat that could not be ignored. Although these unfavorable aspects of the situation were appreciated by the general staff, it had little power to influence Hitler's decisions after the "purge" that followed the miscarriage of the 1941 campaign. Hitler's pressure was too strong for the generals to resist, and the pressure of events was too strong for Hitler. He was compelled to go on and on.

In general, he decided to stabilize his front in the center, to undertake a limited offensive to isolate Leningrad, and to launch his main offensive in the south, toward Stalingrad and the Caucasus Mountains. The over-all plan for the campaign was expressed in a directive issued on 5 April 1942, which was signed by Hitler himself:

The objective is to wipe out the entire defense potential remaining to the Soviets and to cut them off as far as possible from their most important sources of supply.

For this purpose all available forces of Germany and our allies will be brought up. At the same time, however, the occupied terri-

* Guillaume, *Soviet Arms and Soviet Power*.

tories in western and northern Europe, particularly the coasts, must remain adequately protected under all circumstances.

General plan:

In keeping with the original plans for the eastern campaign, it is intended to hold the central part of the front, in the north to bring about the fall of Leningrad and effect a juncture with the Finns by land, and on the southern wing of the Army front to force a breakthrough into the Caucasus area.

Considering the situation at the end of the winter campaign, the forces available, and the transport conditions, this objective can be attained only in several stages.

Therefore to begin with, all available forces are to be combined for the main operation in the southern sector, the objective being to destroy the enemy before the Don in order to gain the oil region in the Caucasian area and to cross the Caucasus Mountains.

As soon as the development of the situation in the encircled area or the release of other adequate forces permits, Leningrad is to be cut off altogether and the Leningrad area is to be captured.

The chief of staff of the Army analyzed the problem from a more conservative viewpoint. Field Marshal Halder doubted that the possibility of annihilating the Red Army really existed, and he questioned whether the weakened German Army should launch a major offensive in 1942 at all. For one thing, the Wehrmacht, with limited resources, was faced by an opponent who still possessed a tremendous reserve. Should Germany attack in the south, it would be necessary to weaken the rest of the front to provide the means for the main offensive. This would force the adoption of a shallow cordon defense in the north and center, a dangerous risk in the face of mounting Russian strength. Even should Hitler succeed in the breakthrough toward Stalingrad, Halder doubted that he would gain a decision because there was nothing to prevent the enemy from withdrawing still deeper into Russia. Should this occur, the Germans would find themselves in an extremely extended and dangerous position, with a front much longer than could possibly be held with their available forces. Halder's proposal, therefore, was to stabilize the eastern front in 1942, undertaking only limited operations designed to eliminate the Russian salients. This would permit a reorganization and rehabilitation of units so that in 1943 Germany could again assume the offensive with an effective army.

But Hitler did not accept this view. He believed that Russia was still staggering under the blows of 1941 and that if Germany did not continue the offensive immediately, the Red Army might recover to such an extent that by 1943 the balance of power would be in doubt. Moreover, Germany should force a decision in the East

in 1942 because by 1943 the threat of invasion from the West might become a reality. Time was therefore working against Germany. Hitler believed that a decision could be reached on the road to Stalingrad because the Russians would commit all their reserves in that direction in an attempt to hold their vital oil fields. Furthermore, if Germany could reach the Caucasus region, its oil would be a prize of decisive significance for the hard-pressed German fuel industry.

The Opposing Forces and German Plan.—After the decision was made to resume the offensive in the East in the summer of 1942, the German forces were reorganized and reinforced so that their greatest power was concentrated in Army Group South. When the campaign began, Axis armies in Russia consisted of the following:

	DIVISIONS				Total
	Panzer	Motorized	Infantry	Satellite	
Army Group North (Kuechler)					
Eighteenth Army (Lindemann) ..	1	1	20	1 ^(a)	23
Sixteenth Army (Busch)	1	1	12	—	14
Total divisions, North	2	2	32	1	37.
Army Group Center (Kluge)					
Reserve	—	—	3	—	3
Third Panzer Army (Reinhardt)	—	—	8	—	8
Ninth Army (Model)	4	2	16	—	22
Fourth Army (Heinrici)	1	1	11	—	13
Second Panzer Army (Schmidt) ..	3	1	9	—	13
Total divisions, Center	8	4	47	—	59
Army Group South (Bock)					
Reserve	—	—	1	8 ^(b)	9
Second Army (Weichs)	—	—	4	2 ^(c)	6
Fourth Panzer Army (Hoth)	3	2	5	—	10
Hungarian Second Army	—	—	1	3 ^(c)	4
Sixth Army (Paulus)	2	1	15	—	18
First Panzer Army (Kleist)	3	1	6	4 ^(d)	14
Seventeenth Army (Ruoff)	1	—	10	6 ^(e)	17
Eleventh Army (Manstein)	—	—	9	6 ^(d)	15
Total divisions, South	9	4	51	29	93
Total divisions, eastern front ..	19	10	130	30	189

(^a) Spanish; (^b) Hungarian and Italian; (^c) Hungarian; (^d) Rumanian; (^e) Rumanian and Italian.

In addition, Germany had four divisions in the Balkans, three in North Africa, twenty-six in western Europe, and nineteen in Norway and Finland.

The greater strength accorded Army Group South consisted for the most part of satellite divisions: Hungarian, Italian, and Rumanian units of dubious military efficiency. Russian pressure in the center and north prevented the withdrawal of German divisions from those sectors to reinforce Field Marshal Bock. But because of the winter's losses Kuechler's and Kluge's divisions had to continue their defensive operations at reduced strength while most of the available reinforcements were sent to the south. The Germans estimated that they were opposed by nine Russian army groups and about thirty-five armies, as shown on the map. Approximately 250 Russian divisions were identified on the eastern front.

Hitler's April directive specified certain preliminary operations that must be completed prior to launching the main offensive. These included mopping up guerrillas and securing the rear areas along the entire front, the capture of Sevastopol, and the reduction of the Russian salient at Izyum. We have seen that the ultimate objective of the main offensive was the seizure of the Caucasus oil fields; but the immediate objective was the destruction of the Russian forces in the Don bend, which was to be accomplished by a series of envelopments.

Since Germany was not strong enough in 1942 to attack simultaneously all along the southern front, the offensive was to be launched as a series of attacks from north to south, synchronized in such a manner that the greatest concentration of ground and air forces could be assured at the decisive points. The initial encircling attacks were to fall into three phases, as shown on the map:

1. The offensive would begin by a breakthrough of the front east of Kursk by the Second, Fourth Panzer, and Hungarian Second Armies, all under Weichs' control. Launched as a double envelopment, the attack would be directed on Voronezh. The northern enveloping wing would be the stronger, and immediately on reaching the Don its infantry divisions would prepare a strong defensive position on the line Livny-Voronezh. As soon as the north flank of the army group was secure, the panzer divisions would move to the southeast down the right bank of the river in support of the second breakthrough.

2. The next phase would consist of an attack from Kharkov to the northeast by the Sixth Army to link up with the Fourth Panzer Army west of the Don. The Sixth Army would then join the Fourth Panzer to continue the attack down the Don.

3. The third phase of the offensive would be launched by the Seventeenth and First Panzer Armies to the east from the Mius

River line. After crossing the Donets, these forces would continue up the right bank of the Don to join the armies advancing down the river. Units in the Donets bend would seize Rostov and bridge-heads across the Don from which the offensive could be continued southward.

As a final, or exploitation, phase of the campaign the Fourth Panzer and Sixth Armies would capture Stalingrad and establish a defensive front on the lower Volga while the First Panzer and Seventeenth Armies drove south to the oil fields in the Caucasus region.

As the attack developed, special care would have to be taken to build up quickly a strong line behind the middle Don between Voronezh and Stalingrad. In general, the satellite divisions would hold this defensive front, although several German units would be maintained in reserve to support them.

Hitler's general directive also contained special instructions for the Luftwaffe and Navy:

Air Force:

It is the task of the Air Force, besides directly supporting the Army, to protect the assembly of troops in the area of the Southern Army Group by intensifying air defenses. This applies especially to the railroad bridges along the Dnieper.

If assembly movements of the enemy are recognized, his main traffic routes and the railroads leading to the battle area are constantly to be disrupted far into the rear area; for this purpose particularly the railroad bridges across the Don are to be attacked.

In preparation for the operation the enemy air force and its ground organization in the attack area are to be attacked and destroyed with concentrated forces.

The possibility of a quick shift of planes to the central and northern zones of operations must be provided for, and the ground organization necessary for this must be retained as far as possible.

Navy:

In the Black Sea it is the main task of the Navy—insofar as our combat and escort forces and our tonnage permit—to assist in supplying the Army and the Air Force.

Considering that the power of the Russian Black Sea fleet is still unbroken, it is particularly important to get the light naval forces to be transferred to the Black Sea ready for operations there as soon as possible.

The Baltic Sea is to be secured by cutting off the Russian naval forces in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland.

The German Air Force, which during the winter had dropped to 1,700 planes on the eastern front, was built up to about 2,200 planes

for the campaign in 1942.* About 1,500 of these were to be employed in the zone of action of Army Group South. In general, the dive-bomber strength was as great as in 1941; but there was a critical shortage of fighters. Consequently, the available fighters would have to be shifted from one place to another to provide support for the more important ground operations, and some sectors of the front would have to be left without fighter cover. On the other hand, the Red Air Force was being steadily modernized and expanded.

Preliminary Operations.—As indicated in the German plan, before the main offensive could be launched, certain preliminary operations would have to be completed to straighten out the front line and release troops for the main attacks.

The German Assault of Sevastopol.—The first of these operations was an offensive by the Eleventh Army to clear the Crimea. Manstein began his offensive with an attack on Kerch on 8 May; and after driving the Russians from eastern Crimea, he turned back on 2 June to assault Sevastopol and eliminate that last Russian toe hold. For the next month the Germans carried on one of their greatest assault operations of the war.

The old fortress of Sevastopol was constructed between the years 1806 and 1825. Its ancient forts showed great strength in the Crimean war, 1854-56, when they held up an allied army of British, French, Italian, and Turkish troops for a period of nine months. Since 1939 the Soviets had devoted special attention to the modernization and enlargement of the fortress, recognizing that, with the coming of air power, the retention of the Crimea was all-important for the control of the Black Sea. By 1942 the existing fortifications had been strengthened with antitank ditches and some 137,000 anti-tank mines. German reports state that Sevastopol was defended by 19 modern forts, about 3,600 pillboxes, and other defense installations of a permanent character. The Russian garrison, commanded by Major General Ivan Y. Petrov, included seven divisions and six brigades with more than 100,000 men. The map inset shows the principal terrain features and the Russian fortifications.

During the spring the Germans assembled an immense amount of special material and equipment, including heavy siege artillery, in the Crimea. Manstein commanded a combined Axis force that in-

* Field Marshal Kesselring's Second Air Force had been shifted from the central sector of the eastern front to Italy to bolster Italian air strength in the Mediterranean.

cluded small German, Italian, and Rumanian naval units,* about 600 aircraft, and two German and one Rumanian corps with nine divisions. The German plan envisaged a main attack by the LIV Corps in the north, supported by a secondary attack by the XXX Corps in the southeast. The map inset shows the deployment of the Axis troops on 7 June and the main operations up to 2 July.

The artillery preparation for the attack began on 2 June and lasted five days. At 0300 hours on 7 June the infantry and combat engineers of the LIV Corps moved forward against the Russian outpost line on the south bank of the Belbek River. The going was very slow as the artillery and the bomber squadrons concentrated on the Russian strong points. Fort Maxim Gorki did not fall until 18 June; but that broke the backbone of the defenses, and two days later the Germans reached the north shore of Sevastopol Harbor. On 28 June elements of the XXX Corps crossed the Chernaya River and moved into the hills southeast of the city. That night the Germans launched an amphibious assault across Sevastopol Harbor; and on 1 July Fort Malakhoff, which covered the eastern approaches to the city, was captured. Sevastopol itself was occupied on the 2d. The Germans claimed the capture of 97,000 prisoners and admitted the loss of 23,000 of their own troops and 2,500 Rumanians.

The Russian Kharkov Offensive of May 1942.—In the meantime, farther north, the Russians jumped the gun on the Germans and launched an offensive of their own toward Kharkov on 12 May. This proved to be one of the major Russian offensives of the summer of 1942. Two armies of the Southwest Front were employed in a two-pronged attack on the important industrial city and strongly defended hedgehog, where the Germans had built up large supply depots to support their coming offensive. The northern attack was launched across the upper Donets northeast of Kharkov, and the southern attack drove northward toward Kharkov from the Izyum salient. Over 100 tanks were employed in each of these attacks against Paulus' Sixth Army, and for the first few days considerable progress was made by the Russians. They threw most of their available reserves into the battle** and succeeded in penetrating as far west as Krasnograd. A heavy tank battle developed around Kharkov, but within a week the Russians had been stopped.

* The largest ships employed were destroyers.

** In addition to the armor, the Germans said that the Russians employed thirteen infantry and three cavalry divisions northeast of Kharkov and ten infantry and nine cavalry divisions south of the city.

German aircraft were brought up from the Crimea, and strong ground counterattacks were launched by Kleist's First Panzer Army from the south face of the Izyum salient on 17 May and by Paulus' Sixth Army east of Kharkov. By the 23d these attacks had cut off the Izyum salient and isolated many Russian troops west of the Donets. Despite determined Russian attempts to break out of the Izyum pocket, German pressure increased; and by 28 May the pocket had been eliminated with a large haul of prisoners and booty. This ended the Battle of Kharkov. The Russians justified their offensive as an effort to upset the impending German offensive in the south, but it was a premature effort and resulted in serious losses that the Red Army could ill afford at the time. On the other hand, the Germans eliminated a dangerous salient and improved their positions around Kharkov.

On 10 June the Germans launched a new attack northeast of Kharkov to secure good jump-off positions for their main offensive, and on 22 June they attacked north of Izyum to enlarge their bridgehead east of the Donets. These attacks were successful against an enemy who had not yet recovered from the Battle of Kharkov; and by 24 June the German objective, the line of the Oskol River, was reached. Bock was then ready to begin his great offensive toward Stalingrad, 300 miles to the east, and toward the Grozny and Baku oil fields, 750 miles to the southeast.

The Drive to the Don (Map 9).—On 28 June the German Second Army launched the first major blow of the summer offensive. The attack surprised the Russians, and the Fourth Panzer and Second Armies swept eastward from Kursk toward the Don against only light opposition. Two days later the Sixth Army launched its attack southeast of Belgorod. These troops also encountered little resistance and crossed the Oskol River the next day. Russian pressure on the left flank of the Second Army forced it to go on the defensive near Livny, but by 4 July the Fourth Panzer Army (Hoth) had crossed 100 miles of plains and had reached the Don at Voronezh.

For a few days two of Hoth's panzer divisions were immobilized in a battle for Voronezh that weakened the spearhead swinging down the Don. This enabled several Russian units to escape, but by the 7th firm contact was established between the Fourth Panzer and Sixth Armies northeast of Valuiki. By that time the Germans had reached the dotted phase line shown on the map. Voronezh was evacuated by the Russians, which gave the Second Army a

southern anchor for its defensive position (Livny-Vonorezh). In general, the first two phases of the offensive had already been completed. But the operation had not gone exactly according to plan, and the anticipated encirclements of important Russian forces had failed to materialize. The enemy had evaded the traps. Halder blamed this situation on Hitler and OKW, who constantly interfered with the orderly conduct of tactical operations.*

On 9 July the third phase of the attack began with the Fourth Panzer and Sixth Armies moving down the Don as planned. The next day the First Panzer and Seventeenth Armies began their attacks; but they were not launched across the Mius, as anticipated in the original plan. It was feared that strong Russian defenses in front of Rostov would delay an attack that far south. Consequently, the main effort of the First Panzer Army was concentrated south of Izyum and directed eastward north of the Donets instead of in the bend of that river. The net result of this change in plans (see Map 8 for original plan) was an attack that offered little hope of trapping large numbers of Russians.

During the next few days rapid progress was made by the German armies. The First and Fourth Panzer Armies converged at Kamensk on the Donets on the 15th, and two days later the Russians evacuated Voroshilovgrad before the advance of the Seventeenth Army. At the same time the First Panzer Army seized a bridgehead at Kamensk, from which it began an attack toward Rostov on the 18th. As the German panzer divisions drove south to the lower Don, the Russians withdrew before them. On the left, with its infantry moving more slowly on foot, the Sixth Army moved toward the Don bend against only scattered resistance.

By the 22d the First Panzer Army had reached the northern outskirts of Rostov and had crossed the Don at four points east of the city. The Fourth Panzer Army had secured a bridgehead still farther east, at Tsimlyanskaya. In about three weeks this army had covered over 400 miles, and Bock's troops had gained control of practically the entire area of the Don bend.

There were, however, unfavorable aspects to this situation. The Russians had managed to elude Bock and escape north and south across the Don River. Furthermore, the Germans were out of po-

* On 6 July Halder recorded in his diary: "In the course of the day phone talks with von Bock (this one highly disagreeable), with the Führer, and with Keitel (OKW). This telephoning back and forth about matters which should be thought out quietly and then incorporated in clear orders is distressing. The hardest to endure is Keitel with his undigested spoutings."

sition to continue the exploitation toward Stalingrad, since most of their armor was concentrated along the lower Don. The long left flank southeast of Voronezh was only lightly held, and it would take some time to move the satellite divisions up to strengthen it. The rapid advance of the Germans imposed a terrific burden on their supply system, which had to operate with few and inadequate railroads. So in spite of the spectacular progress of the offensive, the German staff was apprehensive of the situation and feared a crisis if the unscathed Russians should decide to rally. Hitler, on the other hand, was of the opinion that the enemy was on the verge of collapse. On 23 July he issued a new directive that assigned missions for the fourth phase of the campaign.

The Drive to the Caucasus (Map 10).—In a reorganization Field Marshal Bock was dismissed, and his headquarters was split into two new army group headquarters. Army Group B, commanded by General Weichs, now controlled the Second, Hungarian Second, Fourth Panzer,* and Sixth Armies—in the northern zone of the southern front; and Army Group A, commanded by Field Marshal List,** controlled the First Panzer, Seventeenth, and Eleventh Armies—in the southern zone.

Believing that the far-reaching objectives of his summer offensive had to all intents and purposes already been attained, Hitler gave orders for the final phase of operations that indicated his blind optimism and lack of appreciation of Russian capabilities. Army Group A was first to annihilate the last major enemy forces, which Hitler believed were at Rostov, by a strong armored attack across the Don toward Tikhoretsk, where it would cut the Novorossisk-Stalingrad railroad. Most of the Fourth Panzer Army would join in this operation. Then List's armies (joined now by units from his Eleventh Army, which would cross the strait at Kerch and push on down the coast) would capture the entire east coast of the Black Sea and the last bases of the Russian Black Sea fleet. Another part of List's force would cross the Kuban River, occupy the Maikop-Armavir plateau, and then push across the western Caucasus to join the attack down the coast toward Batum. A third task for List, which was to be executed by an armored force, was to drive to the southeast, capture Grozny and the oil fields in that vicinity,

* In late July the Fourth Panzer Army was temporarily under Army Group A control for operations south of Rostov.

** List had remained in command of German forces in the Balkans during the 1941 campaigns in Russia.

and then continue across the mountains to Baku, the greatest Russian oil center. At the same time Army Group B was to perform the following missions: "Army Group B has the task, in addition to establishing the Don defenses, by an advance on Stalingrad to smash the enemy forces being assembled there, occupy the city itself, and block the land bridge between the Don and the Volga as well as the river itself. Subsequently the fast units are to proceed along the Volga, with orders to advance to Astrakhan and block the main branch of the Volga there as well."

List was unable to stomach such fantastic demands as were placed on him and resigned in September, but he started his attack according to the new plan. The initial blow of annihilation fell in the air because Rostov was practically in German hands by 24 July, and Russian resistance failed to materialize south of the Don. By 1 August Army Group A had cut the Novorossisk-Stalingrad railroad and had reached the Kuban River. List's divisions then proceeded on their divergent ways. The Seventeenth Army moved up on foot behind the panzer spearheads to assault Novorossisk and Tuapse on the Black Sea, and the bulk of the First Panzer Army drove toward the Caspian and Baku. On 9 August Maikop, 200 miles from the Don, and Krasnodar fell to the Germans. But then Russian resistance stiffened in the foothills of the mountains, and the Seventeenth Army could make little further progress. Also on the 9th the van of the First Panzer Army reached Pyatigorsk, over half way from the Don to the Caspian Sea. For the next twelve days the panzer divisions rushed over the fertile Kuban plains and closed up to the Terek River for an assault on the Grozny oil fields.* But then a breakdown of transport left the Germans without fuel for three weeks.

In the meantime Army Group B was making slower progress toward Stalingrad. The Sixth Army moved steadily into the Don bend; but by the end of the month there had been no all-out attack on Stalingrad, owing to fuel and ammunition shortages, and the Russians still held a large bridgehead at Kalach. The Fourth Panzer Army reverted to Weichs' control on the 1st; but a fuel shortage, aggravated by the priority enjoyed by the First Panzer Army, forced the Fourth Panzer to pass to the defensive. On the 19th it was able to resume its attack and by the 23d was within twenty-five miles of the big bend of the Volga, just south of Stalingrad.

* On 22 August German patrols planted their flag on Mount Elborus, the highest mountain in Europe (18,471 feet).

The Sixth Army eliminated the Kalach bridgehead on the 11th and then began preparations for the assault across the Don. On 23 August a motorized corps made a surprise crossing and pushed its spearhead clear to the Volga.

In the later part of August the situation indeed looked black for the Russians. For two months they had been unable to check the onrushing German divisions, whose rapid sweep forward had repeatedly pushed the Red Army troops out of successive defensive positions and left them in a general condition of confusion and disorganization. The Russian armies had inflicted only half as many casualties on the Germans as they had during the same period the year before.* Once again the German machine was rolling relentlessly over its adversaries.

Economically, Russia had suffered serious losses in the campaign. She had lost the important industrial area in the Donets bend and all of the Ukraine. The rich wheat lands of the Kuban had fallen to the invaders, and the oil fields at Maikop were in enemy hands. Her remaining bases on the Black Sea were threatened as were the great oil-producing areas around Grozny and Baku. Stalingrad, strategically one of Russia's most important cities, was already cut off; and its great armament factories were under the fire of German cannon. Should it fall, control of the lower Volga, Russia's greatest communications artery, would fall with it.

With Rommel preparing to launch a final attack to seize the Suez Canal and with List's armies reaching up the slopes of the Caucasus Mountains, Hitler's fantastic dream of a giant double envelopment of the Middle East appeared too plausible for comfort.

But a close examination of the tactical position of the German armies in southern Russia at the end of August shows that it was not so favorable after all. Between them, the two southern army groups held a front about 1,500 miles long. On the left the thirteen divisions of the Second Army, which held the northern flank westward from Voronezh, had been under repeated counterattack. The 400-mile stretch of the middle Don from Voronezh to Kalach was held by twenty-seven divisions, most of them inexperienced satellite units. The 420-mile line that extended across the Kalmyk Steppe from the bend of the Volga to the Terek was practically un-

* For the period 22 June-13 August 1941 the Germans reported their losses in Russia as 390,000 men. For the period 30 June-20 August 1942 they reported only 195,500.

defended.* Until other satellite divisions could move up to protect their outside flanks, the Sixth and Fourth Panzer Armies could not safely launch an assault on Stalingrad; and every day the Germans hesitated in this area, the stronger the Russian positions became. On the right flank the 250-mile sector in the foothills of the Caucasus from the Terek to Tuapse was held by only two mountain divisions.

There were three important German troop concentrations on the perimeter of their great salient: the Seventeenth Army with eleven divisions,** which was battling for the Black Sea ports of Novorossisk and Tuapse; the First Panzer Army on the Terek with ten divisions; and the Fourth Panzer and Sixth Armies at Stalingrad with eighteen divisions between them. These three masses of German troops were engaged in diverging attacks and had no possibility of supporting each other. The spaces between them were held by weak troops deployed in a cordon defense. Nowhere was there a mass of maneuver available to check a Russian counterattack or to exploit a German breakthrough.

Logistically their position was almost impossible. The First Panzer Army had only one dilapidated railroad, with practically no rolling stock, to bring its fuel and ammunition 370 miles—from Rostov to the Terek. (From Rostov to Warsaw is another 1,000 miles by rail). Just one broken-down railroad from the Donets bend to Stalingrad was available to supply the two armies converging on that city. Furthermore, the summer was about over; the autumn rains would aggravate transportation problems, and then the Germans would be faced with another Russian winter.

As for the German Air Force, it had been operating during the summer without reserves and had been forced to shift from one sector to another to provide local air superiority. As the summer went on, it began to dissipate its long-range bomber force in a series of widespread attacks on the Soviet lines of communication in the Rostov area, the railroads running from Stalingrad to Moscow, the Don bridges, and the Soviet ports on the Black Sea coast. Much of the advance of Army Group A south of the Don was made without air cover because there were not enough aircraft to go round and the main concentration of some 1,000 planes had to be used against Stalingrad.

* One German motorized division was operating in the area east of Elista and had patrols over half way to Astrakhan, but no front line in the usual sense of the term existed in this area.

** These divisions included part of the Rumanian Third Army.

Thus in late August, though the Wehrmacht was still on the move, other factors were at work; and the next four months were to witness not only the collapse of the Germans in southern Russia but the turning point of the war as a whole.

THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD.

The German Assault (Map 11).—Though the pace of the August drive to the Caucasus was extraordinary, it slowed down in September—almost as suddenly as it had started. General Halder, the last of the old guard in a responsible position with OKH, was dismissed as chief of staff of the Army and was replaced by General Kurt von Zeitzler, chief of staff of German forces in western Europe.* On 2 September German and Rumanian troops from the Crimea crossed the Kerch Strait and joined the newly arrived Rumanian Third Army on the right of the Seventeenth Army.** These forces captured Novorossisk on the 6th, and the Rumanian Third Army then moved north to take over a sector on the middle Don. The Seventeenth Army devoted its main efforts to forcing the pass through the mountains to Tuapse; but that mission was never accomplished, and no major change occurred on the rest of Army Group A's right flank during the fall.

General Kleist, who now commanded Army Group A, directed his efforts to continuing the drive toward Grozny with the First Panzer Army.*** Its first serious check occurred on reaching the Terek River line, which protected the Grozny oil fields and the approaches to the mountain road to Tiflis. It then tried to maneuver downstream, where it succeeded in forcing a crossing near Mozdok in the first week of September. But the troops of the First Panzer Army were then held up in the densely wooded hills beyond the river. Throughout September and October Kleist kept on trying to push south from Mozdok by surprise attacks at different points, but each attempt was blocked. At the end of October he launched a new attack west of the upper Terek and succeeded in reaching Ordzhonikidze. But

* Halder was dismissed after a violent interview with Hitler in which he recommended breaking off the offensive toward Stalingrad.

** General Manstein, with his best German troops and the siege artillery, was moved from Sevastopol to Army Group North in late August to participate in a projected assault on Leningrad. However, a Russian counter-attack in September threw the plans off balance; and Manstein's forces were absorbed in repelling the attack. The much-talked-of assault on Leningrad never materialized.

*** General Eberhard Mackensen assumed command of the First Panzer Army.

then bad weather held him up, and the Russians counterattacked his forward positions. The drive to the Caucasus had reached a stalemate.

Kleist himself described how the lack of fuel, his loss of troops to the Stalingrad battle, the terrain, and Russian resistance brought his offensive to a halt:

The primary cause of our failure was shortage of petrol. The bulk of our supplies had to come by rail from the Rostov bottleneck, as the Black Sea route was considered unsafe. A certain amount of oil was delivered by air; but the total which came through was insufficient to maintain the momentum of the advance, which came to a halt just when our chances looked best.

But that was not the ultimate cause of the failure. We could still have reached our goal if my forces had not been drawn away bit by bit to help the attack at Stalingrad. Besides part of my motorized troops, I had to give up the whole of my flak corps and all my air force except the reconnaissance squadrons.

The subtraction contributed to what, in my opinion, was a further cause of the failure. The Russians suddenly concentrated a force of 800 bombers on my front, operating from airfields near Grozny. Although only about a third of these bombers were serviceable, they sufficed to put a brake on my resumed advance; and it was all the more effective because of my lack of fighters and of flak.

In the earlier stages of my advance I met little organized resistance. . . . But when we advanced into the Caucasus, the forces we met there were local troops, who fought more stubbornly because they were fighting to defend their homes. Their obstinate resistance was all the more effective because the country was so difficult for the advance. The Russians brought reserves around from the southern Caucasus and also from Siberia. These developed a menace to my flank here, which was so widely stretched that the Russian cavalry could always penetrate my outposts whenever they chose. This flank concentration of theirs was helped by the railway that the Russians built across the steppes, from Astrakhan southward. It was roughly laid, straight over the level plain without any foundation. Efforts to deal with the menace by wrecking the railway proved useless, for as soon as any section of the railway was destroyed a fresh set of rails was quickly laid down and joined up. My patrols reached the shores of the Caspian; but that advance carried us nowhere, for my forces in this quarter were striking against an intangible foe. As time passed and the Russian strength grew in that area, the flanking menace became increasingly serious.*

* Hart, *The German Generals Talk*.

In the meantime the interest of the world was focused on the epic struggle developing around Stalingrad. Exploiting its penetration, which reached the Volga on 23 August, the Sixth Army converged on the city from the north and west while the Fourth Panzer Army continued its attack from the south. By mid-September the Germans reached the suburbs of the city, but the resistance they had met during the last stage of this attack indicated that a great change had taken place in the defending forces. In July and early August Russian resistance had been amazingly disorganized and ineffective; but as the Germans crossed the great bend of the Don River, the opposition began to grow stronger. Stalin had created a new army group, the Stalingrad Front, which was charged with holding the city at all costs. Many of the Russian units that had escaped the envelopments of the German summer offensive had joined the defenders of Stalingrad. So by the end of September Stalingrad was no longer a prize to be quickly seized by the exuberant Germans. It had, however, become a major objective whose capture Hitler considered a personal challenge.

Stalingrad, as it was then, strung out for more than thirty miles along the western bank of the Volga. The mile-wide river formed a great antitank obstacle which denied the German divisions an opportunity to envelop the city. The closer the Germans got to the city, the less room there was for tactical maneuver and the easier it was for the Russians to shift their forces to meet each new attack. As a result, the struggle became one of battering-ram tactics on the part of the Germans. The more deeply they penetrated into the densely built-up areas, the slower their progress became.

It was mostly hand-to-hand combat in the streets, with planes filling the skies overhead. The mass bombing and artillery fire reduced much of the city to rubble. The German troops moved forward foot by foot, house by house, and story by story in each house. The Russian workers in the factories kept their weapons at their side; if the Germans drew near, they would help repel the attack and then go back to their work. Gradually the Germans exhausted themselves with their repeated frontal attacks against the defending infantry, which was supported by antitank guns emplaced in the city's ruins and heavy artillery on the far bank of the Volga.

As the battle progressed, more and more German divisions, drawn from the defensive flanks and from the south, were thrown in. The Italian Eighth and the Rumanian Third Armies moved up on Paulus' left flank—along the middle Don. This shortened the front of the Sixth Army and enabled it to strengthen its assault forces. The

Rumanian Fourth Army moved up and performed a similar service for Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army.

At Stalingrad the defensive stand of the Russian garrison under General Chuikov gripped the attention of the Allied world. The Russian troops in the city, the Sixty-second and Sixty-fourth Armies, were handicapped because their reinforcements and supplies had to be ferried across the Volga within easy range of the German artillery. This limited the size of the forces that could be maintained on the west bank, and as a result they were often hard-pressed. The strain was the more severe because the High Command of the Red Army, with cool strategic calculation, reinforced the static defense as sparingly as possible. It preferred to concentrate most of its gathering reserves on the flanks, with a view to a counteroffensive. Only on two occasions did it divert to Stalingrad itself a division from the armies that were being assembled to the north and south. The margin by which the defenders of Stalingrad held on was narrow, but it sufficed.

By mid-October the Germans were near the heart of the city, barely half a mile from the Volga. Their morale, however, was being sapped by heavy losses, a growing sense of frustration, and the coming of winter. But they were forced to continue fighting by Hitler's demands for renewed efforts. On 8 November 1942 he declared:

The occupation of Stalingrad will become a gigantic success . . . no human being will push us away from that spot. [The conqueror] cuts off thirty million tons of traffic, including nine million tons of oil.

The Germans were paying heavily to satisfy the whims of their chief, for it was later reported that they lost 60,000 men, over 5,000 tanks, 150 guns, and 4,000 mortars in their attempts to take the city. The map inset shows the situation around Stalingrad on 1 November 1942. The two German armies then had about nineteen divisions in the battle; the Germans estimated that the Red Army had elements of thirty-three divisions on the front from the Don to the Volga, sixteen divisions in Stalingrad, and eight divisions in the salient south of the city. As might be expected in this situation, the German generals were discouraged. When in early November Paulus observed Russian offensive preparations, he urged Hitler to break off the attack and withdraw the troops to a fortified winter line extending from Kharkov to Rostov. But Hitler was outraged at the defeatism of his commanders and, as at Moscow the year before, swore he would win the battle yet.

* **The Russian Counterattack (Map 12).**—It was not long until the gravest fears of the German generals were justified. During the fall the Russian High Command had been preparing for a great counterstroke and, despite the indifferent network of railroads available, had succeeded in assembling the troops for the operation in utmost secrecy, mostly by night marches. The plan, which had been developed by General Zhukov and other officers at GHQ, was to be executed by General Rokossovski's Don Front and General Yerezenko's Stalingrad Front. These two commanders had distinguished themselves in the defense of Moscow the year before.

Briefly, the two army groups were to strike at the weak German flanks, northwest and south of Stalingrad, and envelop the two German armies that were still battling in the city. Mobile units on Rokossovski's right would launch the main penetration from the Serafimovich bridgehead.* These troops were assigned the difficult mission of striking rapidly across the Don bend and then recrossing the river to attack Kalach from the west. Simultaneously Rokossovski's center and left would launch holding attacks from other Don bridgeheads and frontal attacks between the Don and Volga. A mobile force from the Southwest Front (commanded by General Vatutin) would cover the right flank of the main penetration and strike to the south toward the Chir River. These troops would cut the Morozovski-Stalingrad railroad, the principal line of communication of the Germans at Stalingrad. The garrison in Stalingrad would increase its activity so as to draw attention in that direction. In the south Yerezenko's mobile forces would strike to the northwest, cut the Kotelnikov-Stalingrad railroad, and drive on to Kalach to gain contact with Rokossovski's divisions.

The attack was timed perfectly. The Western Allies had landed in North Africa, and General Montgomery was pursuing the battered German African army across the desert; so the Luftwaffe had been forced to transfer some of its planes to the Mediterranean. The Germans had thrown most of their reserves into Stalingrad, leaving their flanks weakly guarded; the Wehrmacht was exhausted from its summer and fall operations. The weather favored the Russians: the ground had frozen to provide good footing for the armored spearheads, but heavy snow had not yet fallen.

On 19 November three armored and three cavalry corps of the Don Front broke out of the Serafimovich bridgehead after an artillery preparation that lasted for seven and a half hours. On the

* For some unaccountable reason no serious efforts had been made by the satellite divisions to wipe out this dangerous bridgehead.

