

**THE
SOVIET PARTISAN
MOVEMENT
1941-1944**

**By
EDGAR M. HOWELL**





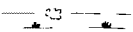
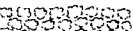



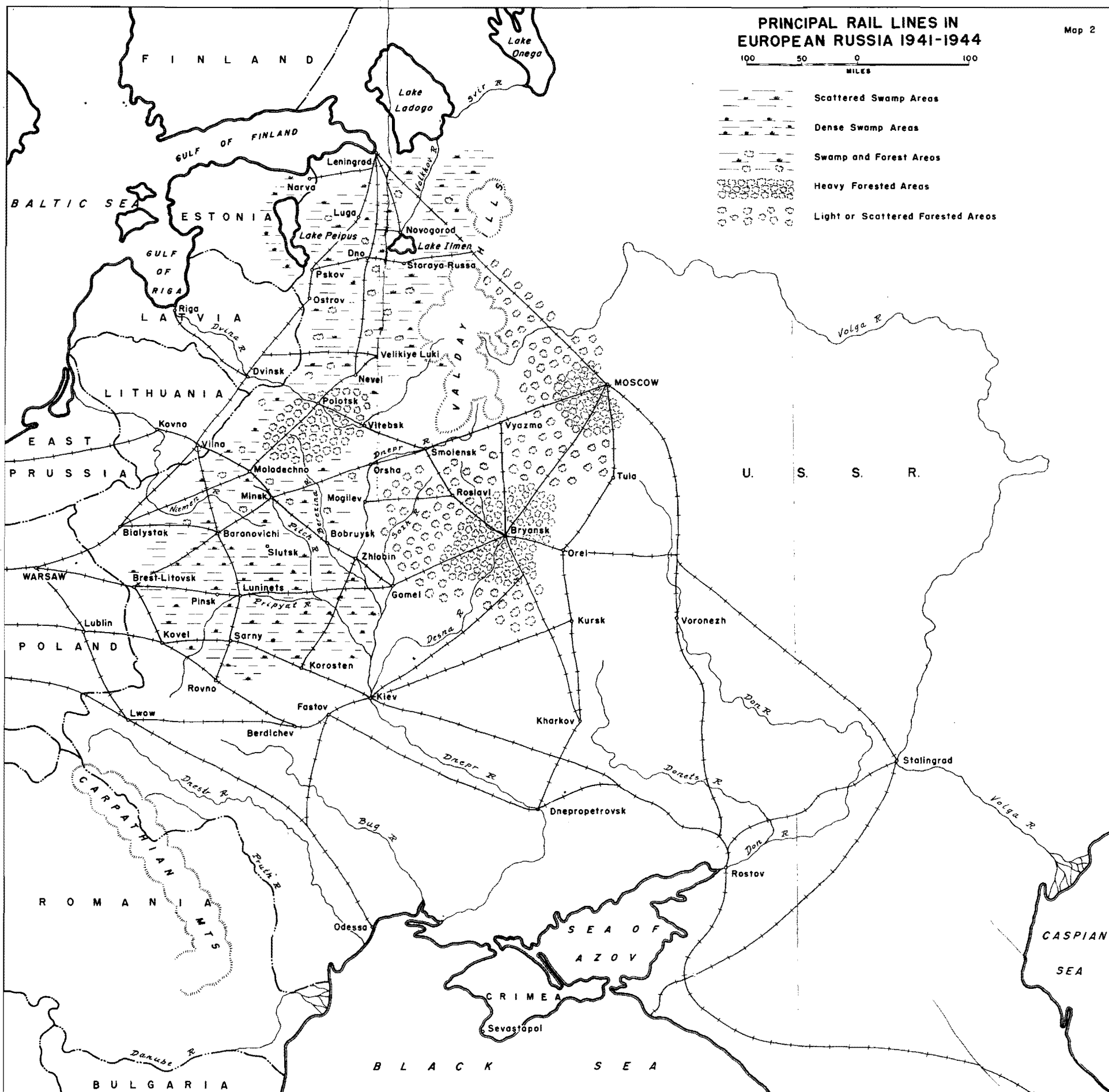
Map 1. General reference map.

PRINCIPAL RAIL LINES IN EUROPEAN RUSSIA 1941-1944

Map 2

100 50 0 100
MILES

-  Scattered Swamp Areas
-  Dense Swamp Areas
-  Swamp and Forest Areas
-  Heavy Forested Areas
-  Light or Scattered Forested Areas



Map 2. Principal rail lines in European Russia, 1941-1944.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
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For explanation of abbreviations used, see SR 320-50-1.

FOREWORD

Unconventional warfare has gained in importance along with the increase in range and destructiveness of weapons. It was a particularly potent factor in several theaters of operations during World War II, but in none did it play a more significant role than on the Eastern front during that conflict. There the guerrilla movement behind the Axis forces gained in importance as the Soviet Army withdrew deeper and deeper into its homeland, trading space for time until mobilization could be completed and winter act as an ally.

If *The Soviet Partisan Movement, 1941-1944* is studied in connection with operational studies of the war on the east European front during World War II, it should prove to be of great value to students of that conflict. It should also prove of particular value to the Army staff and schools and colleges as a reference work in partisan warfare.

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PREFACE

The purpose of this text is to provide the Army with a factual account of the organization and operations of the Soviet resistance movement behind the German forces on the Eastern Front during World War II. This movement offers a particularly valuable case study, for it can be viewed both in relation to the German occupation in the Soviet Union and to the offensive and defensive operations of the Wehrmacht and the Red Army.

The scope of the study includes an over-all picture of a quasi-military organization in relation to a larger conflict between two regular armies. It is not a study in partisan tactics, nor is it intended to be. German measures taken to combat the partisan movement are sketched in, but the story in large part remains that of an organization and how it operated. The German planning for the invasion of Russia is treated at some length because many of the circumstances which favored the rise and development of the movement had their bases in errors the Germans made in their initial planning. The operations of the Wehrmacht and the Red Army are likewise described in considerable detail as the backdrop against which the operations of the partisan units are projected.

Because of the lack of reliable Soviet sources, the story has been told much as the Germans recorded it. German documents written during the course of World War II constitute the principal sources, but many survivors who had experience in Russia have made important contributions based upon their personal experience.

The study was prepared in the Special Studies Division, Office of the Chief of Military History, under the supervision and direction of the chief of that Division. Maj. Edgar M. Howell, AUS-Ret., initiated the project and carried it through to completion. He was assisted in his research in the German records by Lt. Larry Wolff, Lt. William Klepper, Jr., and Miss Leopoldina Novak.

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PART ONE

GERMAN PLANNING FOR THE INVASION AND OCCUPATION OF RUSSIA

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

In the military history of few countries of the world have topography, climate, and population played such decisive roles as in Russia. The sheer size of the land, its formidable array of natural obstacles, the violent seasonal variations of climate, and the single-mindedness of the Russian populace in the face of alien pressure are unmatched. Time and again great powers have invaded Russia with powerful military machines, winning striking victory after victory, only to be ultimately defeated and driven out.

