

## Chapter 10

### Initial Operations and New Plans (July 1942)

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#### ***The First Phase (28 June–6 July 1942)***

By 27 June those German forces that were to participate in the first phase of the summer offensive had moved into their assembly areas according to schedule. On the next day Fourth Panzer Army and Second Army jumped off with forces consisting of three armored, three motorized, and nine infantry divisions. Four Hungarian divisions covered the southern flank; in addition two German and six Hungarian divisions, constituting the reserves, were still enroute.

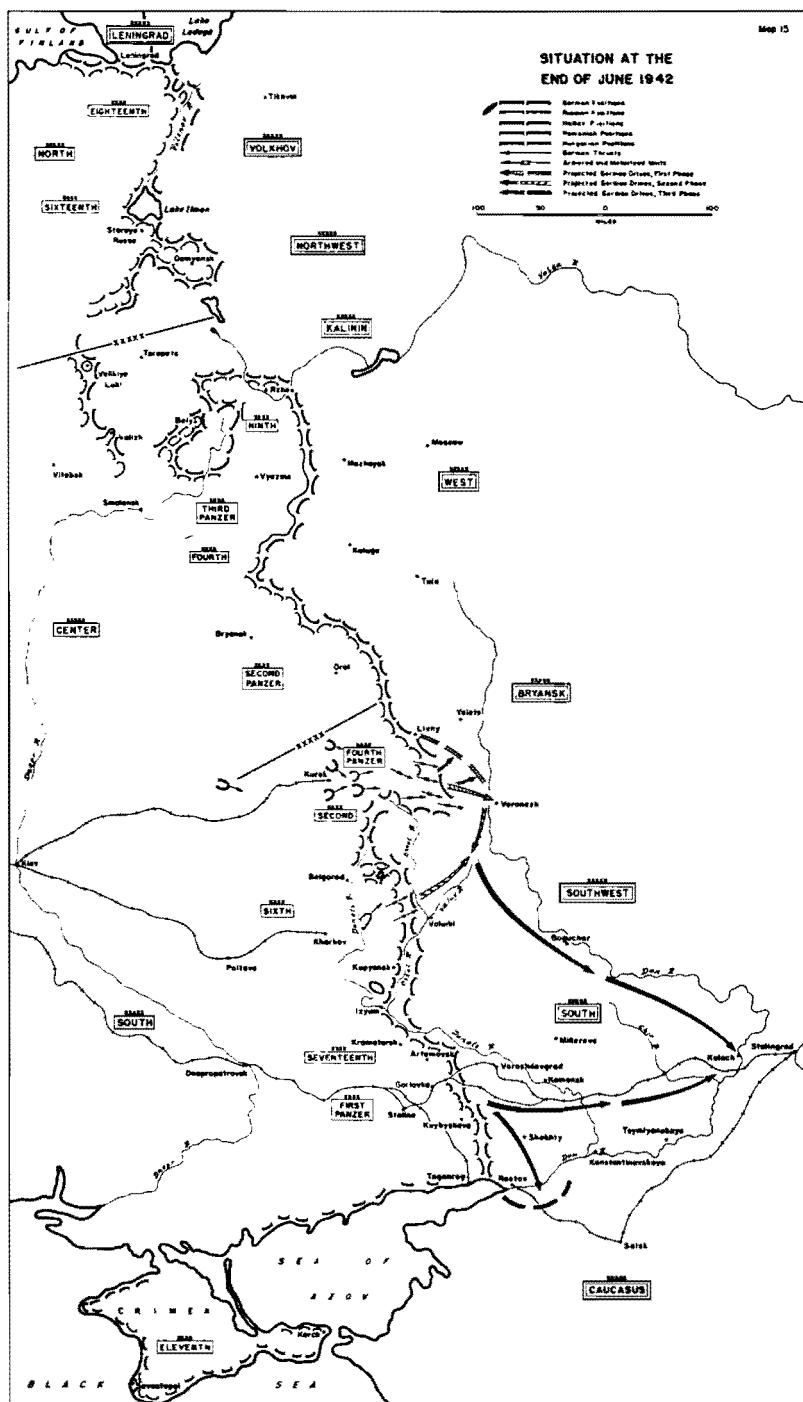
The mission of the spearhead divisions was to break through to Voronezh. [See *map 15*.] The infantry divisions were then to build up strong flank protection along a line extending from Livny to Voronezh, while the motorized forces were to thrust southeastward along the Don River. The forces available for this operation were none too strong. The protection of the Livny—Voronezh sector—about 100 miles wide—would divert most of the German infantry divisions, with the Hungarians taking over the defense of the Don south of Voronezh.

From the very first day of the offensive the Russians launched counterattacks, committing numerous armored brigades whose presence had not been discovered by German intelligence. Sizeable Russian forces were detraining in the Yelets area.

By 2 July the German spearheads were at the outskirts of Voronezh. The city fell after four days of furious fighting, during which the divisions of Fourth Panzer Army became more heavily engaged than Hitler had thought necessary. The first phase of the offensive was completed on that day, with flank protection being secured between Livny and Voronezh.

#### ***The Second Phase (30 June–7 July 1942)***

During the second phase the Sixth Army forces, consisting of 2 armored, 1 motorized, and 16 infantry divisions, jumped off from the area northeast of Kharkov, crossed the Oskol River, and linked up with the armored spearheads of Fourth Panzer Army on the upper course of the Valuy River. The maneuver was completed by 7 July. To gain sufficient time for establishing defensive positions along the Don, the Russians had fought a series of delaying actions west of the



Map 15. Situation at the end of June 1942.

river. In isolated instances, such as east of Kupyansk and opposite the first German bridgeheads across the Oskol, they seemed determined to make a temporary stand. Although some Soviet forces had been enveloped during the course of the German advance, few prisoners and little booty had fallen into German hands. In general, the offensive had thus far proceeded according to expectation.

The German personnel shortage induced Halder to send a memorandum to Army Group South on 2 July, requesting the latter to provide a new type of information. He first explained that current operations of Army Group South were conducted almost without reserves echeloned in depth. Because of the long distances to be covered to reach the objectives, this shortage of forces could have grave consequences unless the Army High Command knew at all times the strength, condition, and casualties of all units, particularly the armored ones. Only with this on hand could the Army High Command properly accomplish its functions.

### **Changes in the German Order of Battle (July 1942)**

The first two phases of the offensive had been directed by Field Marshal von Bock, whose command, Army Group South, was redesignated Army Group B on 9 July. (See chart 4.) Four days later Bock was replaced by Generaloberst (Gen.) Maximilian von Weichs, the former commander of Second Army, ostensibly because of Hitler's dissatisfaction with Bock's conduct of the Voronezh operation. In reality Hitler wanted to tighten his control over the conduct of the German summer offensive.

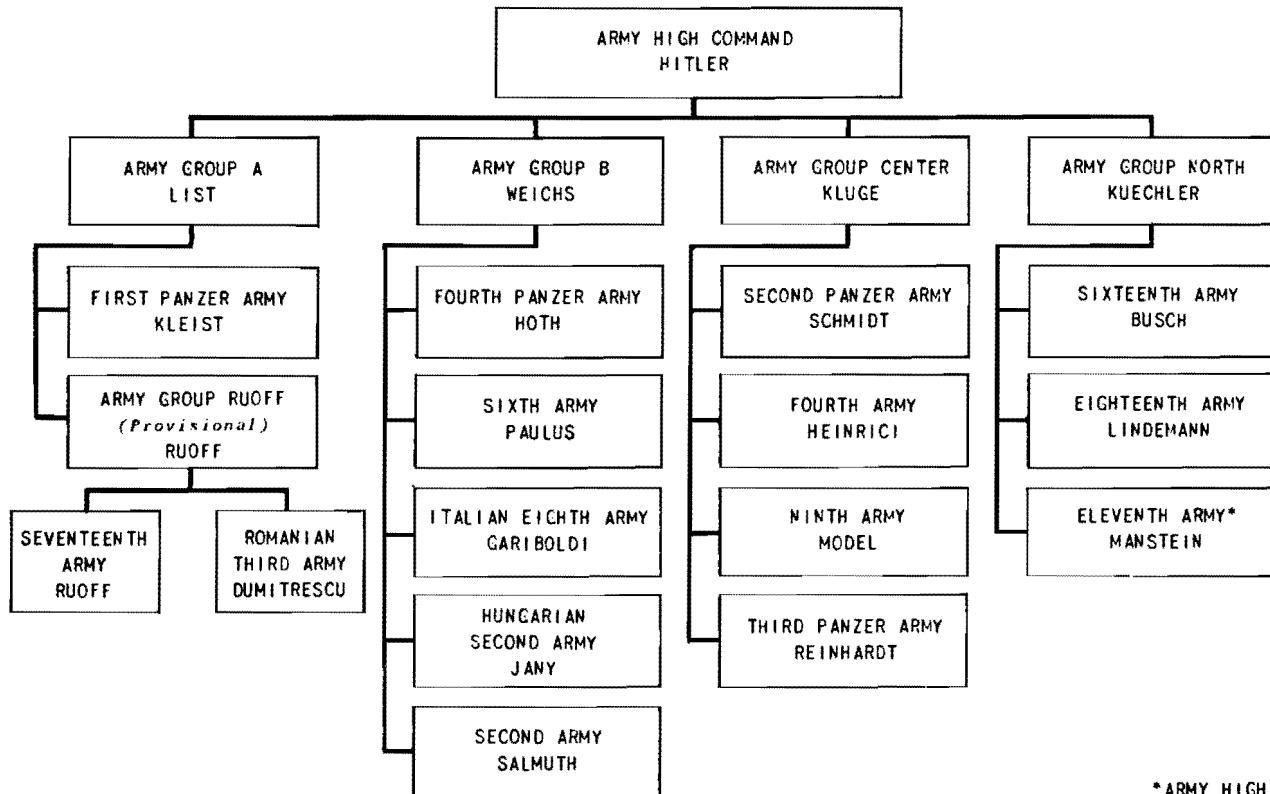
The first group of officers appointed to the staff of Army Group A arrived in Poltava at the end of May. When the new headquarters assumed control at the beginning of July, a forward echelon moved to Stalino, where the future headquarters of the army group was to be established. From the outset the command net broke down repeatedly because the signal troops were insufficiently trained.

### **The Army Group A Offensive**

#### **The Operation Plan**

Army Group A was to intervene during the third phase. Its forces were to jump off from the Taganrog-Artemovsk area, break through the Russian lines, and drive eastward across the Donets River as far as the Don bend, where they were to link up with the Sixth Army and Fourth Panzer Army spearheads driving down the Don. By this maneuver the Russians were to be trapped in the Don bend. Some allied forces were to provide flank protection—the Italians on both sides of Boguchar, the Romanians along the sector adjacent to the

Chart 4. German Order of Battle—Russian Theater of War (Beginning of July 1942).



east. Other army group elements were to thrust southward, envelop Rostov, and establish bridgeheads south of the Don.

The Russian *Southwest, South and Caucasus Fronts* were commanded by Marshal Timoshenko, whose headquarters was in Stalingrad. Intelligence reports indicated that the defeats and losses suffered during the spring of 1942 seemed to have had little effect on the performance of the Russians. To explain the Russian soldier's attitude one had to understand his way of thinking in terms of tangible evidence. Since he ate better rations, saw more and more comrades joining him in combat, and noticed the relative stability of his sector, he probably felt that a definite change for the better had taken place since the last year's disastrous defeats.

Total German casualties for June had been slightly lower than those suffered in May, but higher by 10,000 than expected by the Army High Command. Approximately 157,000 reinforcements had arrived in the Russian theater, exceeding the number of losses by about 31,000 men.

In calculating future manpower distribution quotas for August, it was estimated that 70,000 replacements would be available in August 1942. Of this total 4,000 men would be needed in northern Finland, 10,000 for activating a special desert unit and as replacements for Rommel's casualties in North Africa, and 9,000 to make up for the July deficits of First Panzer and Seventeenth Armies. Of the remaining 47,000 men, 15,000 would go to Army Group A, 10,000 to Army Group B, 14,000 to Army Group Center, and 8,000 to Army Group North. In view of the scope of the summer offensive the Army Groups A and B quotas were not too reassuring.

On 1 July 1942 the total strength of the German Army field forces, including civilians with assimilated ranks, was 3,948,200; the number of officers included in this figure was 150,100.

### **The Army Group A Attack**

On 7 July Field Marshal List assumed command of Army Group A, composed of the First Panzer, Eleventh, and Seventeenth Armies. Two days later his newly formed army group launched its attack with First Panzer Army thrusting toward Voroshilovgrad. The advance proceeded according to schedule. On 11 July an order signed by Timoshenko was captured. In it Timoshenko instructed his unit commanders to halt the German offensive by using delaying tactics. Since the Germans considered the Russian lower command echelon incapable of executing such a complicated mission, Army Group A issued orders to hit the Russians wherever they bogged down during the retreat and to seize as much of their materiel as possible.