20th two motorized and one cavalry corps of the Stalingrad Front broke through the lightly held German positions south of Stalingrad and reached the railroad the next day. In a few days these two attacks overran the disorganized Rumanians and closed the ring by joining forces at Kalach on the 23d. During the next week the Russians exploited their breakthroughs and by 1 December had reached the positions shown by the dotted phase line on the map, having taken almost 65,000 prisoners and captured or destroyed 1,000 tanks. They had already cleared the area of the Don bend northeast of the Chir and had reached the Don in the south. The headquarters of the Fourth Panzer Army and a few Rumanian divisions managed to escape, but the Sixth Army was firmly trapped at Stalingrad.

The tactics of this Russian offensive were typical of all their subsequent operations. They are described by General Guillaume, French Military Attaché in Moscow during the war, who made a thorough study of the operations of the Red Army:

The attack was launched by surprise, in several directions simultaneously—seven in all. Thanks to the breakthroughs achieved at different points, and to the rapid drive of mobile units of opportunity through these breaches, the German reserves were speedily isolated from one another and separately defeated. The intervals between adjacent breakthroughs were ten to fifteen miles, permitting the attack groups, after they had broken the German position, to join up with each other by the second day. . .

The attack, organized in depth, consisted of two echelons. In the forefront, charged with the execution of the breakthrough, were units of all arms, supported by artillery and by tanks. A second echelon, essentially of armored and motorized units, had the mission of transforming the tactical into a strategic success. The mobile forces must reach the rear and the communications of the enemy as rapidly as possible. They were to by-pass at once, without stopping, all resistance found, leaving it to be reduced by the units of combined arms following in their wake.

In the Stalingrad battle of encirclement the depth to which the mobile units reached was seventy-five miles for the units of the Don Front and sixty miles for those of the Stalingrad Front. Their junction was effected in less than five days at a speed of advance of eighteen to twenty miles and more per day, reaching as high as thirty to thirty-five miles per day in some directions. The infantry's speed of advance was three to six miles per day during the breakthrough and averaged twelve and one-half miles in the later advance.*

During the month of December the position of the Germans became desperate. General Manstein, hurriedly recalled from Lenin-

* Guillaume, *Soviet Arms and Soviet Power*.

grad to stop the Russians, set up a new headquarters, designated Army Group Don. His forces consisted mostly of remnants of the Rumanian divisions that had escaped the first Russian onslaught and five panzer and motorized divisions that had been rushed to the breach.* On 12 December Manstein launched a hurriedly prepared counterattack along the axis Kotelnikov-Stalingrad in an attempt to relieve the beleaguered Sixth Army, but this attempt fell far short of its goal.

On 16 December other armies of the Southwest Front joined the Russian offensive by crossing the Don and shattering the Italian Eighth Army. This new thrust endangered Manstein's rear so seriously that he was forced to fall back toward Rostov and abandon any further plans for relieving the Sixth Army. The Russians threw new armies into the battle; and as the year ended, Vatutin had pushed over half way from the Don to the Donets. The 250,000 men of the Sixth Army, under attack from all directions by seven Russian Armies, were doomed.

THE RUSSIAN WINTER OFFENSIVE OF 1943.

The Drive to the Donets (Map 13).—By the first of the year the Russian offensive, which had begun on 19 November 1942 and had already driven the Germans out of the Don bend, was gaining momentum all along the southern part of the eastern front. The Russians definitely held the initiative and did not propose to relax their pressure on the now desperate Germans. During the month of January significant operations transpired concurrently in three different areas: in the Caucasus, at Stalingrad, and between the Donets and middle Don.

As shown by the broken phase line on the map, Kleist had held his positions on the Terek despite the rising threat to his rear. By 1 January even Hitler could see the folly of exposing the First Panzer Army any longer to the danger of being cut off. With the Sixth Army already isolated at Stalingrad, further large-scale losses in southern Russia would be a major catastrophe. Accordingly, Army Group A was directed to withdraw, pulling the Seventeenth Army back toward the Crimea and the First Panzer Army toward Rostov. If this retreat was to be successful, Manstein's Army Group Don would have to hold Rostov.

* One of these divisions came from the Fourth Panzer Army and one from the First Panzer Army; two were moved down from Army Group Center; one was brought all the way from western France.

On 2 January the Russians captured Mozdok as the First Panzer Army began its withdrawal. Utilizing the lower Don and Manych Rivers, which had not yet frozen over, as defensive barriers, Manstein held the door open at Rostov. On 20 January part of Yeremenko's army group, which was now the Southern Front, forced the Manych while other forces reached the mouth of the Donets, where heavy fighting developed. As fast as units from the First Panzer Army got back to Rostov, they were used to resist the mounting Russian pressure; but by the end of the month Yeremenko had gained a bridgehead at the confluence of the Donets and Don. Kleist held a large bridgehead on the lower Kuban, from which he could cover the Crimea; and the First Panzer Army had joined Manstein's troops in the bend of the Donets and at Rostov. Although the Germans barely succeeded in extricating their forces from the Caucasus, their retreat was an amazing performance when the factors of time, space, opposing strength, and weather conditions are considered.

During the retreat from the Caucasus the final phase of the Battle of Stalingrad was being concluded. General Paulus had been ordered to hold out at all costs, even though his eventual fate was already sealed. On 2 January his army held a perimeter defense around an area approximately twenty-five by forty miles. He was under attack from all sides by armies now under the control of General Rokossovski's Don Front. The Germans attempted to supply the Sixth Army by air; but the effort proved costly, and the eighty tons of supplies a day that the Luftwaffe could carry was woefully inadequate. The commander of the aerial supply force described the situation as follows:

It was my task to attempt to supply the Sixth German Army by air, but our resources were far too inadequate. We lost over 500 transport planes trying to bring in ammunition and food for the quarter of a million men encircled in the city. Food soon became so short that the troops had to eat horses that had been frozen in the snow for weeks. It was useless to attempt to break out once we had been surrounded because there was nothing behind us but hundreds of kilometers of open, frozen steppes. In any case, we had been ordered by the Führer to hold Stalingrad. We always underestimated the Russians, but our intelligence was particularly bad in their estimates of Russian strength in the winter of 1943.*

On 8 January Rokossovski sent an ultimatum to Field Marshal Paulus** calling for immediate surrender. Paulus refused; so the

* Shulman, *Defeat in the West*.

** Paulus had been promoted from general to field marshal.

next day the Russians launched a strong attack from the west which was supported by 2,000 pieces of artillery and 3,000 mortars. A week later they penetrated the western perimeter, and German resistance began to collapse. However, not until 1600 hours on 2 February, after the First Panzer Army had safely withdrawn across the Don at Rostov, did the Sixth Army surrender.

The Russians claimed the capture of 23 German generals, 2,500 other officers, and some 90,000 men who had survived the battle. The German situation map for 2 February shows the remnants of sixteen divisions of the Sixth Army surrounded by about fifty Russian divisions. The principal accomplishment of Paulus' army was to gain time for the Germans in the Caucasus to get back to the Don. The latter could hardly have escaped if the Sixth Army had yielded at any time during the first seven weeks of its encirclement. Its sacrifice detained Rokossovski's divisions, which could otherwise have poured down upon Kleist's line of retreat.

While the Germans were concerned with saving their forces in the Caucasus and holding Stalingrad, the Red Army offensive spread farther. During the first half of January snow storms slowed the advance of Vatutin's Southwest Front, but about the middle of the month General Golikov's troops of the Voronezh Front came into action with attacks across the Don.

On the 15th and 16th they routed the Italians at Rossosh, taking about 17,000 prisoners. Three days later the town of Valuiki and remnants of three more Italian divisions fell to the Russians. On 22 January Golikov launched a general attack at Voronezh and by the next day had captured half of the city that the Germans had stubbornly defended for over six months. At the same time other forces crossed the Don, and during the last week of January the Russians claimed the destruction of seven divisions of the German Second and Hungarian Second Armies. This opened the road to Kursk, from whence the German summer offensive had started.

In the meantime Vatutin resumed his attack, and by the end of the month his divisions had advanced to the lower Oskol and had closed up along the Donets east of Izyum. In addition, one of Vatutin's units had succeeded in establishing a bridgehead south of the river near Voroshilovgrad. This force, together with Yermenko's units in the bridgehead at the mouth of the river, presented a serious threat to Manstein's troops who were trying to hold the Donets bend. By 1 February the Russians were ready to

begin a new phase of their offensive; but speed was essential, since the spring thaw could be expected within six weeks.

Operations, 2 February-4 July 1943 (Map 14).—After losing an army at Stalingrad, their foothold in the Caucasus, and the area they had overrun between the Donets and Don Rivers, the Germans hoped at least to hold the line of the Donets. Their forces were reorganized, the Second Army reverting to the control of Army Group Center and Army Group South being reestablished to consolidate command of the rest of the troops that had been in Army Group B and Army Group Don.* Kleist remained in the Crimea with Army Group A. The major units left for Manstein were the First and Fourth Panzer Armies, which were eventually built up to a total of about thirty-two divisions, twelve of which were panzer divisions. The satellite troops had ceased to exist as effective fighting units.

Encouraged by the success attained thus far, the Russian High Command was determined to keep its offensive rolling. Golikov and Vatutin continued to attack north and southeast of Kharkov. On 5 February Vatutin crossed the Donets east of Izyum, and by the 12th his spearheads had cut the main railroads leading into the Donets bend area. This thrust was a serious threat to the Germans farther east; and since their forces were already threatened by the Russian bridgeheads in the Donets bend, Manstein decided to withdraw to the strong Mius position, which Rundstedt had established the year before. On 14 February the Russians reoccupied both Rostov and Voroshilovgrad.

Farther north Golikov continued his relentless drive that had started at Voronezh. On 7 February he captured Kursk, an important railroad center on the Oreł-Kharkov line and a key point of the German position. Golikov then switched his main effort to the south and captured Belgorod on the 9th. From this point his attack developed to the southwest, toward the rear of Kharkov. At the same time Vatutin attacked the city from the east and south. Kharkov fell on 16 February, and as a result the entire German position on the upper Donets was broken. Momentarily it looked as though the Russians would reach the Dnieper and trap all the Germans east of that river. (The limit of the Russian drives is shown by the dotted phase line for 20 February.)

* Manstein assumed command of Army Group South. Weichs was sent to the Balkans as the Supreme Commander Southeast (Army Group E), with control of all German forces in that theater. Manstein, Weichs, and Kleist were made field marshals in February.

But now there was a sudden change in the situation. An unusually early thaw struck the southern front about mid-February, and offensive operations were temporarily delayed. This gave the Germans time to rally their forces, which by then were being strengthened by reinforcements arriving from other sectors and theaters.* In addition, the Russians were now in an overextended position. The front of about 400 miles, which had been held by four Russian army groups in December, was now about 750 miles long and held by only three army groups. Back at Stalingrad Rokossovski's divisions were available, but poor communications made it difficult to move them forward. Also, in fanning out to exploit their breakthroughs Vatutin's and Golikov's armored and motorized units had outrun their infantry support.

Manstein's counterattack started from the vicinity of Stalino on 21 February, and in five days the First Panzer Army had cleared the vital railroads. About the 25th the Fourth Panzer Army began attacking toward Kharkov from the vicinity of Poltava and toward Izyum from Dniepropetrovsk. Four panzer corps were used in these operations. On 15 March the Fourth Panzer Army recaptured Kharkov, and by the end of the month Manstein had recovered the line of the Donets as far north as Belgorod. He had also recaptured Sumy, but Golikov had managed to deepen the rest of the salient that the Russians had driven around Kursk.

This German riposte in late February and March temporarily eliminated the Russian threat to the rear of the German forces in the Ukraine and enabled them to hold along the line of the Donets and Mius (from Belgorod to Taganrog), the same position that they had held during the spring of 1942. With the arrival of the spring thaws at the end of March, no major operations were conducted along this part of the front from April to July. Kleist had stabilized his bridgehead covering the Crimea by falling back toward Kerch after the Russians had broken through his positions on 12 February.

Thus by the end of March 1943 the situation in southern Russia had finally reached a stalemate—generally along the old 1941-42 line—just nine months after the Germans had begun their summer offensive. During this period less spectacular operations had taken place in the northern and central sections of the front.

*The slight improvement of the German situation in the Mediterranean, as a result of winning the race for Tunisia, had temporarily relieved anxiety in that area and in western Europe; so Hitler's major efforts could be devoted to securing his front in southern Russia.

The German lines in the sectors of Army Group North and Army Group Center underwent practically no change from June 1942 to February 1943. On 12 January 1943 the troops of General Govorov's Leningrad Front and Meretskov's Volkov Front launched a limited offensive which, after five days, gained a ten-mile-wide strip south of Lake Ladoga. This reopened land communications with Leningrad, which had been cut off for over 500 days, although German artillery still dominated the corridor. Farther south troops of General Sokolovski's Kalinin Front, who had been attacking Velikie Luki for months, liberated the town in January; but they were unable to push on into the Nevel hedgehog or to cut the important north-south railroad through that point.

Although the Germans in the north had been on the defensive while the fighting was going on at Stalingrad and in the Caucasus, they had been under heavy Russian pressure and had held their positions with great difficulty. Finally, in February, Hitler allowed the withdrawal of troops from the more-exposed salients in order to shorten and strengthen the German line and make a few divisions available to help restore the critical situation in the south. So during February and March the Germans withdrew from the Demyansk and Rzhev salients. Taking the offensive, troops of General Konev's West Front captured the Viasma hedgehog on 11 March, while Sokolovski pushed down toward Smolensk from the north. By the end of March, however, the spring thaws had also stopped operations on the northern front; and the situation remained stabilized until July.

During their great winter offensive of 1943 (November 1942-March 1943) the Russians had regained most of the territory they had lost since the fall of 1941. In addition, the Germans had suffered serious losses in men and matériel. The Russians claimed they had killed 850,000 and captured 350,000 German and satellite troops and that they had captured or destroyed 5,000 aircraft, 9,000 tanks, 20,000 guns, countless motor vehicles, and thousands of railroad cars and locomotives.

COMMENTS (Map 15)

The second year of the war in eastern Europe, the year of Stalingrad, marked the turn of the tide in Russia. Operations began on 28 June 1942 with a crushing German summer offensive that carried the Wehrmacht to the deepest limit of its conquests; yet at the end of the year Hitler found himself back at his starting line. In addition, he had been forced to yield his position in the Viasma-Rzhev

salient, which had been a serious threat to Moscow. The Russians had gained a large salient around Kursk that threatened to separate the German armies in the central and northern sectors of the front from those in the south. The red phase lines on the map show the approximate front lines at the beginning and end of the year's fighting and the high-water mark of the German advance into Russia. The broken blue line shows the front at the beginning of the war. The Wehrmacht still held vast territories in Russia; but the pattern of the Battle of Moscow, the year before, had been repeated at Stalingrad in 1942, and with more disastrous results. This campaign, coupled with the final defeat in Tunisia, had dealt the Axis Powers such staggering blows in 1942 and the first few months of 1943 that they would never again be able to maintain a sustained major offensive.

In his *Biennial Report* General Marshall commented as follows on the Stalingrad campaign:

Even after the reverse before Moscow in 1941, Germany might have avoided defeat had it not been for the campaign in 1942, which culminated in the disaster at Stalingrad. Disregarding the military lessons of history, Hitler, instead of attacking the Soviet armies massed in the north, personally planned and directed a campaign of which the immediate objectives were to deprive the Soviet Union of her vital industries and raw materials by cutting the Volga at Stalingrad and seizing the Caucasian oil fields. Beyond these concrete objectives was evidently the Napoleonic dream of a conquest of the Middle East and India by a gigantic double envelopment, with one pincer descending from the Caucasus through Tiflis and the other from North Africa across Egypt, Palestine, and the Arabian desert. The campaign collapsed before Stalingrad with the magnificent Russian defense of that city and in the northern foothills of the Caucasus, where a breakdown of German transport to the front left the German armor stalled for three weeks for lack of fuel in the critical summer months of 1942.

Some of the reasons for the failure of the Germans in 1942 are given below:

1. *Faulty strategy.* As General Marshall indicated, the basic error in the German strategy of the summer of 1942 occurred when Hitler completely disregarded his primary objective, the Red Army, and directed his forces instead against purely economic targets. The mass of Russian armies around Moscow was always his greatest threat; so as his spearheads advanced to the southeast, their lengthening north flank became increasingly vulnerable. This risk that he took at the beginning of the campaign finally brought on a defeat much greater than he had ever thought possible. Another

flaw in Hitler's strategy was that the objective of Baku was completely beyond the Wehrmacht's capability. The 15,000-foot Caucasus Mountains would have been a difficult barrier to overcome under the best of conditions; but with the German forces fighting at the end of a long and inadequate line of communication, and with a short operational season, the objective was impossible to achieve. In short, Hitler's plans did not properly correlate the factors of time, space, and means.

2. *Insufficient combat power and logistical support.* The Germans began the campaign inferior in strength to their enemy. When they reached the Don River and had still not destroyed any major Russian forces, this inequality became even greater, since they were stretched thinner than ever. Therefore, when the Russians finally struck, the Germans were hopelessly outnumbered at the decisive points. Similarly, the Luftwaffe found itself outclassed during the Russian winter campaign because of the transfer of units to the Mediterranean to oppose the Western Allies and because of the rising power of the Red Air Force.

Logistical problems had been most serious in the 1941 campaign, yet the Germans moved deeper into Russia in 1942 without materially improving their system. Had the German Navy been in a position to gain control of the Black Sea, a water line of communication down the Danube and then across to Novorossisk would have eased traffic on already overworked railroads and would have greatly improved the logistical situation of Army Group A in the Caucasus area. In like manner, control of the Gulf of Finland would have improved the logistical position of Army Group North, but again the German Navy was not strong enough. We shall see later that when the Western Allies faced difficult logistical problems in the fall of 1944, General Eisenhower made the primary objective of his combined forces the opening of the port of Antwerp in order to shorten the ground lines of communication to his fighting fronts.

3. *Poor intelligence.* Hitler and the German High Command completely underestimated the industrial capacity of the Soviet Union and the ability of the Red Army to recover from its defeat in 1941. Furthermore, faulty intelligence or improper evaluation of available information led to tactical mistakes during the German offensive that eventually cost them heavily at Stalingrad.

As for the Russians, the second year of the war witnessed a complete reversal of their fortunes. From an all-time low during the summer of 1942 they suddenly rose to the offensive and in the win-

ter won a great victory. The success of that campaign is attributed to three major factors:

1. *The great resiliency of the Red Army in overcoming the military and economic losses it had suffered during the German offensives.* This factor will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but it is obvious from the results of the Stalingrad campaign that the Red Army of early 1943 was far more powerful than that of the summer of 1941.

2. *The excellent strategy of the Russian High Command.* Perhaps the most striking element in the strategy of the November counterattack was its excellent timing, which proved to be typical of all successful Russian operations. No matter how violent the enemy attacks became or how great the exhaustion of its own forces, never did the Soviet High Command yield to the temptation to throw in its reserves piecemeal in order to relieve the pressure on the defending troops. However tragic the situation of units under fire became, the High Command remained deaf to their pleas until the moment when, assured of an absolute superiority of means, it was in position to launch an overwhelming offensive in the directions chosen. The Red Army's strategy was based on a realistic appraisal of essential factors such as weather, terrain, lines of communication, and available forces. The Russians learned much from the mistakes of their enemy.

3. *Improved leadership in the Red Army, particularly in the High Command.* Throughout the war the firm leadership of Stalin was an asset to the Red Army. By early 1943 outstanding field commanders, who had learned their lessons the hard way in 1941 and 1942, began to direct operations. The entire Russian chain of command, both officers and noncommissioned officers, profited greatly from the lessons learned in the opening campaigns of the war.

In considering the general aspects of the second year of the war in eastern Europe, it must be remembered that the decisive events in Russia in the fall of 1942, climaxed by the defense of Stalingrad and the subsequent rout of the Wehrmacht in the eastern Ukraine, were just one phase of the turn of the tide of the war as a whole. During the summer the Japanese Fleet had been defeated at Midway, and Rommel had been stopped at El Alamein. By November, when the Russians launched their offensive at Stalingrad, the Americans were seizing the initiative from the Japanese in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands; and the Western Allies had begun their offensives in Northwest Africa and in the Western Desert.

THE CAMPAIGNS IN WESTERN RUSSIA (July 1943 to June 1944)

THE NEW RED ARMY

By 1943 the Red Army had reached its full strength of 500 divisions. In comparison with the army that had started the war, it was a completely new organization. Marshal Stalin remained its commander, Marshal Zhukov was Chief of the General Headquarters of the Armed Forces, and Marshal Vasilievsky was Chief of Staff of the Red Army. Zhukov and Vasilievsky spent much of their time at the front coordinating operations of several army groups or actively commanding a single army group. The High Command studied the reverses of 1941 and 1942 assiduously. By the fall of 1942 it had assimilated the lessons of those campaigns, had formulated new combat regulations for the arms and the staffs, and had begun mass production of fully modern equipment.

Morale in the army was raised when Stalin revived the glories of Russia's military past, which had been renounced by the early Bolsheviks. The accomplishments of the Imperial Army were once more praised, and its insignia of rank reappeared on the Red Army's uniforms. Military discipline was tightened; the influence of political commissars was curtailed, the military commanders becoming wholly responsible for their units.

After 1941 the major modifications in ground organizations were toward increasing the mobility and fire power of infantry, cavalry, and armored units and forming the supporting arms and services into separate units. The army group (front) remained the basic planning and administrative organization. The size of its sector was generally determined by lines of communication, since the scarcity of railroads required a rigid, centralized control of transportation. Its strength was approximately 1,000,000 men, and it was usually commanded by a field marshal. A typical front controlled four or five infantry armies, one or two tank armies, one or two air armies (1,000 to 1,100 planes each), four artillery divisions, five anti-aircraft divisions, and several smaller combat and service units.

The armies became the basic command groups. Infantry, tank, and cavalry armies were formed; but considerable variation existed in their composition, particularly in the number of supporting armored and artillery units allotted by the army group. The service elements of an army totalled about 25,000 men. The major components of the infantry army included three or four infantry corps,

an artillery brigade, and tank destroyer, antiaircraft, and combat engineer units. The tank armies varied in composition with the terrain and mission. Some had two mechanized corps and a tank corps, plus supporting troops. Tank armies normally formed a part of the mobile reserve of the High Command and were committed at decisive points during major operations. The cavalry armies consisted of two cavalry corps, one mechanized corps, and the normal army troops. Like the tank armies, they functioned as GHQ troops and were used to augment other mobile formations. Any type of army might be designated a Guards army, the title "Guards" being given to units that distinguished themselves in combat.

There were two general types of corps in the new Red Army: the operational control corps (infantry and artillery) and the mobile corps (tank, mechanized, and cavalry). The former was primarily a forward headquarters, with attached supporting troops, for tactical control of two to four infantry or artillery divisions. The latter were permanent formations with standard tables of organization and equipment. The tank corps was comparable in strength and armament to the American armored division. The authorized strength of the Russian infantry division remained about 10,000.*

In the new Red Army great emphasis was placed on field artillery, and large numbers of new units of that arm were formed. The policy was to use the artillery aggressively, keeping it well forward so that direct fire could be employed. Some have even called the artillery the main striking force of the Army.

The first two years of the war inflicted terrible economic losses on the Russians. The situation might have become hopeless but for the transfer of many of the industrial plants to the Ural region and other distant areas. This, of course, was a tremendous undertaking for the already overburdened railroads; but it and other measures brought about a remarkable increase in the production of military matériel, without which the new divisions would have been useless. For example, five times as many cannon and planes, fifteen times as many tanks, and eight times as many mortars were produced in 1944 as in 1940. In 1946 Stalin stated that the quantities

*The divisions were often understrength. For example, Marshal Zhukov told General Eisenhower after the war that he tried to maintain his divisions at 8,000, but that frequently in a long campaign some would be depleted to a strength of 3,000 to 4,000. Such depletions in strength were not, of course, peculiar to the Red Army.

of certain weapons manufactured annually from 1942 to 1945 were as follows:

Tanks and self-propelled artillery	30,000 ^(a)
Planes	40,000 ^(b)
Cannon	120,000
Machine guns and automatic weapons	450,000
Rifles	3,000,000

- (a) General Guderian estimated that German tank production reached 1,000 per month at the end of 1943.
- (b) American production of planes reached more than 100,000 a year.

While many of the Russian weapons were of crude design in comparison with those of the Western Allies, they were efficient and met the demands of the Red Army. For example, the commander of a German armored army has said that the "Stalin" tank was the finest in the world, combining powerful armament, thick armor, and low silhouette with a speed and general mobility equal or superior to any German tank.

When the new Soviet factories were just getting into production in 1942, the military aid received from the United States did much to sustain the Russians through that critical period. In comparison with later American and Russian production, it was a small quantity; but it was given at a great sacrifice to the American armed forces, who were still short of many essential weapons, and it helped tip the scales in favor of the Red Army. The lend-lease program will be covered in more detail in the next chapter.

THE RUSSIAN SUMMER OFFENSIVE OF 1943 (Map 16a).

By July the Red Army was deployed as shown on the map. The fronts had been reorganized and new commanders appointed. The Germans estimated that the twelve Russian army groups included about forty-five armies, and some sources have placed the Russian numerical superiority over the Germans at four to one. With its combat units reorganized and re-equipped, the Red Army was ready to resume the offensive during the summer of 1943. But the High Command, following the successful strategy of the 1942 and 1943 winter offensives at Moscow and Stalingrad, decided to let the Germans strike first and then to launch a counteroffensive after the enemy's reserves had become committed.

Consequently, the Germans again initiated the summer operations; but this time their offensive was short-lived and was immediately followed by decisive Russian counterstrokes. These opera-

tions during the summer of 1943 were centered around Kursk, Orel, and Kharkov; and in the vicinity of these key cities some of the greatest battles of the war in eastern Europe were fought. The pattern of the summer's operations can be anticipated from the map, which shows the sensitive points on the eastern front—the salients. First the Germans attempted to reduce the Russian-held salient at Kursk, and then the Russians struck the German salients at Orel and Kharkov before continuing their general offensive to the west.

The Battle of Kursk.—Hitler's orders for the operations during the summer of 1943 were less optimistic than his former directives. On 13 March 1943 he outlined his strategic plan:

It is to be expected that the Russians will continue their attacks at the end of the winter and the muddy season and after they have rehabilitated and reinforced their forces to some extent.

Therefore, it is important for us to take the initiative at certain sectors of the front if possible before they do, so as to be able to dictate their actions at least at one sector. . .

At other sectors we must ward off the Russian attacks until they have spent their strength. In these places our defenses must be made especially strong by means of heavy defense weapons, additional fortifications, strategic mine fields, supporting positions, and mobile reserves.

Whereas in 1941 the Germans invaded Russia on a 1,200-mile front with eleven armies, and in 1942 they launched their offensive in the south on a 450-mile front with six armies, in 1943 Hitler had to be content with an offensive on a 150-mile front with three armies. In general, Army Group A in the Crimea and Army Group North would remain on the strategic defensive; all possible forces were to be concentrated on the left of Army Group South and the right of Army Group Center for a converging attack on the Kursk salient. It was hoped that this attack would find the Russians unprepared and would upset their plans for a summer offensive. Besides, a decisive tactical victory in Russia would do much to restore the confidence of the demoralized Wehrmacht. Should the Germans succeed in opening a big gap in the Russian line by destroying the Soviet troops around Kursk, Hitler could then resume the offensive to the east. In any event, with the threat of an invasion through the Mediterranean or from England increasing daily, Hitler believed that he must attempt to regain the initiative in the East.

The lull during the spring thaw gave both the Germans and Russians a chance to rebuild their forces for the summer's battles. In spite of their heavy losses during the winter, a more complete mo-

bilization of their man power enabled the Germans to rehabilitate their forces in the East. The Sixth Army was reconstituted and took over a sector on the Mius River;* new and improved weapons, including heavy "Tiger" tanks and self-propelled artillery, were sent to the front; and 1,000 aircraft were concentrated around Kursk by stripping the Luftwaffe units in Norway, Finland, Lenin-grad, and the Crimea. By July Hitler's armies included the following German divisions:

	DIVISIONS		
	<i>Panzer</i>	<i>Other Types</i>	<i>Total</i>
Army Group North (Kuechler)			
Reserve	1		1
Eighteenth Army (Lindemann)		24	24
Sixteenth Army (Busch)		12	12
	—	—	—
Total divisions, Army Group North	1	36	37
Army Group Center (Kluge)			
Reserve	5	2	7
Third Panzer Army (Reinhardt)	1	6	7
Fourth Army (Heinrici)		18	18
Second Panzer Army (Schmidt)	1	13	14
Ninth Army (Model)	4	14	18
Second Army (Weiss)		7	7
	—	—	—
Total divisions, Army Group Center	11	60	71
Army Group South (Manstein)			
Fourth Panzer Army (Hoth)	6	4	10
Army Kempf (Kempf)	3	6	9
First Panzer Army (Mackensen)	3	9	12
Sixth Army (Hollidt)	1	9	10
	—	—	—
Total divisions, Army Group South	13	28	41
Army Group A (Kleist)			
Reserve	1	1	2
Seventeenth Army (Hoepfner)		10	10
	—	—	—
Total divisions, Army Group A	1	11	12
Total divisions, eastern front	26	135	161

This represented about 75 per cent of the total strength of the German Army.**

* Another headquarters, called Army Kempf, after its commander, was established between the First and Fourth Panzer Armies for the Kursk offensive. In August this force was redesignated the Eighth Army.

** German divisions in other theaters in July 1943 included seven in Finland, twelve in Norway and Denmark, twenty-five in France and the Low Countries, three in Sicily and Italy, and eight in the Balkans.

The German plan provided for two strong panzer attacks toward Kursk (**Map 16b**). General Model's Ninth Army would strike to the south from Orel, and General Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army would drive to the north from Kharkov. Between these two attacks, which would penetrate the faces of the salient, the Second Army would hold as many Russians as possible in the area west of Kursk. Secondary attacks were planned to protect the main effort against Russian counterattacks from the east. Part of the Ninth Army would drive to the southeast to cover the left flank of Model's main effort, and Army Kempf would strike to the northeast to cover Hoth's right flank. No attempt was made to deceive the Russians as to the locations of the main efforts.

The Germans effected a heavy concentration of combat power on the narrow fronts chosen for the main attacks. Russian reports state that in the north the Ninth Army, with 1,500 tanks and 3,000 pieces of artillery, had 4,500 troops, 40 to 50 tanks, and 70 to 80 pieces of artillery for each kilometer of its forty-kilometer attack zone. The Fourth Panzer Army, deployed on an eighty-kilometer front north of Kharkov, had some 1,700 tanks and 2,000 pieces of artillery, with 3,000 men, 40 tanks, and 50 pieces of artillery per kilometer of front in the zone of its main effort.

In contrast to the earlier German offensives, which had caught the Russians by surprise, the Red Army was well informed of the German plans for the 1943 offensive. So Russian preparations were designed to stop the German attacks and then to launch their own counteroffensive. The faces of the Kursk salient were particularly well defended. The following account describes the thoroughness of these preparations:

The Soviet defense zone extended, as at Stalingrad, to a depth of more than sixty miles. It included a whole series of prepared positions which completely partitioned the terrain. The zone actually held by the troops, at the time of the launching of the attack, reached back several tens of miles. Through this whole depth strong works had been built. Ramified firing trenches and communication trenches sheltered the firing positions and facilitated the movement of reserves. The object was to stop the German tanks or at least to inflict maximum losses upon them at each attack against a new position. To that end the Soviet Command did not hesitate to push antitank guns, artillery of all sizes, and tanks used as pillboxes, either singly or in whole units, right up into the infantry in the front lines. Carefully camouflaged, these advanced weapons were directed to open direct fire on the German tanks, but without revealing themselves until the tanks had come into close

range. Farther to the rear, artillery in groups of several regiments each was ready to furnish powerful concentrations of indirect fire on the enemy tanks. Dive-bombers were given tanks and self-propelled guns as their targets.*

The Battle of Kursk began on the morning of 5 July 1943. Actually, it was fought as two separate battles because the German forces never succeeded in reaching Kursk. First let us consider the attack of the Ninth Army. General Model committed some 500 tanks in his initial assault along the Orel-Kursk railroad. In the first wave groups of ten to fifteen heavy tanks advanced with the support of self-propelled assault guns. In another wave groups of fifty to a hundred medium tanks advanced at great speed, followed by infantry mounted on mechanized vehicles. The assault waves were covered by heavy concentrations of bombardment aircraft. In spite of the strong forces committed to the assault, the Germans made little progress. From the outset their tanks came under heavy fire from antitank artillery and dug-in tanks; antitank grenades and incendiary bottles were also used. The first four attacks were stopped in their tracks, but a few tanks did succeed in breaking into the Russian positions on the fifth attempt. By the end of the first day Model had gained only four miles, and the troops that were advancing on the flanks of his main effort had been no more successful. He had already lost over 100 tanks.

During the night Model brought up reserves and resumed the attack the next morning. The Russians were not idle, however, and Rokossovski launched a heavy counterattack against the flanks of the enemy wedge pointed toward Ponyri. German gains were negligible on the 6th in spite of heavy losses. On the 7th and 8th they attempted again to break through toward Kursk, but they ran into a well-defended area around Ponyri. Model finally achieved a local breakthrough on the afternoon of the 7th but was immediately hurled back by another Russian counterattack. Violent fighting continued, but the Germans gained no more ground in the northern sector after 8 July.

On the 17th the Russians launched their counteroffensive. Supported by large concentrations of artillery and heavy mortars that reached a density of 460 pieces per mile of front, they pushed steadily ahead and by the end of the month had thrown Model back behind his starting line.

In the meantime an even greater battle was being fought to the south. General Hoth launched his attack with two panzer corps,

* Guillaume, *Soviet Arms and Soviet Power*.

but he met the same type of furious resistance that stopped Model in the north. He gained two or three miles the first day, but at the cost of 200 tanks. Throwing his reserves into the battle, Hoth made some progress toward Obojan during the next few days. But Russian counterattacks against his flanks forced him to weaken his spearhead, and by 9 July the troops driving on Obojan were forced to go over to the defensive.

Concurrently with this attack toward Kursk, Army Kempf was attacking with two corps along the axis Belgorod-Korochoa to protect the Fourth Panzer Army's right flank. In this effort the Germans were also stopped after a short advance. They then switched their direction of attack. Both Hoth and Kempf turned their forces toward Prochorovka and on the 11th made some headway in the new direction. The next day, however, the Russians launched a strong counteroffensive in that area,* committing some of their elite Guards units, all their available armored formations, and a group of ten artillery regiments. As a result, on 12 July one of the greatest tank battles of the war was fought around Prochorovka. More than 1,500 tanks, supported by large air formations, were employed by each side. This was the high point of the German 1943 offensive, but they lost over 400 tanks that day and made no progress whatsoever. On the 16th the Germans passed over to the defensive; by the 23d they had been pushed almost back to their starting line in the south.

In less than three weeks the last great German offensive in the East had been stopped and the attacking forces driven back to their jump-off positions. In this unsuccessful fighting from 5 to 23 July they had lost 70,000 men killed or wounded, 3,000 tanks, more than 1,000 pieces of artillery, 5,000 motor vehicles, and 1,400 airplanes. The Luftwaffe had supported the offensive with an all-out effort that proved to be its last in eastern Europe. It had started the campaign with as many as 3,000 close-support sorties per day, but the Red Air Force was able to match this effort and by the end of the month had definitely gained air superiority over the battlefield. Never again could the German Army count on the Luftwaffe for decisive air support in the East.