The USSR, which comprises the eastern half of Europe and the northern and central part of Asia, is the largest continuous political unit in the world. Occupying some 8,400,000 square miles, roughly one-sixth of the habitable land surface of the earth, it is nearly three times the size of the United States, and larger than all of North America. It extends from Romania, Poland, the Baltic Sea, and Finland in the west to China, Manchuria, and the Pacific Ocean in the east, a distance of some 6,000 miles. From north to south it stretches from the Arctic Circle to Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, and Mongolia, a maximum distance of some 3,000 miles.

In this huge area are something over 200 million people, about one-tenth of the world's population, including 174 races, nationalities, and tribes, speaking 125 different languages or dialects, and professing faith to some 40 different religions. Of the 174 ethnic groups, however, only 93 are composed of more than 10,000 people. Of the total population, over 153,000,000 are of Slavic origin, divided roughly as follows: Great Russians, 105 millions; Ukrainians, 37 millions; and White Russians, 8½ millions, with a scattering of Poles, Bulgars, and Czechs. The Slavs are chiefly of the Greek Orthodox faith. In addition, there are some 21 million Turko-Tartars, predominantly Mohammedan.

European Russia

European Russia—with which this study is primarily concerned—may be considered that portion of the USSR lying between Central

Europe and the Ural Mountains. Although it represents but a fraction of the entire country, by European standards it encompasses a tremendous expanse of territory. The distance from the 1941 Polish border to Moscow is some 600 miles, to Leningrad, nearly 500; to Stalingrad far to the east on the Volga River, 900; to the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains, 950. Laterally, the distance from Leningrad to the north to Odessa on the Black Sea is 900 miles.

Topography

Almost all European Russia is taken up by the East European Plain. This plain, which is actually a series of low plateaus, has an average elevation of some 500 feet, reaching a maximum of 800–900 feet in the Valdai Hills. In a broad, general sense, the land is of very low relief with no abrupt geographical changes. Despite this topographic monotony, however, the land offers a series of natural obstacles as protection for the heart of the country that is matched by no other area of comparable size.

The greatest single natural barrier in the country is the Pripyat Marshes which lie between White Russia and the western Ukraine and comprise more than 150,000 square miles of densely forested swamps. Other than for a few man-made routes they are impassable except when frozen. Adjoining them on the north is a wide belt of forests and swamps which covers western White Russia. This belt together with the deep woodlands in the Gomel and Bryansk areas and between Vyazma and Moscow forms a succession of natural defenses against any thrust toward Moscow. The topography of the Baltic States and north-west Russia is similar, with forests, swamps, and numerous small lakes predominating. In the south are the broad, treeless steppes of the Ukraine.

Completing this natural defensive network are the rivers. The principal ones, the Dnestr, the Bug, the Niemen, the Dvina, the Dnepr, and the Don, do not provide ready routes of access into the interior but cut across the paths of invasion and, together with their tributaries and swampy watersheds, form in themselves an excellent defense system. Not only do they require innumerable crossings, but due to the low relief of the country and resultant periodic floodings both banks tend toward marshiness and make the construction of approach roads a more difficult engineering feat than the actual bridging. Only between the headwaters of the Dnepr and Dvina in the "dry" Vitebsk-Orsha-Smolensk triangle, or Orsha Corridor, is the defensive value of the river net minimized. But this corridor with its paramount strategic importance is protected by the belt of forests and swamps running north from the Pripyat Marsh. However, in a normal winter all the rivers freeze and, for a period at least, are virtually eliminated as natural barriers.

Climate

The climate is as much an obstacle to extensive military operations as the physical barriers, and at certain seasons is even more effective. The bulk of the land lies in the same latitudes as Canada; the southern Caucasus is on the same parallel as Philadelphia, central Crimea as Bangor, Maine, and Moscow as Hudson Bay, with Leningrad nearly 300 miles farther north. In winter the entire country, with the exception of the southern Crimea, suffers from extremely low temperatures, often far below zero. The climate of the northwest, influenced by the warm Atlantic drift coming across Scandinavia is rather humid and somewhat less rigorous in the winter, but the northeast and central regions and the steppes of the south, being unprotected in the east since the Urals are too low to form an effective climatic barrier, are swept by the prevailing frigid northeast winds from Siberia. Stalingrad, lying along the 48th parallel, has an average January temperature of 15°, while Leningrad, some 950 miles to the north, has a January mean of 18°. Cold weather sets in suddenly and lasts five to six months. Snows are extremely heavy. The spring thaws and the fall rainy season bring heavy flooding and deep mud. The majority of the roads become bottomless and travel across country impossible, throwing excessive weight on the rail lines.

Population

Of the roughly 200 million peoples in the USSR, better than 80 percent are concentrated in European Russia in three well-defined regions, Great Russia, White Russia, and the Ukraine. Although the inhabitants of all three areas are predominantly of Slavic origin, they have kept their separate identities despite invasions and migrations. The division is still reflected today in the three basic dialects generally confined to the three geographical regions. Great Russia is that area generally centering around Moscow lying east of the line Smolensk-Lake Peipus and north of the line Gomel-Orel, as opposed to White Russia bounded by the Pripyat Marshes, Great Russia, Lithuania, and Poland, and the great steppe area of the Ukraine to the south.

The Great Russians

The Great Russians, concentrated as they are in the old Muscovite kingdom, are perhaps more truly Russian in the general acceptance of the term than those to the west and south. Certainly they are more communistic, concentrated as they have been about the center of Bolshevism since the fall of the Imperial government. They have been dominant over the rest of the Russian peoples since the second partition of Poland in 1793 which ceded them the western Ukraine and White Russia.

The White Russians

The White Russians have lived alternately under Polish, Lithuanian, and Russian rule for centuries, plagued throughout history with perpetual invasions. This combined with unproductive soil has kept the standard of living low and the level of illiteracy high. They possess no semblance of a national homogeneity or feeling, and only the language has kept their name alive.

The Ukrainians

The Ukrainians are perhaps the least Russian of all the Russian peoples. Historically they have had little sympathy with the Great Russians. The whole of their area which is the richest agricultural land in the Eurasian land mass, was part of the Polish-Lithuanian Empire until 1667 when the portion east of the Dnepr River fell to the Tsar. The remainder was ceded to the Imperial government in 1793. Those inhabiting the western and northern regions are descended from the Kievan Russians, while the eastern and southern portions were populated by Ruthenes who came down from the north to escape the Polish and Lithuanian invasions and from whom evolved the Cossacks. Individually they have always exhibited a marked degree of independence; as a mass, however, beyond a certain consciousness of their history as Ukrainians due to their language and way of life, they have shown only a desultory sort of national consciousness. Despite efforts of the middle-class intelligentsia in the middle of the 19th century to unite all Ruthenes into a Ukrainian nation and the actual creation of a Ukrainian state for a short time during the Revolution, there is little evidence that except in very limited circles there was any real desire for political separation. A restoration of local autonomy and a settlement of the land tenure question would have satisfied any and all demands of the people. At the time of the German invasion in 1941, despite the claims of the separatists as to the national aspirations of the populace, the people sought only a release from the collectivist system and demonstrated only vague and apathetic ideas about the future political configuration of the Ukraine.