By 13 July Army Group A had made such good progress that Hitler wanted to initiate the southward thrust toward the Caucasus. He therefore instructed List to advance southward in the direction of Konstantinovskaya, seize the Don-crossing facilities in that city and at Tsymlyanskaya, envelop the Russian forces west of the Donets and south of the Don by thrusting westward to Rostov, and cut off the Salsk-Stalingrad rail line. To carry out these missions Fourth Panzer Army and one infantry corps were transferred from Army Group B to Army Group A. The infantry divisions of Army Group A were to move up in forced marches so that they could assist the armored spearheads in preventing a Russian withdrawal.

Army Group B was to provide flank and rear protection for this maneuver by moving the Italian Eighth Army via Millerovo to the middle Don and covering the Chir River. On 15 July air reconnaissance information indicated that the Russians were speeding up the evacuation of the Donets Basin and were withdrawing south and southeastward.

### **German and Russian Weaknesses**

Even before mid-July a shortage of POL began to hamper the movements of the spearhead divisions of Army Group B. Airlift operations were under consideration when, on 15 July, Fourth Panzer Army reported that its further progress would be assured by the capture of sizeable quantities of gasoline. Soon afterward, however, the Germans discovered that the dump they had seized intact contained only about 200 tons of fuel, not even enough to fill the tanks of one weak armored division.

By contrast, the First Panzer Army still had sufficient gasoline to continue its advance as scheduled. The Russian units opposing this army were disorganized; recently captured prisoners originated from as many as 30 different divisions and brigades. A tendency toward mass desertion became manifest at various points, such as at Millerovo, where 1 officer deserted with 500 enlisted men. Prisoner interrogation reports conveyed the impression that the Russian command had lost control in certain areas and that the confusion in the enemy ranks was spreading.

The Russian retreat was directed southward behind the Don with men and equipment crossing the river by ferries and across emergency bridges. At the same time trains out of Stalingrad were moving fresh troops westward. To counteract this maneuver Fourth Panzer Army was ordered to drive straight toward Konstantinovskaya. The army was to protect its flank in the Millerovo area and east of the lower Donets.

### Directive No. 43

On 11 July Hitler issued Directive No. 43 which dealt with the German flank attack from the Crimea across the Kerch Strait into the Caucasus. After mopping up the Kerch Peninsula and Sevastopol—the latter had fallen on 1 July after a surprise landing of German assault detachments north of the fortress—Eleventh Army was to make preparations for crossing the Kerch Strait by early August.

Strong units were to land in the rear of the enemy's coastal fortifications and capture the ports of Anapa and Novorossiysk, thus depriving the Russians of these two naval bases. Most of the Eleventh Army forces were then to advance along the northern slopes of the Caucasus and seize the Maikop oil fields. A secondary thrust along the coastal highway via Tuapse was to be envisaged.

The Navy was to prepare crossing facilities, support the landing forces, and—together with the Luftwaffe—protect the operations from interference by the Russian Black Sea fleet. As part of the preparatory measures the Luftwaffe was to neutralize the Russian harbor installations and naval forces in the Black Sea. During the operation the Air Force was to give direct support to the landing forces. The possibility of employing airborne troops was to be taken into consideration.

An attempt to deceive the Russians was to be made by pretending that strong Eleventh Army forces were being shifted into the area north of the Sea of Azov. Counterintelligence agents were to parachute into the Maikop area to protect the oil fields, execute sabotage missions against the railroad lines leading to the Taman Peninsula, and destroy harbor and coastal installations.

Five days after issuing this directive Hitler moved to his newly established headquarters in the Ukraine, situated in a small triangular woods 10 miles northeast of Vinnitsa along the highway to Zhitomir. Hitler, his intimates, and his military staff—the field echelon of the Armed Forces Operations Staff—were billeted in log cabins and prefabricated barracks. The Army High Command set up its field headquarters in Vinnitsa proper.

### The Continuation of Operations

On 16 July a conference of Army Group A commanders, their chiefs of staff, and the chief of staff of Fourth Air Force took place at Gorlovka. In his introductory remarks List stated that the advance had proceeded much faster than anticipated, since the army group forces had already reached the Don.

He also revealed that First Panzer Army, which had jumped off with 40 percent of its prescribed strength, now had only approximately

30 percent. There was no overall reduction in tank strength, because current losses were being replaced from new production. Each division of First Panzer Army had one tank battalion. Whereas the German divisions of Seventeenth Army were considered good, the Italian ones—with the exception of one classified as “quite good”—had not yet been involved in any fighting. This army had no non-organic artillery units and was particularly anxious to receive some self-propelled assault guns. Four of the Fourth Panzer Army divisions were considered good, two very good. Their automotive equipment was very poor, and it was solely by expedients that the army kept rolling.

List then outlined his plan for future operations: the spearhead divisions of First Panzer Army were to cross the Donets near Kamensk and turn southward to Shakhty; some of the infantry units were to follow the course of the Donets and advance in a southeastward direction to protect the flank of the Fourth Panzer Army. The latter was to cross the Don near Konstantinovskaya and pivot west or southwestward according to the situation prevailing at that time. Infantry divisions were to follow with a minimum of delay to protect the army flank north of the Don, their deployment depending on developments in the Stalingrad area. On 18 July the Seventeenth Army was to launch an eastward or southeastward attack from the Kuybyshev area. The double purpose of this attack was to tie down the Russians and close in on Rostov as soon as possible.

By 19 July the Russians were withdrawing the bulk of their forces toward Rostov. They covered their retreat by leaving strong rear guards, particularly opposite the right of Seventeenth Army. List intended to throw an ever-tightening ring around Rostov while Fourth Panzer Army forces were to send two armored corps across the Don and form bridgeheads as soon as possible. Their task was complicated by the fact that, when they finally reached the Don at the confluence of the Donets, the bridges had been blown and the Russians were entrenched on the south bank of the river. According to an intelligence estimate dated 18 July the Russians had been able to withdraw two-thirds of their infantry strength across the Don. No figures regarding the armored brigades were available. By that date the total number of prisoners taken by Army Group A was 54,000. Because of the disorganization and loss of materiel caused by the withdrawal, the combat strength of the Russian units had dropped considerably.

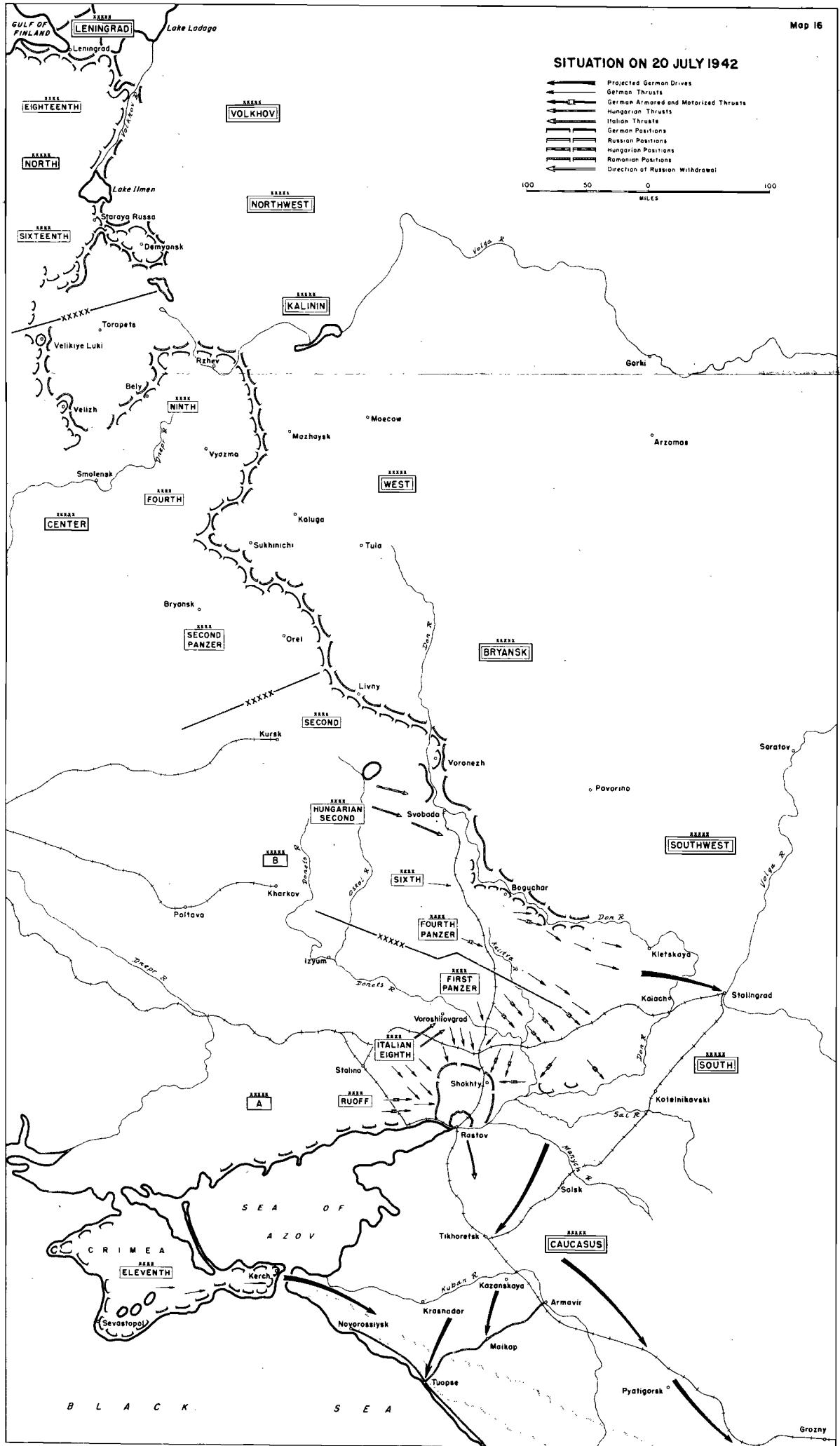
### ***The Situation of the Other Army Groups by 20 July 1942***

By 20 July only the infantry divisions of Sixth Army and the units of one panzer corps of Army Group B continued to advance in the

## SITUATION ON 20 JULY 1942

- Projecting German Drives
- German Thrusts
- German Armored and Motorized Thrusts
- Hungarian Thrusts
- Italian Thrusts
- German Positions
- Russian Positions
- Hungarian Positions
- Romanian Positions
- Direction of Russian Withdrawal

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Map 16. Situation on July 1942.

direction of Stalingrad. The bulk of the German forces in the south were engaged in the Rostov operation under the control of Army Group A. [See map 16.] Flank protection along the Don up to the area east of Boguchar had been established. The Hungarian Second Army had taken over its designated sector south of Voronezh, while the Italian Eighth Army was marching northeastward from the Voroshilovgrad area in order to relieve the German forces in the Boguchar sector. The German Second Army front between Voronezh and Livny had defied a series of savage armored assaults in the vicinity of Voronezh.

Army Group Center had cleared the rear area of Fourth Army of partisan forces. The immediate threat deep in the flank of Ninth Army had also been eliminated. In the Toropets area the front had been strengthened, but here the grave potential danger persisted. Moreover, the Russians maintained continuous pressure along the entire front, particularly in the Second Panzer Army sector. Their local attacks seemed to be intended to relieve the Soviet forces in the south. However, by 20 July no critical situation had developed.

On the other hand the scope of the partisan operations behind the German front had changed noticeably. Whereas in the past the Russian command had used partisan units to soften up sectors that were subsequently to be attacked by regular troops from the front, guerrilla operations were now extending far into the German rear areas. Instead of employing large partisan units as in the past, the Russians committed more and more small raiding detachments and sabotage teams to cut off the German lines of communications and inflict losses on reinforcements moving to the front.

In addition three air forces had been formed out of flying units previously attached to individual armies. It was estimated that approximately 800 serviceable planes supported the Russian ground operations against Army Group Center.

Army Group North had to contend with local attacks, mainly at Staraya Russa and along the Volkhov, which had been repelled without too much difficulty. German preparations for an all-out assault on Leningrad progressed very slowly.

A mid-July report on the rehabilitation of the Army Groups Center and North units indicated that their personnel and materiel situation had improved considerably. Most of the infantry divisions had been reduced to six infantry battalions each and the artillery batteries to three guns each. Their mobility had improved with the arrival of horses and the introduction of more effective automotive repair procedures. The motor vehicle situation nevertheless remained very serious. Motorized elements averaged only half their authorized allowances; the majority of the divisions were capable only of limited-objective attacks.

Developments along the fronts of Army Group Center and North had no adverse effect on the German offensive in the south, and Hitler was able to concentrate on his attack plans without fear of diversion.