The Reduction of the Orel and Kharkov Salients.—The Soviet High Command planned to begin its 1943 offensive with simultaneous concentric attacks against the German-held salients at Orel and Kharkov. The three army groups of Sokolovski, Popov, and Rokos-

* Marshal Vasilievsky was sent out from Moscow to coordinate this operation.

sovski would reduce the Orel salient, and Vatutin's and Konev's groups would liberate Kharkov. The Germans, assisted by the forced labor of the civilian population, had turned each of these cities into a great intrenched camp that was covered by a perimeter of strongly fortified towns. But by employing powerful artillery preparations for their attacks and by using the Red Air Force to increase their striking power, the Russians hoped to reduce both these German hedgehogs.

Stalin began his summer offensive hard on the heels of the German defeat at Kursk. As already described, operations began with heavy counterattacks against the German penetrations of the faces of the Kursk salient. With the destruction of the enemy armor in these battles, the Russians began widening the field of their operations. On 12 July Sokolovski and Popov launched attacks against the northern and eastern faces of the Orel salient. For a time the Germans stubbornly held their positions, but they were unable to withstand the Russian pressure. Mtsensk fell on the 21st and Bolkhov on the 29th. Exploiting these penetrations, Russian armor pushed on to the southwest to cut the main German railroad between Bryansk and Orel. By the end of July the Russians had reached the line shown on the map, their threat to the railroad at Karachev having caused the Germans to begin a general withdrawal from the Orel salient. Orel, the middle anchor of the German front in Russia and a strong point that had been held for two years, fell to the Russians on 5 August (**Map 16a**). In this fighting the Second Panzer Army was destroyed as a cohesive fighting unit, its divisions that managed to escape being absorbed into the Ninth Army.

In the south Vatutin and Konev launched their attacks on Kharkov on 3 August. This offensive was preceded by a three-hour preparation by 6,000 pieces of artillery. At the same time groups of twenty to thirty airplanes continually bombed and strafed the German positions. Belgorod fell on 5 August, which broke the German hold on the northern face of the Kharkov salient. Russian tanks then drove to the southwest to cut off the enemy's retreat toward the west. The Germans committed their reserves to check the Russian breakthrough, but all they could accomplish was to delay the advance a few days. For a time five divisions held the city of Kharkov against powerful day and night attacks by a Russian armored army, attacks in which, according to the Germans, the Russians lost 420 tanks. Only after exhausting his reserves did Hitler consent to a withdrawal. Kharkov was reoccupied by the Russians on 23 August.

The offensive against Kursk and the defensive battles at Orel and Kharkov were disastrous for the Germans. In addition to the 3,000 tanks they lost at Kursk, they lost, according to Russian estimates, 1,500 more at Orel and the same number at Kharkov. Hitler's one means of holding the Russian front against the mounting power of the Red Army was in maintaining a strong mobile strategic reserve. But that reserve was almost destroyed during the decisive tank battles of the summer. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the German defeat around Kursk was as disastrous as those at Moscow and Stalingrad. Never again would they be strong enough to launch a coordinated offensive in the East. They could no longer attribute their defeats to their extended lines of communication or to the Russian winter weather; they had finally been whipped under conditions of their own choosing, although not by a force of equal size. Thereafter the initiative remained with the Red Army.

During the latter part of August other Russian fronts began to come into action. In the south Tolbukhin attacked the Mius River position on 22 August and soon broke through the front of the Sixth Army. Taganrog was isolated and fell to the Russians on the 30th. Malinovski secured a large bridgehead over the Donets southeast of Izyum. Rokossovski resumed his offensive west of Kursk on the 25th and captured Gluchoff on the 31st. East of Smolensk Sokolovski began to move forward on a broad front. The map shows the front line on 1 September. During July and August few major changes, other than the elimination of the salients on the central front, had occurred; but the Russians were now ready to begin a new phase of operations.

The Advance Across the Dnieper (Map 17a).—With breakthroughs having already occurred in the center and in the south, and with seven Russian army groups on the move from Smolensk to the Sea of Azov, the Germans faced a strategic disaster. As the summer of 1943 ended, Hitler had no choice but to fall back and attempt to establish a new defensive line farther to the west. Orders were issued for the ruthless destruction of all resources in the Donets bend as the Germans began to move out of the Ukraine.

The relentless alternating blows of the Russian offensive along the entire line kept the few German reserves that could be scraped together scurrying from sector to sector to try to stem the tide. During the month of September the Russian line from Vitebsk all the way to the Crimea was pushed forward about 120 miles as the

Germans retreated to the Dnieper River. The Russians pursued with light tanks, mobile field guns, Cossack units, and special detachments of infantry in trucks or light horse-drawn carts. A German general who commanded a panzer corps in the Ukraine described a general Russian advance:

The advance of a Russian army is something that Westerners can't imagine. Behind the tank spearheads rolls on a vast horde, largely mounted on horses. The soldier carries a sack on his back, with dry crusts of bread and raw vegetables collected on the march from the fields and villages. The horses eat the straw from the house roofs—they get very little else. The Russians are accustomed to carry on for as long as three weeks in this primitive way, when advancing. You can't stop them, like an ordinary army, by cutting their communications, for you rarely find any supply columns to strike.*

But, like every other modern army, the Russians did have to overcome difficult logistical problems. Fuel and ammunition, particularly, had to be moved forward from the rear areas despite the Red Army's ability to subsist off the country. The speed with which the Russian communications zone personnel rehabilitated the railroads to provide effective lines of communication to the various fronts was remarkable.

Rokossovski continued to exploit his breakthrough in the Orel-Kursk area. He captured Konotop on the 6th and then drove on to the Dnieper and Sozh Rivers. By the end of the month the troops on his left, who had reached the Dnieper at Kiev and secured a bridgehead near the mouth of the Pripet River, passed to Vatutin's control. Rokossovski's center was threatening the German strong point of Gomel. His right wing had pinched out the Bryansk Front and had absorbed some of its troops after Bryansk fell on 20 September.**

Vatutin and Konev also moved forward after the Kharkov breakthrough, but at Poltava they met the most serious fighting east of the Dnieper. Here Manstein had improvised a counterattack to cover the bridges at Kremenchug, over which his troops were trying to withdraw. Poltava, however, fell on the 22d; and Konev attacked Kremenchug on the 28th, the same day Malinovski reached the river at Dniepropetrovsk. By the end of the month Vatutin had seized a small bridgehead southeast of Kiev, Konev was across the river southeast of Kremenchug, and Malinovski held a bridge.

* Hart, *The German Generals Talk*.

** The commander of the Bryansk Front, General Popov, then took over command of the Northwest Front, south of Lake Ilmen.

head south of Dniepropetrovsk. In Tolbukhin's zone Stalino fell on the 7th, but at the end of the month he was being held up along a strong defensive line from Zaporozhye to Melitopol, which the Germans had established to cover the crossings of the lower Dnieper and the northern approaches to the Crimea. Early in September Hitler authorized the withdrawal of the Seventeenth Army from the Kuban Peninsula, and the Russians occupied Novorossisk on the 15th.

With the southern front absorbing all the German reserves, the time was ripe for the Russian High Command to extend the operations to other sectors. Accordingly, on 15 September Yeremenko and Sokolovski launched a major offensive against the German strong points covering the key city of Smolensk. About ten Russian armies were employed in the attack, which after a few days of fierce fighting broke through the strongly fortified German lines. Yeremenko's divisions swung to the west, toward Vitebsk, while Sokolovski pushed on toward Smolensk. After ten days of fighting the Germans gave up Smolensk on 25 September. That same day Sokolovski also liberated Roslavl. The German Fourth Army fell back to a position west of Smolensk, where it held despite heavy Russian attacks.

The dotted phase line on the map shows the Russian gains to 1 October. Rough estimates placed the German losses from July to October at 350,000 men. They had succeeded in withdrawing to the Dnieper; but if that withdrawal was planned for the purpose of establishing a "winter line" along the Dnieper, their plans had failed, for their situation maps for 1 October show four Russian bridgeheads across the river—bridgeheads that made the situation precarious for Hitler's troops in the Dnieper bend and the Crimea.

The crossing of the Dnieper, which was 500 yards wide at some points, was a remarkable accomplishment on the part of the Russians. Several thousand paratroopers were dropped along a 200-mile stretch of the river to help cover the crossing. At one point a battalion of Russian infantry, completely naked and carrying their weapons over their heads, waded across a swamp some 400 yards wide during the night in an attempt to disorganize the German defenses on the south bank. Various ingenious improvisations such as underwater bridges were used; and small craft of every kind, including rafts constructed from gasoline drums, were employed. The bridgehead near Kremenchug was seized by assembling the ferry craft under cover in the Vorskla River and then moving down to the Dnieper at night. Pile or trestle bridges were rapidly con-

structed from trees felled locally, and crude floating bridges were built. In a short time the Russians had fifty-seven vehicle bridges and nine footbridges over the Dnieper.

The Soviet High Command did not propose to relax the pressure on the hard-pressed Germans. The four army groups from Kiev to the Crimea, redesignated First, Second, Third, and Fourth Ukrainian Fronts, began immediately to exploit their Dnieper bridgeheads, which during the first week of October were enlarged and reinforced. Zaporozhye was liberated on the 16th and Melitopol on the 23d. This broke the Sixth Army's line (from the Dnieper bend to the Sea of Azov), and the Fourth Ukrainian Front pushed rapidly ahead to exploit the success. Kleist's Army Group A headquarters withdrew from the Crimea, leaving the Seventeenth Army to hold that important area, and assumed control of the Sixth Army. By the end of October Tolbukhin had cut off the Crimea and had closed up along the lower Dnieper except at Kherson and Nikopol, where the enemy still had bridgeheads. The Seventeenth Army completed the evacuation of the Kuban bridgehead in October, but the Russians followed closely behind and during November seized a small foothold on the peninsula northeast of Kerch, into which they had pressed some nine divisions by the end of the month.

On 17 October Konev launched a strong attack out of his Kremenchug bridgehead, striking south toward Krivoi Rog to cut the main enemy line of communication in the Dnieper bend. This threat became so serious that the Germans were forced to hastily evacuate Dnepropetrovsk — without even completing their demolitions. Troops of the Third Ukrainian Front moved into the city on the 25th. However, General Hube, who had recently assumed command of the First Panzer Army, threw his tanks against the Russians and managed to stop them in front of Krivoi Rog.

There was little activity north of Kiev during October because Vatutin was assembling his forces for an attack on the city. He did, however, expand his bridgehead until it was about thirty miles wide and six miles deep. Early in November the First Ukrainian Front broke out of this bridgehead and began to attack Kiev from the north and west. Manstein, seeing the futility of trying to hold the city, hurriedly withdrew most of his troops; and on the evening of 6 November Vatutin reoccupied Kiev.* The next day he captured the rail junction of Fastov, southwest of Kiev; and by 12 November he had exploited his breakthrough to the west and captured

* Just four days later the Russians re-established rail communication with the city by means of a heavy floating bridge across the Dnieper.

Zhitomir, another key communications center on the last lateral German rail line east of the Pripet Marshes. On the 17th this line was again cut at Korosten. Manstein scraped together all the mobile forces he could find and launched a counterattack against Vatutin's spearheads. Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army attacked Zhitomir on the 14th and recaptured the town on the 19th. A week later the Germans recaptured Korosten, but by the end of the month they had been unable to make much of a dent in the large Russian salient west of Kiev.

During October and November the Russians enjoyed less spectacular success against Kluge's Army Group Center, which, having withdrawn in fairly good order, was able to maintain a cohesive defensive line. Five successive offensives along the Moscow-Minsk highway were contained by the Germans. The burden of this defense fell on the Fourth Army, which held a 100-mile line in front of Orsha with only ten divisions. Against a fifteen-mile sector of this line the Russians employed from twenty to thirty-six divisions in their successive attacks, each of which lasted five or six days. General Heinrici, the commander of the Fourth Army, described these assaults:

The Russians usually made about three tries a day—the first about 9 A. M., after heavy artillery preparations; the second between 10 and 11; and the third between 2 and 3 in the afternoon. It was almost like clockwork. There was no question of the Russian troops failing to advance until they were stopped by our fire—for they were driven forward under the compulsion of officers and commissars, marching in rear, and ready to turn their pistols on anyone who shirked. The Russian infantry were badly trained, but they attacked vigorously.

In my opinion, there were three main factors that contributed to the success of the defense. First, I formed narrow divisional sectors, with a high ratio of force to space on the actual frontage of the Russian assault. Secondly, I managed to form a very powerful artillery grouping of 380 guns to cover the threatened sector. This was controlled by a single commander, at army headquarters, and was able to concentrate its fire on any required point of that twenty-kilometer frontage. The Russian offensives were supported by up to a thousand guns, but their fire was not so concentrated. Thirdly, the losses of the German divisions engaged—which had to be reckoned as the equivalent of about one battalion per division in each day of battle—were compensated by a system of drawing battalions from the divisions on other parts of the army front. I always tried to have three fresh battalions—one for each of the divisions holding the battle front—ready . . . before the attack started.*

* Hart, *The German Generals Talk*.

Rokossovski was also held up before Gomel, but his pressure finally became so strong that the Germans evacuated the city on the night of 24 November and withdrew to another good defensive position around Rogatchev. Farther north Yeremenko launched an offensive against Nevel during the first week of October. He captured the town and cut the main north-south rail line, but he could make no further progress. The terrain from Vitebsk to Leningrad, with its numerous forests, lakes, rivers, and swamps, provided ideal defensive positions, which the Germans effectively organized to block any attempted advance. The Russians would have to wait until winter, when the ground would freeze, to launch a successful attack in the northern sector.

THE RUSSIAN WINTER OFFENSIVE OF 1944.

By the end of the year the general strategic situation of the Russians in eastern Europe had improved considerably. The increasing pressure of the Western Allies was beginning to tell on the Germans,* who could no longer afford to weaken their western defenses; and the Anglo-American strategic bomber offensive was growing in intensity over Germany and absorbing the major resources of the Luftwaffe. In November Stalin met Roosevelt and Churchill at Tehran in the first wartime conference of the three Chiefs of State. Strategic plans for the Allied offensives in the global war were discussed, particularly for the invasion of France, which the Western Allies declared would be their primary undertaking for 1944. Anticipation of a real second front in western Europe encouraged the Russians, who hailed the Tehran conference as a big step in solidifying Allied unity in the common purpose of shortening the war.

During the summer and fall of 1943 the Russians had stopped the Germans at Kursk and had then launched a general offensive that drove Hitler's forces beyond the Dnieper. They had not surprised the Germans at Orel and Kharkov, where it was expected Stalin would launch his summer offensive; but the power of their drive to the Dnieper astounded the Wehrmacht, and the speed with which they crossed the river blasted all German hopes for the establish-

* The number of active German divisions on the eastern front had dropped from 75 per cent of their total in July to 69 per cent in December. This change was mostly a result of the activity of the Western Allies in the Mediterranean. During the summer and fall of 1943 the Germans increased their divisions in Italy from three to thirteen and in the Balkans from eight to fourteen.

ment of a winter line. The Russians were not fighting a lightning war; rather they were waging a methodical war in which their successive and powerful blows along the entire battle line (made possible by their great numerical superiority) were slowly destroying the enemy's ability to resist. By 1 December the summer campaigns were over according to the calendar, but tactically there was no pause in the operations. An unusually mild and dry autumn and winter permitted the Red Army to continue its offensive with hardly a pause.

Operations, 1 December 1943–14 January 1944 (Map 17b).—Some of the Russian army groups were reorganized: the Central and West Fronts became the First and Second White Russian Fronts, and the Kalinin and Northwest Fronts became the First and Second Baltic Fronts.* On the enemy side, Field Marshal Kluge was injured in an automobile accident; so Field Marshal Busch was transferred from the Sixteenth Army to command Army Group Center. Otherwise there were no major changes among the higher German commanders. At Tehran Stalin stated that he had 330 divisions to oppose the Germans. The German order of battle shows 172 active German divisions on the eastern front at that time.

The Russians began their winter operations when Bagramyan launched an offensive south of Nevel on 14 December with the objective of cutting off Vitebsk and reducing that strong point in the central sector. Some progress was initially made, with the Soviet troops breaking through on a fifty-mile front and cutting the Polotsk–Vitebsk railroad; but the Russians were unable to make much further headway through the marshy streams and lakes that had not yet frozen over. Sokolovski joined in the attack on Vitebsk; but the Germans were able to hold that key position, and counterattacks by the Third Panzer Army drove back some of Bagramyan's leading formations. Early in January the Russians abandoned the Vitebsk operation and made no further attempts to resume major operations in the central sector during the rest of the unusually mild winter. They had succeeded, however, in drawing Kuechler's attention from Leningrad to his right flank.

In the south General Konev's Second Ukrainian Front resumed its attacks early in December. One force moved up the south bank of the Dnieper and invested Cherkassi on 10 December. After four

* The new groups retained their old commanders except that General Bagramyan took over the First Baltic Front. General Yeremenko, its former commander, went south to participate in the operations in the Crimea.

days of house-to-house fighting this town fell, the Russians gaining another good passage across the Dnieper. At the same time another force captured the rail junctions southwest of Kremenchug and moved on toward Kirovo. At the end of the month the First Panzer Army launched a series of counterattacks around Kirovo; but within a week Konev renewed his attacks and, after a terrific artillery bombardment, broke through the German lines. A night assault on 7 January liberated Kirovo. As a result of Konev's limited-objective attacks the rear of Manstein's troops around Nikopol was threatened, as was the right flank of the Eighth Army, which still stubbornly held a narrow sector on the Dnieper west of Cherkassi.

While the Russians were jabbing at the left and right of the German line, they were preparing a heavier blow for the Kiev sector. During the first half of December Manstein continued his counterattacks through Korosten and Zhitomir. Employing 200 to 300 tanks on narrow fronts, the Fourth Panzer Army eventually pushed back to within fifty miles of Kiev. But on 24 December Vatutin launched a new offensive, with three armored forces moving toward Korosten, Zhitomir, and Kazatin. By the end of the year these three cities were again in Russian hands, and by 4 January the Red Army had recrossed the old Polish border south of the Pripet Marshes.

These Russian gains were important in that they placed the key centers of the railroad net west of the Dnieper in their hands. Only one more main line, Lwow-Proskurov-Odessa, remained available for the Germans in the Dnieper bend; and the Red troops at Kazatin were within sixty miles of it. Therefore, Manstein withdrew part of the Fourth Panzer Army to the south rather than to the west and feverishly began to build up a defensive force around Vinnitsa to protect the rear of the troops farther east. He managed to stop Vatutin in this area; but his weak left wing could not prevent the Russians from moving along the southern edge of the Pripet Marshes, where at Sarny, on 13 January, they cut the last German lateral railroad between the central and southern sectors. Before Vatutin could continue his offensive, it was necessary to pause until the railroads west of the Dnieper could be rehabilitated.

These probing attacks of the Russians during the first six weeks of their winter offensive not only gained important jump-off positions for future operations, but they kept the Germans' defense unbalanced and wore out their mobile reserves, which were rushed

back and forth to halt the most serious penetrations. By mid-January the Red Army was ready to begin a new series of major attacks on the long front in eastern Europe.

The Liberation of Leningrad (Map 18a).—The first of these blows was struck in the north, where for over two years the Germans had been held on the outskirts of Leningrad, although their guns reached over the city. The Eighteenth Army comprised about twenty divisions, including a panzer grenadier division and the Spanish volunteer division. It was supported by about 360 pieces of heavy artillery, some of which were 406-mm. howitzers. However, this German army was holding a 200-mile front that extended from Lake Ilmen to the sea and against which two Russian army groups had concentrated a formidable force of eight armies. Field Marshal Kuechler had taken three divisions from the Eighteenth Army to help stop the Russian offensive west of Vitebsk in December; so General Lindemann had very few reserves with which to meet the expected enemy offensive. He probably thought that this offensive would strike the salient which pointed toward Lake Ladoga, since it controlled the main railroads leading into Leningrad. The Russians, however, surprised him by choosing different locations for their main attacks.

General Govorov secretly sent a strong force into the beachhead west of Leningrad, moving it across the frozen Gulf of Finland; and he concentrated a mass of heavy artillery about ten miles south of the city. By mid-January the rivers, lakes, and swamps in the north were frozen, making conditions most suitable for a Russian offensive. On 15 January Govorov suddenly launched an attack to the east from his beachhead, his artillery blasting the German defenses in the path of the attack. The Germans' steel and concrete defensive works were smashed, and their counterattacks proved to be disorganized and ineffective. Within four days the Russians had opened a gap in the German line.

General Meretskov launched an attack in the Volkov River sector on the 15th. But instead of attacking from his bridgehead north of Novgorod, he crossed the frozen lake and marshes south of the city and took in rear the formidable German defenses that faced to the north and east. Novgorod fell on 19 January.

Once these two Russian blows had penetrated his flanks, Lindemann had no choice but to withdraw as rapidly as possible to keep his entire Eighteenth Army from being annihilated. He still had available two good north-south railroads, through Dno and Pskov;

so he was able to retreat faster than the Russians could pursue through the snow-covered forests. By 3 February the Germans had fallen back to a position in front of Luga, as shown by the dotted phase line on the map. But since Meretskov threatened to turn the right flank of this line, the Germans could not hold it long. Besides, General Popov's Second Baltic Front joined the offensive in February by attacking to the west against the Sixteenth Army along the line from Lake Ilmen to Velikie Luki. The important rail junction of Dno was attacked from the north and south and fell on 23 February. By 1 March, however, Army Group North* was able to establish a new defensive line from Narva to Polotsk. With the spring thaws approaching, the Russians were unable to continue major operations in this area; so the northern front again became stabilized.**

The Russians claimed that they killed over 40,000 Germans, captured 7,000 more, and captured or destroyed 365 tanks, 2,000 guns, and 100 aircraft. Moreover, the Moscow-Leningrad railroad was at last cleared; and the Germans could never again threaten the city of Leningrad, which had withstood their attacks for fifty-two months.

The Liberation of the Western Ukraine.—Although the Russians achieved a decisive victory in the north, the Ukraine was the scene of the main effort of their winter offensive of 1944. The probing attacks of the Ukrainian fronts in December and early January were continued through February, with the greatest success being achieved in the center and on the flanks of the German line from the Pripet Marshes to the lower Dnieper. Field Marshal Manstein assembled an armored force around Vinnitsa, which he placed under General Hube's First Panzer Army. During the latter half of January counterattacks by these panzer divisions stopped the Russians in front of Kazatin, but Konev increased the pressure north of Ki-rovo.

On 29 January the Soviet High Command launched a coordinated attack by troops of the First and Second Ukrainian Fronts against the faces of the salient held by the German Eighth Army (General Woehler). The Germans were quickly overpowered; and the converging Russian attacks joined south of Korosun, cutting off two corps of the Eighth Army. By 3 February about eight divisions

* On 31 January General Model replaced Field Marshal Kuechler as commander of Army Group North.

** General Meretskov's headquarters was now transferred to the Finnish frontier.

were completely isolated in the Korosun pocket. General Konev took over the four Russian armies in the area and set about to liquidate the pocket. Hube (First Panzer Army) had to suspend his counterattacks at Vinnitsa and rush to the relief of the Korosun force. Some nine divisions of the First Panzer and Eighth Armies tried to reach the trapped divisions, which for a time were supplied by air. But all efforts were in vain, and on 17 February Stalin announced the final liquidation of the Korosun pocket. The Russians claimed the destruction of 100,000 German troops in this "little Stalingrad."

While the Germans' attention was focused on the middle Dnieper, troops from Vatutin's right wing struck southward from Sarny and suddenly stormed and captured Rowne. On 3 February they routed the Hungarian garrison out of Lutsk and pushed on toward Dubno and Lwow. The retention of the latter city was of great importance to the Germans since its loss would disrupt the remaining main railroads from Poland into the Ukraine and force the Germans to switch their lines of communication to the poor rail net through Rumania. The Fourth Panzer Army was rushed to the west and succeeded in stopping this Russian drive.

The third of the alternating Russian blows against the harassed and exhausted Germans in the Ukraine was struck against the Sixth Army in the Dnieper bend. Surprising the enemy by attacking in miserable weather, Malinovski launched a drive on a sixty-mile front west of the Dnieper on 2 February. On the second day a breakthrough was made between Krivoi Rog and Nikopol, and by the 6th the railroad into Nikopol was cut. At that moment Tolbukhin's Fourth Ukrainian Front attacked the large Dnieper bridgehead that the Germans had held for several months. The enemy could not withstand these heavy converging attacks, and on 8 February Nikopol and its rich manganese mines fell into Russian hands. On 21 February the Russians stormed and captured Krivoi Rog, the citadel of the German defensive system in the Dnieper bend.

Only one operation of any importance developed in the central sector of the eastern front during the winter. In this region the Germans had taken maximum advantage of the defensive possibilities of the terrain, which, fortunately for them, never froze solid that winter. Rokossovski launched an offensive near Rogatchev on 22 February; but although the Dnieper was crossed and Rogatchev was captured, the First White Russian Front could make no further progress.

Hitler probably thought that if he could hold his exposed positions in the Dnieper bend during January and February, the usual spring thaw would halt the Red Army and give his troops a breathing spell. But if this was his hope, nature tricked him, because the weather was so mild and there had been so little snow during the winter of 1943-44 that the Russians were able to launch a great offensive in March.

For five months after they had crossed the Dnieper River Stalin's armies had steadily expanded and consolidated their gains west of the river. By March they had not only taken a heavy toll of the enemy, but they were prepared to launch a new major offensive to clear the western Ukraine (**Map 18b**). Marshal Zhukov took command of the First Ukrainian Front, Vatutin having been stricken with a fatal illness; Marshal Vasilievsky came out from Moscow to assist Malinovski and if necessary coordinate the operations of the Third and Fourth Ukrainian Fronts. This assignment of their top commanders suggests that the Russians again planned to begin the campaign with their main efforts on the flanks of the German position in the Ukraine, with the First Ukrainian Front driving to the south from the salient west of Kiev to cut the last German rail communications from Poland and the Third Ukrainian Front driving toward Odessa and clearing the coast of the Black Sea. However, the battle was soon joined along the entire line, developing into an advance on a broad front.

On 4 March Marshal Zhukov began the offensive with an attack on a 110-mile front between Dubno and Vinnitsa. His main effort, by Guards tank formations, was directed toward Tarnopol. Striking the gap between the German Fourth and First Panzer Armies, in two days the Russians drove forward forty miles and cut the vital Lwow-Odessa railroad. The danger of this attack across his rear was quickly appreciated by Manstein, who started moving the First Panzer Army from the vicinity of Uman to try to check Zhukov. But then, on 6 March, Marshal Konev* joined the offensive by striking the demoralized Germans, who had not yet recovered from the Korosun disaster. His armor broke through their positions, and on 10 March he captured the large enemy base of Uman. A Russian war correspondent commented on this operation at the time:

The morale of some of the German tank crews has completely cracked in some sectors. Tanks have been left on the roads with their whole tracks sunk in mud, and with fuel and ammunition in

* Konev was promoted after his victory at Korosun.

them. The German radio station was left intact. At the village of Potash [ten miles north of Uman], in a space of less than three-quarters of a mile, 630 abandoned lorries were counted, crammed with food, shells, and so forth. Uman was full of dumps, and the airfield was undamaged.

These breakthroughs by Zhukov and Konev completely shattered any hope that the Germans might have had of stopping the offensive. Remnants of the Eighth Army eventually escaped to the southwest, across the Dniester; the First Panzer Army continued to fight its way toward the west, although hopelessly outnumbered. Konev pushed on rapidly, reached and crossed the Bug on the 12th, and cut the Lwow–Odessa railroad three days later. For two weeks Konev continued to move forward against little opposition. He crossed the Dniester on the 19th and a week later reached the Prut on an eighty-mile front. In a little over three weeks he had moved 225 miles as the crow flies.

Zhukov's left wing captured Vinnitsa on 22 March and Proskurov on the 25th; but on his right he made little headway against the Fourth Panzer Army, which was guarding the approaches to Poland and fighting to protect the rail centers of Kowel, Lwow, and Tarnopol. On 20 March, as Konev was crossing the Dniester, Zhukov's center resumed its attack. Its armored formations advanced sixty miles in four days and on the 25th reached the Dniester northwest of Cernauti. Five days later this communications center on the upper Prut fell to the First Ukrainian Front. By the end of the month both Konev and Zhukov were on the upper Prut; and the First Panzer Army was completely isolated, as shown by the dotted phase lines on the map.*

Perhaps the most remarkable operations of the campaign were those of Hube's First Panzer Army. Practically isolated between the First and Second Ukrainian Fronts after 10 March, this force first delayed the capture of Vinnitsa and Proskurov and then fought its way slowly to the southwest. Moving at night and using the many north-south valleys that run through the area, Hube was usually able to slip away before a major attack could be launched against him. The woods, orchards, and villages in the valleys offered good concealment from air observation; and his mobile units could move quickly from place to place. As his force was large, it could not be attacked with impunity; and the Russians used caution

*The German situation map for 1 April shows three corps headquarters, three panzer divisions, and remnants of thirteen other divisions encircled northeast of Cernauti.

in approaching it. His supplies were sent in by air. Hube attempted to cross the Dniester on 29 March but met opposition from troops of the Second Ukrainian Front, who were on the south bank. The next night he moved west with most of his force while the remainder continued its efforts to cross the Dniester. On 2 April that portion of the command that had been trying to cross the river abandoned the attempt after suffering severe losses and moved west to rejoin the main body. Two days later a German relief force attacked eastward from a point north of the Dniester while Hube began an attack westward along the same axis (see red arrows on the map). In the meantime strong Russian forces had been sent against Hube from the east. Consequently, while attacking westward he had to fight a rear-guard action against the Soviet forces behind him. Fighting day and night, the relief expedition and Hube's forces gradually drew together until contact was made on 8 April; by the 10th the last of Hube's troops had entered the lines of the relieving force. By keeping his divisions together and maintaining an alert and aggressive attitude, Hube not only saved most of his own army but perhaps prevented the annihilation of those German forces farther to the east by delaying for almost a month the advance southward of Zhukov's First Ukrainian Front.

Concurrently with the offensive of the First and Second Ukrainian Fronts Malinovski's Third Ukrainian Front moved toward the lower Dniester. He, too, launched his offensive on 4 March, simultaneously with that of Zhukov. Field Marshal Kleist's Sixth Army was unable to withstand Malinovski's assault and after four days of heavy fighting began to withdraw. In spite of the numerous rivers in the area, the Russians exploited their breakthrough, occupying Kherson on 13 March and reaching the Bug on the 16th. The Germans rallied temporarily at Nikolaev, which they held against converging Russian attacks until the 28th, when they had to retreat to avoid being completely cut off. Malinovski pressed on to the southwest, directing three columns on Odessa. The Germans evacuated this important port on 10 April without a fight, and two days later the Third Ukrainian Front reached the Dniester throughout its zone and seized a bridgehead at Tiraspol.

By mid-April the Russians had reached the line shown on the map. With Zhukov and Konev in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, Hitler promptly reacted to the danger by occupying Hungary. Its occupation was essential not only to check a Russian surge into the plains of central Europe but to ensure any continued hold on the Balkans. The Soviet spearheads failed to pene-

trate the mountain passes, and there were not sufficient reserves to renew the attempt. The Russians were feeling the effects of their prolonged advance. The Germans also rallied behind the Dniester, and at Iasi on the Prut with the help of the Rumanians. From mid-April to July the southern sector of the eastern front was quiet, the opposing forces reorganizing for the coming summer campaigns.

The Liberation of the Crimea.—In the Crimea the Seventeenth Army of four German and about six Rumanian divisions had for five months waited with sober apprehension for the Russian assault. Field Marshal Vasilievsky was to coordinate the attack, in which Tolbukhin's Fourth Ukrainian Front would make the main effort in the north while General Yeremenko's Maritime Army attacked from its beachhead near Kerch. Altogether there were over thirty Russian divisions.

On 8 April Tolbukhin launched his assault against the strong Perekop position, which was being held by the best German troops. Powerful artillery and several hundred planes smashed the enemy's first line, but the Soviet troops were stopped against a second line farther down the isthmus. However, a more significant operation had begun the night before when the Russians crossed the lagoons between Perekop and the Sea of Azov. Here the south shore was lightly defended by weak Rumanian forces since the Germans believed the lagoons to be impassable. The small parties of Russians that managed to ford the lagoons were followed immediately by guns, ammunition, light cars, and horses in flat-bottomed boats and rafts. The surprised Rumanians put up little fight, and the Russians quickly established their beachheads. On the 9th Yeremenko launched an attack at Kerch.

The decisive action of the campaign occurred on the 11th when Tolbukhin, without waiting for further reinforcements, struck out boldly from his beachheads and captured the main rail junction at Dzhankoi. The Germans ordered a withdrawal to Sevastopol, whose breastworks they had reached by the 19th. When Tolbukhin's and Yeremenko's forces joined hands to invest the city, the Germans attempted to evacuate their forces; but a shortage of shipping and the loss of the port of Odessa on the mainland seriously hampered their efforts. Alert Soviet air and naval units moved in and sank almost 200 Nazi ships and barges during the days that followed. After regrouping his forces and moving up heavy artillery, Tolbuk-

hin attacked the Sevastopol defenses at dawn on 7 May. With the fire from 300 Russian guns per mile of front and hundreds of bombers to open the way for the infantry, the assault was an immediate success. On 9 May Sevastopol was liberated.

The Germans withdrew to the tip of the peninsula southwest of the city, but their resistance was as brief as it had been on Cape Bon, in Tunisia, the year before. The Russians claimed over 100,000 dead and captured and an immense amount of captured matériel. The last of the three great campaigns of the Russian winter offensive of 1944 had been the shortest but perhaps the most brilliant of all.

COMMENTS (Map 19).

The results of the Soviet campaign in western Russia during the period July 1943 to June 1944 are shown by the broken and dotted phase lines on the map. The most spectacular gains were won in the south, where the entire Ukraine was cleared. In addition, the siege of Leningrad was raised; and the Crimea, and with it control of the Black Sea, was again in Soviet hands. Except in White Russia, the Red Army had generally reached or crossed the prewar western boundary of the Soviet Union. It was estimated that from December to April the Germans lost over 1,000,000 men in Russia, 80 per cent of the casualties occurring in the southern sector.

During these campaigns the pattern of the Russian offensives was the same as that which was to be followed during the remainder of the war. By attrition, rather than by spectacular rapier-like thrusts, the Red Army took its toll of the enemy. Relentless pressure was maintained by a series of methodically conducted offensives that struck first at one point and then at another along the entire 1,400-mile battle line. After a rapid advance the Red Army would halt, reestablish communications to its rear, bring up supplies, and complete necessary regroupings. Then, striking the salients developed in its previous operations, it would continue the offensive, attacking at alternate points as before. In this manner the Soviet High Command avoided the error the Germans committed at Moscow and Stalingrad of pushing their offensive to the limit without the certainty of being able to supply it with replacements of man power and equipment.

Each successive attack was launched on a broad front and with a strong concentration of combat power. Massed artillery and over-

whelming air support would assist in each penetration, and well-trained and -equipped armored forces and other mobile troops would exploit the breakthrough. The primary mission of the Red Air Force throughout was close support of the ground forces. Its mastery of the air also facilitated Russian air reconnaissance while rendering that of the Wehrmacht less effective. This factor, together with strict camouflage discipline, enabled the Russians to gain surprise in most of their attacks and at the same time deny that advantage to the enemy.