The Balts

The inhabitants of the Baltic States, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, are not historically or ethnically Russians. Predominantly Indo-European rather than Slavic, they came under Russian rule only with the disintegration of the Lithuanian and Polish kingdoms and the defeat of Charles XII of Sweden by Peter the Great. All three states gained their independence in 1918, but were occupied by the USSR in 1940.

Taken together they comprise some 6,000,000 people of whom better than 80 percent are pure Balts. The Lithuanians, once a powerful people in their own right, never seem to have lost their sense of nationality. But the Letts and Estonians for centuries were subject peoples, serfs and small holders, under the heavy hand of the great German land-owning class descended from the Teutonic Knights.

The Transportation Net

The tremendous territorial extent of Russia and its low industrial capacity, capping the natural difficulties of its terrain and climate, have been a great handicap to the development of an adequate transportation system. As a result, compared to central and especially western Europe, Russian rail and highway nets are extremely deficient both quantity and qualitywise. European Russia is a land of rivers, and while these streams provide a ready means of transportation at least part of the year, at the same time they sharply limit the expansion of the railroad and highway systems because of the necessity for innumerable bridges. Since most of the country lies in the northern latitudes, both construction and maintenance are hampered by extremes of weather with alternate freezing and thawing, frozen subsoil and consequent lack of drainage, and deep mud during the spring thaw and the autumn rainy period. In addition, because of a lack of hard, granite-like rock for foundation work, the subgrade has to be limited generally to river gravels, with a consequent deterioration under heavy use and extremes of weather. This is especially true of the road net.

The most extensive portions of the transportation net were north of the Pripyat Marshes, running from Poland and Lithuania through White Russia to Moscow. In the Ukraine the net was much more sparse, although, militarily speaking, this was compensated for to some degree by the open, flat terrain which was highly suitable for mobile warfare. In the northwest and the Baltic States the net was equally limited, but unlike the Ukraine the terrain was unsuitable for cross-country maneuver and the few roads and rail lines had to carry the bulk of all movement.

Railroads

In 1941 the USSR had for its 8,400,000 square miles of territory only 52,000 miles of railroads, the greatest portion of which lay in European Russia. Of this trackage, less than 15 percent could be classed as heavy capacity, as opposed to medium and light. As a means of comparison, the density of the rail lines was 17.6 miles per 1,000 square

miles for European Russia as against 155 miles per 1,000 square miles for Germany.¹ The gauge differed from the standard European gauge,² necessitating transshipment at the western border.

The three major geographical areas—the Ukraine, White and Great Russia, and the Baltic States—were each served by one heavy-capacity double track rail line. In the Ukraine this was the line Krakow-Lwow-Kiev-Kursk or Dnepropetrovsk. Only to a small extent could it be supplemented by the tortuous and winding medium-, and often low-, capacity line Przemysl-Stanislaw-Cernauti-Odessa on the southern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains. Through White Russia to the east the primary trunk was the Warsaw-Brest-Litovsk-Minsk-Smolensk-Moscow. This was paralleled on the south by the low- and medium-capacity line through the Pripyat, Brest-Litovsk, Pinsk-Gomel-Bryansk-Moscow. Several lateral lines of medium capacity, however, and one diagonal route from Kovno in Lithuania southeast through Minsk and Bobruysk to Gomel offered possibilities for alternate routes. To the north the one trunk was the Warsaw-Bialystok-Vilna-Dvinsk-Pskov-Leningrad line. With the exception of the stretch Dvinsk-Ostrov, it was double track. The few alternate lines, for the most part to the north of Pskov, were all of low capacity.

Roads

The road net was generally poor, comprising some 60,500 miles of all types of surfacing, from plain unimproved dirt track to asphalt and concrete highways, for the whole of the USSR.³ The majority of this net was in European Russia. Generally the paved arteries paralleled the rail lines. Of the entire net, only the stretch westward from Moscow through Smolensk to Minsk, where it terminated could be classed as a superhighway in the American sense of the term. All but the few hundred miles of concrete and asphalt deteriorated rapidly under heavy use and became bottomless during the spring and fall muddy seasons, thus throwing an added burden on the rail system.

¹ *Militärgeographische Angaben ueber das europäische Russland, Allgemeiner Ueberblick, 1.IX.41., Gen. St.d.H. Abt. fuer Kriegskarten und Vermessungswesen (IV. Mil.-Geo.),* pp. 38-40. 29/IDZ.11. Postwar estimates of the 1940 trackage total have raised this estimate to just over 60,000 miles, of which 16,000 were double-track. See: P. E. Garbutt, *The Russian Railroads* (London, 1949), p. 12; Nikolai A. Voznesensky, *The Economy of the USSR During World War II* (Washington, 1948), p. 59.

² Standard European gauge: 4 feet 8½ inches; Russian gauge: 5 feet.

³ *Militärgeographische Angaben ueber das europäische Russland, Allgemeiner Ueberblick, 1.IX.41., GenStdH. Abt. fuer Kriegskarten und Vermessungswesen (IV. Mil.-Geo.),* pp. 38-40. 29/IDZ.11. A 1938 American estimate placed the total at 64,200 miles, of which some 2,400 miles were believed to be asphalted. See: E. J. Simmons, *USSR, A Concise Handbook* (Ithaca, 1947), ch. XIV.

Rivers

Despite the fact that rapids were few in the Russian rivers and that canals connected several of the major streams, their extensive use as an aid to invasion was limited by their general north-south courses and by their freezing in the cold months and heavy flooding in the spring. Prior to World War II, less than 8 percent of Russian freight traffic moved over these inland waterways.⁴

The Transportation Net and Irregular Resistance

The difficulties of Russian terrain and climate pose an added problem to an invader should any determined guerrilla resistance develop, that is, the protection of the lines of communication against organized armed attack. Whereas in the Ukraine the general absence of cover virtually precludes the chance of irregular raiding, in the central and northern sectors the danger is a very real one. From the southern edges of the Pripyat to the Gulf of Finland all orderly movement is channeled by the terrain into a few narrow corridors where for long stretches it is exposed to easy interdiction. This also is true of the heavy forests about Gomel and Bryansk and before Moscow. Not only does the terrain offer the attackers protection in the execution of their raids, but secures their movements and hides and protects their bases. The many rivers add to this problem, for the bridges and culverts are very ready targets for sabotage. The climate too exercises a very real effect in this respect. The heavy snows during the winter and the mud in the spring and fall sharply limit the value of the road net which in turn places an added load on the rail system and a few good highways and makes any interruption of them doubly effective.