#### **Directive No. 44 (21 July 1942)**

Directive No. 44 pertained to warfare in northern Finland. The rapid progress of the operations in the south gave rise to the hope that the Soviet Union would soon be cut off from the Caucasus. As a result the Soviets would lose their oil resources, and the vital supply route for lend-lease shipments via Iran would be blocked. This blow, together with the loss of the entire Donets Basin, would be fatal to the Soviet military position.

In Hitler's opinion the next step would be to cut off the northern supply route by which the Allies kept the Soviet Union in the war. This had to be achieved by cutting the Murmansk railroad, which carried the bulk of lend-lease supplies during the winter months. [See *map 4*.] The importance of this route would increase when unfavorable weather prevented effective interception of the convoys in the Arctic Ocean.

The Twentieth Mountain Army, together with the Fifth Air Force, was therefore to seize the Murmansk railroad near Kandalaksha during the autumn of 1942. To facilitate this drive, Leningrad was to be captured in September at the latest, thus releasing Finnish forces, and one German mountain division was to be transferred to Finland.

A Finnish attack against Belomorsk was to be coordinated with the Twentieth Mountain Army offensive. In general, the most important task of the German forces in Finland remained the protection of the Petsamo mines, since Germany would probably have to cease the production of high-alloy steel for airplane and submarine engines without nickel shipments from Finland.

Oddly enough, the Finnish theater was the only one in which the Russians did not enjoy numerical superiority, since about 500,000 Finns and Germans faced approximately 300,000 Russians. However, contrary to the hopes expressed in Directive No. 44, this superiority could not be brought to bear because the prerequisite to any major operation—the capture of Leningrad—had not materialized; Army Group North had not proved sufficiently strong to seize the city. The German forces stationed in Finland did not influence the struggle for victory in the south, since no decisive action took place in the Finnish theater during 1942.

#### **Directive No. 45 (23 July 1942)**

On 21 July a recently captured Russian General Staff officer stated during his interrogation that the Russians intended to defend Rostov

to the bitter end. At Army Group A headquarters, however, the impression prevailed that Russian resistance in the city would soon collapse because the garrison had lost much of its equipment and morale seemed to be low. This opinion was soon justified: Rostov fell on 23 July except for a few isolated nests of resistance in the western part of the city.

At this decisive moment Hitler began to show increasing interest in Stalingrad, the Volga city that was still approximately 100 miles from the German spearheads. The old Russian dictum that the mother-land could not be defeated unless the invader got across the Volga seemed to have gained new significance in Hitler's mind. Several of his requests to divert two panzer divisions from the Rostov operation had previously been ignored in the heat of battle. Now he issued a direct order transferring one panzer corps composed of two armored divisions from Fourth Panzer to Sixth Army and thus from the Caucasus to the Stalingrad operation. The concept of an orderly advance by consecutive phase lines, which had been followed since the beginning of the summer offensive, gave way to two simultaneous drives in divergent directions, one toward the oil lands, the other toward Stalingrad.

Directive No. 45, dealing with the continuation of the summer offensive, was issued on 23 July. In the preamble Hitler stated that during an offensive of little more than three weeks' duration, the long-range objectives set for the southern attack forces had been attained for all intents and purposes. Only a few small contingents of Timoshenko's armies had been able to escape and reach the other bank of the Don, where they would probably be reinforced from the Caucasus area. Another Russian force was being assembled in the Stalingrad area, where the Soviet command apparently intended to offer strong resistance.

As its next objective Army Group A was to encircle and annihilate those enemy forces south and southeast of Rostov which had escaped across the Don. Strong motorized units were to advance southwestward and cut the rail line connecting Tikhoretsk with Stalingrad.

In addition to losing the panzer corps transferred to Army Group B for the continuation of the drive toward Stalingrad, Army Group A was to release the Motorized Infantry Division Grossdeutschland which was to stop its advance as soon as it reached the Manych River and prepare its units for transfer to the West.

After accomplishing the mission of destroying the Russians south of the Don, Army Group A was to seize the Black Sea coast and thus paralyze the Russian Black Sea fleet. As soon as the movement of the main army group forces had progressed sufficiently, elements of

Eleventh Army were to cross the Kerch Strait and advance along the Black Sea coastal road.

Another force, consisting of mountain and light divisions, was to cross the Kuban River and seize the elevated ground near Maikop and Armavir. The mountain divisions were to cross the western Caucasus passes and operate in conjunction with the forces advancing along the Black Sea coast. At the same time an attack force consisting of motorized elements was to move into the Grozny area, block the passes of the Ossetin and Georgian military roads leading across the central Caucasus, and then thrust along the Caspian toward Baku.

In addition to building up a defense line along the Don, Army Group B was to advance toward Stalingrad, destroy the Russian forces assembling in that area, and block the corridor between the Don and the Volga. Motorized units were then to drive down the lower Volga toward Astrakhan and there block the principal branch of the river.

The Luftwaffe was to support the ground forces crossing the Don and advancing toward Tikhoretsk, and concentrate on destroying Timoshenko's forces and the city of Stalingrad. Occasional raids were to be conducted on Astrakhan, and shipping on the lower Volga was to be disrupted by the sowing of mines. During the further course of the operation the Air Force was to operate in conjunction with the ground forces advancing toward the Black Sea ports and protect them from Russian naval interference. Other Luftwaffe units were to support the thrust via Grozny to Baku.

Because of the crucial importance of Caucasus oil to the future German war effort, air attacks against oil wells or oil tanks were to be made only in case of absolute necessity. The Russians, however, were to be deprived of Caucasus oil deliveries by German air attacks that were to disrupt the rail and pipe lines and destroy the port installations.

The Navy was to lend its support during the crossing of the Kerch Strait and prevent the Russian Black Sea fleet from interfering. Moreover, the Navy was to organize light forces for disrupting Russian communications across the Caspian Sea.

The local operations previously planned for Army Groups Center and North were to be executed with a minimum of delay in order to produce the greatest possible effect on the opposing forces. Army Group North was to seize Leningrad by the beginning of September. For this purpose five divisions as well as the nonorganic medium and heavy artillery units of Eleventh Army were to be transferred from the Crimea to the north. Two German and two Romanian divisions were to be left in the Crimea temporarily.

Special attention was called to maintaining the secrecy of this directive.

Directive No. 45 resulted in the diversion of one motorized infantry division of Army Group A and five divisions of Eleventh Army from the Caucasus operation. Hitler's absolute confidence in victory induced him to leave in the Caucasus only sufficient forces to carry out a pursuit. The breach in the Russian front seemed so enormous that the shifting of a few divisions from Army Group A to Army Group B could not possibly affect the Caucasus drive. At the same time Hitler felt that such a move would guarantee a speedy advance to the lower Volga. The Russian forces assembling in the Stalingrad area would be overrun by the German spearhead divisions. After reaching the city the latter would immediately turn southeastward and continue their drive toward Astrakhan and the Caspian Sea.

Thus in a way Hitler reverted to the original concept on which the Operations Division of the Army High Command in October 1941 had based its plan for the Caucasus operation. According to this plan an offensive across the Caucasus Mountains could be envisaged only after the German flank along the lower Volga had been secured. The instructions issued in Directive No. 45 constituted a belated attempt to secure the flank along the Volga while relatively weak forces simultaneously advanced into the Caucasus.

### **German Shortages**

#### **Tanks**

On 25 July the number of tanks in serviceable condition in the Army Group A area totaled 435 for 8 spearhead divisions or an average of 54 tanks per division. The best equipped panzer division had 109 tanks, the poorest 24.

#### **Gasoline**

The First Panzer Army's shortage of gasoline was so great that all motorized elements of the XLIV Infantry Corps were immobilized and the infantry units were unable to move because of the breakdown of the supply system.

By 25 July the gasoline situation had grown more critical than ever. When General Halder inquired at Army Group A headquarters why gasoline supplies were so unsatisfactory, he was told that the shortage was caused by bad weather, the long distances covered during the offensive, and the priority given to the Sixth Army for its assault on Stalingrad. Airlifted supplies had temporarily alleviated shortages, but the bulk of the essential POL requirements could not be moved by this mode of transportation. Since the available truck transportation had proved insufficient, an improvement could be expected only after the Stalino-Shakhty railroad had been repaired. Both panzer armies were temporarily immobilized by lack of gasoline.

**Stalingrad Takes Priority Over the Caucasus (End of July 1942)**

On 29 July the last rail line connecting the Caucasus with central Russia was blown up at several points by German armored elements. The Caucasus was isolated and Hitler seemed to believe that it was his for the taking. On the next day Army Group A was warned that the heavy fighting near Stalingrad would force the Army High Command to transfer one additional German corps and two Romanian ones with a number of divisions to Army Group B in order to assist Sixth Army in its struggle. The Fourth Panzer Army headquarters might also be pulled out to take charge of this support thrust, in which case only one of its corps would continue to participate in the drive toward Maikop under First Panzer Army control. The definite decision would depend on developments in the Stalingrad situation.

That same evening List told Halder that the transfer of three corps, which apparently was under consideration, would endanger the eastern flank of the southward thrust into the Caucasus. Halder replied that the transfer would take place after the corps had reached the south bank of the Don and that their diversion in the direction of Stalingrad would actually constitute an alternative flank protection. List thereupon insisted that at least the Grossdeutschland Division remain with Army Group A to protect its flank against a Russian surprise thrust. Halder reassured him that the division would not be transferred to the West before mid-August. On the other hand, he had little hope of any further delay since Hitler had recently asked him: "What is the use of victories in Russia, if I lose western Europe?"

Halder continued by saying that Hitler did not believe the Army Group A flank would be in danger. List did not share this opinion. He wanted at least the Grossdeutschland Division in reserve. The army group commander then reminded Halder that the success of the Caucasus operation would depend primarily on the ready availability of POL. Hitler's plan struck him as a great gamble, since driving into the Caucasus with relatively weak forces, whose flank was not sufficiently protected, meant taking extraordinary risks.

While these conversations were taking place Russian troops were retreating into the Caucasus, with no sign of a new front being built up farther to the south. Stalin's order, that every officer and enlisted man would have to fight to the end without giving way, showed that the Russian command was aware of the seriousness of the situation.

On 31 July Halder sent an order to Army Groups A and B in which he confirmed the transfer of Fourth Panzer Army. In the introductory remarks he stated that with the severing of the rail communications between the Caucasus and Stalingrad the Russian front south of the Don was split wide open. The Russians in front of Army Group A would attempt to stop the German advance into the Caucasus,

but it seemed doubtful whether they would have the necessary forces to do so. At Stalingrad they would throw all their resources into the battle to maintain control over their life line, the Volga.

Army Group A's immediate mission was to seize the Black Sea coast and thus paralyze the Russian fleet, which in turn would guarantee the security of the German lines of communications across that body of water.

On 1 August the Fourth Panzer Army with two German and one Romanian corps, a total of eight divisions plus corps and army troops, would be transferred from the Caucasus to the Stalingrad operation. Army Group A was to assemble its remaining motorized units under First Panzer Army for a drive in the direction of Maikop. From there some army elements were to cut off the withdrawing Russian forces, while others were to drive via Tuapse toward Batum. Some motorized units would have to protect the eastern flank of the army. Mountain divisions were to be employed for the thrusts across the passes in the Caucasus. The much contested Grossdeutschland Division would be available for eight days more, after which it was to prepare to entrain on 12 August at Stalino.

The mission of Army Group B was to remain unchanged.

## Chapter 11

### The Period of Stagnation (August–October 1942)

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#### *Developments to Mid-August 1942*

German hopes that Army Group A would be able to encircle the enemy forces in the region immediately south of the lower Don were unfulfilled. The Russians evaded destruction by withdrawing to the Caucasus, whereupon the Germans seized Krasnodar and Maikop against light resistance. Their divisions followed the retreating Russians closely and penetrated into the western Caucasus up to the mountain passes. Fully realizing the danger which threatened them the Russians successfully blocked the only road leading over the mountains to Tuapse.

In the Crimea elements of Eleventh Army prepared the crossing of the Kerch Strait, while the bulk of the army forces entrained for Leningrad. In the central Caucasus area First Panzer Army moved in the direction of the Grozny oil fields, but very slowly being greatly handicapped by a shortage of gasoline at the very time when Russian resistance was stiffening.

The operations of Army Group A thus gave the impression of a dispersed effort with 20 divisions advancing along a front of more than 500 miles. The army group's two points of main effort—northeast of Tuapse and at Pyatigorsk—were 200 miles apart. Most of the air support units had been shifted to the Stalingrad area after the army group had crossed the Don. The supply situation was very unsatisfactory. Because of the shortage of rolling stock, the only rail line leading from the Rostov area into the Caucasus could not satisfy more than the most elementary requirements, and insignificant shipments across the Sea of Azov failed to alleviate the shortages.