The influence of the Russian High Command was apparent in most of the offensives, since they usually consisted of coordinated efforts by two or more army groups. When the first offensive of the summer campaign reached the Pripet Marshes, it split the German front into two sectors. The Russians were then free to continue operations against the southern army groups with little fear of German reinforcements being shifted from the less active sectors of Army Group North and Army Group Center. A similar result was achieved in the spring when the Russians pushed their offensive to the Carpathian Mountains in the eastern tip of Hungary. This split the Germans' southern sector into two compartments: southern Poland and Rumania, with poor lateral communications between them.

The operations during the year disclosed an adherence to other sound military principles on the part of the Russian High Command. The campaigns were planned and conducted to take maximum advantage of the terrain and weather. The value of railroads and key communications centers was appreciated, and these objectives were gained in such sequence as to impose the maximum inconvenience on the enemy while at the same time facilitating further Russian operations. Realizing the value of rivers as defensive lines, the Russians exerted special efforts to cross these barriers quickly and before the Germans had a chance to establish their defenses behind them.

Other lessons can also be learned from the campaigns in western Russia. By launching their Kursk offensive at obvious points on the faces of the salient, by neglecting effective cover plans and precautions, and by the absence of diversionary operations, the Germans completely lost the element of surprise and dissipated their strength against impregnable Russian defenses. The futility of committing armor against well-prepared antitank defenses was not recognized by the Germans until they had suffered catastrophic

losses that jeopardized their entire position in Russia. On the other hand, the speed with which the Russians crossed the Dnieper completely surprised the Germans and disrupted their plan of defense of the Ukraine. Once again Hitler displayed his fatal tendency to hold too long to untenable positions. In war it is often necessary to conduct a last-ditch defense to save a tactical situation; but at Kursk, Orel, Kharkov, Korosun, and in the Crimea the disastrous German losses could have been avoided by a timely withdrawal once the hopelessness of their position was apparent. Instead, German resources were wasted without the gain of any tactical or strategic advantage. The large amount of equipment and supplies lost by the Wehrmacht during the Russian advance was being rendered increasingly difficult to replace by the Allied air attacks on German industrial plants. The losses in personnel were even more serious to a country that was already beginning to feel the pinch of a two-front war.

On the other hand, in one sector at least the Germans demonstrated the power of a mobile defense with modern weapons and proved that they could still fight skillfully and well. Between the Pripet Marshes and Vitebsk three German armies held off for nine months the repeated attacks of fifteen to twenty Russian armies.

THE LIBERATION OF EASTERN EUROPE

(June 1944 to May 1945)

LEND-LEASE AID TO RUSSIA (Map 19).

Although major combined operations by the armed forces of the Western Allies and Russia were never undertaken during the war, the United States and the British Commonwealth did contribute materially to the military success of the Soviet Union by providing sizeable quantities of essential armaments, transportation equipment, machine tools, raw materials, and foodstuffs. United States aid to Russia was to continue until it finally reached a total value of approximately \$11,300,000,000.* The following table, based on dollar cost, shows the extent of our lend-lease effort and how the quan-

* British assistance to the Soviets exceeded \$1,300,000,000.

ties of equipment and supplies sent to Russia compared with those allocated to other nations:

	<i>Britain</i>	<i>U.S.S.R.</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
Percentage of cost of total program ^(a)	65	23	7	3	2	100
Breakdown by category expressed in percentage of total to each country:						
Ordnance and ordnance stores ..	10	7	7	14	8	9
Aircraft and aeronautical materials	20	14	9	8	22	17
Tanks and other vehicles	12	16	13	14	10	13
Vessels and other watercraft	17	11	10	3	17	15
Miscellaneous military equipment	7	7	24	6	9	8
Facilities and equipment	1	5	—	1	1	2
Agricultural, industrial, and other commodities	31	39	33	5	28	32
Testing, reconditioning, etc., of defense articles	1	1	1	—	3	1
Services and expenses	1	—	3	49	2	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

^(a) The value of the total lend-lease program of the United States exceeded \$50,000,000,000.

A special Soviet Protocol Committee was formed by President Roosevelt and given top priority, even above our own armed forces, in some items of essential military equipment during the critical early months of the war. This was a real sacrifice, since our war production was just getting underway and even our own demands could not be filled. American equipment was used at Stalingrad and undoubtedly helped in turning the tide, and American trucks and jeeps greatly facilitated the advance of the Russian armies in the Ukraine. However, as Russian production of military items increased, more emphasis was placed on lend-lease nonmilitary goods, such as machine tools, industrial plants, and raw materials. In October 1943 a United States Military Mission* was established in Moscow "to promote the closest possible coordination of the military effort of the United States and the U.S.S.R." This was a difficult task to accomplish, but the mission did provide some hitherto scarce information on the use the Russians made of our lend-lease material. General Deane said:

It is difficult to evaluate the relative importance of the thousands of items which we sent to Russia, but I believe I am safe in saying that truck transportation and combat vehicles stood first. . . . When

* Headed by Major General John R. Deane.

I made a trip to the Russian front in July 1944, we encountered American trucks everywhere. They appeared to be the only sort of vehicles used for convoy work. The roads were jammed with transportation of all descriptions, but except for American trucks there did not appear to be enough of any one kind to set up convoys which could be moved as units. . . The officers and enlisted men were enthusiastic in their praise of our trucks. . .

Next in importance, I believe, came petroleum products. . . This included not only the gasoline to operate the aircraft we sent to Russia and the oil required for all types of American aircraft, vehicles, and locomotives, but also a large amount of blending agents with which Soviet gasoline could be made usable for aviation purposes. Soviet oil production, mostly in Baku, was considerable. However, their refining processes were poor; and the ordinary Russian gasoline was little better than American kerosene. . .

From the amount [of foodstuffs] I saw at the front I concluded that most of it went for Army consumption. I have no doubt that the high development of American packaging was responsible for this. It not only insured against food spoilage but also aided in economizing on precious cargo space. Assuming that the Red Army had an average strength of twelve million men, the food sent to Russia was sufficient to supply each man with more than one-half pound of fairly concentrated food per day.

Another important item of supply was railroad equipment. . . This was a tremendous contribution to the Russian effort, since the scarcity of truck transportation forced a maximum use of railroads. All the rail equipment had to be constructed to the special Russian railroad gauge, which is about four and one-half inches wider than ours. . .

Our supplies may not have won the war, but they must have been comforting to the Russians.*

There were three main routes by which supplies were shipped to Russia. The first was the North Atlantic route to Murmansk and Archangel. Since this was the shortest, it was particularly important early in the war when shipping was at such a premium. German naval and air forces in Norway, however, were a constant threat to this line; and from nearby bases around Petsamo they were able to harass shipping in the ice-free port of Murmansk. About 21 per cent of the cargoes sent by this route early in the war were lost, as against 8 per cent of the shipments to the Persian Gulf.

As long as the Axis air forces dominated parts of the Mediterranean Sea, our convoys to the Persian Gulf had to be routed around

* John R. Deane, *The Strange Alliance* (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1947).

the Cape of Good Hope, a voyage that required about seventy-six days. But when the Western Allies regained control of the Mediterranean, they could use that much shorter route; so during the last two years of the war the Persian Gulf became the main point of entry for military equipment and supplies for Russia. The United States began the establishment of a full-fledged supply route in the Persian corridor in September 1942. The mission of the Persian Gulf Command was to move lend-lease supplies from deepwater ports on the Persian Gulf to Soviet transfer points in northern Iran, 650 miles away. American troops moved into Iran in the fall of 1942 and took over the operation of the Iranian State Railway and the existing truck assembly and port facilities. They constructed docks and warehouses and plane and truck assembly plants, built highways and organized a motor-transport service, put Diesel locomotives and modern rolling stock on the railroad, assembled trucks and planes on a production-line basis, unloaded ships with the temperature at 120° F. in Khorramshahr, and moved supplies through mountain passes where it was 18° below zero.

The American troops, totaling up to 29,500 men, were supplemented by as many as 44,000 local laborers. The greatest monthly movement of supplies to Russia through the Persian corridor was reached in July 1944, when 289,000 long tons were delivered to the Soviets. During the entire period of active operations, commencing in late December 1942 and terminating in the midsummer of 1945, a total of 5,560,000 long tons of lend-lease cargo was moved through the Persian Gulf to Russia.

The third route to Russia was across the Northern Pacific to Vladivostok and other Russian ports in eastern Siberia. In the Pacific the cargoes were hauled in Soviet bottoms, which carried about half of our total shipments. This meant that over 7,000,000 tons of supplies had to be hauled on the trans-Siberian railroad over a route that required twelve days for a passenger train to negotiate. An important auxiliary to the North Pacific surface route was the air ferry route over which American crews flew lend-lease aircraft to Fairbanks, Alaska, where they were picked up by Russian crews and flown across the Bering Sea and Siberia to air bases in eastern Europe.

From October 1941 to May 1945, 2,660 shiploads of supplies were sent to Russia via all routes. Over 15,200,000 tons arrived at their destinations, but seventy-seven ships were lost as a result of enemy

action. The following list gives the quantities of the major items that the United States sent to Russia during the war:

Trucks	385,883
Jeeps	51,503
Tanks	7,056
Tractors	5,071
Oil products (tons))	2,670,000
Food (tons)	4,470,000
Locomotives	1,981
Freight cars	11,158
Aircraft	14,834
Antiaircraft guns	8,218
Radio sets	16,000
Shoes (pairs)	15,417,000
Merchant vessels	95

THE RUSSIAN SUMMER OFFENSIVE OF 1944.

After five years of war Hitler finally began to feel the full fury of the United Nations. In the West the Allied forces under General Eisenhower, who had been waging a "war of nerves" against the Germans and thus forcing them to keep troops and supplies in readiness to meet an impending invasion, gave substance to German fears and Russian hopes with their landings in Normandy on 6 June. The Germans were then actively engaged in a war on three major land fronts. In France, Italy, and on the eastern front the Allies were bringing superior forces to bear against the war-wearied Wehrmacht and were beginning to forge a ring of steel that was soon to be drawn tighter and tighter.

In the East, although the Germans had been pushed back on their bases, there had been no appreciable shortening of the front (see dotted phase line on map). Therefore, the German armies that had suffered such heavy losses in Russia since November 1942 were stretched thinner than ever to meet the summer offensives that the increasingly powerful Red Army was sure to launch. The huge salient that the Russians held in the western Ukraine was a particularly serious threat, since a breakthrough there would permit a penetration into central Poland that would compromise the German forces on the rest of the front. But Hitler, faithful to his policy of inelastic defense, would consider no proposal for a general withdrawal to shorten the eastern front and create a strategic reserve capable of influencing future operations. Instead, the German divisions were so scattered over Europe that nowhere did they enjoy a combat superiority that promised decisive results. About 53 per

cent of Hitler's total forces, or 140 divisions, were on the Russian front, 20 per cent were in France and the Low Countries, and 9 per cent were in Italy. The remainder were in Germany, the Balkans, Denmark, Norway, and Finland.

In the spring of 1944 the Anglo-American air forces gained definite air superiority in western Europe, and their heavy bomber attacks against the fatherland continued to keep most of the Luftwaffe occupied. In the East the Red Air Force still dominated the skies over the battlefields with its efficient fighters and fighter-bombers. On 2 June 1944 the first shuttle bombing mission to Russia was flown from Italy by heavy bombers of the American Fifteenth Air Force which attacked enemy airdromes in Hungary and flew on east to land on newly prepared United States air bases in the Ukraine, between Kiev and Kharkov.* The greatest threat of the German Navy was largely eliminated when its U-boats were overcome in the Battle of the Atlantic in 1943. The Wehrmacht was still capable of conducting a desperate defense, and it still held large areas beyond the German borders in which the battles could be fought; but the scales of war were weighing heavily against the Nazis.

The Finnish Campaign of 1944.—Before discussing the main campaigns in eastern Europe during the last year of the war, let us consider briefly the final operations in Finland. As a preliminary to the main effort in White Russia, Soviet troops of General Govorov's Leningrad Front launched an attack against the Finns between Lake Ladoga and the Gulf of Finland on 10 June, breaking a two-year lull on that front. The attack was preceded by a three-hour preparation by artillery and aircraft that broke up the concrete defensive works of the forward positions and inflicted casualties of up to 70 per cent on Field Marshal Mannerheim's front-line troops. By the second day the Russians had opened a gap fifteen miles deep on a front of thirty miles. Mannerheim threw in his reserves, but on the 16th the Russians broke through the second defense line. By 19 June the Mannerheim Line had been completely broken through, and the last Finnish reserves had been expended. Viipuri fell the next day. This successful Russian offensive gained in ten days what the Red Army had taken three months to accomplish in the campaign of 1939-40—a testimonial to the vast improvement in

* The shuttle bombing program between western and eastern Europe was never developed to any extent because of the difficulty of coordinating operations with the Russians.

Soviet arms during the war. Leningrad was relieved of all danger, and the Gulf of Finland was again open for the Red Baltic Fleet. Govorov then began shifting his main forces back to the south for an attack on the Germans who were defending Estonia.

The day after Viipuri fell, on 21 June, General Meretskov launched an offensive on both sides of Lake Onega. Since most of Mannerheim's reserves had already been committed against Govorov, the Russians were able to push steadily ahead in spite of the difficult terrain. By mid-July the Finns had fallen back to their old frontier, and fighting began to die down along the south and south-eastern Finnish fronts. This operation reopened direct rail communication between Murmansk and the White Sea and Leningrad. On 4 September, after more than three years of fighting, hostilities between the Finns and Russians ceased. Sporadic fighting developed between the Finns and the Germans who were withdrawing from eastern Finland.

The final operation in Finland occurred in the fall when Meretskov moved north and launched an attack from the Murmansk area against the German Twentieth Army to capture the valuable nickel mines and the air and naval bases of Petsamo and Kirkenes, from which the Germans had attacked the convoys of the Allies. Beginning an offensive in the arctic tundra at the outset of winter was a bold maneuver, but in spite of the terrain and weather the Russians were successful. Their main attack, launched south of Petsamo, was supported by artillery and aircraft. In two days the Russians penetrated the German defensive positions and then pushed on to the northwest to cut off Petsamo and join up with an amphibious force from the north. The Russians took Petsamo on 15 October. The enemy called up all available reserves from Norway; but he could not stop the Russians, who captured Kirkenes ten days later. The Finns then undertook the task of expelling the last Germans from their territory. On 27 December Berlin announced that the German withdrawal from Finland had been completed.

The Drive to the Vistula (Map 20).—On the main battle line between the Gulf of Finland and the Black Sea there had been a general regrouping of units on both sides during the spring lull in the fighting. After the disastrous winter campaign in the western Ukraine both Kleist and Manstein were relieved of their commands, and their headquarters were reorganized. The forces in Rumania were placed under the command of General Schoerner, whose headquarters became Army Group South Ukraine. His troops included

the Sixth and Eighth Armies and the Rumanian Third and Fourth Armies. Manstein's old headquarters, redesignated Army Group North Ukraine, had the sector between the Carpathian Mountains and the Pripet Marshes. To it were assigned the First and Fourth Panzer Armies and the Hungarian First Army. Field Marshal Model was called down from the north to head this army group, which had the important mission of preventing the Russians from advancing into southern Poland. In the center Field Marshal Busch still had the Second, Ninth, Fourth, and Third Panzer Armies, while General Lindemann assumed command of Army Group North, which had the Sixteenth and Eighteenth Armies.*

The Soviet army groups were also reorganized and their commanders shifted. Marshal Zhukov returned to his post as Deputy Supreme Commander, and Marshal Vasilievsky resumed his duties as Chief of Staff of the Red Army. Konev, Malinovski, and Tolbukhin moved up one notch, taking over the First, Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts, respectively. Tolbukhin's old command, the Fourth Ukrainian Front (General Petrov), included mountain troops; so after capturing Sevastopol it was given a zone in the Carpathians between the First and Second Ukrainian Fronts. Rokossovski continued to command the First White Russian Front, but the old Second was reorganized as the Second and Third White Russian Fronts, with Zakharov and Chernyakovski as the commanders.** Bagramyan still had the First Baltic Front; Yeremenko returned from the Crimea to resume command of the zone west of the Valdai Hills, and a new group, the Third Baltic Front, was organized in the Lake Peipus region under General Maslennikov, whom we last saw as commander of the Trans-Caucasus Front in 1943. Govorov's Leningrad Front had one corps around Narva; during June his main effort was directed against the Finns north of Leningrad.

Revitalized with battle-tested commanders and re-equipped and reinforced, the Russian army groups were ready to resume their advance to the west in June. With the Western Allies already securely established in Normandy, and keeping the German forces in western Europe fully occupied, the Red Army could anticipate major

* On 23 June the German army commanders in Russia were as follows: Sixth, Angelis; Eighth, Woehler; First Panzer, Raus; Fourth Panzer, Harpe; Second, Weiss; Ninth, Jordan; Fourth, Tippleskirch; Third Panzer, Reinhardt; Sixteenth, Hansen; Eighteenth, Loch.

** Both these officers were new as army group commanders but had distinguished themselves in the operations of 1943. Chernyakovski had commanded an army under Rokossovski at Kursk and Vatutin at Kiev, while Zakharov had an army in the Donets bend.

victories in the East during the summer. The most logical place to begin their offensive, in keeping with the strategy of striking alternate blows along the front and against German salients where possible, was the huge bulge in White Russia, where Army Group Center had been blocking the main route from Moscow to Warsaw since the fall of 1943.

There were several good reasons why the Soviet High Command should begin the summer campaign with an offensive against the Minsk salient. First, logistical considerations favored this sector, since it was nearest the important communications centers and large depots of the Moscow area. The eight months' lull in fighting in this area had given the Russians ample time to rehabilitate the railroads and accumulate huge quantities of ammunition, fuel, and other supplies necessary to support a sustained offensive. On the other hand, the offensive in the Ukraine had carried the Russians so far that they had not yet had time to improve their communications there or bring in the required stocks of supplies. Second, tactical considerations favored an offensive in the center. The Russians were aware of the lack of depth to the German positions and were confident that breakthroughs on the faces of the salient could be quickly exploited to annihilate Army Group Center. This would create a huge gap in the main German defensive system and cause the rest of the front to collapse. On the dry route from Smolensk to Minsk no major rivers would have to be crossed, and the terrain was more favorable for armored action than that to the north or south. Although a continuation of the offensive in southeastern Poland might achieve decisive results, the Germans had concentrated their strongest reserves there; and their troops in the Pripet Marshes would be a threat to the Russian right flank. In short, logistics, enemy dispositions, and terrain all favored an offensive toward Minsk.

While the Russians were marshalling their forces for the offensive, the Germans were trying to re-establish a defensive line in Russia. During the spring the most serious threat was posed by the First Ukrainian Front in the Lwow area; so one division after another was withdrawn from Army Group Center to strengthen this sector. By 1 June German situation maps showed about thirty-seven German divisions, including eleven panzer divisions, on the 200-mile front from the Carpathians to Kowel and one panzer and thirty-three infantry divisions on the 500-mile front from Kowel to Vitebsk. This distribution of his scarce divisions clearly indicated where Hitler expected the next attack—in the Lwow-Kowel

area. But he was soon to have impressed on him the wisdom of the age-old military axiom that plans must be based on the enemy's capabilities and not his probabilities.

On 23 June, three years and a day after the Germans had invaded Russia, the Red Army began its summer offensive. The night before, Soviet partisans had launched a widespread attack on German railroad lines in White Russia that interrupted all traffic for more than twenty-four hours.* The main attack was launched on a 350-mile front by the First Baltic and the three White Russian Groups. The Russians had accumulated ample stocks of ammunition and about 400 pieces of artillery or heavy mortars per mile of front; so the artillery preparation was very effective, a steady drumfire being delivered on all German positions. Superimposed on this artillery fire was the weight of the Red Air Force, which in continuous waves attacked artillery positions, reserves, headquarters, and communications. These combined fires inflicted heavy losses on the front-line troops and on the local reserves as they moved forward. They practically destroyed the enemy network of signal communications, causing a breakdown in the command channels and those used for artillery fire control. After this intense preparation the attack began with infantry, closely supported by armored brigades, opening holes in the German lines. The main attacks were launched by Bagramyan and Chernyakovski on both sides of Vitebsk and by Rokossovski south and east of Bobruisk.

From the beginning the German situation was desperate. The only general reserves available to Field Marshal Busch were one panzer division, which had to be immediately committed at Bobruisk, and one motorized infantry division that quickly became engaged at Vitebsk. Thereafter Busch could exert little influence on the battle because he had no other reserves. Furthermore, the rigid defensive policy of the German High Command had prevented the preparation of alternate defensive positions in the rear to which the front-line units could be withdrawn. Hitler had also designated certain key towns as fortresses that must be defended to the last. Vitebsk, Orsha, and Mogilev, on the perimeter of the Minsk salient, had been so designated; and at the beginning of the battle the bulk of Busch's Third Panzer and Fourth Armies had been assigned to the last-ditch defense of those points. This simplified the problem for the Russians, since the fortresses were quickly isolated, tying down most of the German troops.

*About 10,500 separate demolitions were counted in the zone of Army Group Center.

Within two days Vitebsk had been encircled by the Russians, and a twenty-five-mile gap had been opened south of the city through which Chernyakovski immediately committed his mobile reserves—armored armies of tank and motorized corps organized to pass through the gaps created by the assault infantry and exploit deep to the rear. One such column reached the Smolensk–Minsk highway on the 25th, cutting the main communication line of the Fourth Army. At the same time Rokossovski sent his armored corps through a twenty-mile gap that had been opened in the Ninth Army's line between the Pripet and Beresina Rivers. Some of his tanks exploited to the west while another force swung north to cut off Bobruisk, acting in conjunction with the force driving west from Rogatchev.

German opposition rapidly deteriorated. The envelopment of about 70,000 troops of the Ninth Army at Bobruisk was completed on the 27th. At the same time other Russian forces crossed the Dnieper in rapid pursuit of elements of the Fourth Army that tried to withdraw behind the Beresina. Orsha and Vitebsk both fell on the 27th, and Zakharov captured Mogilev on the 28th. The fall of Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev, and Bobruisk meant that the German defenses in their central sector had been completely crushed; and by 30 June the first phase of the battle for White Russia had been completed with the destruction of some 200,000 Germans.

The second phase of the battle began immediately, with Chernyakovski crossing the Beresina, Bagramyan opening an attack on Polotsk, and Rokossovski driving to outflank Minsk from the southwest. On 3 July Chernyakovski's tanks entered Minsk and that night were joined by some of Rokossovski's troops. These moves by the Russian armored columns completely disrupted the German defensive plans and resulted in the encirclement of practically the entire Fourth Army southeast of Minsk. Polotsk fell at the same time, but in this area the German troops had been able to maintain a more cohesive front than farther south. The climax of the battle for White Russia was reached on 4 July with the capture of Minsk. In ten days the Red Army had crushed three German armies and had torn a 250-mile gap in the enemy line between Polotsk and the Pripet River.

From 4 to 10 July the armored columns of the First and Third White Russian Fronts pushed on to the west. They met their heaviest opposition from miscellaneous German units hurriedly brought up to block the main routes from Minsk to Vilna and Baranowice; but this resistance was quickly overcome with the capture of Baran-

twice on the 8th by Rokossovski and the encirclement of Vilna on the 10th by Chernyakovski. In the meantime Zakharov was mopping up in the rear. The only force the Germans could organize to stop the hard-driving Russian tanks was one corps of three divisions that they withdrew from the vicinity of Pinsk and assembled in the area Bialystok-Grodno.

The situation on 10 July is shown by the dotted phase line on the map. In less than three weeks the Red Army had driven 250 miles. The greatest encirclements had taken place at Vitebsk, Bobruisk, and Minsk. In these pockets twenty-one of the thirty-three German divisions that originally held the line from Vitebsk to the Pripet had been trapped. The Third Panzer Army had managed to withdraw part of its forces to the west, and in the south the Second Army had been comparatively unmolested; but in the center the Ninth and Fourth Armies had been practically destroyed. Only four or five divisions had managed to escape through the guerrilla-infested forests south of Minsk, and they had lost all their heavy equipment. During the battle Busch was relieved, and Model was called up to try to save the situation in Army Group Center. Harpe replaced Model as commander of Army Group North Ukraine.

About 10 July the White Russian Fronts changed their tactics. Instead of armored formations pushing forward regardless of opposition on the flanks and rear, there was a more methodical advance on a broad front. This change was undoubtedly dictated by the increasing difficulty of supplying the extended armored corps. But at the same time the Russian High Command enlarged the scope of the offensive by launching new attacks on the flanks of the huge gap they had torn in the German line. Anticipating such a move, Model went to Hitler's headquarters on 10 July with a proposal to withdraw Army Group North behind the Dvina and use some of its divisions to bolster the shattered Army Group Center. As usual, however, Hitler refused to consider a general withdrawal and ordered the all-out defense of the Baltic States. The folly of this decision was soon to become evident.

On 12 July General Yerenko's Second Baltic Front joined Bagramyan's right wing in the general offensive by attacking on a 100-mile front from Ostrov to the Dvina. In this sector the Germans held a strong defensive line; but Opochka, one of its bastions, fell on the 15th. Maslennikov also joined the offensive and captured Ostrov on the 21st and Pskov two days later. On the 25th Yerenko cut the main road from Dvinsk to Riga and the next day captured Dvinsk itself. At the same time Narva fell to troops of

the Leningrad Front. The Germans were able to re-establish a defensive line in the difficult terrain north of the Dvina; but to the south of that river Bagramyan's armor, practically unopposed, drove on to the northwest. On 31 July he occupied the road junction of Mitau, about twenty miles from the Gulf of Riga. This move practically isolated Army Group North from the rest of the German front. General Schoerner assumed command of the army group and launched local counterattacks that prevented the Russians from reaching the coast, and for the next few weeks he managed to hold his contracted front against the enemy attacks.

In the meantime a more significant operation had been developing on the right flank of Army Group Center. In this zone Marshal Konev's First Ukrainian Front had been reinforced and by mid-July was prepared to join in the general offensive. As German troops were being shifted from Army Group North Ukraine to Army Group Center, he launched his attack (14 July), striking without an artillery preparation to gain tactical surprise. Konev's main effort struck north and south of Brody, which the Germans were holding to protect the important communications center of Lwow. This operation quickly assumed the same pattern as those in White Russia. By the 19th about five German divisions were encircled west of Brody, while Konev's right wing pushed on toward the San River, which was reached on the 23d and crossed the next day. By the 25th Lwow was encircled; but the Germans held the city for two days, giving some of Harpe's forces a chance to withdraw. Przemysl also fell as Konev's right wing pushed on from the San to the Vistula and his left wing moved into the foothills of the Carpathians. On 2 and 3 August Konev crossed the Vistula at Baranow and during the next few days established a bridgehead twenty-five miles wide and twenty miles deep. The First Ukrainian Front advanced no farther at this time, but Konev reported that during his three-week offensive he had destroyed 170,000 German and Hungarian troops.

Simultaneously with Konev's offensive Rokossovski launched a powerful blow against the extreme left flank of Army Group North Ukraine. This operation was conducted by a special task force that included tanks, Cossack troops, and cavalry of the First White Russian Front; it was commanded by General Chuikov of Stalingrad fame. Chuikov struck westward from Kowel on 18 July and two days later reached the Bug River on a forty-mile front. Part of the task force turned north toward Brest-Litovsk while the main body moved on to Lublin, which was captured on the 24th. Exploiting

this breakthrough, Chuikov moved on toward the Vistula against no opposition and reached the river east of Radom on the 26th. From that point he pushed north along the east bank, and by 31 July Russian tanks were only ten or twelve miles from Warsaw. This move precipitated an uprising in Warsaw on 1 August of Polish underground troops under General Bor, but it was eventually suppressed by the Germans.* Along the Vistula, south of Warsaw, the Germans collected auxiliary troops such as police battalions and students from military schools, who managed to prevent a full-scale crossing of the river, although two small bridgeheads were seized. The reconstituted Ninth Army was charged with the defense of this sector of the Vistula position.

While Chuikov was driving to the Vistula and Warsaw, two-thirds of Rokossovski's troops were engaged in an attack on the strong fortress city of Brest-Litovsk, which was defended by the Second Army. By 25 July four Russian columns were converging on this city. One column had moved through the Pripet Marshes to Pinsk, which it had captured on the 14th in what was virtually an amphibious operation. Support had been provided by ships of the Dnieper River flotilla operating up the Pripet. Brest-Litovsk fell on the 28th, but some of its defenders managed to escape.

During the later part of July the Second and Third White Russian Fronts continued their pressure against Army Group Center. But the enemy grew stronger as he fell back on his stronghold of East Prussia. German civilians were called out to help prepare defensive zones along the frontier, and the Fourth Army was quickly re-established with three divisions called up from other sectors of the front.** Nevertheless, Chernyakovski captured the fortress of Vilna on the 13th, after the Third Panzer Army had succeeded in breaking through to rescue the besieged garrison; and Kovno fell on the 31st. One column crossed the Niemen north of Grodno on 16 and 17 July and captured the city after a heavy fight; but it was finally stopped at Augustow, on the East Prussian border, on the 18th by a two-division counterattack by the Fourth Army. At the same time Zakharov, having advanced from Minsk, directed a strong attack on Bialystok. A serious battle developed in this area from 20 to 27 July as the Germans tried unsuccessfully to hold the key road center. Zakharov, however, was unable to move much farther west since Rokossovski needed his assistance south of Bialystok,

*The Poles accused the Russians of failing to support the underground troops.

** Two of these divisions came from Army Group North Ukraine.

where the Germans were mounting their strongest counterattack of the campaign.

At the end of July Field Marshal Model judged Rokossovski's spearheads, which, it will be recalled, were driving down the Vistula to Warsaw, to be his most serious threat. Accordingly, he concentrated all the troops he could gather and personally led a counter-attack of four divisions against the Russians who had reached Radzymin. After two days of bitter fighting the Germans claimed the annihilation of a Russian tank corps. In this battle south of the Bug, which continued during the first week of August, Rokossovski's drive was finally brought to a standstill. A German account of the battle concluded that it showed "that with a bold and resolute leader great success can be made even though the situation may have been desperate."

By 7 August, in spite of the small number of troops available to them, the Germans had generally succeeded in stopping the great Russian offensive. In six weeks the Red Army had driven over 450 miles, from the upper Dnieper to the Vistula—the longest and fastest advance it had yet achieved. But such an advance always over-stretches communications, and this was the case here. Because of the time needed to rehabilitate the newly recovered railroads and to bring up supplies, almost six months were to pass before the Russians could mount a fresh drive on this part of the front.

Moscow announced that during the first month of the offensive the Russians captured 158,000 and killed 381,000 enemy troops and destroyed or captured 2,700 tanks and self-propelled guns, 8,700 other guns, and 57,000 motor vehicles. This was one of the most decisive campaigns of the war, for not only did it result in the virtual destruction of Army Group Center but it forced the German High Command to so weaken the rest of its defenses that it was no longer able to oppose any determined Soviet offensive.

Furthermore, at the very moment that the Russians were reaching the Vistula the Western Allies broke out of their Normandy beachhead and swept over the fields of western France to encircle two German armies west of the Seine. The German High Command itself had suffered a severe internal shock in the attempted assassination of Hitler on 20 July. The purge of Army leaders that followed not only increased Hitler's personal interference with operations but seriously shook the morale of the German field commanders. General Zeitzler was relieved as Chief of Staff of the German Army, and panzer expert Guderian was called up to fill his post. Henceforth the top German field commanders were frequently

changed to try to improve an almost hopeless situation. One of the first of such moves was the transfer of the indomitable Model to France in mid-August to try to save the critical situation in the West. The Wehrmacht went on trying to plug the holes in its defensive perimeter, but each successive attempt only temporarily delayed the Allied armies that were pressing closer and closer to the heart of the Reich.

The Advance to the Baltic Sea (Map 21a).—As the Russian drive ground to a halt along the Vistula early in August, the Red Army began to increase the pressure elsewhere. In the north Maslennikov continued his attacks south of Lake Peipus, and by mid-August he had broken through the German defensive lines and shifted the direction of his main attack to the north. One column captured Dorpat on 25 August, but at the end of the month other columns moving toward the road center of Valga were blocked by determined German resistance. Yeremenko made even less progress during August as he attempted to advance across the difficult terrain north of the Dvina. Bagramyan and Chernyakovski made some gains in Lithuania, but on 16 August the Germans launched an attack with four divisions at Siauliai. There was a week of intensive fighting around that town, during which Schoerner secured his narrow corridor west of Riga. Nothing occurred elsewhere that was of any importance, and by the end of August an uneasy lull was developing in the zones of all three Baltic groups.

The capitulation of Finland early in September enabled the Russians to reinforce the Leningrad Front and also gave General Schoerner an excuse to begin withdrawing his German divisions from Estonia. About 15 September Govorov launched an attack that soon developed into a rapid advance against little opposition (**Map 21b**). Tallinn was captured on the 21st, and during the first week in October the Russians began to occupy the islands of Dago and Oesel with the help of the Red Navy and Air Force. Maslennikov also resumed operations on 15 September, with a coordinated attack against Valga. After a four-day battle the town fell, the Germans falling back toward Riga. Yeremenko joined in this offensive and extended his operations south of the Dvina.

An even more significant operation developed on the First Baltic Front, where, on the 15th, Bagramyan launched an attack toward Riga. In three days he drove to within fifteen miles of the city. The Germans committed their panzer units west of Mitau to hold open the corridor through which they were withdrawing their

troops from north of the Dvina. Bagramyan then left the capture of Riga to Maslennikov and Yeremenko and on 5 October switched his main effort to the west to cut off the retreating Army Group North. In four days he advanced sixty miles on a 120-mile front. By 10 October a part of his force reached the Baltic between Libau and Memel, while other troops pushed southwest to the Niemen River, the northeastern border of East Prussia. The Germans held the port of Memel, but Tilsit came under the fire of Russian artillery. Riga fell on the 13th; and by mid-October the Baltic campaign had come to an end, with Army Group North isolated in the western part of Latvia. Although Schoerner maintained contact with East Prussia by sea, the twenty decimated divisions under his control were no longer able to exert any strategic influence on the conduct of the war.

From 16 to 25 October Chernyakovski tried to push a new offensive into East Prussia; but although he broke through two of the German defensive lines, he was finally stopped by the strong permanent fortifications covering Insterburg. By the end of October the Russians had reached the solid line shown on the map. Then wet autumn weather and the need to regroup forces prevented them from launching a new major offensive into East Prussia for two and a half months.

While the Russian Baltic groups and Chernyakovski were liberating the Baltic States, little effort was made by the central groups to continue the summer offensive that had so quickly carried them to the Vistula. Rokossovski consolidated his front by moving up to the Narew River in August and September, and Konev enlarged his Baranow bridgehead and straightened his line in front of Tarnow; but otherwise these commanders directed their efforts to preparing for the coming winter offensive.

The Advance Across the Danube (Map 21a).—Just as things were beginning to quiet down in the central sector of the eastern front, Stalin landed another stunning blow—this time against Army Group South Ukraine, which had enjoyed a lull on its front while the great battles were raging east of the Vistula. In early August General Friessner held his 300-mile front with about twenty-three German and twenty Rumanian divisions; but the latter had little interest in fighting for Hitler, and negotiations had already begun between the Rumanians and Russians. Opposite Army Group South Ukraine, Malinovski and Tolbukhin had about ten armies in their Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts, whose initial operations were to be coordinated by Marshal Timoshenko.

The offensive began on 20 August with Malinovski striking south against the Eighth Army and Tolbukhin, from his Tiraspol bridgehead, driving westward against the Sixth Army. Like the other great Russian offensives, these attacks were assisted by heavy artillery concentrations and air support that on the first day included over 1,600 sorties in each attack zone. The Germans had concentrated their strongest forces around Iasi and Kishinev, but they were unable to stop the hard-driving Red divisions. During the first two days the Russians crushed the German defenses and by the 23d were beginning to exploit the breakthroughs with their armored columns.