⁴Garbutt, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

CHAPTER 2

PREINVASION PLANNING

The Decision To Attack Russia

After the swift and successful conclusion of the French campaign in June 1940, Hitler thought he was invincible. France was completely in his grasp and it seemed impossible that Britain, with its army shattered, would attempt to hold out in the face of the German threat. But when Britain showed it had no idea of admitting defeat and intended to fight to the finish, Hitler started preparations for an invasion of the island kingdom in the event he could not bomb it into submission.

Actually he did not favor such an operation. Not only was he well aware of the risks involved in such an amphibious attack in view of Germany's undeniable inferiority at sea—and he was seconded in this by his naval leaders¹—but also he disliked the political implications which he believed an actual military defeat of Britain would entail. He wanted surrender not destruction, for in destruction he saw a collapse of the Empire which in the long run would benefit Japan and the United States rather than the Reich. He and his advisors concluded that Britain's intransigency stemmed from the hope of Soviet Russia's entering the picture, since the latter obviously had every reason not to want a powerful Germany on its western border.² As he cast about for alternatives, Hitler saw the possibilities inherent in confronting his enemies with a solid political front from the North Cape to Morocco. An international bloc including Spain, Italy, and Russia, he thought, would demonstrate to the British the futility of continued resistance.³

On 21 July 1940 at a conference between Hitler, Grossadmiral Erich Raeder, Commander in Chief of the Navy, and Generalfeldmarschall Walther von Brauchitsch, Commander in Chief of the Army, all the skepticism relative to the invasion, Operation *SEELOEWE*, was aired.⁴

¹ See: Memo, Raeder to OKW, 11 Jul 40. Cited in *Brassey's Naval Annual*, 1948 (New York, 1948), pp. 113–15, 117–18.

² *Ibid.*, "The Private War Journal of Generaloberst Franz Halder" (hereafter cited as "Halder's Journal"), IV, pp. 115–17. Copy in Foreign Studies Br., OCMH. Halder was chief of the German General Staff from 1938 to Sep 1942.

³ "Halder's Journal," *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 115–16. Negotiations for some sort of an alliance with Spain continued fitfully throughout the fall of 1940.

⁴ There are two accounts of this conference extant, one by Raeder and the other, much more detailed, by Halder who had been briefed on the meeting by Von Brauchitsch. See "Halder's Journal," *op. cit.* IV, pp. 126–28; *Brassey's Naval Annual* 1948, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

Still doubting the feasibility of the attack, Hitler believed that it should be made only if all other means of bringing Britain to terms failed. Britain was sustained, he insisted, by the hope of assistance from Soviet Russia and a change of attitude on the part of the United States. For this reason Germany's attention had to be turned to the Russian aspect of the picture. The Army should study the problem in the light of a possible operation against the Soviet Union and should begin planning.

Although this conference was mainly concerned with Operation *SEELOEWE* Hitler had previously been briefed on the broad operational and political aspects of a campaign in the East. Among these was the idea that the political objectives of such an operation should include the creation of a Ukranian state and a confederation of Baltic States under German domination.⁵

On 31 July, at another conference of his leaders, Hitler, reiterating that the British were hanging on only because they hoped the Russians would enter the war on the side of the Allies, declared that Germany would have to attack and destroy the Soviet Union the following spring. The Communist state had to be eliminated from the European scene. He would shatter it in one rapid, driving campaign and then break it up along ethnic and geographic lines, absorbing some parts bodily into the Reich and making puppet states of others. The Army (*Oberkommando des Heeres*—OKH) was to immediately initiate preparations for such an attack, later named Operation *BARBAROSSA*.⁶

This was no random speculation on the part of the Fuehrer. Rather, it was a clear-cut military and political decision to wage war on two fronts simultaneously. As such it might well be taken as the turning point of World War II.

German Occupation Policy and Practice

In planning a campaign of the scope of *BARBAROSSA* and with its sweeping military and political objectives, the preparations had to go far beyond purely operational aspects, for during the interim between the launching of the initial attack and the actual end of hostilities, as well as during the transition period between the attainment of military victory and the final political goal, the land would have to be occupied by military or political agencies, or both.

To the Germans, theoretically, all territory in their possession in which military operations might take place was a theater of war (*Kriegsgebiet*). This theater of war consisted of a zone of operations (*Operationsgebiet*),

⁵ "Halder's Journal," *op. cit.*, IV, p. 128.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-45: The directive for Operation *BARBAROSSA* is contained in OKW/WFSt/Abt. L (1), Nr. 33408/40g.K.Chefs., 18.XII.40. in "Fuehrer Directives and Other Top-Level Directives of the German Armed Forces, . . . 1939-1945" (hereafter cited as "Fuehrer Directives"), tr. by Office of Naval Intelligence, I, pp. 127-30.

that portion of the theater of war where the armed forces operated against the enemy, and a zone of the interior (*Heimat-Kriegsgebiet*). The zone of operations was always under a German military administration (*Deutsche Militaer-Verwaltung*).⁷ Upon the cessation of operations the newly seized territory was placed under either a military or a civilian political administration according to the particular ethnic, geographic, and strategic considerations of the area occupied. The early occupation administrations had followed no specific pattern and were the products of no particular pre-formed plans. In each case it had been Hitler who determined the method.⁸ The Soviet Union was another case presenting new problems.

Military Occupation

Organization

According to German standing operating procedure, the executive power in the zone of operations was vested in the military. This zone of operations was divided into a combat zone (*Gefechtsgebiet*) and a number of army rear area commands (*Rueckwaertige Armeegebiete*) or *Koruecke* one behind each army operating at the front.⁹ [See *chart 1*.]

The *Koruecke* were in charge of supply and administration and were responsible for military security in their particular zones.¹⁰ To carry out these duties they were given special security units. For purposes of administration and local control, they had several gradations of subordinate headquarters: *Feldkommandanturen*, regional military government offices, *Kreiskommandanturen*, district offices in rural areas, and *Ortskommandanturen* in the smaller urban areas and towns. For normal police work and security of lines of communication they were assigned units of military police (*Feldgendarmarie*).¹¹

These *Koruecke* corresponded in effect to the communications zone of the American Army, and, although nominally agencies of their respective armies, were under the direct control of the Army Chief of Supply and Administration (*Generalquartiermeister-GenQu*). *GenQu* had as his province all the functions of the supply and administration of the

⁷ "Handbuch fuer den Generalstab im Krieg, I.VIII.39." pts. 1, 4. Copy in CRS, TAG.