The situation of Army Group B was equally disappointing. The Russians in the Don Bend took advantage of the slowness of the Sixth Army advance—caused by the 10-day lack of gasoline and a momentary shortage of ammunition—and suddenly offered strong resistance. Although this maneuver led to the encirclement of some Russian forces, it also helped the Soviet command to gain time for the strengthening of the defenses of Stalingrad. In any event, by

18 August the Germans had cleared the Don bend and prepared for the final reduction of the city. After some confusion, caused by an almost 180° turn of its forces, Fourth Panzer Army had moved into the area north of Kotelnikovski and was ready to push toward Stalingrad from the south. Flank protection along the Don was provided by the Italian Eighth and Hungarian Second Armies, which—supported by a few German divisions—occupied wide sectors. [See chart 5.] The Romanian Third Army, scheduled to take over the sector on both sides of Kletskaya, was unable to take its place because of rail transportation difficulties. For the time being Sixth Army had to assign German divisions to this sector which in turn reduced the striking power of the assault forces at Stalingrad. During the preparatory attacks the Luftwaffe gave close support and simultaneously carried out some strategic bombing missions against the lines of communications connecting Stalingrad with Moscow.

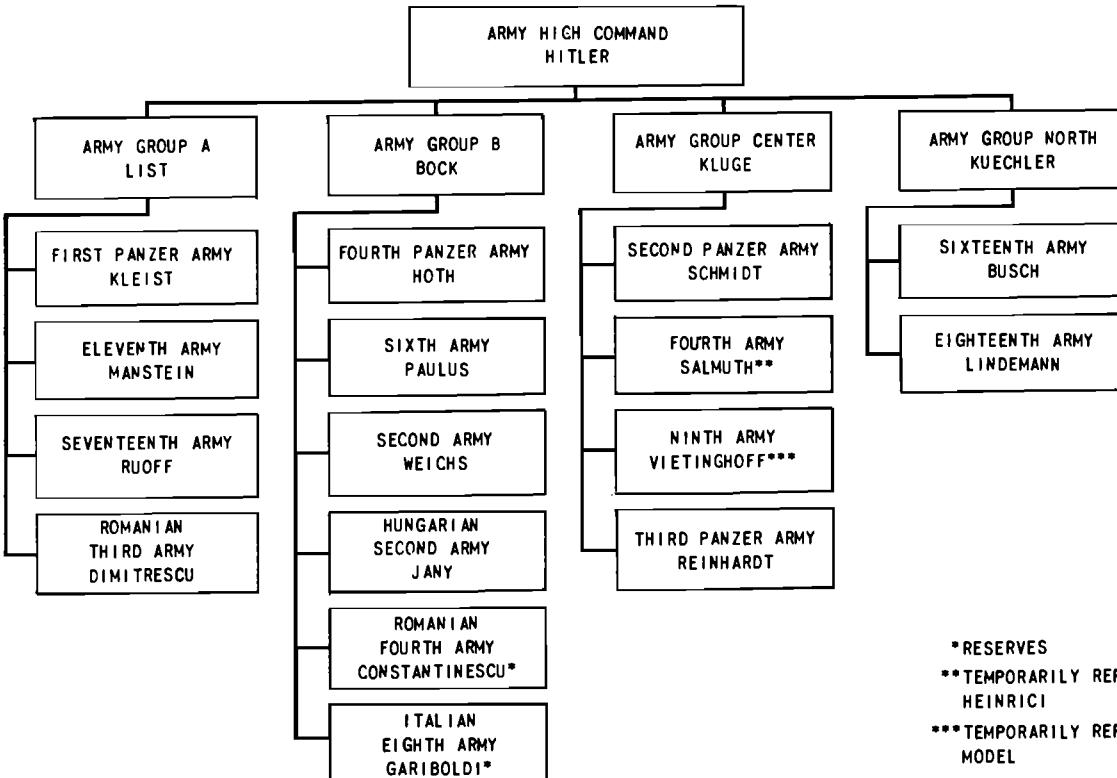
The German supply situation was alarmingly bad. The assault forces were dependent on a single, low-capacity railroad which ran eastward from the Donets Basin. Available truck transportation was insufficient to bridge the long distances between the supply bases and the spearhead units.

Hitler had ordered Army Group Center to launch a pincers attack against the Russian salient around Sukhinichi. The two armored divisions of Fourth Panzer Army that had been transferred from Army Group B during the second half of July because of the shortage of POL in the south were to participate in this attack. Field Marshal von Kluge strongly protested against this mission, indicating that the consolidation of the Rzhev front was far more urgent. On 7 August a conference at Hitler's headquarters near Vinnitsa ended with Kluge's exclaiming that he would not disobey a direct order to launch the Sukhinichi attack, but that the responsibility would be Hitler's.

The attack failed despite all German efforts. Soon afterward Army Group Center became engaged in such heavy fighting that air and ground reinforcements had to be diverted from other parts of the theater. Finally, strong Russian attacks against Ninth Army at Rzhev were repelled in sharp local actions. Meanwhile Army Group North was continuing its preparations for the attack on Leningrad.

The distribution of Luftwaffe units corresponded to that of the ground forces. Of some 1,230 operational aircraft available in the Russian theater in mid-August 1942, approximately 720 supported Army Groups A and B.

Chart 5. German Order of Battle—Russian Theater of War (12 August 1942)



The Eastern Intelligence Division estimated overall Russian strength on 15 August as follows:

Units	Total*	Russian western front*	Reserves*	Other fronts*
Infantry Divisions-----	287	134	73	80
Infantry Brigades-----	142	47	66	29
Cavalry Divisions-----	33	7	20	6
Armored Brigades-----	131	34	86	11

\*Equivalent of full-strength units.

### **Personnel and Other Problems (16-18 August 1942)**

In a letter to Marshal Keitel, General Halder again drew the attention of the Armed Forces High Command to the seriousness of the Army's personnel situation. According to recent estimates the Russian theater would be short of at least 720,000 replacements by 1 November 1942. The 400,000 men who would be inducted and trained in the interim period might compensate for current losses, but would not reduce this deficit, and the requirements of other theaters had not been taken into account. In any event, the estimated shortage of more than 700,000 replacements would involve serious risks.

In addition to the vexing personnel shortages at the front, the partisan problem had assumed such importance that Hitler issued Directive No. 46 on 18 August in order to standardize German operating procedures against the enemy in the rear areas. In this directive the Fuehrer ordered every German in partisan-infested areas to participate in the antiguerrilla struggle. However, though the new policy was well intended, its enforcement suffered from a chronic shortage of personnel and equipment which permitted great numbers of partisans to escape from one well-set trap after another.

This same personnel shortage created another problem. Germany's allies, who had had to bear such heavy burdens during the summer offensive in order to supplement the Wehrmacht's strength, now stood along greatly exposed sectors of the Don front. In this connection Hitler was apprehensive lest Stalin repeat his classic maneuver of 1920: an attack across the Don near Serafimovich in the direction of Rostov, similar to the one the Bolsheviks had launched against Wrangel's White Russian Army with such devastating results. The Fuehrer felt that the Italian Eighth Army which was responsible for the security of this Don sector would be incapable of stopping such an attack. He therefore urged repeatedly that the 22d Panzer Division be withdrawn from Stalingrad and rehabilitated behind the Italian Eighth Army sector.

The Romanians who were providing the largest contingent among Germany's allies were the subject of a memorandum Halder sent to Army Groups A and B on 18 August. Those Romanian units assigned to Army Group A—with the exception of the four mountain divisions committed in the Crimea and Caucasus—were to secure the area west and southwest of Astrakhan after the Russian Black Sea coast had been cleared and the fleet eliminated. The plans, however, would be subject to approval by Marshal Antonescu who was to assume command of a newly activated Romanian army group composed of the Romanian Third and Fourth and German Sixth Armies. The army group would secure the German flank along the lower Volga after the fall of Stalingrad.

The Dieppe raid, 18–19 August 1942, came as a complete surprise and somewhat of a shock to the Germans. Hitler's immediate reaction was to strengthen his defenses in the West, an objective that could be attained only at the expense of the Russian theater. The personnel and equipment diverted to North Africa, which was more than justified by Rommel's brilliant exploits, also constituted a drain on Germany's limited resources. A few weeks later Hitler directed the diversion of more troops to reinforce the Crete garrison. He believed that a large-scale Allied invasion of the Mediterranean island fortress was imminent and ordered the crack 22d Infantry Division transferred from the Crimea to Crete.

### ***The Situation in the Caucasus (Second Half of August 1942)***

On 19 August Army Group A headquarters estimated the situation in the Caucasus as follows: Russian resistance in the northwestern parts of the Caucasus Mountains was extremely stubborn. Approximately 20 Russian reserve divisions known to be in the Caucasus had not yet been committed for the defense of this area, perhaps because they were insufficiently trained and equipped. The fact that the Red Army considered Caucasian replacements as unreliable might have delayed their employment.

There was no indication of any assembly of Russian forces in the Astrakhan area. The Russians apparently did not intend to threaten the flank and rear of Army Groups A and B from that side. On the contrary, repeated air attacks on Elista—the German-held town in the gap between Army Groups A and B—semed to indicate that the Russians were worried about a German thrust toward Astrakhan.

In its conclusions the report stated that the Russians seemed to employ delaying tactics in the Caucasus. They were continuing the evacuation of industrial machinery and military forces. Because of the advanced season, however, it was not to be expected that they would completely evacuate the Transcaucasus. In carrying out their

mission, the Army group forces would have to face a hard and time-consuming struggle along the entire Caucasus front even though sizeable Russian forces had been destroyed during the past weeks. The steadily growing lines of communications, the vast territory to be kept under control, the scarcity of motor fuel, and the increasing terrain obstacles were the principal factors that would slow down the advance.

Two days later a German propaganda release proudly announced that at 1100 on 21 August a detachment of mountain troops had raised the German flag on Mount Elbrus. But the conquest of the 18,481-foot peak of the Caucasus Mountains did not alleviate the oil shortage.

The acute shortage of gasoline was at this point the primary cause for the delay in the advance, because it prevented the heavy truck columns from moving up supplies from distant railheads. Instead, the Germans had to use short, undamaged or repaired sections of rail lines and establish truck shuttle services between detraining and entraining points. The delays incurred by transshipping bulky supplies were reflected in the unsatisfactory progress of the army group forces.

By 28 August the Russian forces opposite Army Group A had set up their defenses. The Red Army had regained control over its units, reorganized its forces, and moved up reinforcements from Transcaucasia, Iran, and also—via the Caspian—from central Russia. By the end of August strong Russian ground forces, having the advantage of local air superiority, blocked the access to Novorossiysk along well-built, deeply echeloned defense lines and launched occasional counterattacks. The Russians also were on the offensive along the Tuapse road, where German motorized units were restricted to the few existing mountain roads.

The advance of the German mountain corps was delayed by smaller, but equally well-entrenched forces. The Italian Alpine Corps that was to participate in the thrust across the Caucasus failed to arrive, apparently because the Italian Eighth Army refused to transfer the corps to the respective German army command. Along the Terek River bend the Russians had concentrated strong ground forces that had the advantage of local air superiority.

At the end of August the Russians were employing 10–12 divisions along the Black Sea coast, 1 or 2 in the mountains, and 8 divisions along the Terek front for a total of 19–22 divisions. Additional forces and replacements were arriving. The Soviets seemed to be determined to hold their Caucasus positions until the outbreak of winter. Nevertheless, they were continuing to evacuate industrial and agricultural supplies and machinery from the Caucasus area.

On 31 August Hitler, who was very dissatisfied with the situation at Army Group A, received Marshal List, its commander, at his headquarters. List explained that he intended to continue his thrusts into the western Caucasus at three points:

1. Near Anapa and Novorossiysk and, after the seizure of these two cities, along the coastal road;
2. On both sides of the mountain road to Tuapse; and
3. Along the Sukhumi road, where the mountain troops were to make their main effort.

In the central Caucasus, List suggested, the First Panzer Army should destroy the Russian forces in the Terek bend and seize the Grozny oil fields beyond that river. Hitler approved these plans.

General Warlimont visited Army Group A and a number of its subordinate headquarters during the last days of August and reported that morale was high. The responsible commanders apparently felt confident that they would be capable of accomplishing their missions.

### ***The Opening of the Battle for Stalingrad (End of August 1942)***

Early on 23 August one corps of General Paulus' Sixth Army crossed the Don in force and reached the Volga north of Stalingrad that same evening. On the following day heavy Russian counter-attacks endangered the German toehold which, however, was strengthened by the arrival of additional units on the west bank of the Volga.

Fourth Panzer Army and Sixth Army had the mission of seizing Stalingrad and securing the lower Volga. The two armies totaled 25 divisions, some of which were greatly understrength. The Russian *Sixty-Second Army*, composed of some 8 divisions under General Chuikov, was responsible for the defense of Stalingrad. The Germans had local air superiority, being supported by some 1,000 aircraft of all types. During the last days of August, the Germans advanced with relative ease through the outer suburbs of Stalingrad.

While this advance was proceeding in a satisfactory manner, Hitler continued to be preoccupied with protecting both flanks of the forces driving across the Don toward Stalingrad. He ordered one of the few remaining motorized infantry divisions of Army Group A detached from the drive into the Caucasus and shifted to the Elista area west of Astrakhan to secure the growing gap between Army Groups A and B.