At that moment the Rumanians ceased fighting for the Germans and surrendered to the Russians. On the 25th a new Rumanian Government declared war on the Axis, and the Rumanian troops began active cooperation with the Russians. Malinovski drove south toward Focsani while Tolbukhin pushed on toward Galati. By the 25th the bulk of the Sixth Army was cut off southwest of Kishinev, and the next day part of the Eighth Army was trapped along the Sifet south of Iasi. By the 26th Tolbukhin had reached the lower Danube, and Malinovski was beginning to pass through the Focsani-Galati gap. In less than a week the decisive operations of the campaign had been completed, and the German right flank had been shattered. The encirclements at Kishinev and south of Iasi had been almost as disastrous for the Germans as those in White Russia earlier in the summer. The Russians claimed 106,000 prisoners and huge quantities of war matériel. The dotted phase line shows the situation on 26 August.

During the rest of the campaign operations in the Balkans were governed by political developments as much as by military considerations. The vast spaces over which they had to move proved to be the chief problem for the troops of the Red Army. In the last week in August Tolbukhin closed up along the lower Danube and the Bulgarian frontier. On the 26th Bulgaria deserted the Axis and began negotiations with the Allies. Malinovski drove on past Focsani on the 27th, captured the oil center of Ploesti on the 30th, and entered Bucharest on the 31st. About this time the forces of Field Marshal Weichs' Army Group F began to evacuate the Aegean Islands and Greece.

By the middle of September Malinovski had reached the Iron Gate at Orsova, where the Danube passes through the mountains, and had already won many of the passes through the Transylvanian Alps. The lack of opposition is explained by the fact that the Ger-

mans were depending on newly formed Hungarian units to defend Transylvania. Dissatisfied with the progress of negotiations with Bulgaria, Russia declared war on that country and sent Tolbukhin across the border on 5 September. Three days later Bulgaria declared war on Germany, and Tolbukhin began to assemble his forces along the Danube so that he could move up on Malinovski's left.

Since the Germans from Greece were beginning to arrive in the Nis-Belgrade area, from where they could easily move on back into Hungary, the Soviet High Command decided to begin operations against Belgrade immediately, regardless of logistical considerations (**Map 21b**). Accordingly, at the end of September Tolbukhin crossed the Danube near Orsova. His columns cut the Nis-Belgrade trunk railroad on 10 October. Bulgarian troops and Yugoslav partisans under Tito joined the Russians, and on the 20th Belgrade was cleared of Germans after three days of street fighting. This forced the Germans to use the road through Sarajevo as their escape route. Tolbukhin then delegated the task of clearing out Yugoslavia to Tito and the Bulgarians and concentrated his forces north of the Danube, where he could assist Malinovski in a new offensive toward Budapest and Vienna. This regrouping was not completed until the end of November. In the meantime small British forces landed in Greece on 24 September and three days later invaded Albania. On 18 October the exiled Greek Government returned to Athens from Cairo. By December the lower Balkans were cleared of Nazi troops.

The heaviest fighting in the south during October and November occurred in Malinovski's zone. Late in September Army Groups North and South Ukraine were redesignated Army Group A and Army Group South, respectively. Friessner, commander of the latter, was charged with the defense of Hungary. Malinovski started an offensive toward the Tisa on 5 October and on the 11th forced this river at Szeged. At the same time his center and left crossed the mountains and drove on to the west. By the 12th he had reached the dotted phase line shown on the map. This advance cleared the passes of the Transylvanian Alps and placed the Russians in position to turn the German-Hungarian defenses in the Carpathians.

Late in October the Fourth Ukrainian Front joined the offensive and stormed the Carpathian passes as the enemy began to withdraw. Ungvar was captured on the 27th. The Germans tried to make a stand farther south, at Debrecen, but Russian tanks also overcame this opposition. At the end of the month Malinovski

launched an attack across the Tisa, and by 4 November his vanguards had reached the outskirts of Budapest.

Tolbukhin finally joined in on Malinovski's left and on 29 November launched an attack across the Danube that reached Lake Balaton during the first week in December. But Budapest had to be cleared before he could progress much farther, and it was there that the Germans decided to make a final stand. It was to take the Russians two more months to capture that stronghold.

THE RUSSIAN WINTER OFFENSIVE OF 1945 (Map 19).

The summer campaigns of 1944 had caused a tremendous shrinkage in Germany's conquests, both in eastern and western Europe. Yet Hitler had avoided the total collapse that seemed almost certain in August. His rally during the autumn was made possible by his contracted defensive perimeter and the Allies' extended lines of communication. But by 15 December 1944 the inevitable fate of the Reich must have been clear to the Wehrmacht High Command. Pounded relentlessly from the air and blockaded from the sea, the fatherland rested its fate in the hands of its Army, which, although overwhelmed on all sides, had been somewhat resuscitated by scraping the bottom of the man-power barrel to fill its depleted ranks.

The High Command then made a fatal mistake when, believing a decision could be won more quickly in the West than in the East, it committed its last carefully hoarded mobile strategic reserve, the Sixth Panzer Army, against the Americans in the Ardennes Forest on 16 December. Thus the only means by which the Wehrmacht might have temporarily stemmed the irresistible advance of the Red Army was dissipated in the snow of Belgium. Thereafter, in spite of a few local reverses, the Russians advanced as fast as they could provide the logistical support for their armies. Their over-all plan was simple: to advance on Berlin as the principal objective and cover the main advance by driving into East Prussia in the north and advancing to Vienna in the south. Unfortunately, space limitations permit only a summary of these final Russian operations.

In spite of the critical situation in the West during the later part of December, Stalin characteristically refused to launch a major offensive toward Berlin until he was prepared to support it with a tremendous superiority of all means. Therefore, the principal action on the eastern front from 15 December to 12 January was centered around Budapest, where the Germans were trying to prevent the Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts from pushing up the Dan-

ube Valley, the "back door" of Germany (Map 22a). Tolbukhin continued the offensive that he had begun on 29 November. On 27 December his spearheads west of the Danube bend were joined by Malinovski to complete the encirclement of five German and four Hungarian divisions in Budapest. From 2 to 11 January the Germans launched a heavy panzer counterattack that met with some success but failed to pierce the Russian lines. On 18 January Pest, the eastern half of the city, fell to Malinovski; but the last resistance in Buda, on the west bank of the Danube, did not cease until 13 February. For fifty days this natural fortress had delayed the advance of the Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts into Austria.

But the main operation of the winter campaign developed farther north. During the lull of nearly six months the Russians had built up their communications in Poland and had assembled abundant resources. Their forces had been reorganized, with Zhukov assuming command of the First White Russian Front, which, along with Konev's First Ukrainian Front, had been reinforced by divisions made available by the completion of the Baltic operations. These two groups would launch the main attack to the west. Rokossovski had taken over the reinforced Second White Russian Front for an attack into East Prussia through the Allenstein gap, and Chernyakovski had strengthened his group for a drive through the Insterburg gap. Besides a numerical superiority of nearly four to one,* the Russian armies now had better equipment than they had fought with before. The factories had greatly increased the output of the new "Stalin" tank; and the inflowing stream of American trucks had enabled the High Command to motorize many more of the infantry divisions, so that they could be used to back up the armored spearheads.

Konev began the offensive on 12 January from the Baranow bridgehead. A breach in the enemy lines was made after three days, with the fall of Kielce. Armored columns raced westward while other troops threatened the rear of the Germans facing Zhu-

* Estimates placed the Russian strengths as follows:

Konev:	9 armored corps and	66 infantry divisions
Zhukov:	13 armored corps and	53 infantry divisions
Rokossovski:	7 armored corps and	59 infantry divisions
Chernyakovski:	2 armored corps and	60 infantry divisions
Total:	31 armored corps and	238 infantry divisions

In mid-January German orders of battle show Army Group A with 37 divisions (including 5 panzer) and Army Group Center with 44 divisions (including 2 panzer), or a total of 81 divisions between the Carpathians and Memel. Many of the German divisions were far under strength.

kov. Tarnow fell on the 18th and Cracow on the 19th, while other columns crossed the German border to complete Konev's decisive operation. On 14 January both Zhukov and Rokossovski joined in the offensive, and the breach became 200 miles wide with the capture of Radom on the 16th. Warsaw was isolated and fell on the 17th, by which time Zhukov's spearheads were close to Lodz, which fell two days later. By the 23d the Russians had driven over half way from Warsaw to Berlin (170 miles in nine days), as shown by the dotted phase line, and had completed another great strategic breakthrough.

By-passing the fortified communications centers of Posen and Torun,* Zhukov rolled on against the enemy's new and hastily organized Army Group Weichsel (Vistula), which was thrown into the breach in the German lines. On 30 January Zhukov crossed the old German border; the next day one of his spearheads reached the Oder near Kustrin, only forty miles from Berlin. During the next two weeks Zhukov closed up to the Oder and strengthened the part of his front that faced the Baltic. Konev reached the upper Oder at the end on January, which move brought the great industrial area of Silesia under attack. On 4 February he launched an attack across the Oder that reached the Niesse on the 15th, the same day that Breslau, the heavily fortified industrial center and capital of Silesia, was encircled.

When Rokossovski began his offensive from the Narew on 14 January, it quickly gained momentum. He entered East Prussia by the same routes that Samsonov had used with such fatal results in 1914; but the story was different this time, for Rokossovski swept on past the battlefield of Tannenberg and through Allenstein to reach the Baltic on 26 January. This isolated all the German forces east of Danzig. In the meantime Chernyakovski, coordinating his offensive with that of Rokossovski, turned the Insterburg gap from the north on 20 January and closed in on the fortress of Königsberg. By 15 February the defenders of East Prussia, relentlessly hammered from all sides, had been compressed into an isolated pocket west of Königsberg. In the meantime Memel had fallen on 28 January in the final operations of the First Baltic Front.

The Germans, again reorganizing their crumbling front, gained a respite along the Oder as the 300-mile Russian drive came to a halt because of muddy terrain and lack of supplies (Map 22b). For the next two months the Soviet High Command prepared for the

* Torun fell on 9 February, but Posen held out until the 23d.

final drive on Berlin, with active operations taking place only along the Baltic Sea and on the Danube River.

Zhukov launched a new attack toward the Baltic on 24 February and reached the coast at Kolberg on 4 March. In two more weeks he closed up to the lower Oder. Farther east the Germans tried to make a last-ditch stand between Danzig and Königsberg; but Rokossovski stormed Danzig on 30 March, and on 9 April Königsberg surrendered to Vasilievsky, who had replaced the mortally wounded Chernyakovski. In the center Zhukov attacked Kustrin on 10 March, captured the town two days later, and established a bridgehead across the Oder—this in preparation for his drive on Berlin. During the last week in February Konev closed up to the Niese and prepared to assault Breslau, an operation that was completed on the last day of the war.

When the Ardennes counteroffensive failed in January, Hitler turned his attention to the Danube sector of the eastern front, where things had not been going well. On 3 March the Sixth Panzer Army, recently transferred from the West, launched a counteroffensive northeast of Lake Balaton. The panzer divisions almost reached the Danube, but after a week of fighting they ran short of fuel and began to suffer heavily from enemy artillery and aircraft. This was the signal for the Russians to begin a new offensive. Tolbukhin attacked on 18 March and was joined by Malinovski two days later. By 2 April Tolbukhin was closing in on Vienna from the south; and Malinovski, pushing up the Danube, was nearing the eastern edge of the city. After a week's battle Vienna was cleared of Germans on 13 April. This ended the Danubian campaigns of the Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts that had started on the Dniester eight months before.

THE FINAL RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN IN CENTRAL EUROPE (Map 23)

During March and early April the German front in the West collapsed. After breaking through the West Wall the Western Allies crossed the Rhine with hardly a pause, encircled the Ruhr industrial area, and sped across central Germany with their armored columns, which by 16 April were drawing up to the Elbe and Mulde Rivers, where the Americans halted to await the arrival of the Russian armies.

On 16 April Zhukov began the battle for Berlin when with twenty-two divisions he broke out of his Oder River bridgeheads. In two

days his armor penetrated the deep fortified area; and by the 21st his guns were firing on Berlin, and his tank spearheads were at the city limits. Konev also began his attack across the Niesse on the 16th. Meeting less opposition than Zhukov, he cut the Dresden-Berlin highway on the 18th and then directed a strong tank force to the north. Despite Hitler's order to stand and fight to the last, resistance began to collapse as thousands of Germans tried to flee to the west to escape the Russians. On 25 April Konev's and Zhukov's spearheads joined west of Berlin to complete the double envelopment of the city. The same day one of Konev's divisions established contact with the American First Army on the Elbe at Torgau. Street fighting started in Berlin on 22 April; but not until 2 May did the remnants of the garrison, some 70,000 men, surrender to the Red Army.

During the last week of April and first week of May the final operations of the war in Europe were concluded. Rokossovski, who had moved up on Zhukov's right, crossed the Oder, captured Stettin on the 26th, and swept westward to make contact with the American XVIII Airborne Corps (then attached to Montgomery's army group) on the Wismar-Elbe River line on 3 May. Zhukov and Konev closed up to the Elbe and Mulde to link up with General Bradley's three American armies. In the Danube Valley the war ended before the Russians reached General Patton's Third Army east of Linz, but in Italy the British established contact with Marshal Tito's forces north of Trieste on 1 May. The final surrender of the Wehrmacht took place on 7 May at General Eisenhower's headquarters in France.

In a speech delivered on 1 May Marshal Stalin announced the German losses in the last three months of fighting: 800,000 prisoners, 1,000,000 killed, 6,000 aircraft, 12,000 tanks, and 23,000 pieces of artillery.

GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE (Map 19)

When the fourth and final year of the war in eastern Europe ended on 7 May 1945, Germany proper was completely overrun by Allied troops; and in the next week isolated German units in Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Yugoslavia surrendered to the Red Army. During the year the Russians had advanced a straight-line distance of 800 miles, from Vitebsk to the Elbe—exactly the same distance that the Western Allies had covered in advancing from Brest to the

Elbe. It is, however, impossible to make an accurate comparison of the achievements of the different Allied forces. In his campaigns in western Europe General Eisenhower had to overcome three major obstacles: the Atlantic Wall, the West Wall, and the Rhine; and he was forced to withstand the greatest German counteroffensive of the year. In addition, his air forces destroyed the Luftwaffe; and his naval and air forces took care of the German Navy. On the other hand, the Red Army continued to fight about twice as many German divisions as did the Western Allies.* Nevertheless, the importance of the ground operations in the West was not minimized by the Germans, who successively sent their three best field commanders, Field Marshals Rundstedt, Kluge, and Model, from the East to the West. The preponderance of strength in the East was dictated by the High Command's over-all strategy, which depended on prepared and natural defensive lines to hold the Western Allies while its ground forces stopped the Red Army.

Actually, the issue in eastern Europe was settled with the destruction of Army Group Center in White Russia at the beginning of the Red Army's last summer offensive. Thereafter, with American, British, and French divisions running rampant over the battlefields of western Europe, the fall of the Baltic States and the Balkans was inevitable; and the Germans no longer had the means even to defend their own frontiers. The Germans attributed their defeat in White Russia to the excellence of the Russian plans, preparations, and leadership, as well as the great numerical superiority. They considered the following to be some of their own mistakes in that campaign:

1. The failure of the High Command to allot sufficient resources and troops for the defense of White Russia.
2. The failure to prepare alternate defensive positions to the rear.
3. The interference of Hitler and the High Command in the tactical conduct of the battle.
4. The hesitancy of the High Command to quickly shift reserves toward Minsk once the Russian breakthrough was achieved.

* The following table, based on German orders of battle, gives a comparison of German divisions in eastern Europe, exclusive of Finland and the Balkans, with those in western Europe, exclusive of Norway, Denmark, and Italy:

	GERMAN DIVISIONS	
	<i>Eastern Europe</i>	<i>Western Europe</i>
June 1944	140	60
October 1944	120	50
January 1945	136	73
April 1945	130	65

5. Bad morale among the troops, which was caused by the exhaustion of five years of war, the feeling that they were fighting for a lost cause and were being sacrificed in useless last-ditch stands, spectacular Russian successes, the lack of protection against the Red Air Force, and the insecurity of their lines of communication because of Russian partisan activity in the rear areas.

But the price of the victory was high. The Russians reported their total losses as approximately 7,500,000 military personnel killed and missing, or one in every twenty-two of their 1940 population.* In his memoirs General Eisenhower discusses the effects of the war on the Russian people:

The experience of Russia in World War II was a harsh one. The year 1941 saw the entire western portion of that country overrun by the Nazis. From the region of the Volga westward, almost everything was destroyed. When we flew into Russia, in 1945, I did not see a house standing between the western borders of the country and the area around Moscow. Through this overrun region, Marshal Zhukov told me, so many numbers of women, children, and old men had been killed that the Russian Government would never be able to estimate the total. Some of their great cities had been laid waste, and until November 1942 there seemed to be little hope that their desperate defense could hold off the enemy until their industries could be rehabilitated and the Western Allies could get into the war in force.

All this would have embittered any people; it would have been completely astonishing if the Russians had not had a more direct and personal vindictiveness toward the Germans and a sterner attitude toward the realities of war than was the case in countries far removed from the scene of hostilities.**

German generals who fought in Russia had something to say of the Red Army's officers and soldiers. One general said:

As the war went on, the Russians developed an increasingly high standard of leadership from top to bottom. One of their greatest assets was their officers' readiness to learn. . .

When asked what he considered the Russians' chief asset, he added:

I would put first, what might be called the soulless indifference of the troops—it was something more than fatalism. They were not quite so insensitive when things went badly for them, but normally it was difficult to make any impression on them in the way that would happen with troops of other nations.***

* The ratio of United States battle deaths and missing was about one in every five hundred of our 1940 population.

** Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*. Copyright, 1948, by Doubleday & Co., Inc.

*** Hart, *The German Generals Talk*.

Another general said:

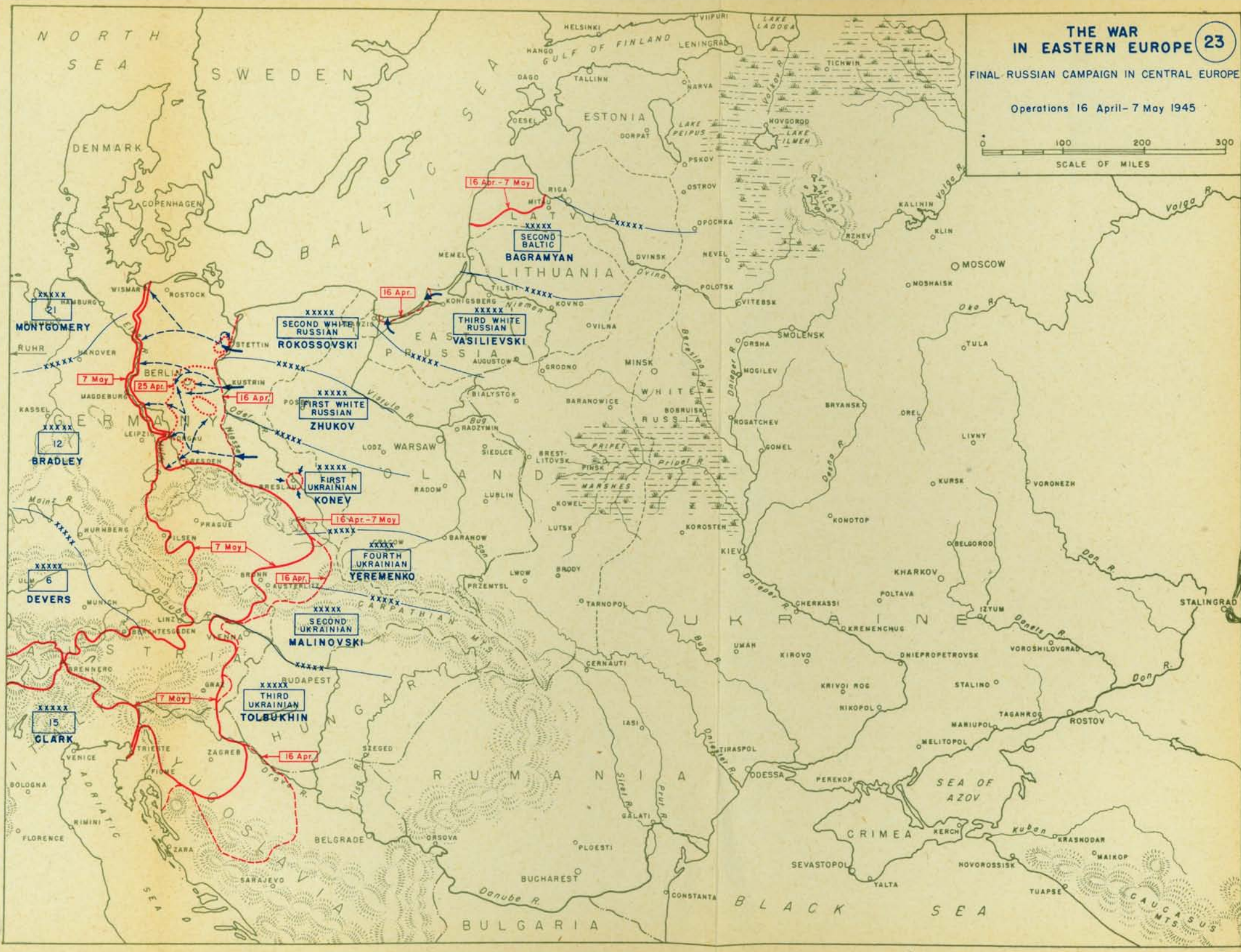
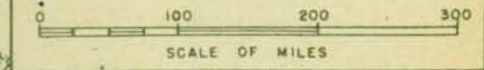
The Red Army of 1941-1945 was far harder than the Czar's Army, for they were fighting fanatically for an idea. That increased their doggedness, and in turn made our own troops hard, for in the East the maxim held good—"You or I". Discipline in the Red Army was far more rigorous than in the Czar's Army. . .

Whenever Russians have appeared in the history of war, the fight was hard, ruthless, and involved heavy losses. Where the Russian makes a stand or defends himself, he is hard to defeat, and it costs a lot of bloodshed. As a child of nature he works with the simplest expedients. As all have to obey blindly, and the Slav-Asiatic character only understands the absolute, disobedience is nonexistent. The Russian commanders can make incredible demands on their men in every way—and there is no murmuring, no complaint.*

The Russian pattern of warfare which evolved during the campaigns in eastern Europe offered a distinct contrast to the German blitzkrieg of the early years of the war or the highly coordinated operations of the Western Allies. Because of their Army's great numerical superiority, the Russians were able to wage a methodical war of attrition which, however costly to themselves, eventually ended in victory.

* Hart, *The German Generals Talk*.

Operations 16 April-7 May 1945



NORTH SEA

SWEDEN

ESTONIA

LITHUANIA

DENMARK

BALTIC SEA

MONTGOMERY

BRADLEY

DEVERS

CLARK

BAGRAMYAN

ROKOSOVSKI

VASILIEVSKI

ZHUKOV

KONEV

YEREMENKO

MALINOVSKI

TOLBUKHIN

SEKOND WHITE RUSSIAN

THIRD WHITE RUSSIAN

FIRST WHITE RUSSIAN

FIRST UKRAINIAN

FOURTH UKRAINIAN

SEKOND UKRAINIAN

THIRD UKRAINIAN

RUSSIA

UKRAINE

RUMANIA

BULGARIA

BLACK SEA

CAUCASUS

SEA OF AZOV

CRIMEA

ADRIATIC SEA

Volga R.

Dnieper R.

Danube R.

Don R.

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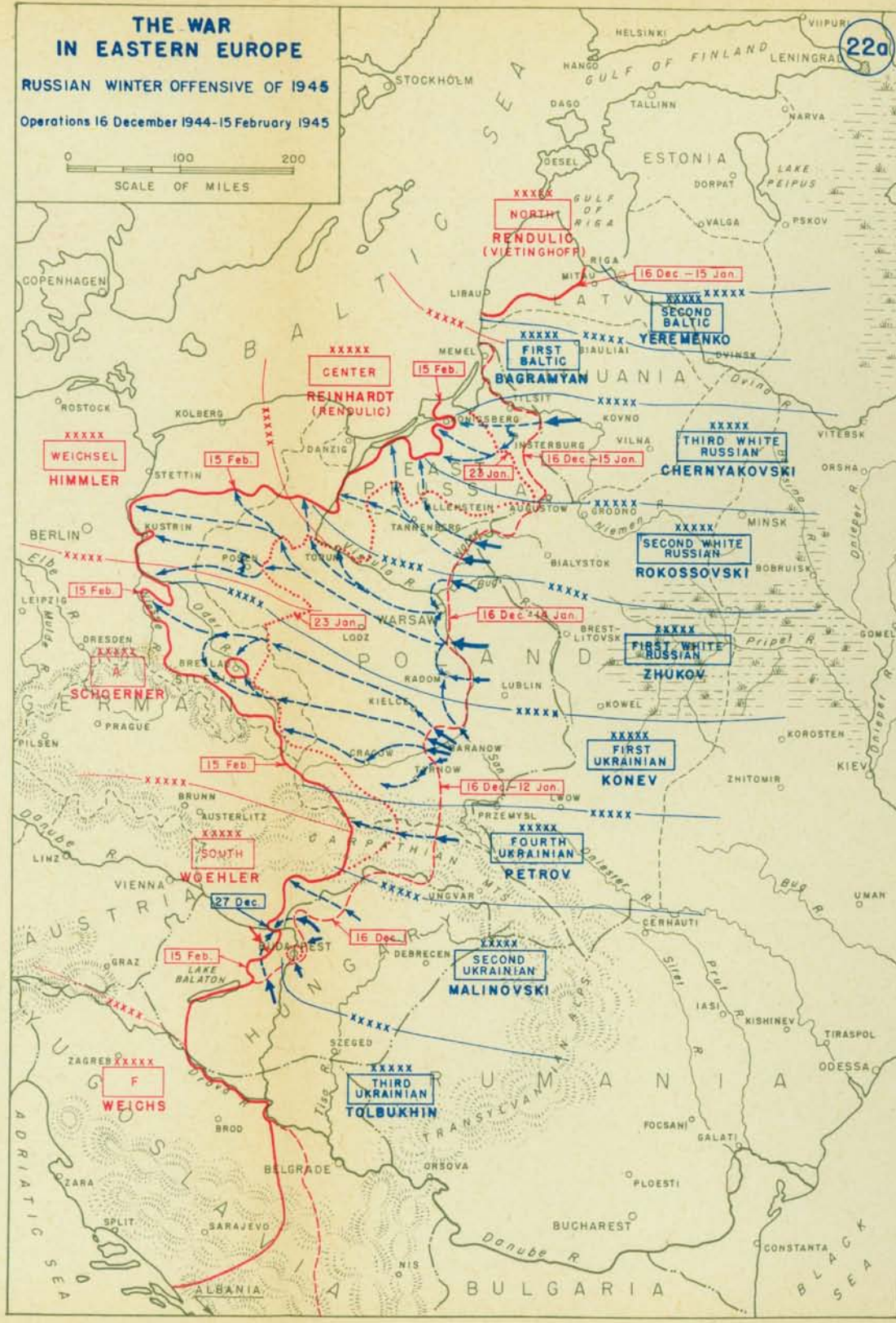
Volga R.

THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE

RUSSIAN WINTER OFFENSIVE OF 1945

Operations 16 December 1944-15 February 1945

22a

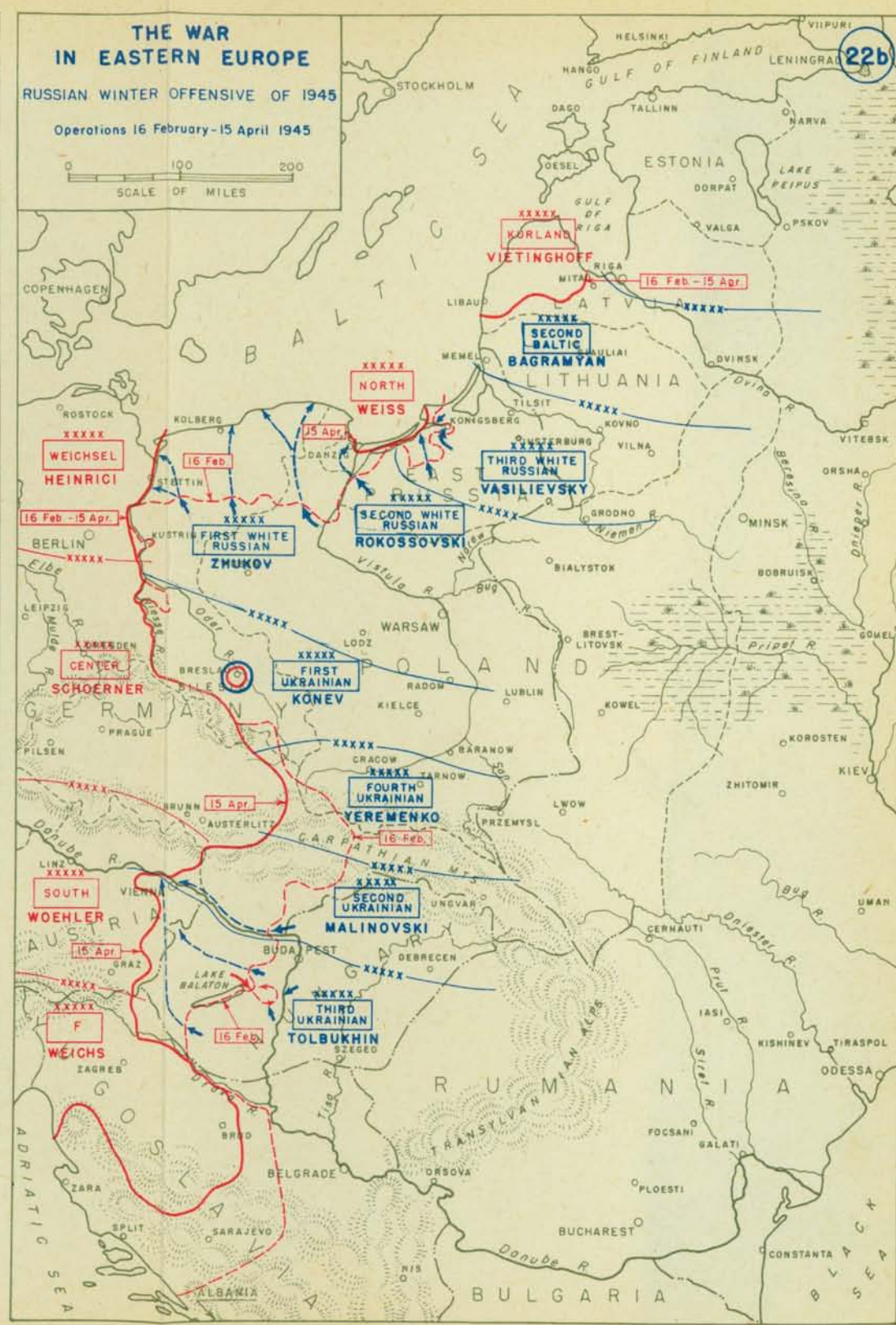


THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE

RUSSIAN WINTER OFFENSIVE OF 1945

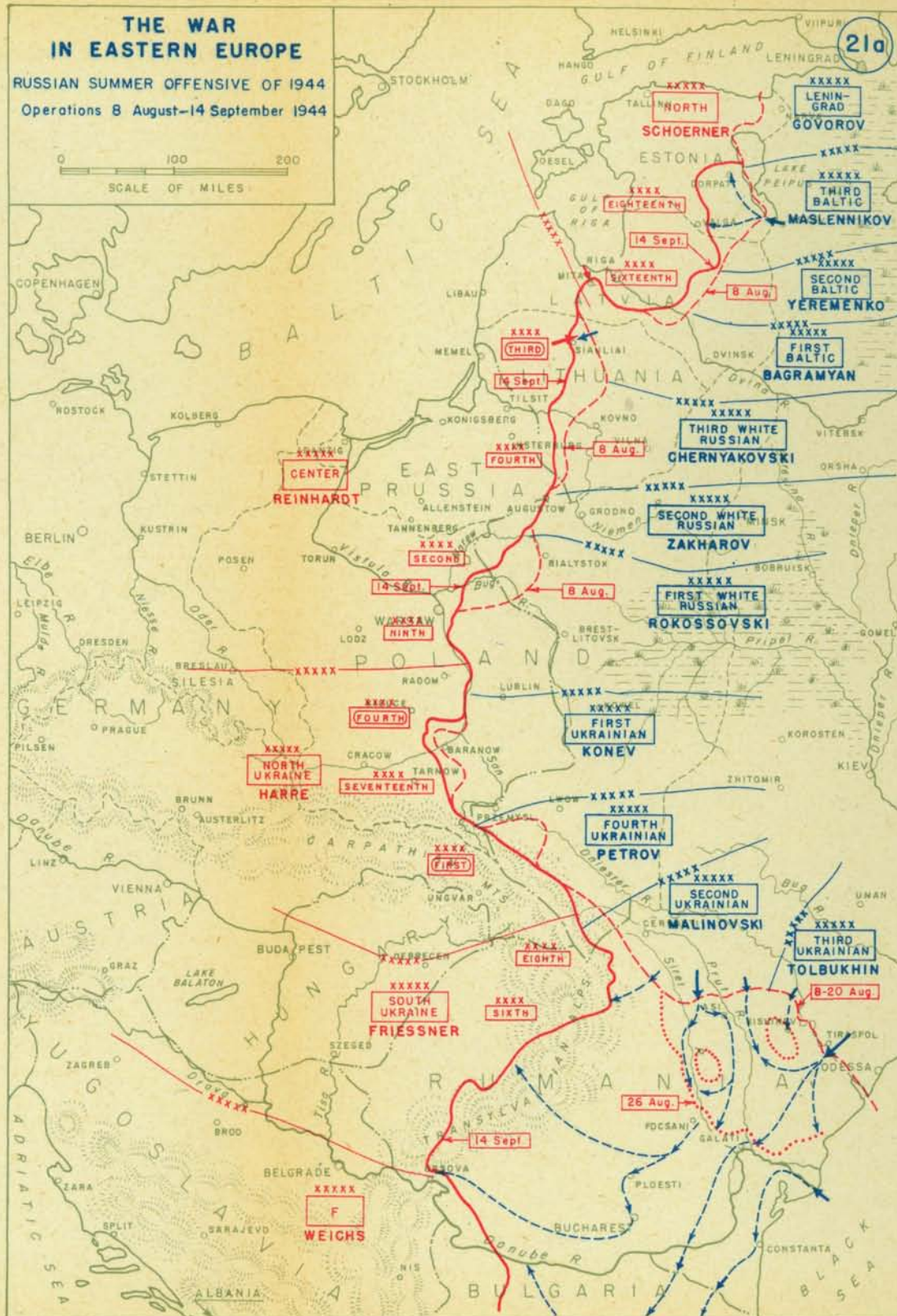
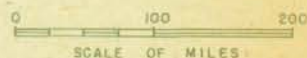
Operations 16 February-15 April 1945