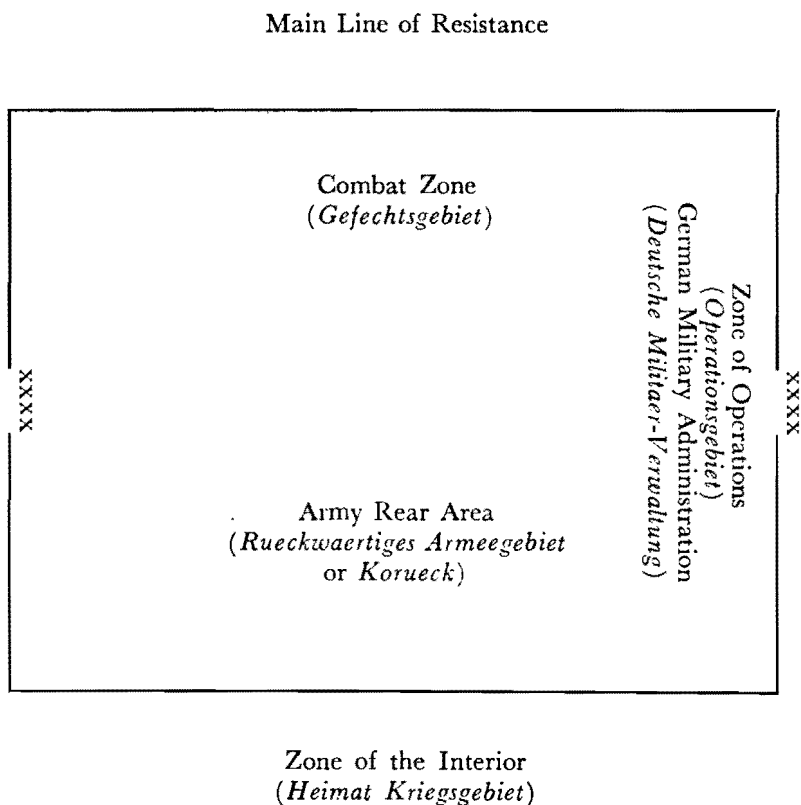
⁸ See: Directive No. 5, 30.IX.39., OKW, Nr. 171/39 g.K.Chefs., WFA/L I, in "Fuehrer Directives," *op. cit.*, I, p. 55; Berlin den 20. Oktober 1939, *Besprechung des Fuehrers Mit Chef OKW ueber die kuenftige Gestaltung der polnischen Verhaeltnisse zu Deutschland (Vom 17.X.39. abds.)* in *Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal*, (hereafter cited is I.M.T.). (Nuremberg, 1947), XXVI, pp. 378-83.

⁹ "Handbuch fuer den Generalstab im Krieg, I.VIII.39.", *op. cit.* I, p. 4.

¹⁰ *Ob.d.H.*, 6. Abt. (IV), *Gen.St.d.H.*, "Versorgung des Feldheeres (V.d.F.)", (Berlin, 1940), pp. 21-25. Copy in H.Dv.90/40.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30, 33-34; WD MID, "Order of Battle of the German Army" (Feb 44), pp. 49-50.

Chart 1—Organization of the German Theater of War (*Kriegsgebiet*) as of 1 August 1939, showing a Typical Army Sector*



*Source: CRS, TAG. *Grundlegende Befehle, Gliederung des rueckw. Gebiets*, H17/6.

field army. Besides the planning and organization of supply in the field, he was responsible for the establishment and security of all lines of communication and supply installations and for military government control of the areas behind the operating armies.¹²

By the time detailed planning for *BARBAROSSA* was well under way following the December publication of the actual directive for the attack, the Armed Forces High Command (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*—OKW) had made it clear that the occupation of the Soviet Union was to be civilian and political, not military, and had placed definite limitations on the extent to which a strictly military jurisdiction was to be exercised. The area under the control of the Army was to be kept as shallow as possible, and as the campaign moved farther and farther to the east the forward boundary of the political administration zone, which was to be established behind the Army's zone of operations, was to be progressively advanced. With the termination of hostilities the entire area was to go under a political occupation.¹³ In other words, a planned administration was to be put into effect in the occupied portions of the USSR only after they had left the jurisdiction of the military.

With the policy thus set, *GenQu* made his preparations accordingly, planning only those security measures necessary to guarantee the unimpeded progress of the armies and the exploitation of the land for their immediate use.¹⁴

The Security Commands

In March *GenQu* received his allotment of staffs and troop units. These comprised three army group rear headquarters (*Rueckwaertige Heeresgebiete*) and nine security divisions (*Sicherungs Divisionen*) activated from three regular infantry divisions. These security divisions were units "specially created," as OKH described them, to handle the "security, exploitation, and military administration" behind the front lines. One army group rear area headquarters and three security di-

¹² TM E 30-351, "Handbook on German Military Forces" (1945); "*Versorgung des Feldheeres*," *op. cit.*, pp. 12-15. The information in these sources was corrected and brought up to date by Gen Maj Alfred Toppe, *GenQu* during 1944-45, in interview in Aug 52.

¹³ See: Helmuth Greiner; "Draft Entries in the War Diary of Def Br [Definite Branch] of Wehrmacht Operations (Dec 40-Mar 21)" (MS 065k, Hist Div, EUCOM), pp. 102-04. Copy in Foreign Studies Br, OCMH. Supplement to Directive 21, "Directive for Special Areas (Operation *BARBAROSSA*)," OKW/WFSt/Abt. L (IV/Qu), Nr. 44125/41 g.K.Chefs., 13.III.41, in "Fuehrer Directives," *op. cit.*, I, pp. 158-60.

¹⁴ "Special Directives for the Supply," 3 Apr 41, in *Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals* (hereafter cited as *N.M.T.*), V, *U.S. vs Wilhelm von Leeb, et al* (Case 12), von Roques 2. Copy in CRS, TAG.

visions were assigned to each of the three army groups set up for the operation.¹⁶

In the initial phases of the campaign, the *Koruecke* were to be responsible for security, with the security divisions assigned to them. As soon as the tactical situation permitted, however, the army group rear area commands would take over, committing the security units laterally according to the army sectors. As in the case of the *Koruecke*, these commands, although subordinated to their respective army groups, were to receive their operational directives from and report directly to *GenQu*.¹⁵

Each security division received one infantry regiment and an artillery battalion from the cannibalized formations. At least six of these infantry regiments, which were to constitute the "alert units" (*Eingreifgruppen*) of the security divisions, had had front line experience in the Polish or French campaigns. The remainder was made up of *Landesschuetzen* battalions, formed into regiments, and field and local administrative headquarters, with small complements of signal, engineer, and similar troops. In addition to the strictly army units, each division was assigned one motorized police battalion from the *Ordnungspolizei*.¹⁷

The staffing and equipping of the security divisions reflected the quality of the troop units they comprised. In general they were staffed with retired or overaged officers and inexperienced reservists. The G-4's were inadequately trained and the G-2's were admittedly inept in intelligence matters and generally had no knowledge of counterintelligence methodology.¹⁸ The alert regiments for the most part were well armed and equipped, as were the motorized police battalions, but in the *Landesschuetzen* battalions and the field and local administrative headquarters much organic equipment was lacking and many weapons were

¹⁵ OKH, *Chef der Heeresruestung und BdE*, AHA: Ia (II) Nr. 591/41 g. Kdos., 3.III.41., in *Befh. rueckw. H. Geb. 103, Ia, Taetigkeitsbericht*, 13.III.41.-21.VI.41. 16407/1.

¹⁶ N.M.T., *op. cit.*, V, U.S. vs. *Wilhelm von Leeb, et. al* (Case 12), pp. 5012-13; "Special Directives for the Supply," Von Roques 2 in *ibid*.