On the other flank the Russians attempted to gain another bridge-head against the Italian Eighth Army deployed along the Don. Although the Russians attacked cautiously and with only relatively small forces, the Italian right withdrew apparently without offering resistance. The Russians thereupon moved a guard cavalry corps into the area of penetration and two days of heavy counterattacks were required before the situation was restored on 27 August. Two addi-

tional Russian bridgeheads existed opposite the Hungarian Second Army which held the Don sector adjacent to the Italian left. Farther to the north the Germans observed that the Russians were gradually transferring attack forces from the Voronezh to the Stalingrad area.

On 28 August Generaloberst (Gen.) Wolfram von Richthofen, Commander, VIII Air Corps, made a personal reconnaissance of the region, during which he consulted with the commanders of Fourth Panzer and Sixth Armies. The consensus was that no interference from strong enemy forces was to be expected in the Stalingrad area. Luftwaffe reconnaissance aircraft flying northward were unable to discover any Russian forces in a terrain that offered little cover or concealment. Richthofen's general impression was that the Russian command was disorganized in this area.

Halder, however, contested the accuracy of this information and Hitler thereupon decided to move the forward echelon of Army Group B headquarters far to the front and airlift infantry replacements to Sixth Army in order to speed up the conquest of Stalingrad.

### ***The German Leadership Crisis (September 1942)***

Throughout the summer of 1942 General Halder [Chief, Army General Staff] had noted in his diary that he was experiencing increasing difficulties in working with Hitler. The latter's chronic tendency of underrating Russian capabilities had gradually assumed grotesque proportions, finally developing into a positive danger. In fact, the situation had become more and more intolerable for the military. According to Halder, it was almost impossible to accomplish anything useful. Hitler's exercise of command was characterized by pathological reactions to impressions of the moment and by his complete lack of understanding of command procedures.

Under such circumstances the military men in top-level positions were bound to be the first victims of any unfavorable turn of events. As early as 30 August, for instance, while German progress was still quite satisfactory, Halder noted that the Army leaders had once again been the target of the Fuehrer's abuse. According to Hitler, they suffered from intellectual conceit, mental inflexibility, and a complete incapacity of grasping essentials.

During the first days of September the military events continued to be favorable for the Germans. On the first day of the month German troops succeeded in crossing the Kerch Strait and landing on the Taman Peninsula. After seizing Anapa, they joined in the drive along the Black Sea coast toward Novorossiysk. A few days later Marshal List [Commander, Army Group A] suggested that the bulk of IL Mountain Corps engaged in the central Caucasus be pulled out after leaving some blocking units near the passes. This mountain

corps could be more advantageously employed in the Maikop area to achieve a breakthrough toward the coast. Since he did not share List's opinion, Hitler sent General Jodl [Chief, Armed Forces Operations Staff] to investigate on the spot and discuss the matter with List.

Upon his return Jodl reported that List's plan seemed sound and he advocated its implementation. In the subsequent argument Hitler accused List of not having followed orders and of having dispersed his forces over much too wide an area. In his reply Jodl tried to prove that List had followed to the letter all orders he had been given. The Fuehrer thereupon became extremely irritated and asked that his orders to List, including notes of verbal instructions, be submitted to him. In addition, he instructed that court stenographers be brought from Berlin to Vinnitsa to take down the minutes of all future military conversations and conferences.

On 9 September Hitler was informed by Halder that List intended to let the Russians attack the German bridgeheads across the Terek until their strength had been exhausted, and that he would then resume the offensive. Hitler considered this idea as fundamentally wrong since its execution would imperil the very existence of the German bridgeheads against which the Russians were moving a constant stream of reinforcements.

This last misunderstanding, coming after so many similar conflicts, led Hitler to consider a number of changes in top-level positions. List was asked to hand in his resignation, which he did on the evening of 9 September. For the time being Hitler decided to assume command of Army Group A in person, so that in addition to his civilian functions he now held the position of an army group commander in Russia, commander in chief of the German Army, and commander in chief of the German armed forces. Three top echelons of military command has thus been unified in a singular manner.

The chief of staff of Army Group A, General von Greiffenberg, remained at army group headquarters at Stalino as "head of the message center and transmitting agent for orders." Halder was notified on the same day that Hitler intended to relieve him because he "was no longer equal to the psychic demands of his position." General der Infanterie (Lt. Gen.) Kurt Zeitzler replaced Halder on 24 September.

The conflict between Hitler and Jodl—brought to the surface by Jodl taking List's side—was so deep that Hitler considered the dismissal of his closest military adviser. He was to be replaced by Paulus who a few months later was to play such a tragic role when he surrendered the remnants of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad. Keitel's position as Chief of Staff, Armed Forces High Command, was also jeopardized with Goering trying to replace him with one of his own protégés. General Warlimont, Jodl's immediate assistant,

fell in disfavor and was sent on extended leave from which he did not return to duty until his superior—who had survived the turmoil—recalled him after the Allied landings in North Africa in November 1942.

In the opinion of an eyewitness who was at Hitler's headquarters at Vinnitsa during the period under review, the crisis which developed in September 1942 was far more than a conflict over the misinterpretation of orders and was by no means settled with the relief or temporary absence of a few military men. Hitler himself showed signs of such deep and lasting depression that the causes must have been less superficial than was generally assumed. For the first time the Fuehrer seemed to have realized that Germany could not win the Russian campaign and would therefore lose the entire war. It took him many weeks before he was able to restore his outward composure, and then he achieved it only by immersing himself in the innumerable military and political details of his daily work.

### ***Faulty Intelligence and Its Interpretation***

On 9 September the Eastern Intelligence Division submitted an estimate according to which the Russians seemed to have no sizeable reserves along the entire front. On the contrary, in order to form points of main effort, they had to shift units over long distances. Because of insufficient training and a shortage of equipment the troops still available and the units presently in the process of activation would probably not be ready for commitment for some time. Halder accepted this estimate and concluded that the Russians lacked strategic reserves.

Such favorable information was always well received by Hitler who, on 13 September, ordered Army Group B to launch a pursuit in the event Russian resistance north of Stalingrad should collapse. At the same time the existing plans for a thrust toward Astrakhan were to be reexamined and data regarding their execution submitted. Hitler then instructed the army group commander to launch local attacks at the boundary of Sixth Army and the Italian Eighth Army, correct some dents in the German lines in the Don bend, and construct a switch position behind the German front west of Voronezh. Obviously, the Fuehrer took great interest in every tactical detail concerning the army group adjacent to his own.

### ***The German Offensive Grinds to a Halt (26 September 1942)***

None of the objectives of the summer offensive were attained by the Germans. Although Army Group A made local gains in the direction of Tuapse and Grozny, these minor successes were not decisive. The army group had exhausted its strength. The only major oil fields

that had fallen into German hands—those at Maikop—were almost completely destroyed. In 1941 their output had amounted to 2.5 million tons or 8 per cent of the total USSR production. The oil wells and refineries were demolished. Only two storage tanks and a few stretches of pipeline were found intact.

Army Group B's assault on Stalingrad met with unexpected resistance. Beginning 14 September the Russian garrison received a steady flow of reinforcements, and on 16 September Sixth Army under General Paulus was given control of all German units that had entered the city, including some Fourth Panzer Army elements. As early as 20 September Halder noted that the attack forces were gradually succumbing to exhaustion. But for the next two months the battle raged within the city, marked by feats of magnificent heroism on both sides. The Russian toehold west of the Volga was split into four separate bridgeheads with a total frontage of some 15 miles running through the built-up downtown area. The main 5-mile bridgehead held by the Russians had a depth varying from 600-3,000 feet on the west bank of the river.

During these weeks of house-to-house fighting Stalingrad lost its initial significance as a flank protection anchor for the Caucasus offensive. Instead of a means to an end, Stalingrad had become an end in itself. More and more troops poured into the city from both sides. After the Romanian Third Army had finally arrived and taken up its positions along the Don between the Italian Eighth and the German Sixth Armies, Paulus was able to shift into the city those German divisions that had hitherto protected his flank.

The Romanians felt none too happy about the new assignment they had received. In an inquiry addressed to the Operations Division of the Army High Command on 24 September, they pointed out that the Romanian Third Army would have to defend a 105-mile sector with 69 battalions, or an average of 1.5 miles per battalion. Considering that the Romanians had no mobile forces for counterattacks and no self-propelled antitank guns, the Romanian line was very weak. If present plans were implemented, the situation of the Romanian Fourth Army would be even worse, since only 33 battalions would have to hold a frontage of 250 miles, an average of almost 8 miles per battalion. This army would be scarcely strong enough to keep its sector under observation.

The Germans did not attach too much importance to these alarming weaknesses; in their reply they pointed out to the Romanians that everything would depend on the outcome of the battle of Stalingrad. They also answered evasively the other Romanian inquiries regarding German armored support, the availability of motor transportation, etc.

The fighting in the sectors of Army Groups Center and North had resumed with new intensity. Strong Russian attacks against Second and Third Panzer Armies and Ninth and Eighteenth Armies were repelled only with considerable effort. The Russians were by no means at the end of their strength. On the contrary, despite the life-and-death struggle raging in the south, they were attempting to gradually regain the initiative in these parts of the theater. The German Eleventh Army forces earmarked for the attack on Leningrad had to be committed to ward off these Russian assaults, so that the all-out offensive on the city of Leningrad—the second major objective of the summer of 1942—had to be abandoned.

The German offensive had bogged down everywhere and the imminence of the muddy period, quite apart from all other factors, made its resumption impractical. The personnel situation in the Russian theater, which had slightly improved until the end of July, had deteriorated considerably since then.

*German Personnel Strength Variations in the Russian Theater (Summer 1942)*

Month of 1942	Losses*	Reinforce- ments**	Strength	
			Increase	Decrease
May	134, 230	158, 900	24, 670	-----
June	126, 050	157, 500	31, 450	-----
July	156, 600	177, 800	21, 200	-----
August	256, 100	89, 750	-----	166, 350
September	185, 000	83, 750	-----	101, 250
October	130, 100	97, 200	-----	32, 900

\* Including personnel transferred out of the theater.

\*\* Including convalescents returned to duty.

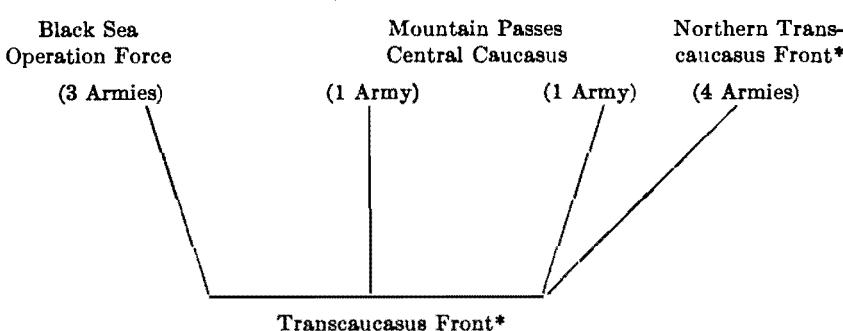
### **German Estimates in October and Early November 1942**

General Zeitzler, the new Army Chief of Staff, indicated at the daily situation conference on 9 October that the complete calm along wide stretches of the front could not yet be interpreted with complete certainty. Either the Russians had withdrawn a number of units to rehabilitate them or they were transferring them to some other points for a winter offensive. Under these circumstances it would be particularly important that the German army groups form reserves for such a contingency.

### **Army Group A**

Intelligence agents informed their contacts in the Army Group A area that American and British materiel and technicians were arriv-

ing at Baku, Batum, and in the Transcaucasus. The disposition of the Russian forces in the Caucasus, as plotted from radio intercepts, was as follows:



\*Equivalent to an army group.

During the first half of November there was a notable increase in reinforcements arriving in the eastern Caucasus area. According to various reports 3 divisions had arrived in Baku, 4 were transferred from Baku to Tiflis, 1 to Makhachkala on the Caspian, and 18 additional troop transports were on the way to the latter.

### Army Group B

By mid-October Army Group B received many reports of troop concentrations in the Saratov area, which seemed to confirm that the Russians were making initial preparations for an offensive near Stalingrad. Air reconnaissance had so far failed to confirm these reports, but this was by no means a proof of their inaccuracy, since Russian concentrations had often gone unnoticed from the air until practically completed. In any event, the Germans were then too deeply committed in Stalingrad to turn back from an operation which had become an obsession with Hitler.

Reports from the front indicated that traffic in the Serafimovich area increased nightly, but Army Group B interpreted these movements simply as supply traffic serving to replenish stocks consumed during recent combat actions. It was precisely from this point that the Russian counteroffensive was launched on 19 November.

On 26 October Sixth Army reported confidently that, even though strong Russian resistance might prevent the army from completing the seizure of Stalingrad before 10 November, the city would be completely in German hands by that date.