22b



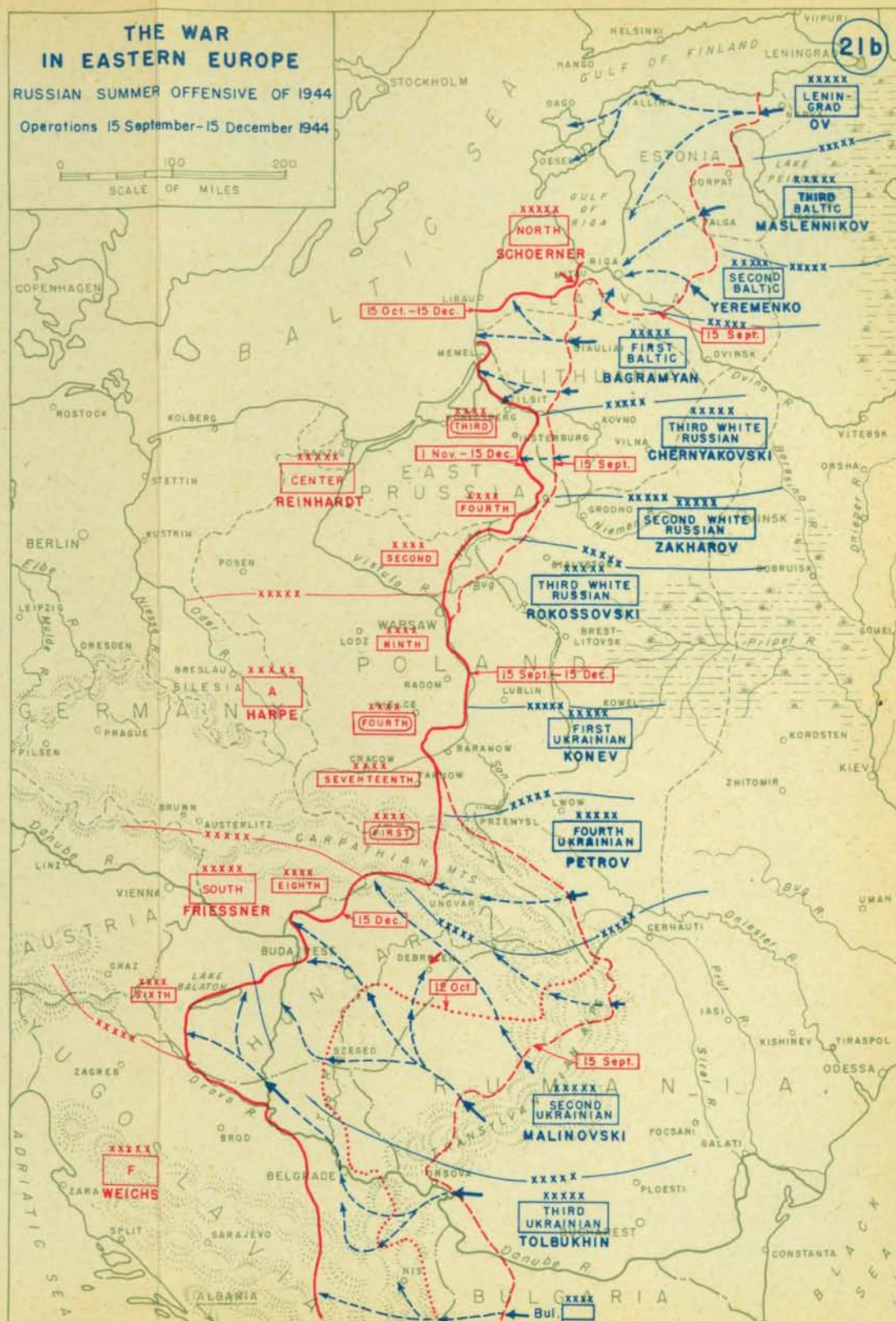
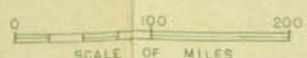
THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE

RUSSIAN SUMMER OFFENSIVE OF 1944
Operations 8 August-14 September 1944



THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE

RUSSIAN SUMMER OFFENSIVE OF 1944
Operations 15 September-15 December 1944

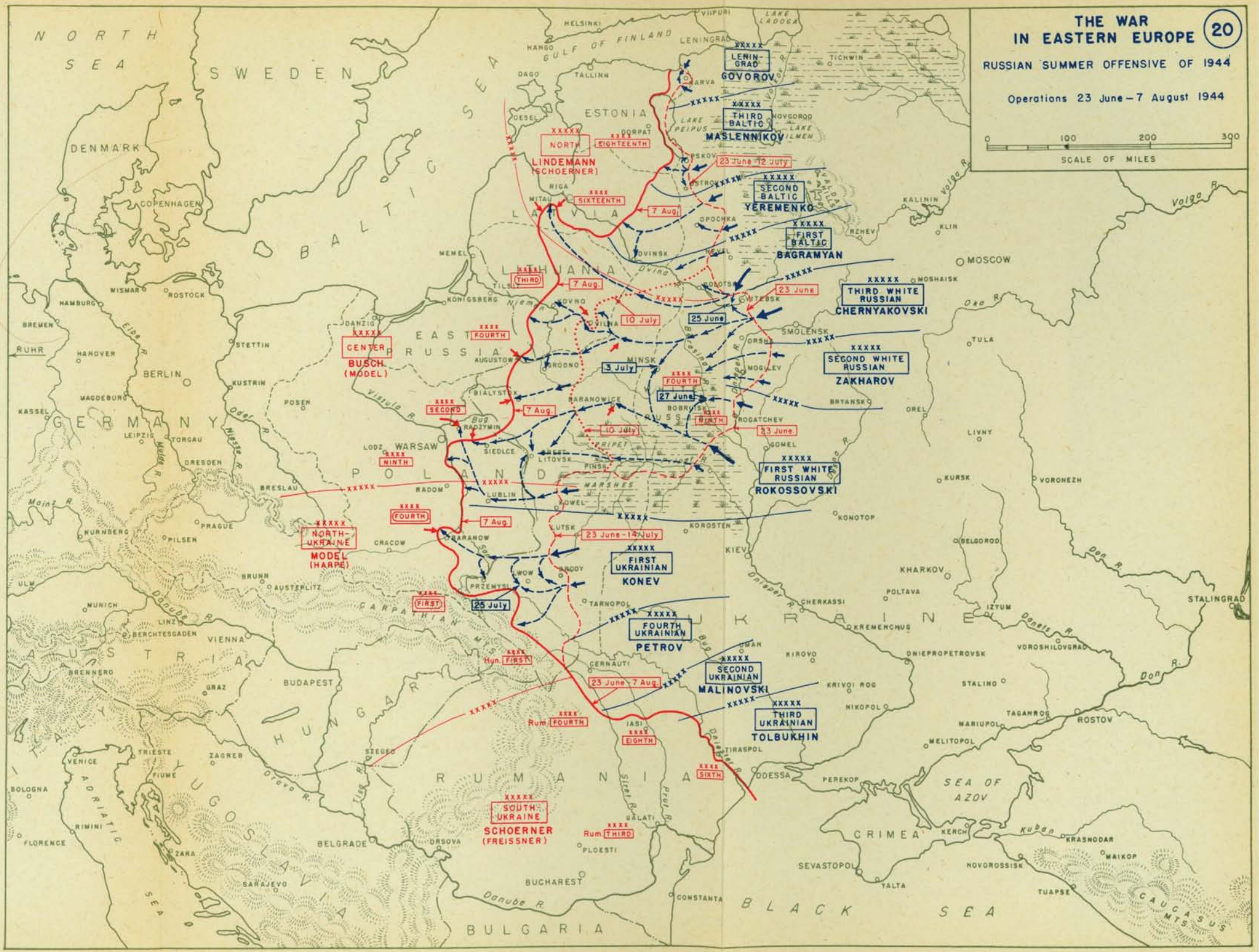


THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE

RUSSIAN SUMMER OFFENSIVE OF 1944

Operations 23 June - 7 August 1944

0 100 200 300
SCALE OF MILES



XXXXX SOUTH-UKRAINE
SCHOENER (FREISSNER)

XXXXX NORTH-UKRAINE
MODEL (HARPE)

XXXXX CENTER
BUSCH (MODEL)

XXXXX THIRD UKRAINIEN
TOLBUKHIN

XXXXX SECOND UKRAINIEN
MALINOVSKI

XXXXX FOURTH UKRAINIEN
PETROV

XXXXX FIRST UKRAINIEN
KONEV

XXXXX FIRST WHITE RUSSIAN
ROKOSHOVSKI

XXXXX SECOND WHITE RUSSIAN
ZAKHAROV

XXXXX THIRD WHITE RUSSIAN
CHERNYAKOVSKI

XXXXX FIRST BALTIC
BAGRAMYAN

XXXXX SECOND BALTIC
YEREMENKO

XXXXX THIRD BALTIC
MASLENNIKOV

XXXXX LENIN-GRAD
GOVOROV

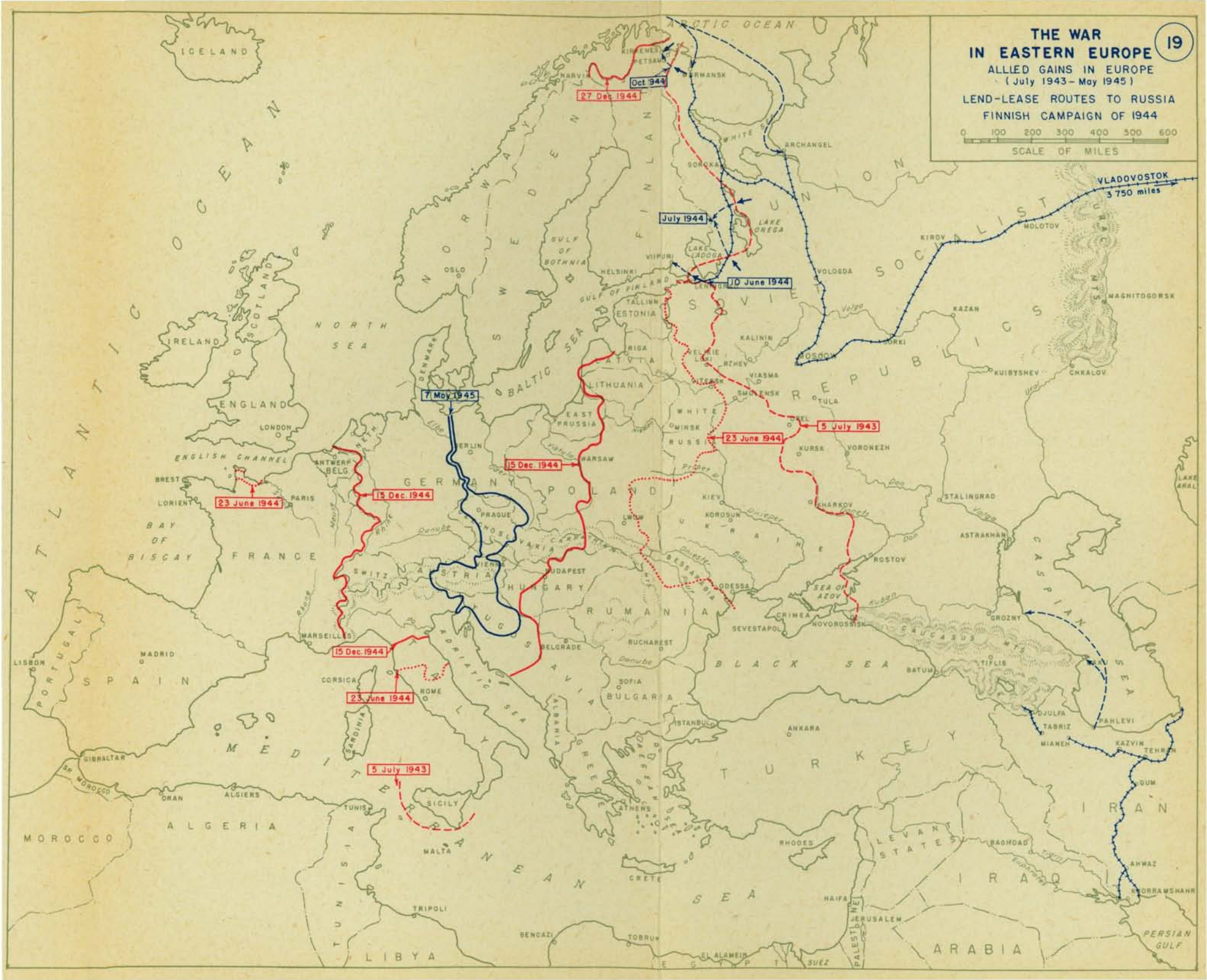
THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE

19

ALLIED GAINS IN EUROPE
(July 1943 - May 1945)

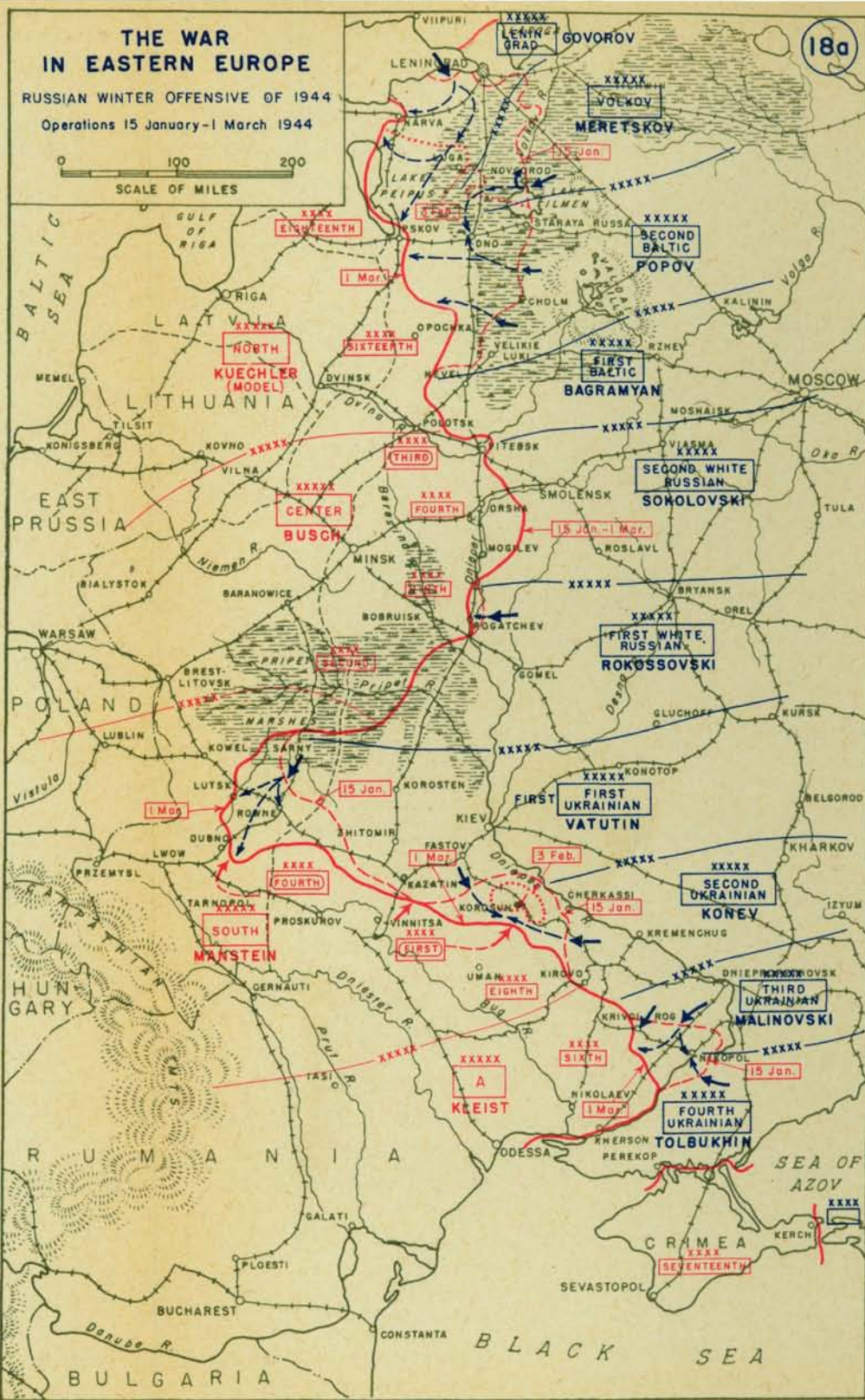
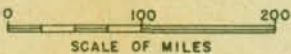
LEND-LEASE ROUTES TO RUSSIA
FINNISH CAMPAIGN OF 1944

0 100 200 300 400 500 600
SCALE OF MILES



THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE

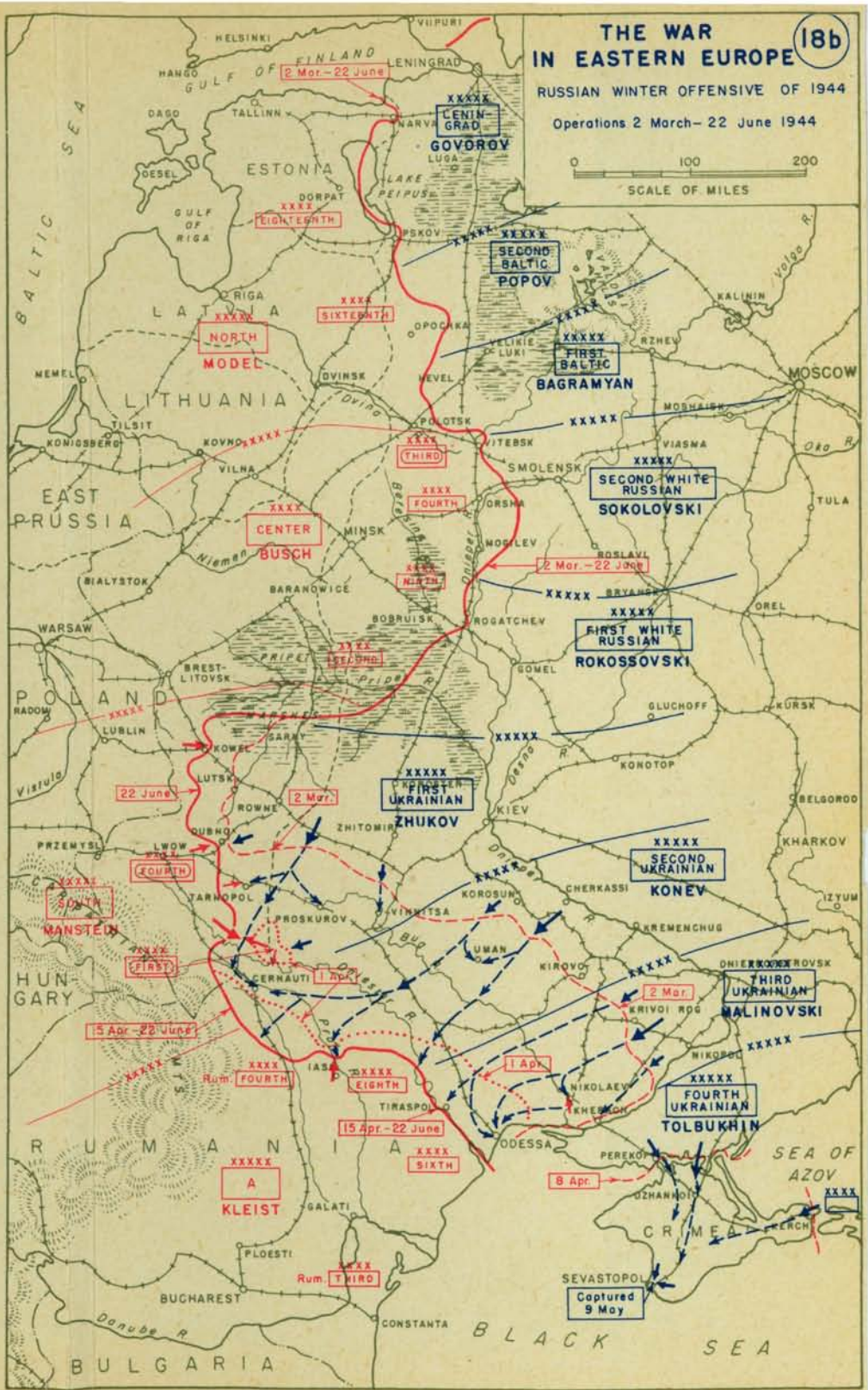
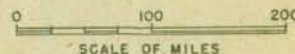
RUSSIAN WINTER OFFENSIVE OF 1944
Operations 15 January-1 March 1944



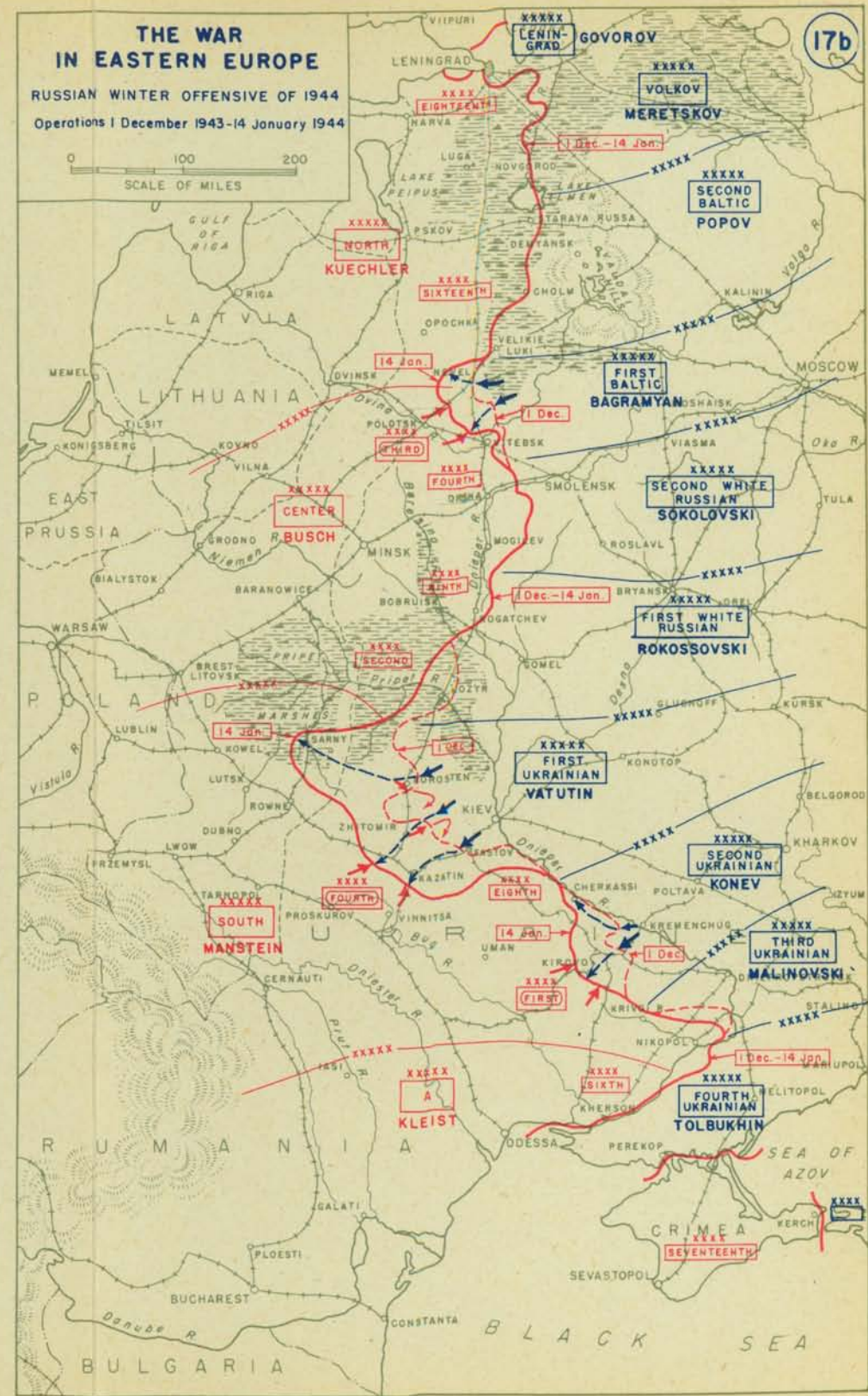
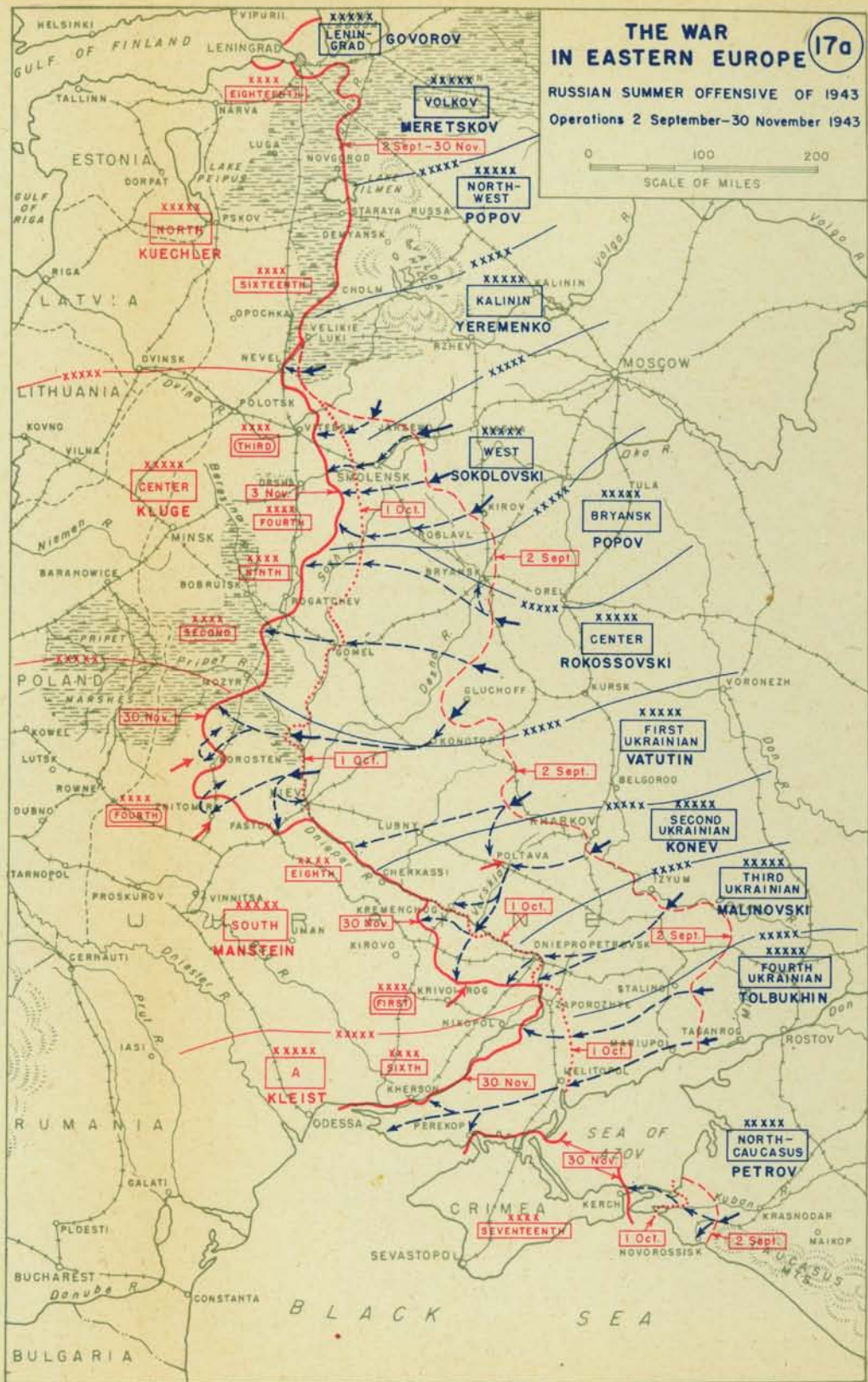
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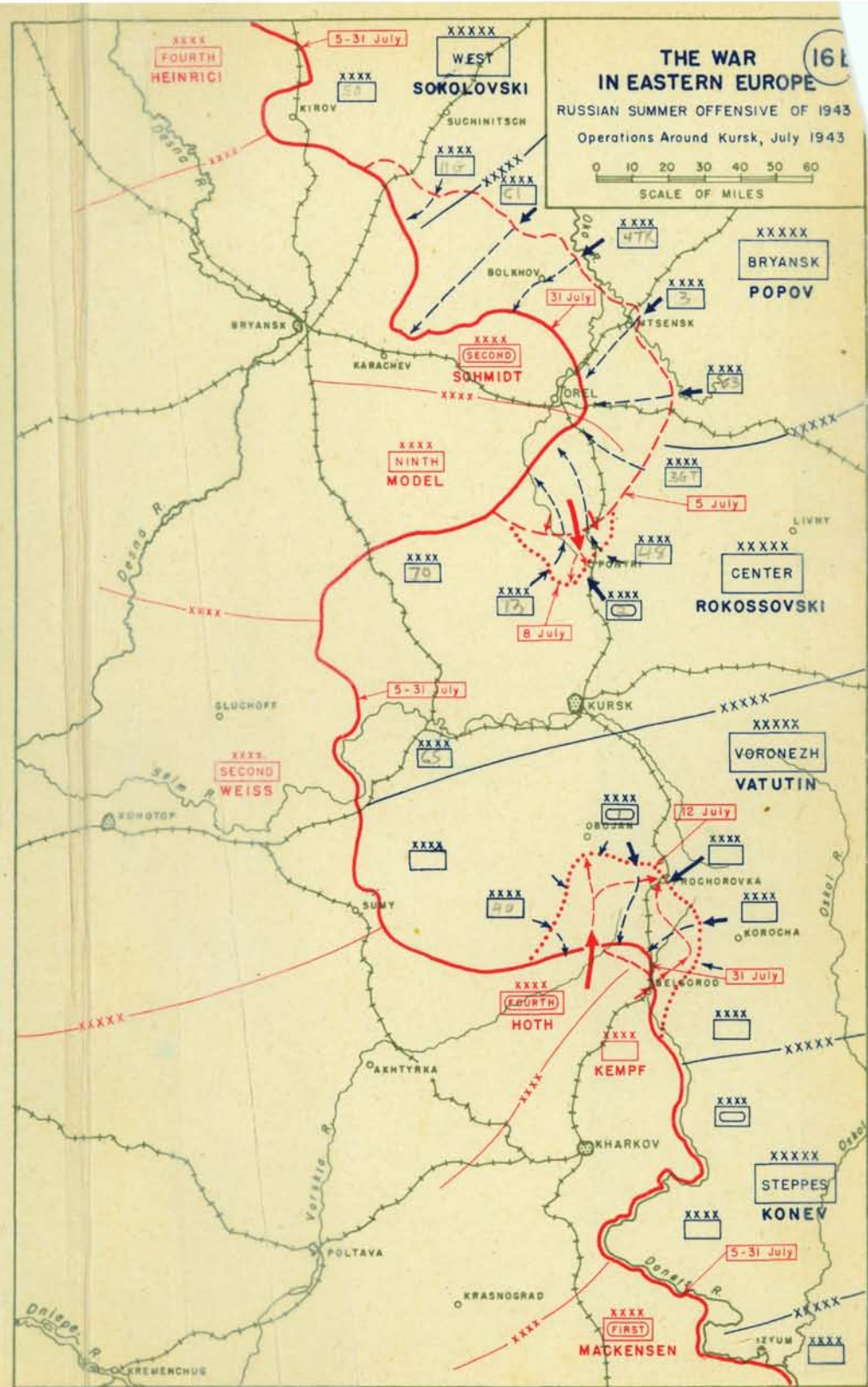
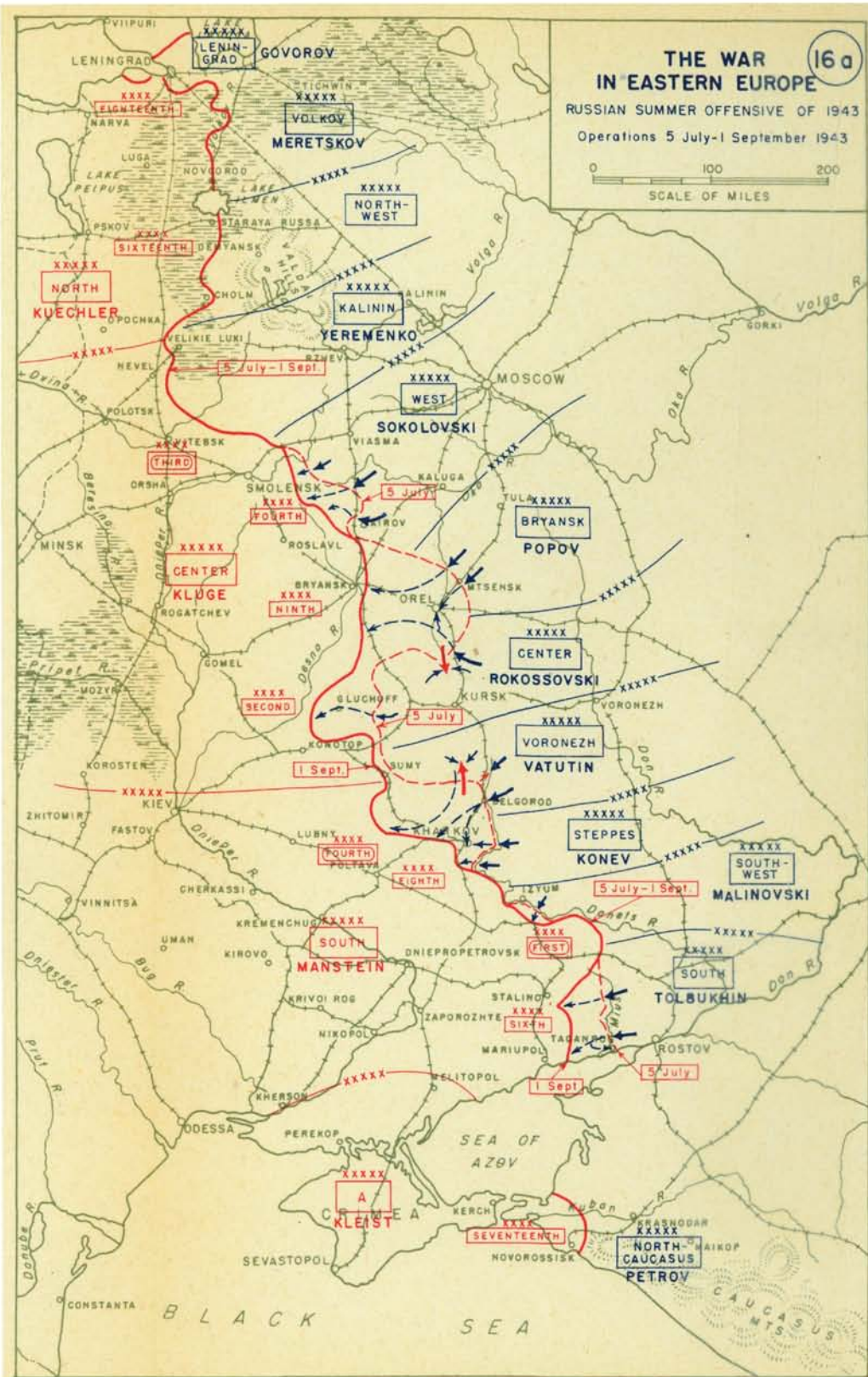
THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE

RUSSIAN WINTER OFFENSIVE OF 1944
Operations 2 March-22 June 1944



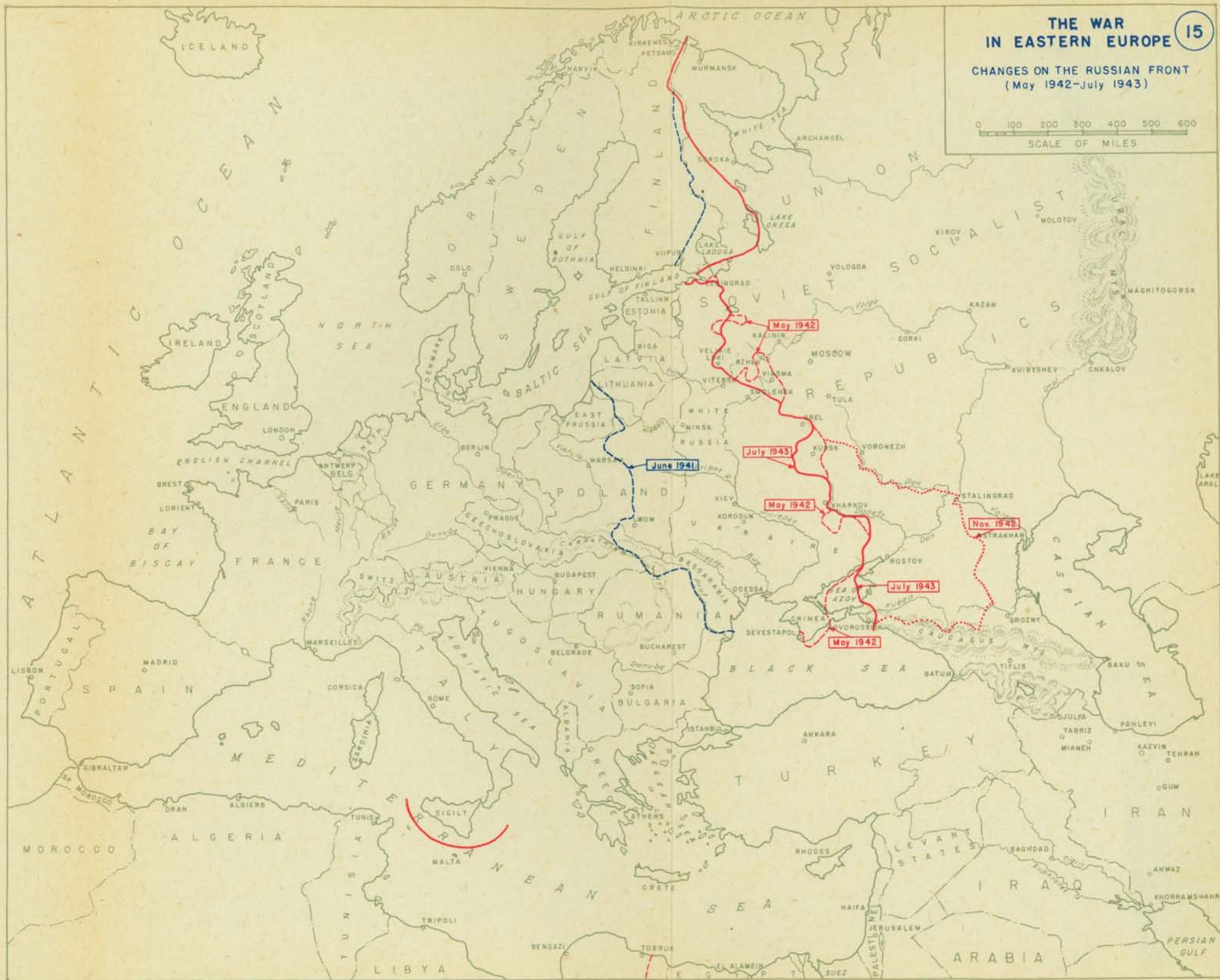
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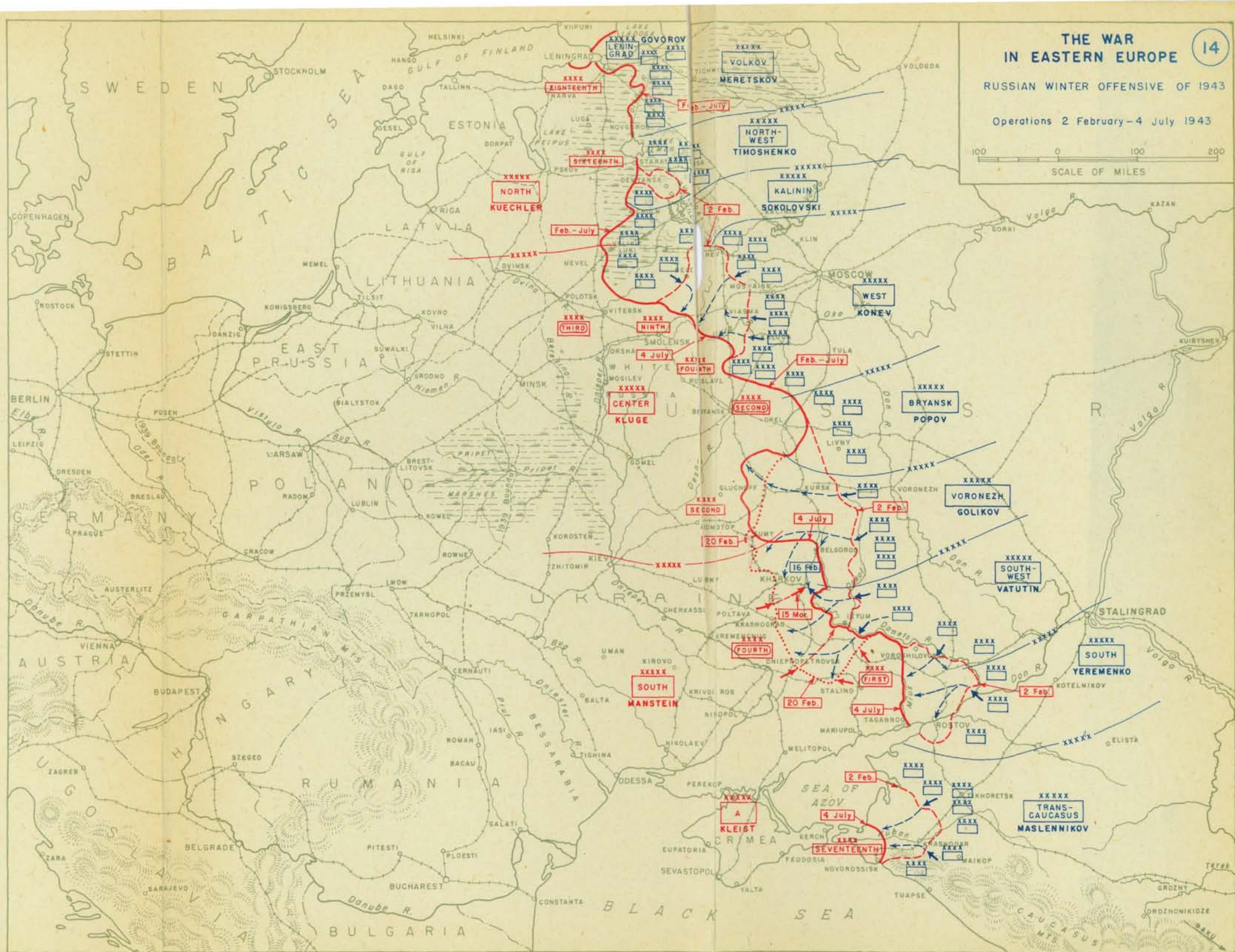
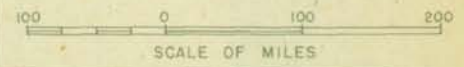
THE WAR
IN EASTERN EUROPE 15
CHANGES ON THE RUSSIAN FRONT
(May 1942-July 1943)

0 100 200 300 400 500 600
SCALE OF MILES



RUSSIAN WINTER OFFENSIVE OF 1943

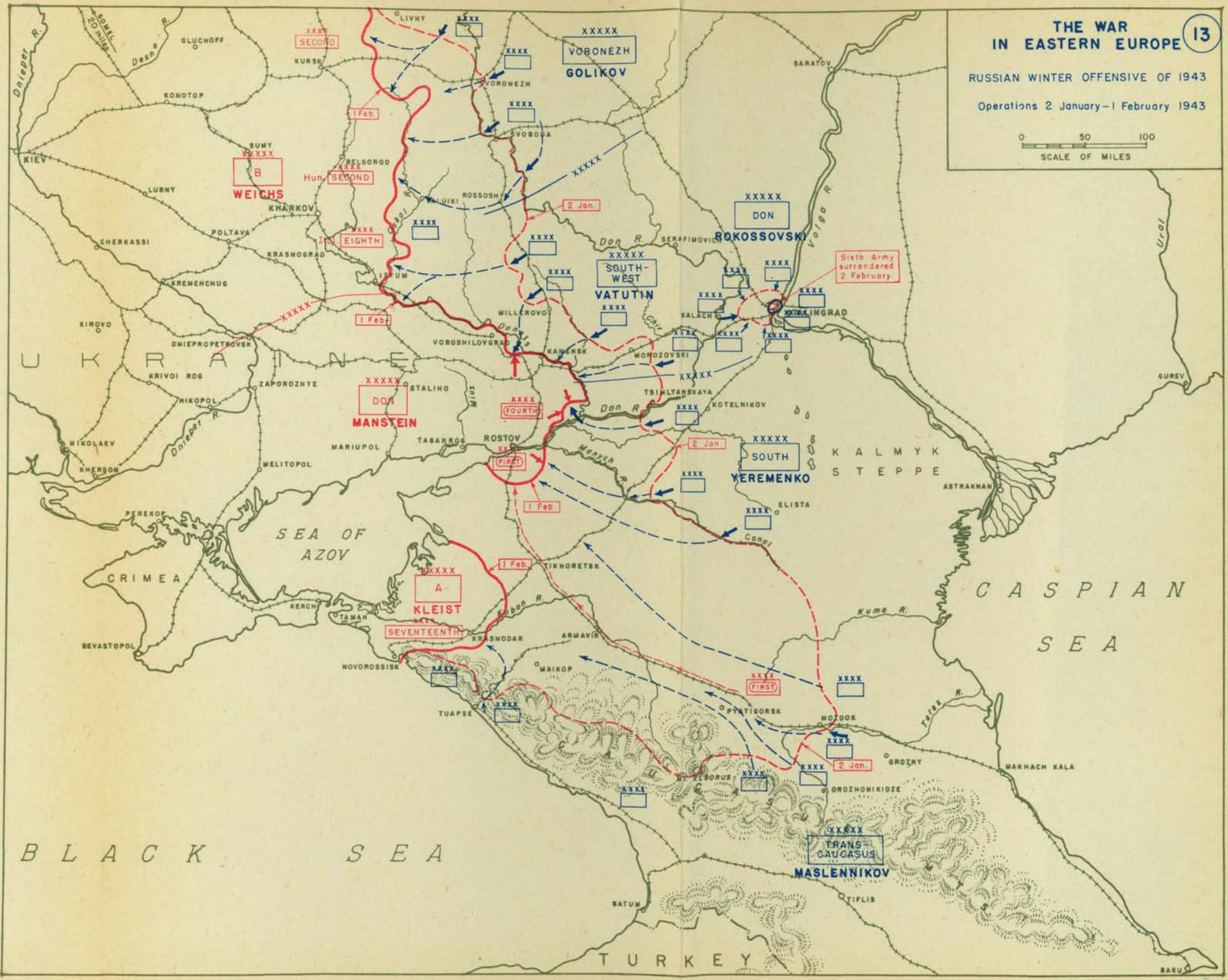
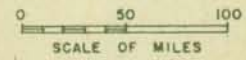
Operations 2 February - 4 July 1943



THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE 13

RUSSIAN WINTER OFFENSIVE OF 1943

Operations 2 January - 1 February 1943



WEICHS

GOLIKOV

ROKOSSOVSKI

MANSTEIN

VATUTIN

YEREMENKO

KLEIST

MASLENNIKOV

Sixth Army surrendered 2 February

SEA OF AZOV

CASPIAN SEA

BLACK SEA

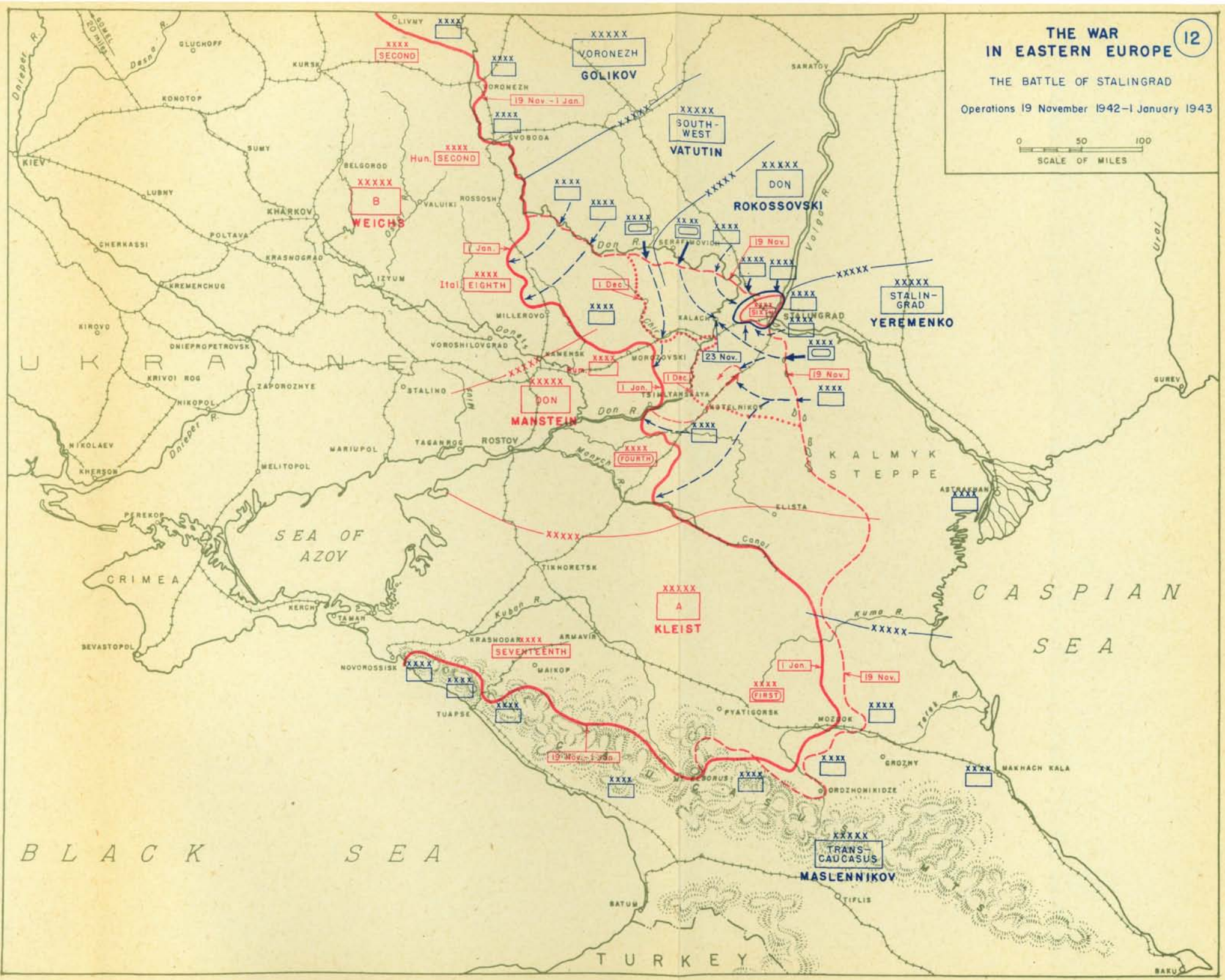
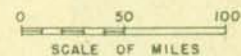
TURKEY

THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE

12

THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD

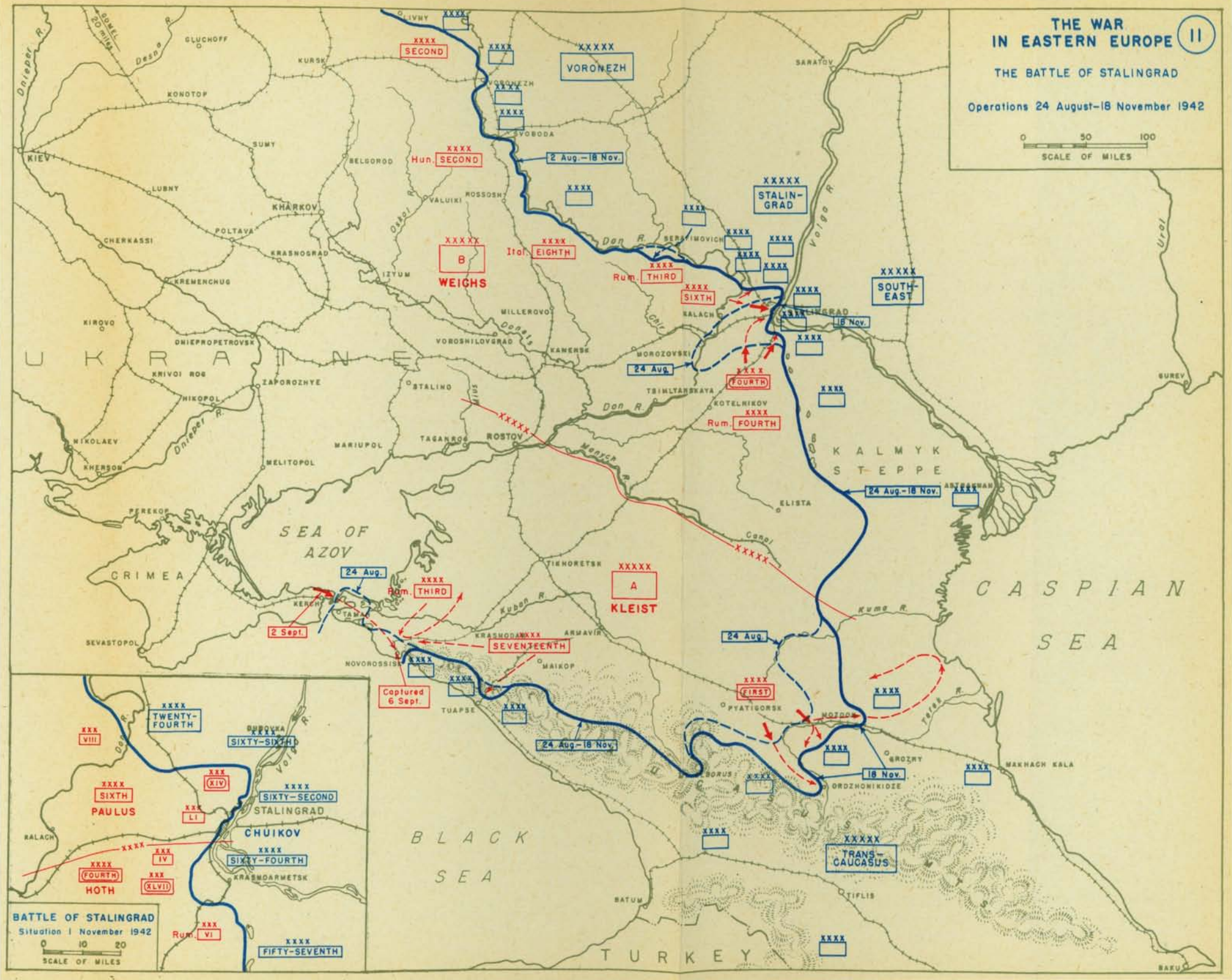
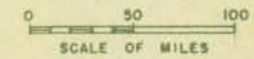
Operations 19 November 1942-1 January 1943



THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE 11

THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD

Operations 24 August-18 November 1942

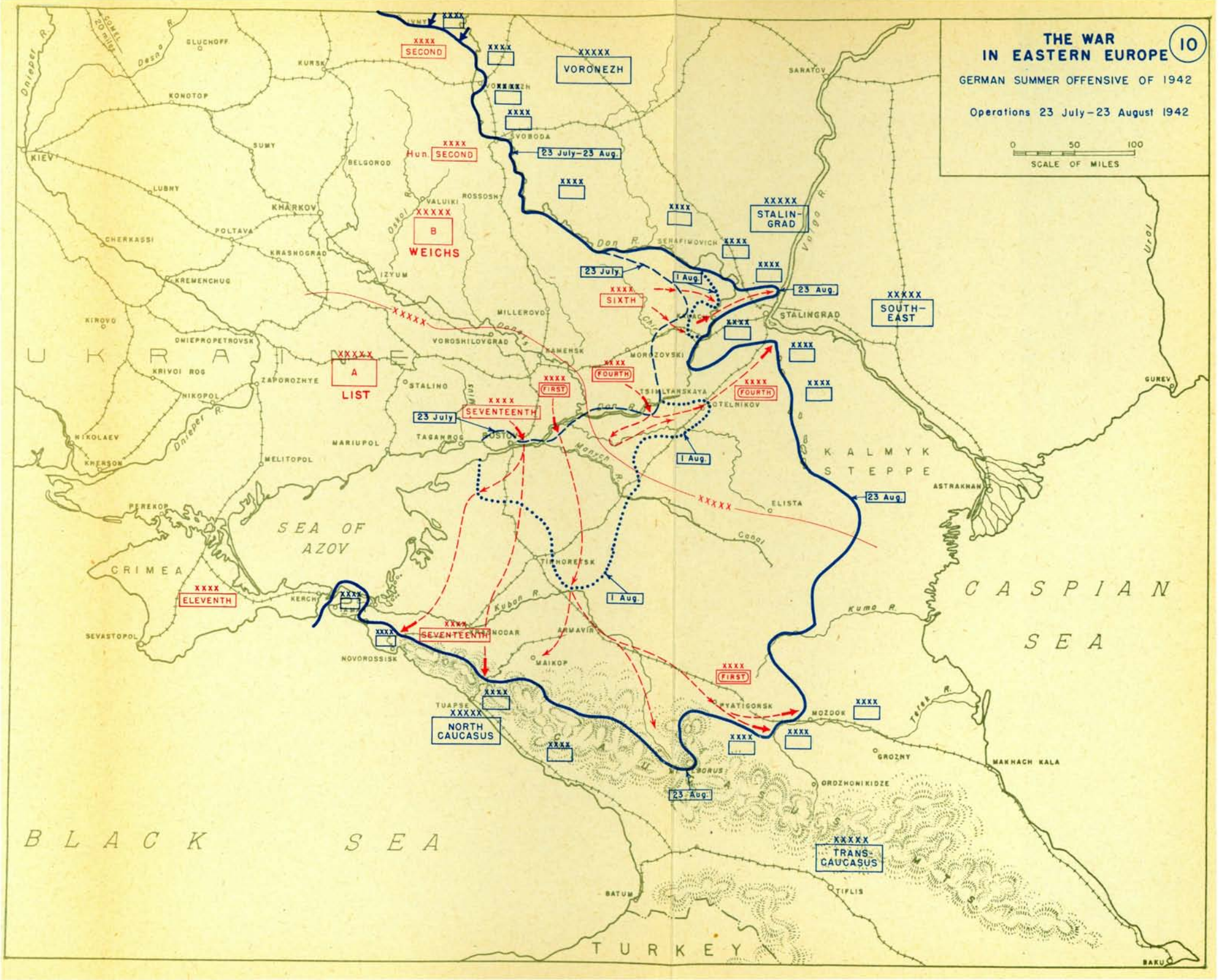
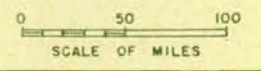


BATTLE OF STALINGRAD
Situation 1 November 1942
0 10 20
SCALE OF MILES

**THE WAR
IN EASTERN EUROPE** 10

GERMAN SUMMER OFFENSIVE OF 1942

Operations 23 July - 23 August 1942



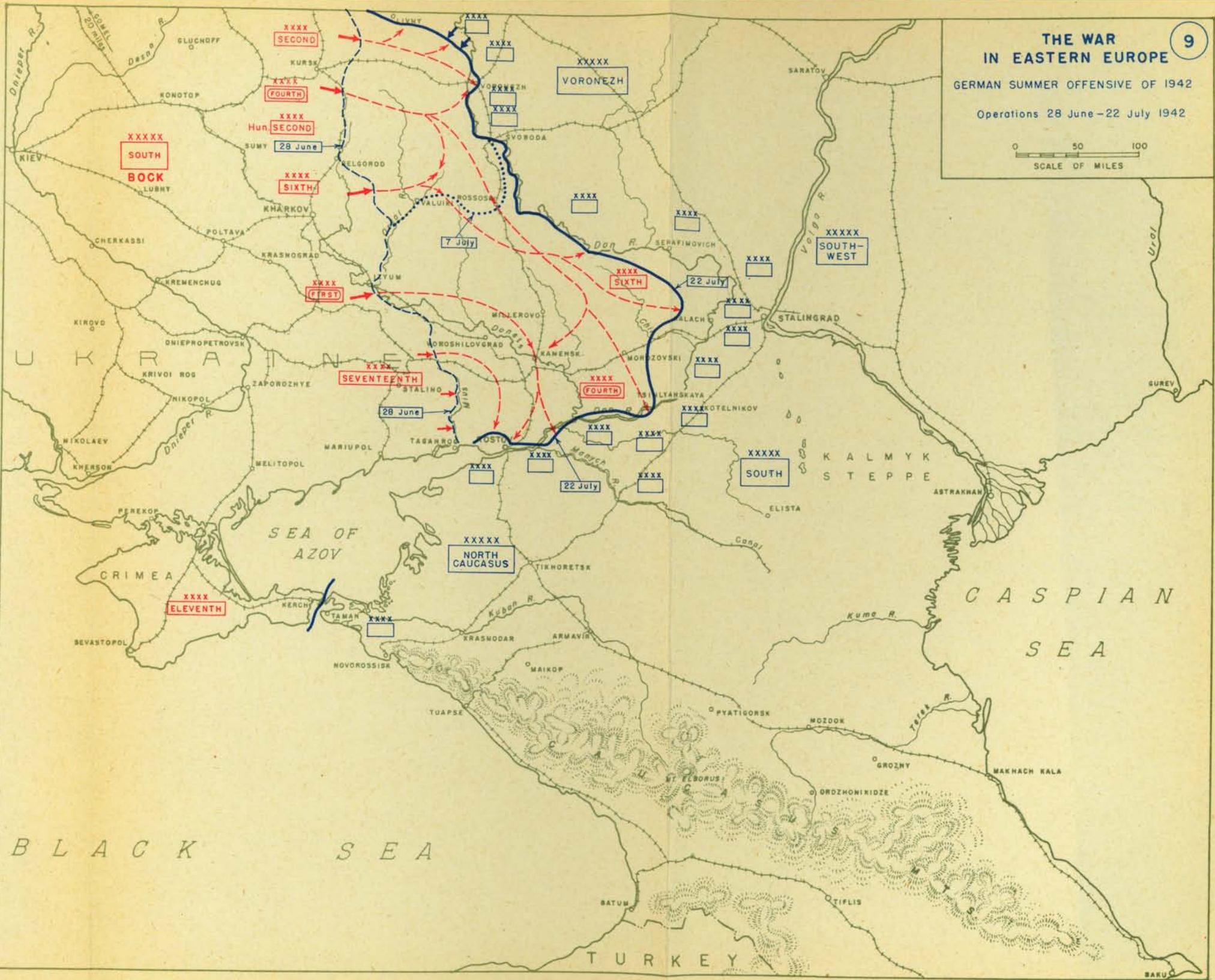
THE WAR
IN EASTERN EUROPE

9

GERMAN SUMMER OFFENSIVE OF 1942

Operations 28 June-22 July 1942

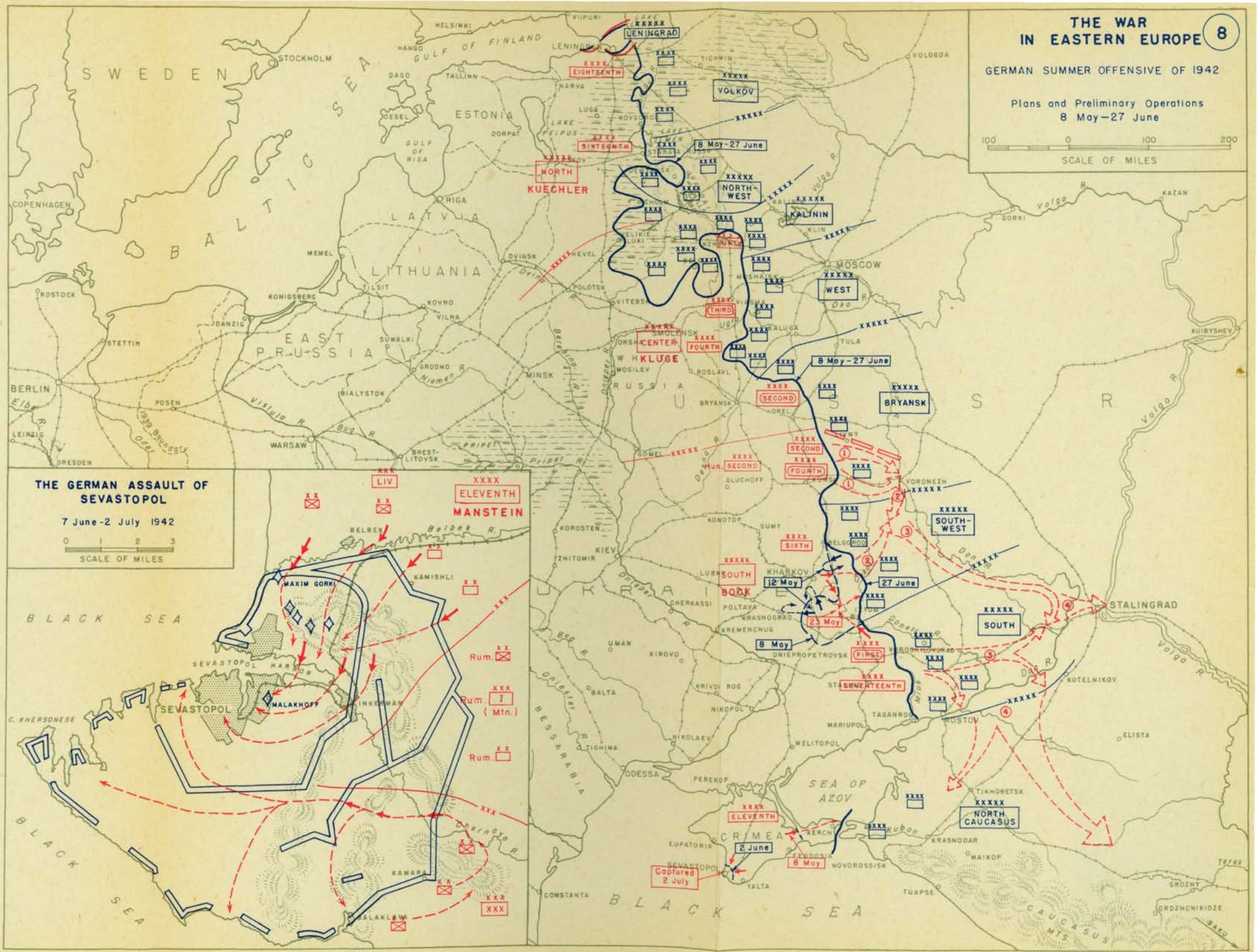
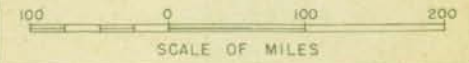
0 50 100
SCALE OF MILES



THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE 8

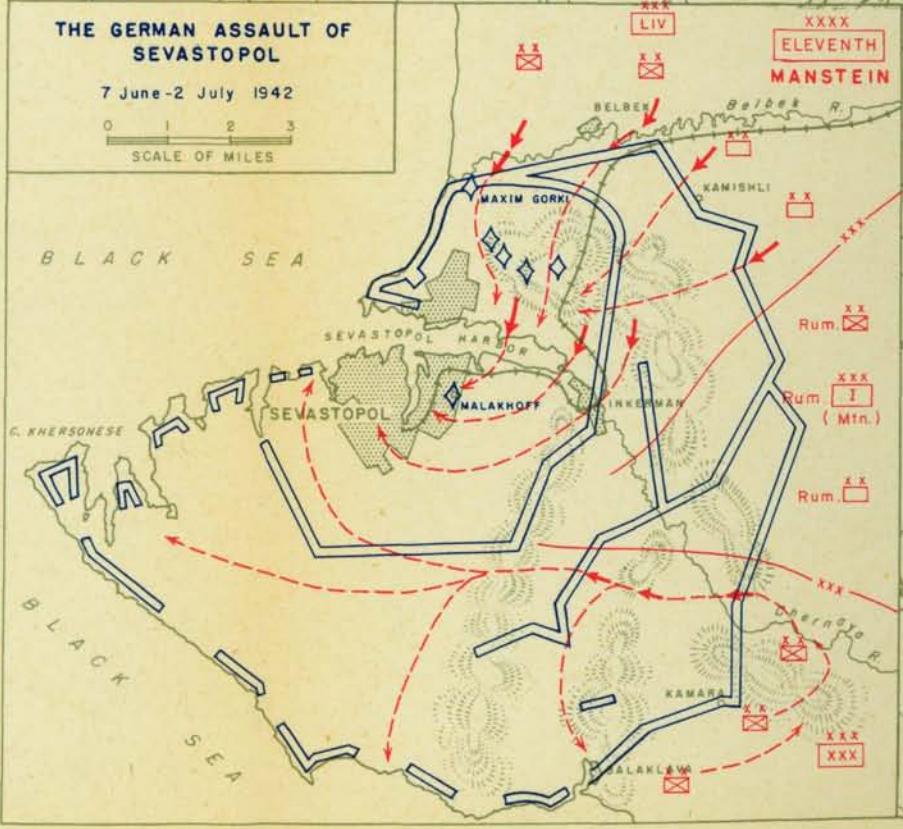
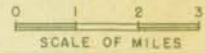
GERMAN SUMMER OFFENSIVE OF 1942