¹⁷ There is no adequate English equivalent for *Landesschuetzen* or *Ordnungspolizei*. The *Landesschuetzen* were troops of poor quality generally drawn from the *Landwehr* classifications, the 35- to 45-year-old classes. The *Ordnungspolizei* were German regular or uniformed police formed into troop units. They included the municipal, rural, river, and building inspection police, the firefighting police, and the air raid protection services. They should not be confused with the *Sicherheitspolizei*, or security police. See: TM 30-451, "Handbook on German Military Forces" (1945), II-8, II-31; "Order of Battle of the German Army," *op. cit.*, pp. 102-06; *Anl. z OKH 1600, Kriegsgliederung des Feldheeres*, 15.V.41. H1/93b; *Befehl RFSS*, 21.V.41. NOKW 2079.

¹⁸ Notes of CG of Rear Area at Stargard on G-2 conf at Hq, 9 May 41 (indexed under No. 22, H 3/482); *KTb, Ib, 281 Sich. Div.*, 1.V.41. 15954/6.

substandard. In the *281st Security Division*, for instance, all rifles, carbines, and pistols were from stocks captured from the French, Belgian, Dutch, and Czechoslovakian Armies. All vehicles were of foreign make with no spare parts. Some had no tires. Division headquarters had no vehicles of any sort.¹⁹ Of the units of the 9 security divisions, 3 infantry regiments and 9 *Landesschuetzen* battalions were equipped with bicycles, while 15 police battalions and 1 *Wachbataillon* (guard battalion) were motorized. The bicycle troops were considered suitable for local commitment only.²⁰

Training: The specific operational missions given the rear area commands and the training of the security and police units allotted them closely mirrored the Army's occupation role as outlined by OKW. The *Koruecke* and army group rear areas had as their primary tasks the security of supply installations, supply routes and lateral routes, supply transports (by convoy if necessary), airfields, and depots of captured materiel; the guarding and evacuation of prisoners of war; and traffic regulation. The heaviest emphasis was placed on the security of supply points.²¹

The field and local administrative headquarters, which were to be permanently set up at key points along supply routes and lateral roads, were to work with the security and police units in establishing a series of strong points to protect the supply lines and insure control of the populace. They were to immediately suppress any active or passive resistance on the part of the Russian civilians by severe punitive measures. In addition they were to watch the population carefully in order to determine which elements were anti-Soviet and thus possibly useful to German interests.²²

The training of the troop units reflected these tasks, and at the same time took into consideration the military capabilities of each. The *Landesschuetzen* units and the *Wachbataillone* were specifically trained in the security and defense of supply installations, troop billets, and airfields; in reconnaissance and patrol duty along communication axes; for attacks on objectives of limited scope such as clearing villages and small wooded areas of stragglers; in convoy duty; and in working in close cooperation with the *Feldgendarmarie* and *Ordnungspolizei*. The police units were schooled in traffic regulation on the supply routes and in the general maintenance of order. In addition they were given enough small unit infantry training to enable them to assist other units in attacks on

¹⁹ *Bericht, Ib, 281 Sich. Div. 1.V.41., KTB 281 Sich. Div. 15954/6.*

²⁰ *Anl 2 z. KTB 1, H Geb Mitte, 1.IX.41. 14684/3; KTB, H Geb Nord, 22.IV.-7.VIII.41. 14768/2; Anl z. OKH 160.00 Kriegsgliederung des Feldheeres, 15.V.41. H 1/93b.*

²¹ *OKH/Gen.St.d.H/Ausb. Abt. (Ia), Nr. 700/41 g., 21.III.41., Anl. Bd. 2, z. KTB 1, Hefter 1, 286 Sich. Div., Ia, 31.III.-7.VIII.41. 16182/2.*

²² *Ibid.*

limited objectives and in the guarding and evacuation of prisoners of war and captured materiel. The alert regiments were trained as normal infantry units with emphasis on offensive work in keeping with their role as mobile reserve forces.²³

Summary

This was the extent of the preparation for the military occupation. Beyond planning for the period between the launching of the initial attack and the actual end of hostilities there was nothing. The deficiency was the same one that underlay the *BARBAROSSA* plan as a whole; all planning for the attack was predicated on a winning campaign of no more than four months' duration.²⁴ The Army expected to win and win quickly. There was no preparation for unforeseen contingencies, such as especially adverse weather, which might prolong the campaign beyond expectations, or for the possibility of failure to achieve complete victory. Such eventualities, following German army practice, were not considered the province of the planners, but of "command responsibility."²⁵ Despite the fact that as early as December 1940 Hitler had indicated to Von Brauchitsch and Halder that he intended leaving some 60 divisions in Russia as occupation troops, the General Staff had no definite plans for utilizing these units, only a "vague concept."²⁶

Political Occupation

The occupation and partition of Russia were to be political. In order to bring the war to a successful conclusion according to Third Reich standards, which meant the satiation of all its war aims, Germany would have to do more than merely defeat the Red Army. It would have to split up the entire area into socialist, political entities, dependent on Germany, with which peace might be concluded. According to Hitler's directive, this was not a task for the Army.²⁷

The territory overrun in the course of the campaign was to be divided into states with separate governments as soon as the progress of the war permitted. The rear boundary of the Army's zone of operations was to

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Besprechung mit den stellvertretenden Kommandierenden Generalen am 5.I.42., KTB, Chef des Stabs, Chef Heeresrüstung und Befehlshaber des Ersatzheeres, 19.XII.41.-20.III.42.*; Directive No. 32, "Preparations for the Period After *BARBAROSSA*," *OKW/WFSt/Abt. L (I Op.)*, Nr. 44886/41 g. K. Chefs., 11.IV.41., in "Fuehrer Directives," *op. cit.*; Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader* (New York, 1952), p. 143.

²⁵ Interview with Gen Maj Alfred Toppe, 13 Aug 52.

²⁶ Helmuth Greiner, "Operation *BARBAROSSA*," (MS C-065i, Hist Div, EUCOM), p. 47. Copy in Foreign Studies Br, OCMH. See also: Interview with Gen Maj Alfred Toppe, 13 Aug 52. The phrase "vague concept" is Toppe's.

²⁷ Greiner, "Draft Entries in the War Diary of Def Br of Wehrmacht Operations (Dec 40-Mar 41)," *op. cit.*, pp. 202-04.

be moved progressively eastward with the fighting and the area so formed given a civilian political administration. At first it was to be divided into three administrative divisions or *Reichskommissariate* corresponding roughly to the Baltic States, White Russia, and the Ukraine on the basis of ethnic differences and the boundaries between army groups. Here the administration was to be in the hands of Reich commissioners or *Reichskommissare* who were to take their orders from the Fuehrer. Military tasks in the *Reichskommissariate* were to be handled by armed forces commanders (*Wehrmachtbefehlshaber*) subordinate to OKW. They were to provide military protection for the area and maintain close liaison with the *Reichskommissare* in order to support them in their political tasks.