In his conversations with the men in his immediate entourage Hitler often revealed his concern over a major Russian offensive,

perhaps a winter offensive, across one of the allied sectors along the Don in the direction of Rostov. Russian troop movements and the construction of bridges in the Italian and Romanian sectors were indications of the Soviet command's offensive intentions. Hitler ordered some newly organized Luftwaffe ground divisions moved up to strengthen the allied sectors. With these reinforcements on the line, a few German Army divisions could be transferred behind the allied positions, where they could be held in reserve during their rehabilitation. Meanwhile, he ordered the air force to bomb intensively Russian bridge sites and presumed staging areas in the forests along the northern bank of the Don.

The intelligence summary for the second half of October reported the arrival of Russian reinforcements in the Kletskaya-Serafimovich area. The cross-river traffic near Kletskaya had increased, and railroad traffic northwest of Stalingrad had grown heavier. So far none of these reinforcements had been committed in battle. Radio silence in the Saratov area was complete. Similar indications of troop concentrations were observed opposite the Italian Eighth and the Hungarian Second Armies along the Don, where several bridges had been constructed to consolidate Russian-held bridgeheads. The Germans did not yet know whether the forces arriving in the Saratov area were combat-ready units or new ones in the stage of activation or training. The mere presence of these units however, was significant if considered in connection with potential Russian offensive intentions.

By 3 November intelligence sources reported that the Russians were preparing an attack against the Romanian Third Army. Whether this offensive would be a diversion or an operation with a far-reaching objective was not known. During the following days the Russians seemed to carry out large-scale movements opposite the Romanian Third Army. On the night of 8–9 November some 2,000–2,500 vehicles had been observed in the area north of Kletskaya. The establishment of the headquarters of the *Southwest Front* northwest of nearby Serafimovich was considered as definite proof of offensive preparations in this area.

### **The Estimate of 6 November**

This convincing evidence of an impending Russian attack in the Army Group B area was apparently not properly interpreted by the Eastern Intelligence Division. In an estimate dated 6 November this agency expressed the opinion that the Russians were concentrating their forces opposite Army Group Center. Whether they would be capable of conducting another major operation in the south seemed doubtful; in any event, indications for the launching of such an offensive in the south in the near future were lacking. That the Russians

had altogether abandoned their previous intentions of thrusting across the Don could not be verified.

The following reasons were given for a major Russian offensive on the Army Group Center front:

1. There was a definite need for a rapid success that could be achieved more easily in the center than in the south. Moreover, such an offensive would definitely dispel the German threat to Moscow;

2. The favorable course of the Russian front opposite Army Group Center offered advantageous jump off positions for a Red Army offensive against Smolensk;

3. In the event of success the offensive could be pursued to the Baltic, thus cutting off the German forces in the Leningrad area; and

4. Any operation across the Don, directed against German-held Rostov, would present greater logistical and technical problems than the one in the center. Even if such an offensive in the south succeeded, it would destroy only the southern wing of the German forces without offering the strategic possibilities of the thrust in the center. This did not imply that the Russians would not launch a secondary offensive across the Don.

According to available information the Russian preparation for the offensive in the center had not sufficiently advanced to permit its start before the muddy season. The arrival of German reinforcements and German radio deception were given as reasons for having delayed the attack. Although the Russian forces so far identified in assembly areas would appear relatively small for an operation against Smolensk, this factor had little significance since motorized units could be moved up within a short time. Moreover, some of the assembled forces might not have been identified. Also, the Russians had often shown a tendency of overextending themselves by reaching for objectives that were not properly related to their available strength.

During recent offensive operations the Russians had first launched infantry attacks to open gaps in the minefields and had then committed their tanks for penetrations in depth. They had shown remarkable skill in dissimulating their offensive plans by excellent deception which made it difficult to estimate the extent of their preparations. Whether the Russian offensive would be launched on 7 November, as stated by Russian prisoners, was doubtful. Actually, its start would depend both on Russian preparedness and weather conditions. Taking into account all known factors, the launching of the offensive on the Army Group Center front could be expected with the start of freezing temperatures.

This estimate, made only 13 days before the Russian counter-offensive was launched in the south, showed that the Russians had succeeded in deceiving the Germans as to their true intentions. The

reasoning used to prove the theory of an offensive in the center rather than in the south was an interesting example of intelligence rationalization.

On 12 November—seven days before the Russians jumped off—the Eastern Intelligence Division correctly estimated the threat to the Romanian Third Army, but arrived at the conclusion that the scope of the offensive would be limited to cutting the railroad line that connected Stalingrad with the west. The purpose of such a Russian operation would be to force a German withdrawal from Stalingrad and to resume the Volga boat traffic.

### ***The Oil of the Caucasus***

#### **German Efforts at Production**

Late in September German counterintelligence personnel were still planning a *coup de main* in order to spare certain important installations in the Baku area from complete Soviet destruction. German agents were to infiltrate behind the Russian lines, contact reliable persons employed at the respective installations, and prepare so-called fake demolitions. The latter would be easily repaired once the Germans had seized the respective area.

By early November the unfavorable course of events forced German counterintelligence to switch from fake-demolition attempts to real acts of sabotage. The most successful sabotage act was perpetrated at Grozny, where parachute agents blew up a large Russian ammunition dump, causing great damage and heavy casualties.

The Oil Brigade Caucasus was meanwhile continuing its efforts against heavy odds. In a memorandum dated 29 October Oil Brigade Headquarters complained about the situation at Ilskaya, a town southwest of Krasnodar. There, the German outpost line went straight through the oil fields. Inspecting officers from Oil Brigade Headquarters had requested the responsible tactical commander to advance his defensive positions by 900 yards. This request had gone to the chief of staff of Seventeenth Army, who expressed his concern over any such action since German forces faced greatly superior Russian units in that sector. From the German point of view this refusal was all the more regrettable because the Russians had apparently left their drills intact and production could have started sooner there than elsewhere.

The Ilskaya wells produced no oil while under German control. Neither did most of the other wells at Maikop or elsewhere in the Caucasus. Reviewing the German effort to exploit the Caucasus oil resources in his economic survey of 1942, General Thomas stated that the staff of Oil Brigade Caucasus had taken the continuance of the

German advance into the Caucasus for granted. Expecting that they would be able to exploit the rich Grozny oil fields, the Oil Brigade personnel had failed to concentrate their efforts on the Maikop and other fields, which had been in German hands for several months. The technical difficulties encountered by the Germans because of Russian demolition of oil wells and transportation facilities were far greater than anticipated. After inspecting the Maikop area the technical experts reported that it would be more effective to use the drilling equipment and personnel of the Oil Brigade in Romania or near Vienna than in the Caucasus.

This suggestion was not accepted. Instead, the Oil Brigade operated at Maikop and elsewhere under precarious circumstances, and the Armavir-Maikop railroad was not reconditioned until too late. When the brigade finally struck oil, its commander was ordered to evacuate and blow up the laboriously reconstructed installations; the small quantities of oil produced could not be taken along due to the lack of transport facilities.

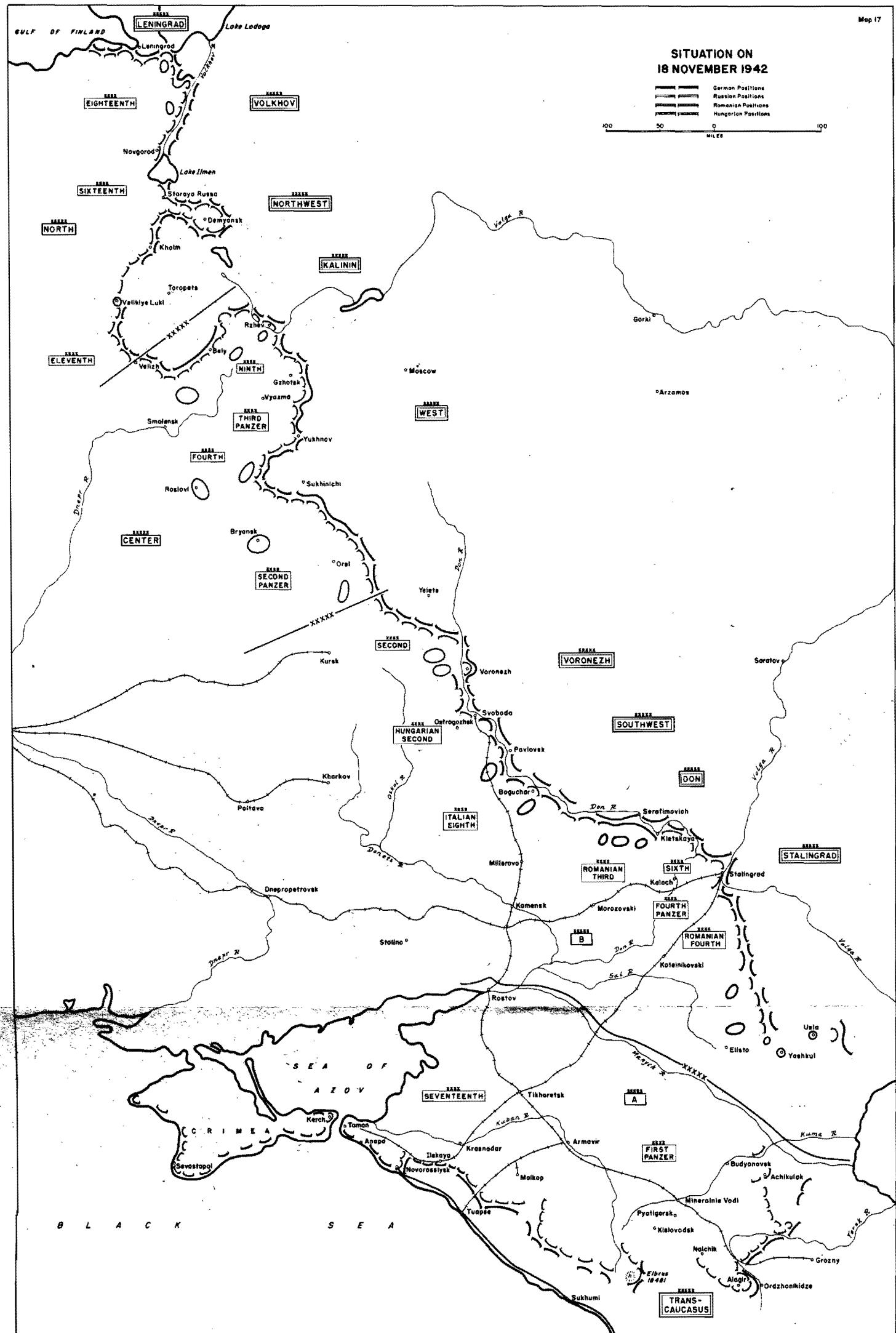
### Russian Supplies

In reviewing the Russian oil supply, General Thomas expressed the opinion that blocking the Volga at Stalingrad would not by itself suffice to reduce the Soviet Union's POL supplies to such a degree that it would impair the Russian conduct of operations in 1943. This could be achieved only if all supplies from Baku were cut off completely by the spring of 1943. In this case Russian stocks would be exhausted by the summer of 1943. The Soviet armed forces and civilian economy would be severely handicapped without oil from the Caucasus. Since approximately 70 percent of the total high-octane gasoline consumed in the Soviet Union was produced from Baku oil, the seizure of the Baku wells and not the occupation of the lower Volga from Stalingrad to Astrakhan would lead to extensive paralysis of the Russian Air Force.

This report, like so many others by which General Thomas tried to warn the men who were responsible for Germany's military planning, served only one practical purpose: to make its author even more unpopular in National Socialist circles.

### Local Engagements (October-Mid-November 1942)

During October and early November the strength of Army Groups A and B was further dissipated in local engagements on the road to Tuapse, in the Pyatigorsk area, and particularly within Stalingrad. [See map 17.] During heavy fighting the Germans achieved some local gains and improved their positions, but in many instances they



Map 17. Situation on 18 November 1942.

had to ward off Russian counterattacks. These local engagements, however, had no effect on the overall situation. The autumn muddy season, which started in mid-October, brought no relief to the weary troops.

The Romanian and Italian sectors were still far from strong. No German divisions were available to support the allied sectors in case of emergency, because the motorized divisions originally earmarked for this purpose were fully engaged in the battle for Stalingrad and could not be released by the Sixth Army. On the contrary, on 2 November the Fuehrer approved Zeitzler's suggestion to pull organic engineer battalions out of certain divisions in the south and commit them at Stalingrad. A request to stop the offensive for eight days to give the German troops a much-needed rest was disapproved by Hitler. The supply situation, particularly in ammunition and gasoline, remained extremely critical, railroad transportation being unequal to the task of moving basic requirements to the front.