Plans and Preliminary Operations
8 May-27 June



THE GERMAN ASSAULT OF SEVASTOPOL

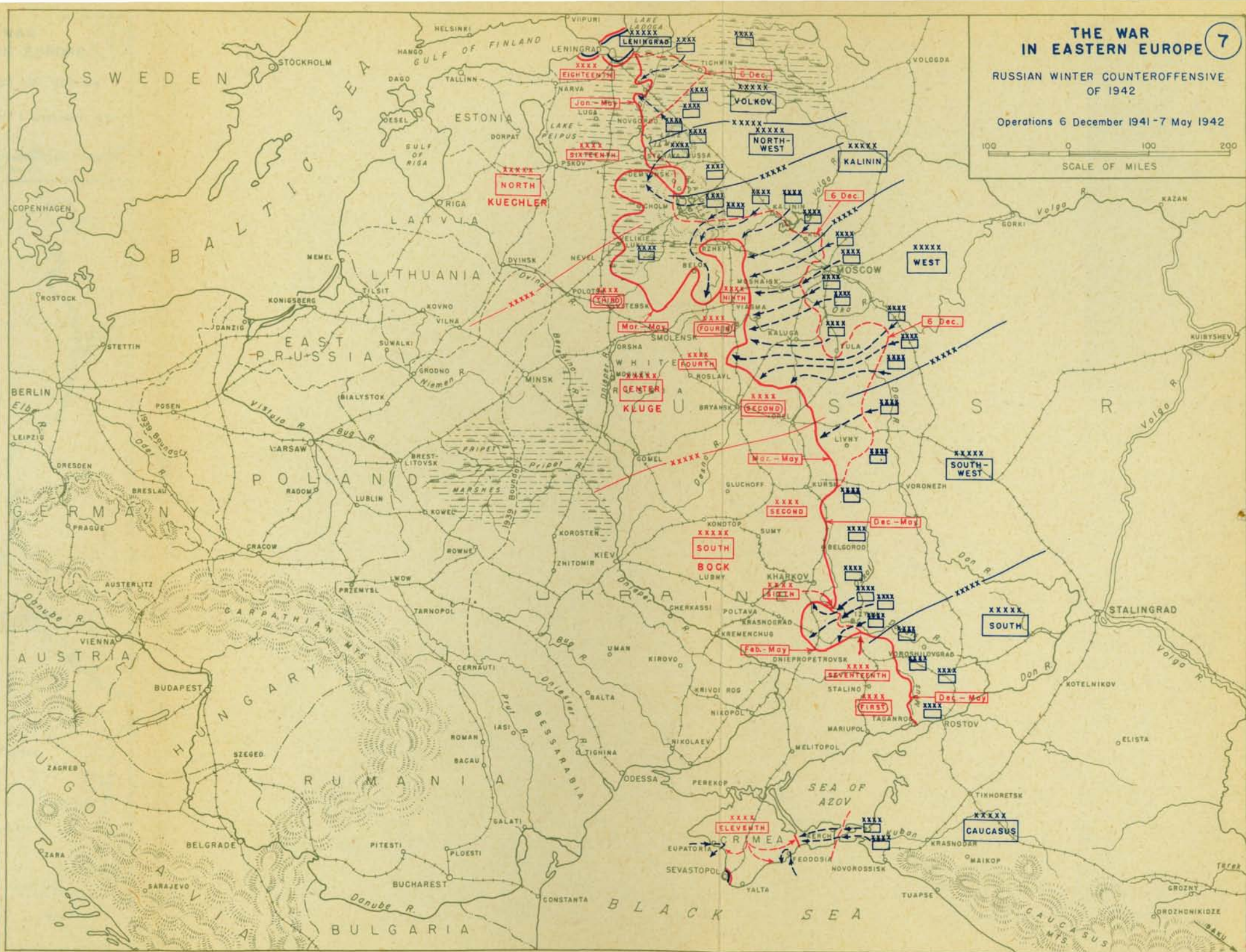
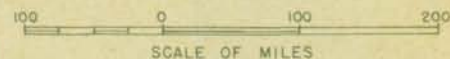
7 June-2 July 1942



THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE 7

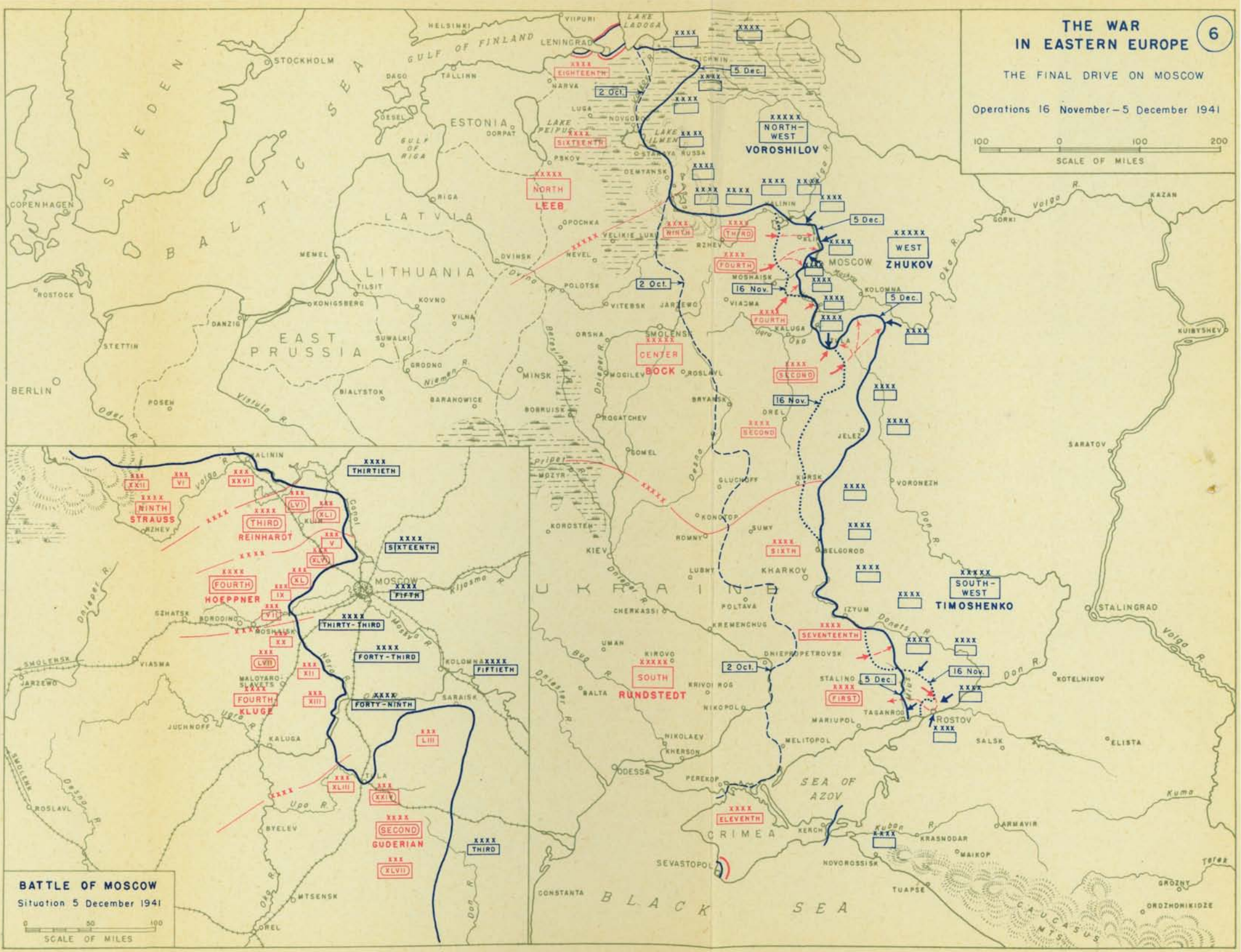
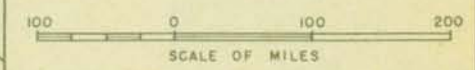
RUSSIAN WINTER COUNTEROFFENSIVE OF 1942

Operations 6 December 1941 - 7 May 1942

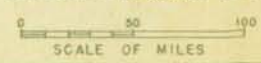


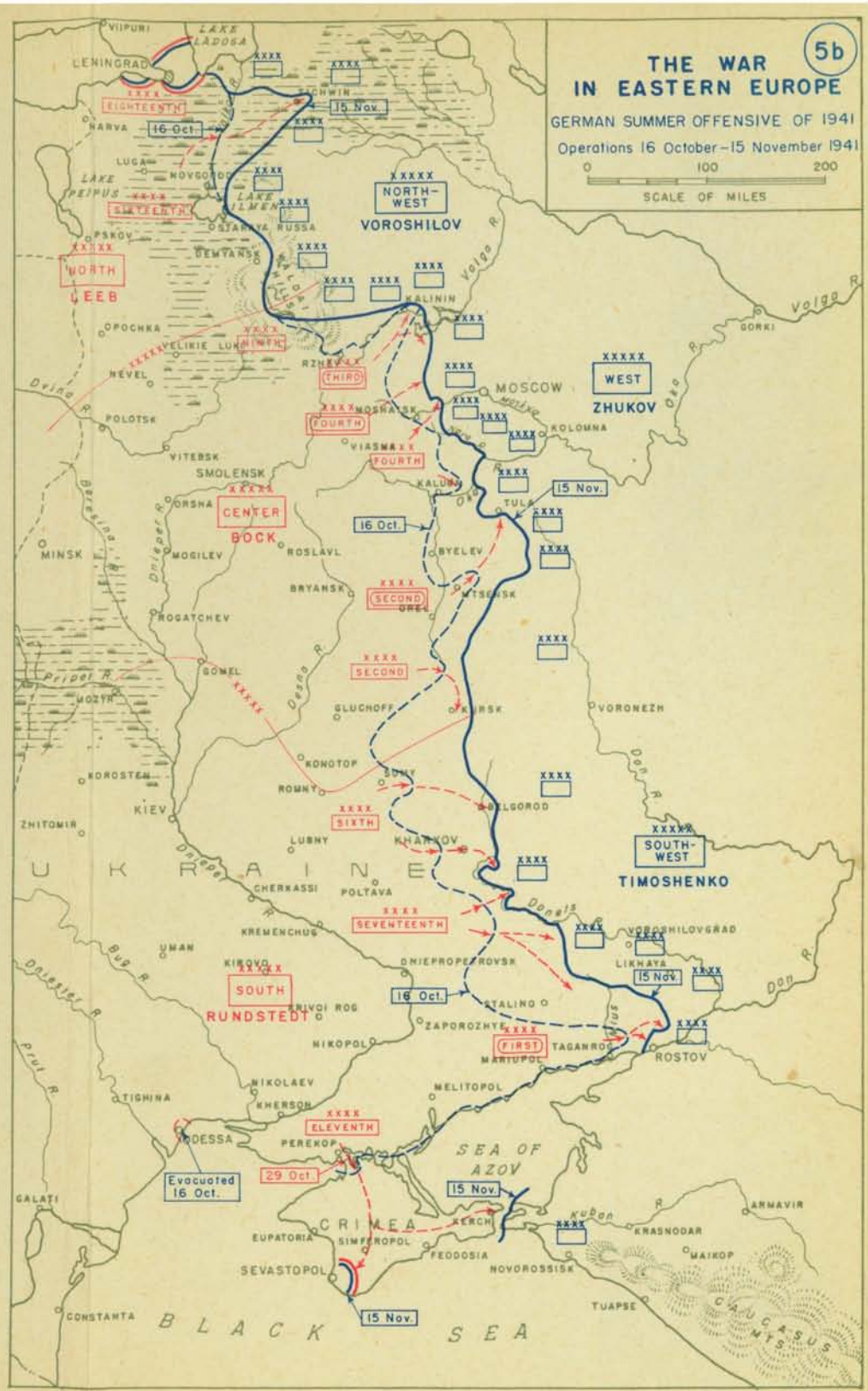
THE FINAL DRIVE ON MOSCOW

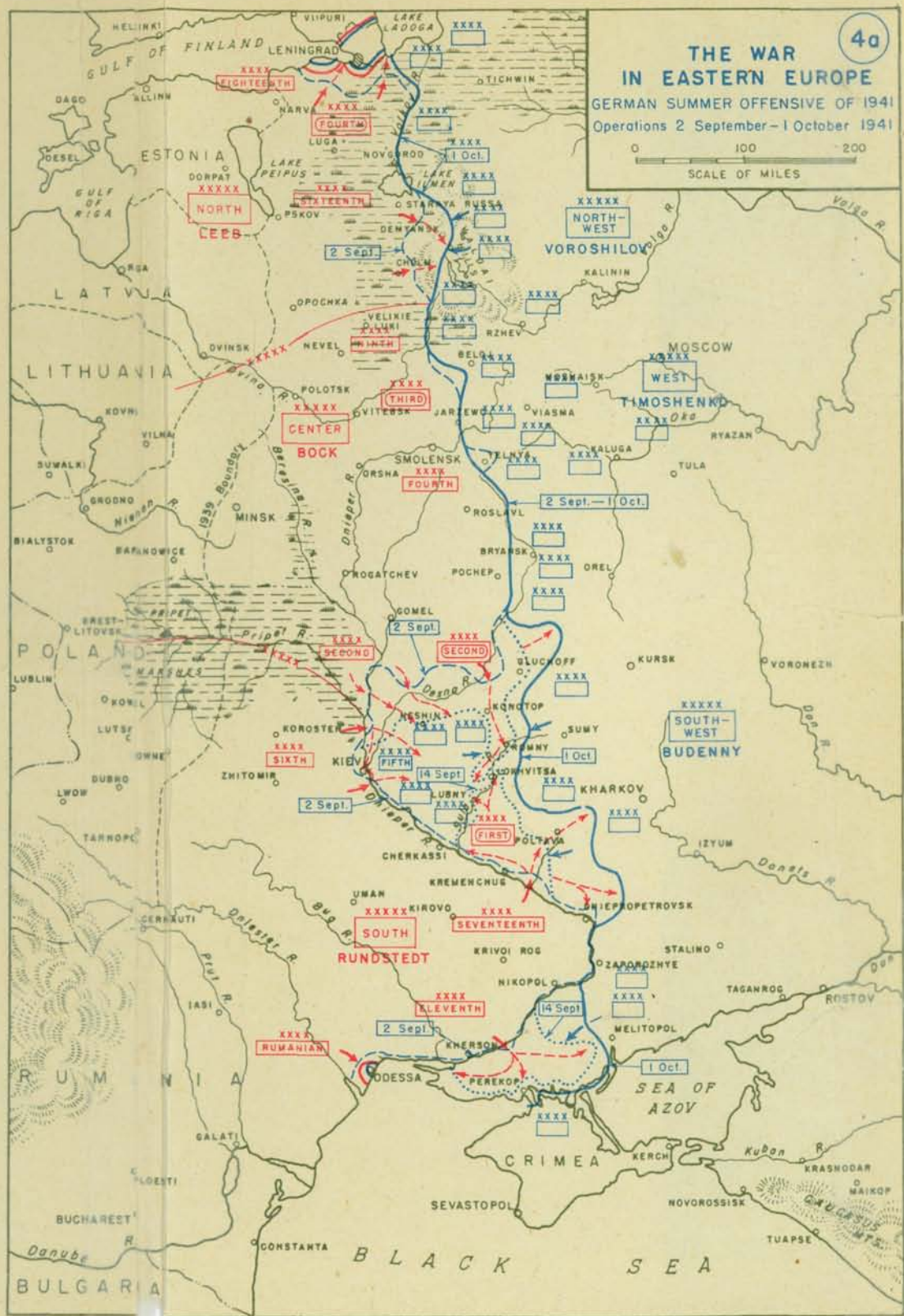
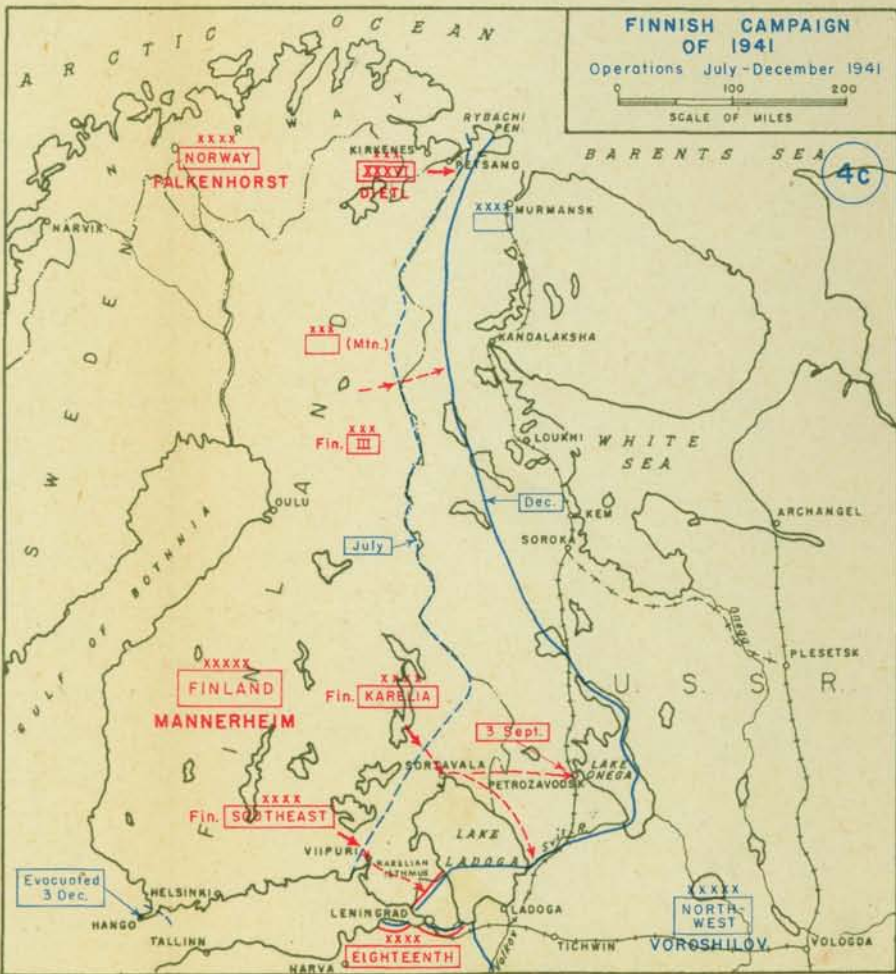
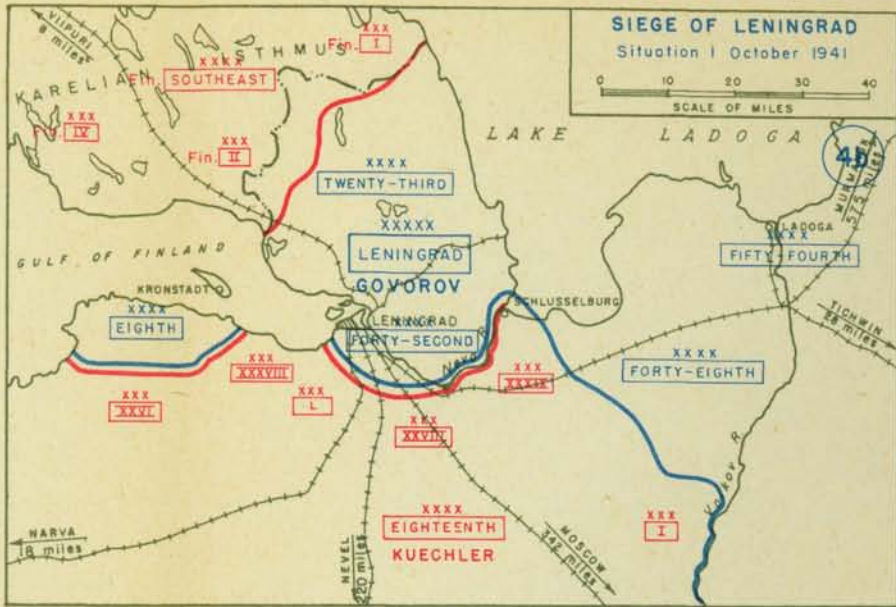
Operations 16 November - 5 December 1941

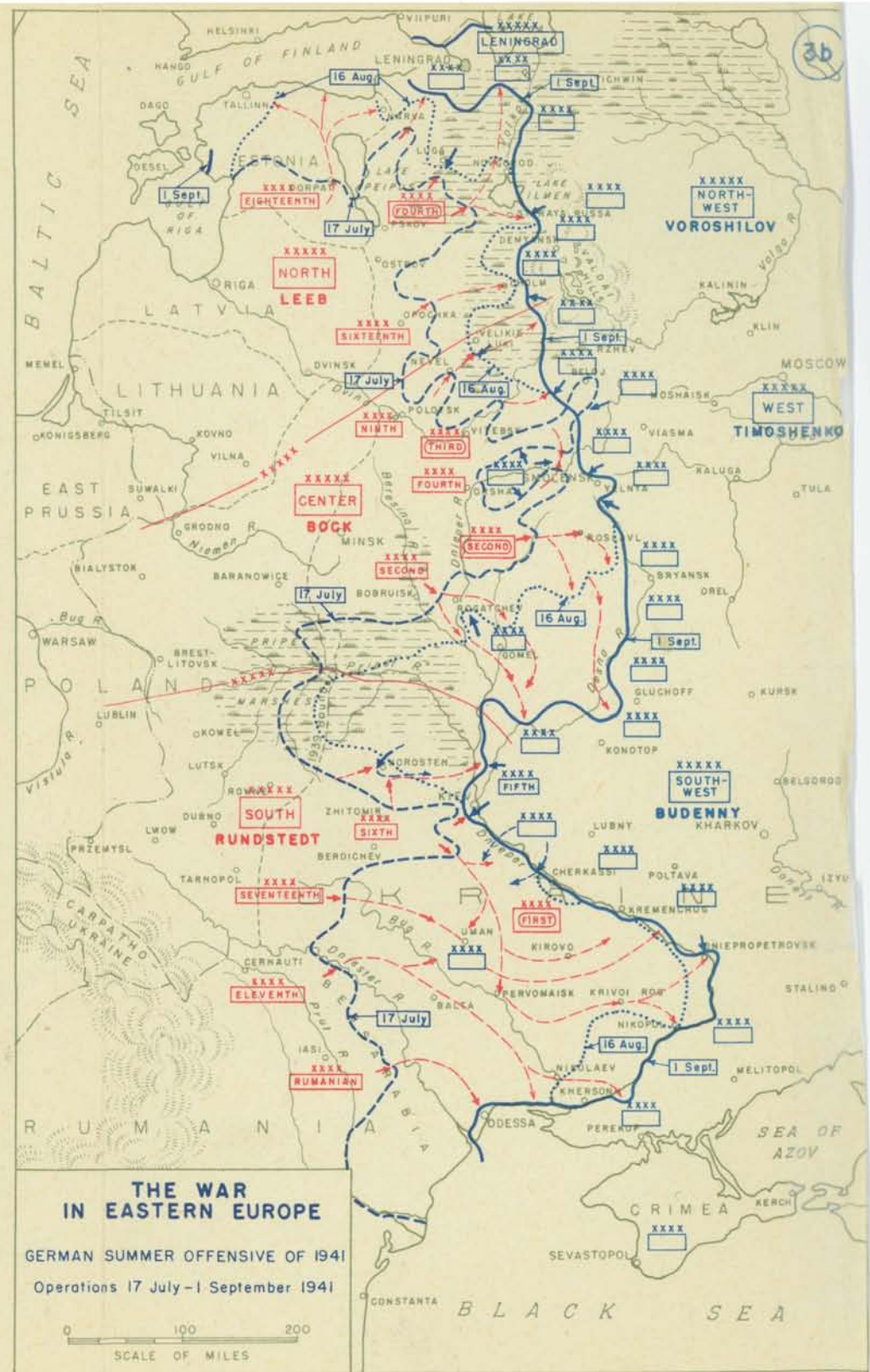
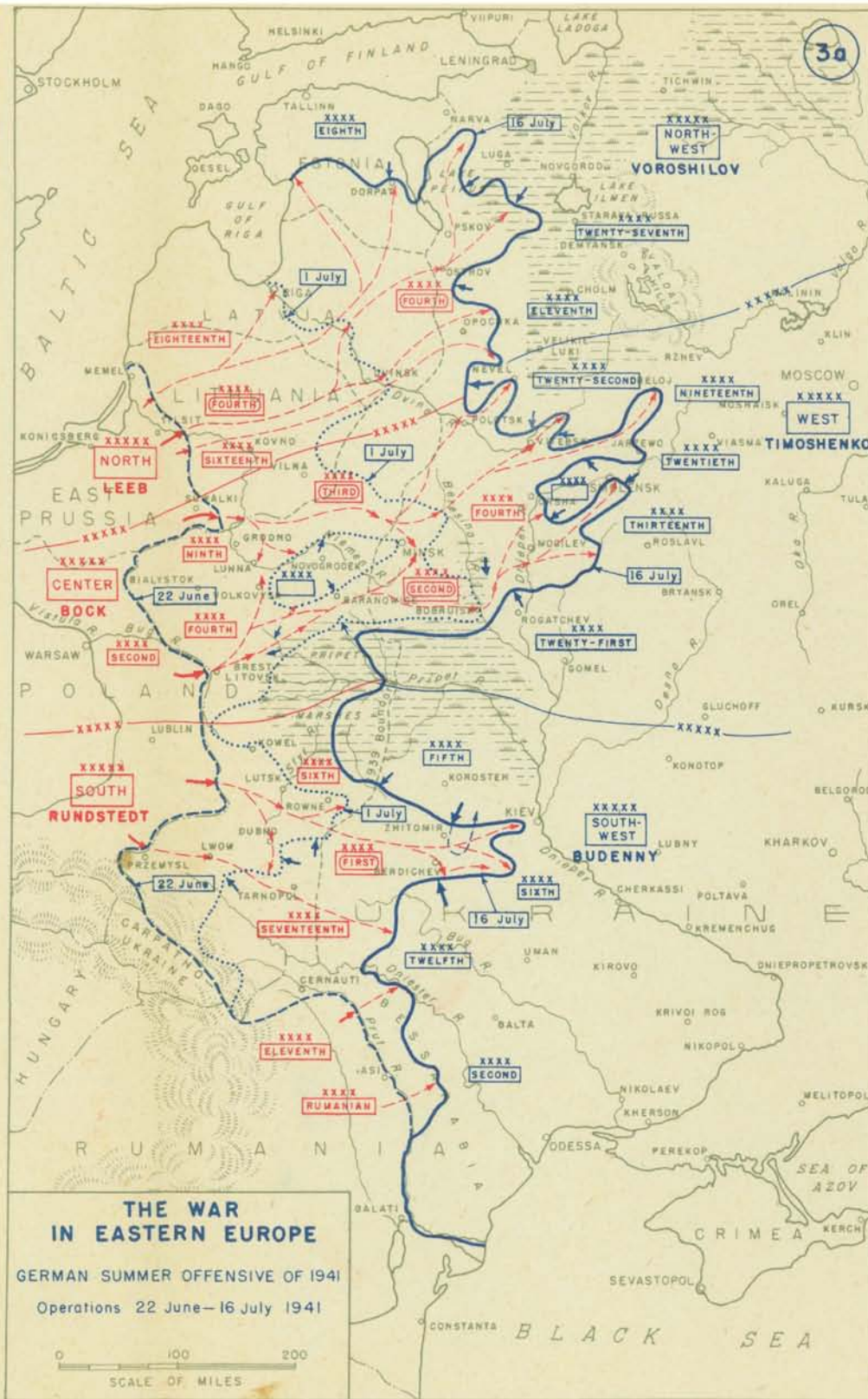


BATTLE OF MOSCOW
Situation 5 December 1941



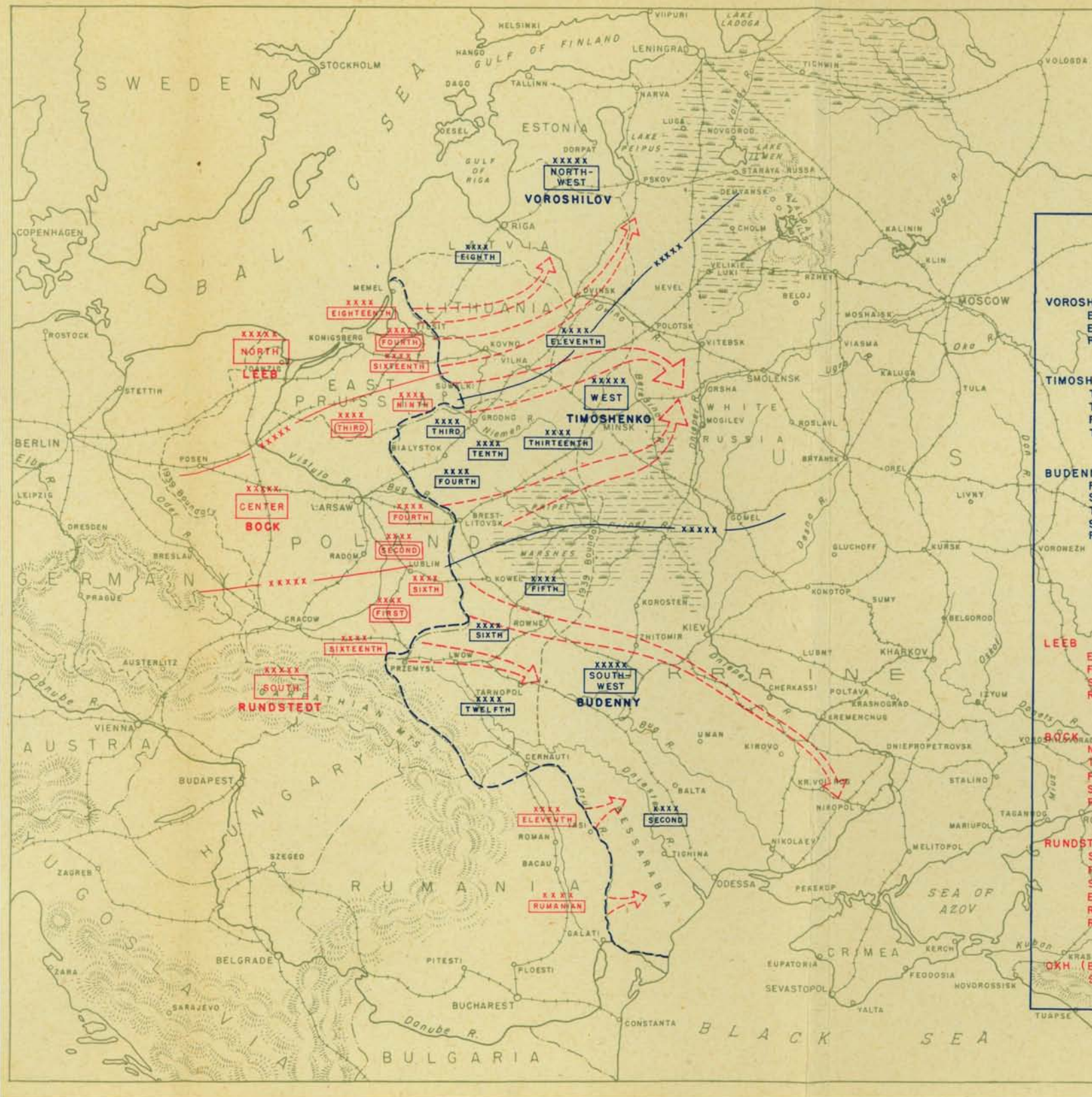
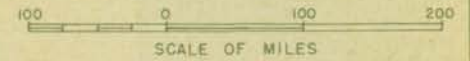






TERRAIN AND COMMUNICATIONS

OPPOSING FORCES AND GERMAN PLANS
(22 June 1941)

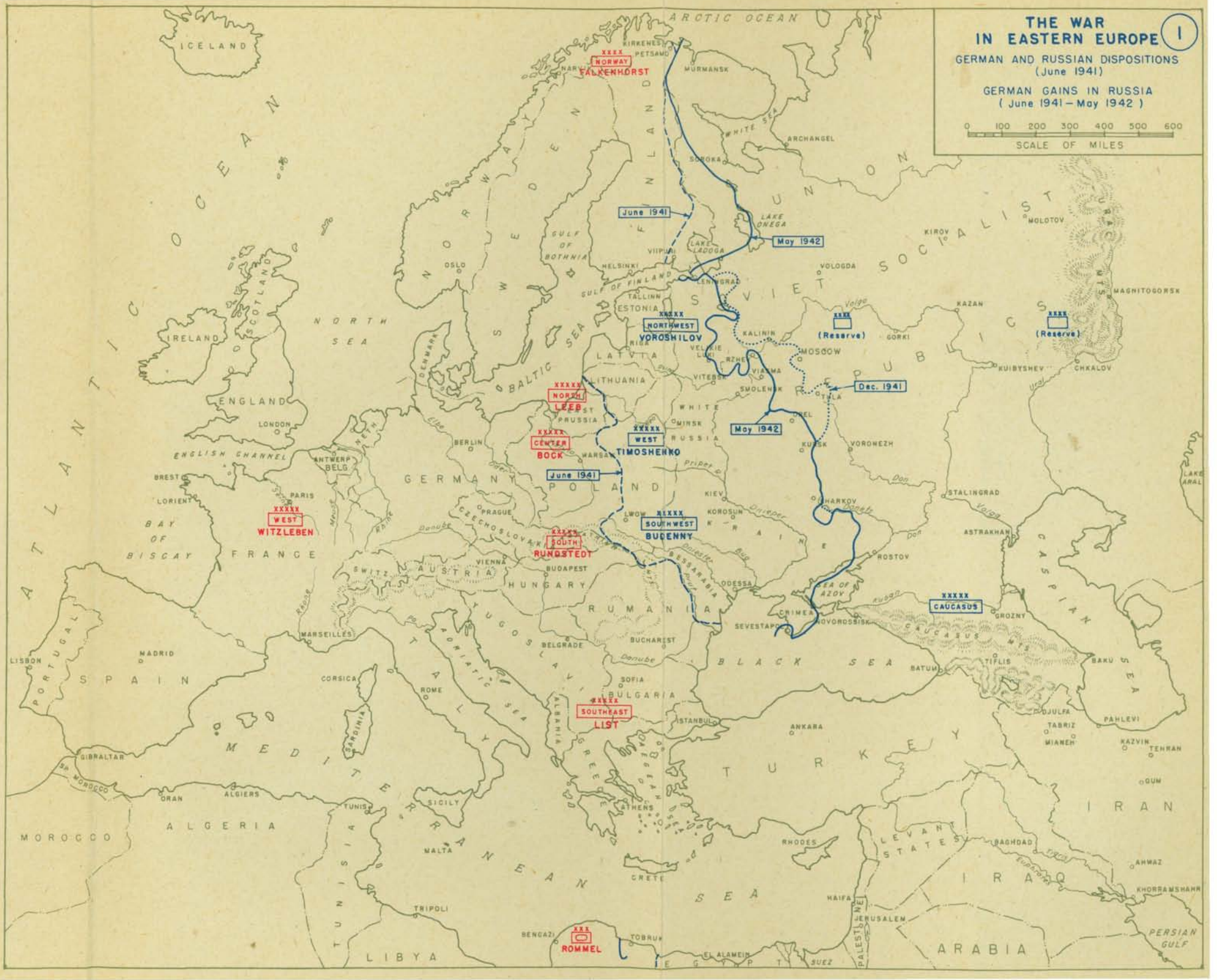
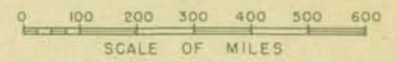


ORDER OF BATTLE		
RUSSIAN		
	Panzer Divisions	Other Types
VOROSHILOV		
Eleventh Army	16
Eighth Army	2
Reserve	14
Total, Northwest Front	32
TIMOSHENKO		
Third Army	2
Tenth Army	34
Fourth Army	11
Thirteenth Army	11
Total, West Front	47
BUDENNY		
Fifth Army	17
Sixth Army	12
Twelfth Army	1
Second Army	12
Reserve	2
Total, Southwest Front	69
Total Russian Divisions	148
GERMAN		
LEEB		
Eighteenth Army (Kuechler)	7
Fourth Panzer Group (Hoepner)	3
Sixteenth Army (Busch)	8
Reserve	8
Total, Army Group North	30
BOCK		
Ninth Army (Strauss)	9
Third Panzer Group (Hoth)	4
Fourth Army (Kluge)	14
Second Panzer Group (Guderian)	9
Reserve	7
Total, Army Group Center	55
RUNDSTEDT		
Sixth Army (Reichenau)	6
First Panzer Group (Kleist)	5
Seventeenth Army (Stuelpnagel)	13
Eleventh Army (Schobert)	7
Rumanian Army (Antonescu)	4
Reserve	7
Total, Army Group South	50
OKH (Brauchitsch), reserve		
Second Army (Weichs)	2
Total German Divisions	149

THE WAR IN EASTERN EUROPE 1

GERMAN AND RUSSIAN DISPOSITIONS
(June 1941)

GERMAN GAINS IN RUSSIA
(June 1941 - May 1942)



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