Since this war was to be far more than a mere passage of arms, or as Hitler said, a fight to a finish between "two opposite political systems," the invaded territory was to be "prepared" for the political occupation to follow. This task of "preparation" was given to Heinrich Himmler, leader of the SS troops (*Reichsfuehrer SS*) and chief of the German Police, to carry out independently of all other agencies and on his own responsibility.²⁸

For the mission Himmler formed special task groups called *Einsatzgruppen* from the personnel of the SS, SD, and Gestapo²⁹ which he made generally responsible for all political security tasks within the operational area of the Army and the rear areas so far as the latter did not fall under the civil administration. Specifically they were to clear the operations zone of both Jews and Communist officials and agents by liquidating all racially and politically undesirable elements seized. The armies were to supply the *Einsatzgruppen* with quarters, food, gasoline, and the like, but were to have no control over them whatever. A Himmler representative was assigned to each army group with an *Einsatzgruppe* at his disposal. When the attack was launched, these groups followed directly behind the troops as they moved into Russia.³⁰

The detailed planning for the political administration took form under the direction of Alfred Rosenberg, Hitler's deputy for ideological matters

²⁸ "Directive For Special Areas (Operation BARBAROSSA)" in *OKW/WFSt/Abt. L (1)*, Nr. 33408/40 g. K. Chefs., 18.XII.40 in "Fuehrer Directives," I, pp. 127-30.

²⁹ SS—*Schutzstaffeln*, the elite guard of the Nazi Party (combat units of the SS were known as the *Waffen SS*); SD—*Sicherheitsdienst*, SS security and intelligence service; Gestapo—*Geheime Staatspolizei*, secret state or political police.

³⁰ *N.M.T. op. cit.*, IV, *U.S. vs Otto Ohlendorf, et al* (Case 9), I, pp. 75-77; Ohlendorf affidavit, doc. 2890 in *ibid*; "Regulation for Assignment of Security Police and SD in the Army Organization," *OKH*, 26.III.41. (doc. 256), prosecution document book in *ibid.*; *I.M.T.*, *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 312-18.

and philosopher of the Nazi Party.³¹ Early in April he was first oriented on *BARBAROSSA* and its aims and was successively appointed political advisor to Hitler for the operation,³² Commissioner for the Central Control of Questions Connected with the East-European Region,³³ and finally on 17 July Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories.³⁴ In starting his preparation, Rosenberg gave top priority to safeguarding the war effort in its operational stages and assuring a supply of raw materials and food for the armies and the occupation force.³⁵ To him the long-range goal was the end of Pan-Russian (*Grossrussisch*) pressure and the elimination of any military or political threat from the east.³⁶

His plans to achieve this goal followed closely the political premises laid down in the 21 and 31 July conferences the previous year: occupied Russia was to be broken up into separate political entities according to historical and racial conditions, each with a different political aim. Some were to be absorbed into the Reich, others set up as puppets. During the interim period between the actual end of hostilities and the achievement of the final political goal, the *Reichskommissare* operating under his direction were to carry forward the administration toward the final form.³⁷

He believed that in an undertaking of such size the ultimate political goal could be more quickly and efficiently reached if the plans of all Reich agencies in the East, including police, economic, and propaganda, be made to conform with those laid down by his office and their activities subordinated to him as Hitler's representative.³⁸ This was a practical approach, and had it been adopted would have eliminated a duplication

³¹ Rosenberg was an old line National Socialist, having joined the Nazi Party in 1919 and worked steadily in it through the years. Early recognized as the party ideologist, he developed and spread Nazi doctrines both in the newspaper *Voelkischer Beobachter*, which he edited, and in numerous books he wrote. He was never a member of Hitler's inner circle, and beyond the scope of his editorial work was never influential in party affairs.

³² *I.M.T.*, *op. cit.*, XI, pp. 476-77; *Anhang zur Denkschrift Nr. 2, Personelle Vorschlaege fuer die Reichskommissariate im Osten und die politische Zentralstelle in Berlin*, 7.IV.41. *Ibid.*, pp. 555-60.

³³ See: Hitler's decree of 20 April 41 concerning the appointment of Rosenberg as his agent for matters relating to eastern Europe. *I.M.T.*, *op. cit.*, XXVI, pp. 383-84.

³⁴ *Abschrift zu Rk. 10714 B, Erlass des Fuehrers ueber die Verwaltung der neu besetzten Ostgebiete, Vom 17, VII.41.* in *I.M.T.*, *op. cit.*, XXIX, pp. 235-37.

³⁵ *Allgemeiner Aufbau und Aufgaben einer Dienststelle fuer die zentrale Bearbeitung der Fragen des osteuropaeischen Raumes*, 29.IV.41 in *I.M.T.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 550-66.

³⁶ *Allgemeine Instruktion fuer alle Reichskommissare in den besetzten Ostgebieten*, 8.V.41. in *I.M.T.*, *op. cit.*, XXVI, pp. 576-80.

³⁷ See: "Halder's Journal," *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 126-28, 144-45.

³⁸ *Anhang zur Denkschrift Nr. 2, Personelle Vorschlaege fuer die Reichskommissariate im Osten und die politische Zentralstelle in Berlin* 7.IV.41 in *I.M.T.*, *op. cit.*, XXVI, pp. 555-60; *Denkschrift Nr. 3, Betrifft: UdSSR, Berlin, den 25.IV.41.* Doc. 1020-PS. Files of Office of the Chief of Counsel for War Crimes. DRB, TAG.

of functions and a constant conflict of jurisdictions, which was to do much harm to the occupation, and would have given the whole venture a singleness of purpose that it was to need so badly later. But both Goering³⁹ and Himmler, however, insisted on complete independence.⁴⁰

The form the final political structure was to take is not completely clear. As Rosenberg saw it, White Russia was to be developed into a German protectorate with progressively closer ties to Germany; the Baltic States were also to become a protectorate, transformed into a part of the greater German Reich by Germanization of the racially acceptable elements, the settling of Germans there, and the deportation of all those racially undesirable; the Ukraine was to be set up as an independent state in alliance with Germany; and the Caucasus with its contiguous northern territories was to become a federation of Caucasian States with a German plenipotentiary, German military and naval bases, and extra-territorial military rights for the protection of the oil fields which would be exploited by the Reich.⁴¹

Hitler's views were much the same: generally, the Crimea was to become Reich territory, evacuated by all foreigners and settled by Germans only; the Baltic States and the Don-Volga area were to be absorbed into a greater Germany; while the Caucasus was to become a military colony. The future status of the Ukraine and White Russia remained vague, however, and the forms of the structures were never drawn out in detail.⁴²

Except for the operations of the economic administration and Himmler's police functions (Himmler was given as much authority in Russia as he exercised in Germany proper), Rosenberg was to have jurisdiction of all territory west of the operations zone and was to be responsible for the entire administration there.⁴³ From his Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories at the top, control was to descend through the *Reichskommissare* in their political-ethnic areas, to general, main, and

³⁹ At the same time Himmler had been given his task of preparing for the political occupation, Goering had been placed in charge of the economic exploitation of the USSR. See: "Directive For Special Areas (Operation *BARBAROSSA*)," *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ *Aktenvermerk, Fuehrerhauptquartier 16.VII.41.*, memo for the record, notes on the Fuehrer conf, 16 Jul 41, in *I.M.T. op. cit.*, XXXVIII, pp. 86-94.