The situation of Army Group Center had improved with the gradual consolidation of the front line; a continuous line had been established even around the Russian-held Toropets salient. The Russians launched attacks in different sectors, but with little practical effect. On 22 October Hitler discussed the new shock tactics used by the Russians in the Army Group Center area, which consisted of massing forces along a narrow stretch of the front in deeply echeloned formation. To counteract these tactics, the Fuehrer advocated the use of the same defensive methods which the French had employed during the major German attack at Reims in 1918. They had kept their artillery at great distance from their MLR, firing large quantities of ammunition to meet the onslaught. Hitler did not realize, however, that the Germans in 1942 could not expend as much ammunition as the French in 1918.

In the Army Group North sector, intermittent fighting around the German-held Demyansk salient did not lead to any major change in the front line. South of Lake Ladoga the situation became tense for the Germans who checked a Russian breakthrough toward Leningrad at the cost of heavy casualties. The strong artillery forces shifted from the Crimea—about 800 guns—were to be used to tighten the ring around Leningrad.

On 31 October and 1 November Hitler, his entourage, and the Armed Forces Operations Staff returned from Vinnitsa to their former headquarters in East Prussia.

## Chapter 12

### Critical Analysis of the German Summer Offensive in 1942

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#### *Different Concepts of Strategy*

According to the postwar conclusions of Generals Halder, Heinrici, etc., the German summer offensive should never have been launched. The German Army had emerged greatly weakened from the ordeal of the winter 1941-42. It had no strategic reserves. To concentrate the essential forces for a large-scale offensive, wide sectors of the Russian front had to be stripped of all their local reserves. Even though the Russians were equally weak by spring 1942, they had manpower reserves and natural resources that were not available to the Axis Powers.

In Halder's opinion the appropriate German strategy for the summer of 1942 would have been to stabilize the front, eliminate the numerous Russian salients and dents in the German lines, and shorten the front line to save personnel. While using active defense tactics at the front, the German Army could have reorganized and refitted for an offensive to be launched at the first favorable opportunity.

Hitler, however, was adverse to any such delay in the continuation of the offensive. In his opinion the Russians had been hard hit during their winter onslaught, and if given time, would get back on their feet. He doubted whether the German Army would be in a more favorable position in 1943 than in 1942. Also, Germany would have to seek a decision in Russia that year, because the Allies might attempt an invasion of western Europe in 1943. While direct and indirect United States aid to Britain and Soviet Russia was steadily increasing, Italy's military and economic power was gradually deteriorating. The crushing blows suffered by the Italian armed forces in the African and Mediterranean theaters had affected the staying power of Germany's principal ally in Europe. Moreover, by adopting a defensive strategy, Germany would lose face with Japan and the neutral powers. Finally, Hitler believed that a dictatorship, to maintain itself, had to produce an incessant stream of successes. An offensive in 1942 would be all the more necessary because, with the military-economic situation steadily growing worse since the start of the Russian campaign, time was working against Germany.

### ***Differences over the Choice of Objective***

The original objective of the campaign against the Soviet Union was "to eradicate the remaining Russian military potential and deprive the Soviets of the resources on which their economy was still based." The experience of 1941 indicated that this objective could not be attained unless the Russians were prevented from withdrawing. Halder at the time asserted that this would be extremely difficult in the south, where the Russians could afford to trade space for time without suffering a decisive defeat.

The situation could have been different in the center, where the Russian capital was still within German reach. A deep enveloping sweep launched from the Voronezh-Orel region to points east and northeast of Moscow would have had a telling effect. There was little doubt that the Russians would again have summoned all their strength to defend their capital as they had done during the preceding winter. An offensive in this area would therefore have given the Germans a far better chance to deal the Soviets a knockout blow than an operation in the south.

The German offensive in 1942 was, however, launched in the south because Hitler felt that a decisive victory could be won in southern Russia. Germany's growing shortage of strategic materials influenced the Fuehrer's thinking so much that he became convinced the Soviets were suffering from similar handicaps after having lost so many rich provinces to the Germans. He argued that if their vital oil supply from the Caucasus was threatened, they would use all their remaining manpower and materiel for its defense. Another factor was that possession of this oil would be of greater importance to the German war effort than anything Moscow had to offer.

According to the postwar writings of General Halder and his associates, Hitler's decision to launch an offensive in the summer of 1942 in the southern part of the Russian theater was at best a doubtful gamble. His objective could have been obtained only if the Russians had committed the bulk of the Red Army in the Don bend and if the Germans had succeeded in cutting off and destroying these Soviet forces.

### ***Mistakes in the Execution of the German Offensive***

In addition to being handicapped by Hitler's basic mistake of choosing the wrong time and place for his second attempt to defeat the Soviet Union, the German summer offensive was affected by the following factors:

*a. Strength vs. Objectives.* The relationship between the objectives of the summer offensive and the forces available for attaining them

was not sound. The objectives—conquest of the Caucasus and linkup with the Finns via Leningrad—were too distant and difficult to attain with the forces that could be mustered. The solution to proceed by phases in southern Russia was a useful expedient, so long as the objective in each case was reached before the next phase was tackled. The first two phases were executed according to plan, but by the end of the third phase—23 July 1942—the objective of cutting off and destroying the Russian forces in the Don bend as a preliminary step to the invasion of the Caucasus had not been achieved. The proper action would have been to stop and consider every facet of the existing situation. Instead, Hitler issued Directive No. 45 which committed his exhausted forces to two simultaneous drives into the Caucasus and toward the Volga.

*b. Faulty Intelligence Estimates.* Even though the Germans had built up an efficient system of collecting information, their evaluation and interpretation often was colored by wishful thinking. The desire to avoid unpleasant incidents with the Fuehrer frequently seems to have overshadowed the realities of the situation. Hitler had underestimated the Russians from the beginning of the campaign. Ever since June 1941 he had been convinced that the Red Army was on the verge of defeat and the Soviet regime ready to collapse. He repeatedly asserted that if the German Army could deliver only a few more blows in the summer of 1942, the entire house of cards would tumble. If anyone objected to his arguments, Hitler would ask him, "Are you insinuating that the Russians could outperform us?"

*c. Logistical Difficulties.* The various supply reports and statistics distributed before the start of the summer offensive reflected a certain overconfidence and self-assurance that were not fully justified. Even though stocks in depots and dumps seemed ample, transportation of supplies to the rapidly advancing troops was bound to create numerous problems unless the few existing rail lines could be complemented by a tremendous truck and airlift effort. But it was no secret that the German armed forces had neither the necessary trucks and cargo planes nor the gasoline, not to mention the persistent inadequacy of maintenance and repair facilities, and the shortage of qualified technicians, spare parts, etc. From the outset there was actually not the slightest hope that the supply services would be capable of keeping up with an advance to the Volga and beyond the Caucasus.

*d. Mistakes in Occupation Policy.* Hitler's attitude toward the Russians found its expression in the occupation policies applied by the National Socialist Party functionaries. Overriding the repeated protests of the commanders in the field, Hitler's henchmen perpetrated such ruthless acts of suppression that they destroyed all chances for gaining the support of the population of the occupied territories.

*e. Inflexible Luftwaffe Tactics.* Throughout the summer offensive of 1942 the Luftwaffe had continued its rigid adherence to the tactics that had proved so successful in earlier campaigns but had failed in Russia in late 1941. The method of concentrating practically its entire strength on close support of the armored spearheads was ineffective because of the depth and width of the theater. The striking forces of the Luftwaffe, drawn far away from their bases and beset by maintenance difficulties, were exposed to Russian attacks on their lines of communications.

In the autumn of 1942 these developments led to a revision of policy by which Luftwaffe tactics and organization were adapted to the needs of the Russian theater. Balanced air forces, better equipped with defensive aircraft, were to assist the ground forces in repelling any possible Russian counteroffensive, but they were "too little and too late."

*f. Hitler's Intuition.* It is remarkable how early Hitler realized at which point the major Russian counteroffensive would hit the German and allied lines. But he was incapable of drawing the proper conclusions from his realization. When the Russians launched their attack and succeeded in trapping the Sixth Army within a few days, Hitler was unable to make the right decision. For this reason the German summer offensive of 1942 ended in a heavy defeat that could not be recouped, especially since it was soon to be followed by a second catastrophe, the capitulation of the German and Italian armies in Tunisia. The battle of Stalingrad—the climax and aftermaths of which will be described in a later volume dealing with the period 1943–45—initiated the series of defeats that brought about Germany's collapse and ruined Hitler's recently acquired reputation as a *Feldherr* (Great Captain).

## Appendix A

### List of German Military Leaders (July 1940–November 1942)

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#### **BOCK, Fedor von**

Grade: Field Marshal—19 Jul 40.

Assignments: CG, Army Group B—Oct 39–31 Mar 41.

CG, Army Group Center—1 Apr–18 Dec 41.

CG, Army Group South—17 Jan–13 Jul 42.

#### **BRAUCHITSCH, Walther von**

Grade: Field Marshal—19 Jul 40.

Assignment: CinC of the Army—4 Feb 38–19 Dec 41.

#### **FROMM, Friedrich**

Grade: Generaloberst (General)—19 Jul 40.

Assignment: CG, Replacement Training Army—End of 39–21 Jul 44.

#### **GOERING, Hermann**

Grade: Reich Marshal—19 Jul 40.

Assignment: CinC of the Luftwaffe—1 Mar 35–23 Apr 45.

#### **GREIFENBERG, Hans von**

Grades: Colonel—3 Oct 38.

Generalmajor (Brigadier General)—1 Aug 40.

Generalleutnant (Major General)—1 Apr 42.

Assignments: Chief, Operations Division, Army High Command—26 Aug 39–24 Oct 40.

Officers Reserve Pool—25 Oct 40–15 Jan 41.

CofS, Twelfth Army—15 Jan–10 May 41.

CofS, Army Group Center—10 May 41–5 May 42.

C of S, Army Group A—5 May 42–1 Aug 43.

#### **GUDERIAN, Heinz**

Grade: Generaloberst (General)—19 Jul 40.

Assignments: CG, Second Panzer Group—May–5 Oct 41.

CG, Second Panzer Army—5 Oct–22 Dec 41.

#### **HALDER, Franz**

Grade: Generaloberst (General)—19 Jul 40.

Assignment: Chief, Army General Staff—1 Nov 38–24 Sep 42.

#### **HITLER, Adolf**

Assignments: CinC of the Armed Forces—2 Aug 34–30 Apr 45.

CinC of the Army—19 Dec 41–30 Apr 45.

CG, Army Group A—9 Sep–22 Nov 42.

#### **HOTH, Hermann**

Grade: Generaloberst (General)—19 Jul 40.

Assignments: CG, Third Panzer Group—16 Nov 41–5 Oct 41.

CG, Seventeenth Army—5 Oct 41–25 Apr 42.

CG, Fourth Panzer Army—1 Jun 42–15 Nov 43.

#### **JODL, Alfred**

Grades: Generalleutnant (Major General)

General der Artillerie (Lieutenant General) } 19 Jul 40.

Assignment: Chief, Armed Forces Operations, Staff (Office)—26 Aug 39–8 May 45.

**KEITEL, Wilhelm**

Grade: Field Marshal—19 Jul 40.

Assignment: CofS, Armed Forces High Command—4 Feb 38–8 May 45.

**KINZEL, Eberhard**

Grades: Lieutenant Colonel—1 Mar 39.

Colonel—1 Feb 41.

Assignments: Chief, Eastern Intelligence Division—26 Aug 39–1 May 42.

Officers Reserve Pool—1–23 May 42.

CofS, XXIX Corps—23 May–12 Nov. 42.

**KLEIST, Ewald von**

Grade: Generaloberst (General)—19 Jul 40.

Assignments: CG, First Panzer Group—Jun–5 Oct 41.

CG, First Panzer Army—5 Oct 41–21 Nov 42.

**KLUGE, Guenther von**

Grade: Field Marshal—19 Jul 40.

Assignments: CG, Fourth Army—1 Sep 39–26 Dec 41.

CG, Army Group Center—18 Dec. 41–12 Oct 43.

**KUECHLER, Georg von**

Grades: Generaloberst (General)—19 Jul 40.

Field Marshal—30 Jun 42.

Assignments: CG, Eighteenth Army—5 Nov 39–15 Jan 42.

CG, Army Group North—16 Jan 42–31 Jan 44.

**LEEB, Wilhelm von**

Grade: Field Marshal—19 Jul 40.

Assignments: CG, Army Group C—Jul 40–Mar 41.

CG, Army Group North—1 Apr 41–16 Jan 42.

**LIST, Wilhelm**

Grade: Field Marshal—19 Jul 40.

Assignments: CG, Twelfth Army—1 Sep 39–Oct 41.

CG, Army Group A—26 Jun–10 Sep 42.

**MANSTEIN, Fritz Erich von**

Grades: General der Infanterie (Lieutenant General)—1 Jun 40.

Generaloberst (General)—1 Jan 42.

Field Marshal—1 Jul 42.

Assignment: CG, Eleventh Army—18 Sep 41–21 Nov 42.

**MARCKS, Erich**

Grades: Generalmajor (Brigadier General)—1 Apr 39.

Generalleutnant (Major General)—1 Mar 41.

General der Artillerie (Lieutenant General)—1 Oct 42.

Assignments: CofS, Eighteenth Army—5 Nov 39–10 Dec 40.

CG, 101st Light Infantry Division—10 Dec 40–26 Jun 41.

Officers Reserve Pool—26 Jun 41–15 Mar 42.

CG, 337th Infantry Division—15 Mar–28 Sep 42.

CG, LXVI Corps—28 Sep–Nov 42.

**MODEL, Walter**

Grades: Generalleutnant (Major General)—1 Apr 40.

General der Panzertruppen (Lieutenant General)—26 Oct 41.

Generaloberst (General)—1 Feb 42.

Assignments: CofS, Sixteenth Army—23 Oct 39–13 Nov 40.

CG, 3d Panzer Division—13 Nov–26 Oct 41.

CG, XLI Corps—26 Oct 41–15 Jan 42.

CG, Ninth Army—16 Jan 42–5 Nov 43.

**PAULUS, Friedrich**

Grades: Generalleutnant (Major General)—1 Aug 40.  
 General der Panzertruppen (Lieutenant General)—1 Jan 42.  
 Generaloberst (General)—30 Nov 42.  
 Assignments: CofS, Sixth Army—3 Sep 40.  
 ACoS, Operations, Army High Command—3 Sep 40–16 Jan 42.  
 CG, Sixth Army—16 Jan 42–1 Feb 43.

**RAEDER, Erich**

Grade: Grossadmiral (Fleet Admiral)—1939.  
 Assignment: CinC of the Navy—1935–43.

**REICHENAU, Walter von**

Grade: Field Marshal—19 Jul 40.  
 Assignments: CG, Sixth Army—Oct 39–3 Dec 41.  
 CG, Army Group South—3 Dec 41–17 Jan. 42.

**RICHTHOFEN, Wolfgang von**

Grade: Generaloberst (General)—Mar 42.  
 Assignments: CG, VIII Air Corps—End of 39–23 Jun 42.  
 CG, Fourth Air Force—24 Jun 42–10 Jun 43.

**ROMMEL, Erich**

Grades: Generalmajor (Brigadier General)—1 Aug 39.  
 Generalleutnant (Major General)—7 Feb 41.  
 General der Panzertruppen (Lieutenant General)—1 Jul 41.  
 Generaloberst (General)—1 Feb 42.  
 Field Marshal—22 Jun 42.  
 Assignments: CG, 7th Panzer Division—15 Feb 40–14 Feb 41.  
 CG, Afrika Corps—14 Feb–1 Sep 41.  
 CG, Panzer Group Afrika—1 Sep 41–30 Jan 42.  
 CG, Panzer Army Afrika—30 Jan 42–22 Feb 43.

**RUNDSTEDT, Gerd von**

Grade: Field Marshal—19 Jul 40.  
 Assignment: CG, Army Group A—20 Oct 39–15 Mar 41.  
 CG, Army Group South—1 Apr–3 Dec 41.  
 CG, Army Group D (West)—8 Mar 42–2 Jul 44.

**SODENSTERN, Georg von**

Grades: Generalleutnant (Major General)—1 Feb 40.  
 General der Infanterie (Lieutenant General)—1 Aug 40.  
 Assignments: CofS, Army Group A—15 Feb 40–15 Mar 41.  
 CofS, Army Group South—1 Apr 41–15 Jul 42.  
 CofS, Army Group B—15 Jul 42–14 Feb 43.

**STRAUSS, Adolf**

Grade: Generaloberst (General)—19 Jul 40.  
 Assignment: CG, Ninth Army—30 May 40–15 Jan 42.

**THOMAS, Georg**

Grade: General der Infanterie (Lieutenant General)—1 Aug 40.  
 Assignment: Chief, Armed Forces Economics Office—1 Sep 39–17 Nov 42.

**WAGNER, Eduard**

Grades: Colonel—1 Oct 37.  
 Generalmajor (Brigadier General)—1 Aug 40.  
 Generalleutnant (Major General)—1 Apr 42.  
 Assignment: CofS, Supply and Administration Division, Army High Command—26 Aug 39–1 Oct 40.  
 Chief, Supply and Administration Division—1 Oct–22 Jul 44.

**WARLIMONT, Walter**

Grades: Colonel—1 Feb 38.

Generalmajor (Brigadier General)—1 Aug 40.

Generalleutnant (Major General)—1 Apr 42.

Assignments: Chief, National Defense Division, Armed Forces High Command—26 Aug 39—31 Dec 41.

Deputy Chief, Armed Forces Operations Staff—1 Jan 42—6 Sep 44.

**WEICHS, Maximilian von**

Grade: Generaloberst (General)—19 Jul 40.

Assignments: CG, Second Army—23 Oct 39—13 Jul 42.

CG, Army Group B—13 Jul 42—10 Jul 43.

**ZEITZLER, Kurt**

Grades: Colonel—1 Jan 39.

Generalmajor (Brigadier General)—1 Feb 42.

General der Infanterie (Lieutenant General)—24 Sep 42.

Assignments: CofS, XXII Corps—26 Aug 39—5 Dec 40.

CofS, First Panzer Army—5 Dec 40—24 Apr 42.

CofS, C-in-C West—24 Apr—24 Sep 42.

Chief of the Army General Staff—25 Sep 42—20 Jul 44.

## Appendix B

### Chronology of Events

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*1940*

*July*

- 16 Hitler issues Directive No. 16, pertaining to the invasion of England.
- 19 In a speech before the Reichstag assembly Hitler makes a peace overture to Great Britain.

*August*

- 7 Directive *AUFBAU OST* is issued, initiating military buildup in German-occupied Poland.
- 8 German bombing planes open the air offensive against Britain.

*September*

- 13 Italy begins drive into Egypt.
- 17 Invasion of England is indefinitely postponed.
- 27 Germany, Italy, and Japan sign Tripartite Pact.

*October*

- 7 German troops enter Romania.
- 28 Italian forces attack Greece from Albania.

*November*

- 12 Hitler issues Directive No. 18, pertaining to future operations in the Mediterranean theater.
- 12-13 Molotov visits Berlin.

*December*

- 8 British open a surprise drive against the Italians in North Africa.
- 18 Hitler signs and issues Directive No. 21, Operation BARBAROSSA, pertaining to the campaign against the Soviet Union.

*1941*

*February*

- 17 Hitler asks Jodl to draw up a plan for the invasion of India.

*March*

- 11 Lend-Lease Act passed by U. S. Congress and signed by President Roosevelt.
- 26 Yugoslav *coup d'état*.

*April*

- 3 Rommel opens his offensive in Libya.
- 6 German troops invade Yugoslavia.
- 13 Soviet Union concludes a pact of neutrality with Japan.
- 17 Yugoslav High Command capitulates.
- 23 Greek Army surrenders to the Germans and Italians.

*May*

- 2 Pro-Axis revolt in Iraq is squashed by British troops.
- 20 German parachute troops invade Crete.
- 29 Rommel stopped at the Egyptian border.

*June*

- 11 Directive No. 32, "Preparations for the Period after BARBAROSSA," is circulated among the services.
- 22 Operation BARBAROSSA begins.

*July*

- 1-2 Riga occupied by German troops.
- 13 Great Britain and Russia conclude a mutual-aid treaty.
- 16 Army Group Center captures Smolensk.
- 19 Hitler issues Directive No. 33 pertaining to the continuation of the Russian campaign.
- 23 Supplement to Directive No. 33 orders diversion of Army Group Center armor to the south and north.
- 30 Directive No. 34 orders the withdrawal of the Army Group. Center panzer groups to permit their rehabilitation.

*August*

- 12 Hitler issues Supplement to Directive No. 34, envisaging the Moscow offensive after the seizure of Leningrad.
- 25-29 British and Russian forces occupy Iran.

*September*

- 6 Directive No. 35 orders Moscow offensive for the end of September 1940.
- 8 First German attacks against the outer fortifications of Leningrad.
- 18-19 Kiev and Poltava seized by the Germans.

*October*

- 1 First Russian Protocol, signed at Moscow, provides that Great Britain and the United States would supply materials essential to the Russian war effort for nine months.
- 7 Start of the muddy season in central European Russia.
- 8 Army Group Center takes Orel.
- 12-13 Bryansk and Vyazma fall to the Germans.
- 16 Odessa is seized by Army Group South forces.
- 20 Soviets lose Kalinin and Staritsa.
- 21 Army Group North starts the attack on Tikhvin.
- 24 Kharkov is seized by Army Group South.
- End Soviet Government moves from Moscow to Kuibyshev.

*November*

- 2 Army Group South takes Kursk.
- 7 Hitler decides to delay seizure of Caucasus oil fields to following year.
- 8 Army Group South forces split Russian defense in Crimea.
- 11 Russians abandon Tikhvin.
- 15 Army Group Center launches all-out attack on Moscow proper.
- 20 Army Group South panzers enter Rostov.
- 28 Russians counterattack at Rostov from three sides.

*December*

- 1 Hitler permits Army Group South to evacuate Rostov.
- 5 German offensive bogs down and Russians begin to seize initiative.
- 7 Japanese attack Pearl Harbor.
- 8 Germans evacuate Tikhvin.
- 8 Hitler issues Directive No. 39, pertaining to the defense of German-held territory.
- 11 Germany and Italy declare war on the United States.
- 16 Germans abandon Kalinin.
- 19 Brauchitsch resigns as commander in chief of the Army; Hitler assumes his responsibility.

1942

*January*

10 Hitler revises 1942 plans on the basis of recent setbacks.  
 15 Hitler issues the first order of a large-scale German withdrawal in World War II.  
 End Russians break through at Izyum.

*April*

5 Directive No. 41 defines plan for summer offensive of 1942.

*May*

12 Russians launch spoiling attack near Kharkov.  
 17 Germans jump off near Izyum.  
 19 Russian resistance collapses on Kerch Peninsula.  
 27 Rommel opens second drive into Egypt.  
 28 Germans win Battle of Kharkov.

*June*

7 Start of the second German siege of Sevastopol.  
 11 Master lend-lease agreement signed between the United States and Soviet Union.  
 19 Outer defenses of Sevastopol are breached.

*July*

5 End of fighting on Crimea.  
 6 Germans take Voronezh.  
 11 Directive No. 43 issued, dealing with flank attack from Kerch across the strait into the Caucasus.  
 13 Hitler decides to initiate a frontal attack of the Caucasus.  
 16 Hitler's headquarters moved to Vinnitsa in the Ukraine.  
 21 Directive No. 44 issued, pertaining to warfare in northern Finland.  
 23 Hitler issues Directive No. 45, ordering two simultaneous drives into the Caucasus and toward Stalingrad.  
 29 Last rail line connecting Stalingrad with the Caucasus is cut.  
 31 Fourth Panzer Army is diverted from the Caucasus to the Stalingrad offensive.

*August*

6 Army Group A captures Armavir.  
 9 Maikop falls into German hands.  
 18 Hitler issues Directive No. 46, pertaining to antipartisan warfare.  
 18-19 British stage Dieppe raid.  
 28 Russians counterattack in the Caucasus.

*September*

1 Germans cross the Kerch Strait.  
 6 Army Group A forces capture Novorossiysk.  
 9 Hitler assumes command of Army Group A upon List's resignation.  
 24 Zeitzler replaces Halder as Army Chief of Staff.  
 26 Army Group A captures Nalchik.

*October*

23 Start of Battle of El Alamein.  
 31 Hitler returns to East Prussia.

*November*

8 Allies invade North Africa.  
 11 Germans assume control over Unoccupied France.  
 12 Rommel expelled from Egypt.  
 19 Soviets launch Stalingrad counteroffensive.

## Appendix C

### Bibliographical Note

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The German sources used in preparing this study included those Fuehrer directives, fragmentary diaries, and records of the Armed Forces High Command that pertained to planning and operations in Russia; the official records of the Organization, Intelligence, Operations, and Logistical Divisions of the Army High Command; selected war diaries of the army group and army headquarters that participated in the Russian campaign; and the Halder War Diaries.

In describing the preparation and execution of the German summer offensive of 1942, the author made extensive use of the *Kaukasus* (Caucasus) files of the Planning Branch, Operations Division, Army High Command. He also consulted the records of the *Technische Brigade Mineraloel Russland* (Technical Brigade, Mineral Oil, Russia) which was directed by the Armed Forces Economics Office.

Another source of information was the "Strategic Survey of the German Campaign in the East," a postwar study prepared by a group of German general officers under the supervision of General Halder.\* The memoirs and postwar writings of such outstanding German military leaders and historians as Greiner, Guderian, Heinrici, Heussinger, Kesselring, Rundstedt, Tippelskirch, and Warlimont were also used. In addition, the author conducted a series of personal interviews with former German Army and Luftwaffe officers in order to fill a number of gaps in the sources.

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\*See foreword.