⁴¹ *Instruktion fuer einen Reichskommissar im Kaukasien*, 7.V.41. Doc. 1027-PS. Files of Office of Chief of Counsel for War Crimes. DRB, TAG: *Instruktion fuer einen Reichskommissar im der Ukraine*, 7.V.41 in *I.M.T.*, *op. cit.*, XXVI, pp. 567-73; *Instruktion fuer einen Reichskommissar im Ostland*, 8.V.41 in *ibid.*, pp. 573-76; *Allgemeine Instruktion fuer alle Reichskommissare in den besetzten Ostgebieten*, 8.V.41 in *ibid.*, pp. 576-80.

⁴² See: *Aktenvermerk, Fuehrerhauptquartier*, 16.VII.41. in *I.M.T.*, *op. cit.*, XXXVIII, pp. 86-94.

⁴³ *Abschrift zu Rk. 10714 B. Erlass des Fuehrers ueber die Verwaltung der neu besetzten Ostgebiete*, Vom 17.VII.41. in *I.M.T. op. cit.*, XXIX, pp. 235-37.

district *Kommissare*. A higher SS and police leader was to be assigned to each *Reichskommissariat*.⁴⁴

Taken together with Himmler's "preparation," there was to be nothing benevolent about this administration. What the Russian people thought or felt did not matter, and there was to be no real attempt to draw them over into the German camp. The occupation was to be permanent. That was the final goal as Hitler set it, and nothing or no one was to be allowed to interfere with the attainment of it.⁴⁵ This was a struggle of ideologies, not nations.⁴⁶ The "Jewish-Bolshevik" intelligentsia was to be exterminated. In Great Russia force was to be used "in its most brutal form."⁴⁷ Moscow and Leningrad were to be leveled and made uninhabitable so as to obviate the necessity for feeding the populations through the winter.⁴⁸ The land was first to be dominated, then administered and exploited.⁴⁹

Martial law was to be established and all legal procedures for offenses committed by enemy civilians were to be eliminated. Guerrillas were to be ruthlessly killed at any time. Civilians who attacked members of the Wehrmacht were to be treated in like manner and on the spot. In circumstances where individuals attacking the armed forces could not readily be identified collective punitive measures were to be carried out immediately upon orders of an officer with the rank of battalion commander or higher. Suspects were not to be retained in custody for trial at a later date. For offenses committed by members of the Wehrmacht against the indigenous population, prosecution was not to be compulsory even when such acts constituted crimes or offenses under German military law. Such acts were to be prosecuted only when the maintenance of discipline required it.⁵⁰ All Communist Party functionaries and Red Army commissars, including those at the small unit level, were to be

⁴⁴ *Erster Abschnitt: Die Organization der Verwaltung in den besetzten Ostgebieten*, an undated, unsigned paper found in the Rosenberg files outlining the organization and administration of the occupied eastern territories, in *I.M.T.*, *op. cit.*, XXVI, pp. 592-609. According to Rosenberg, "[This paper] is not a direct instruction of the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories but it was the result of discussions with the various agencies of the Reich government officially interested in the east. In this document there are contained instructions for the Eastern Ministry itself." (See: *I.M.T.*, *op. cit.*, XXXVIII, pp. 86-94.

⁴⁵ *Aktenvermerk, Fuehrerhauptquartier, 16.VII.41. I.M.T.*, *op. cit.*, XXXVIII, pp. 86-94.

⁴⁶ Greiner, "Draft Entries in the War Diary of Def Br of Wehrmacht Operations (Dec 40-Mar 41)," *op. cit.*, p. 202.

⁴⁷ "Halder's Journal," *op. cit.*, VI, p. 29.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁴⁹ *Aktenvermerk, Fuehrerhauptquartier, 16.VII.41., in I.M.T.*, *op. cit.* XXXVIII, pp. 86-94.

⁵⁰ "Order concerning martial law in the area of Operation BARBAROSSA and special measures for the troops," *Fuehrer HQ, 13.V.41.*, in "Fuehrer Directives," *op. cit.*, I, pp. 173-74.

eliminated as guerrillas not later than at the transit prisoner of war camps. This was the well-known "Commissar Order."⁵¹

Preparation for the Economic Exploitation

Germany's ultimate objectives in the attack on the Soviet Union were primarily of an economic nature. The campaign was intended to introduce the vast food resources of Russia into the European economy and make Russian raw materials available for the Four-Year Plan.⁵² With the USSR's "boundless riches under her control," as Hitler put it, Germany would be "unassailable" and would control the necessary potential for waging "future wars against continents."⁵³

The systematic economic exploitation, such as the Germans planned, had three basically different aspects: exploitation with the aim of supporting the troops in the field; exploitation in terms of obtaining raw materials and food stuffs for Germany proper; and lastly the permanent control and exploitation of all economic production in Russia within the framework of a European market under German hegemony.

Goering, as plenipotentiary of the Four-Year Plan, was given jurisdiction over the whole program and empowered to issue all orders concerning it, even to the Wehrmacht.⁵⁴ He in turn delegated this authority to the Policy Directorate of the Economic Staff East (*Wirtschaftsfuehrungsstab Ost*) headed by the chief of the Armed Forces Economic Office, General der Infanterie Georg Thomas.⁵⁵

In Russia itself, control was to be vested in Economic Staff Oldenburg for Special Duties (*Wirtschaftsstab z. b. V. Oldenburg*) under the command of Generalmajor Schubert. Staff Oldenburg was to exercise its command and administrative functions through five economic inspec-

⁵¹ See: *Abt. Landesverteidigung (IV/Uq) F. H. Qu., den 12.V.41., Betr.; Behandlung gefangener politischer und milit. russischer Funktionare in I.M.T., op. cit., XXVI, pp. 406-08; OKH/Az. Gen zbV ObdH (Gr R Wes), Nr. 91/41g. Kdos. Chefs., 8.VI.41. in Fr Heere Ost, Chefsachen Band I. H 3/1.*

⁵² *Wirtschaftspolitische Richtlinien fuer Wirtschaftsorganisation Ost, Gruppe Landwirtschaft, Wirtschaftsstab Ost, Gruppe La, 23.V.41. in I.M.T., op. cit., XXXVI, pp. 135-57; see also: Vortragsnotiz uber Vierjahresplan und Vorbereitung der Kriegswirtschaft, Abt. Landesverteidigung 3.XII.36. in ibid., pp. 478-80.* The Four-Year Plan was set up in 1936 with Hermann Goering as plenipotentiary to "Within four years . . . put the entire economy in a state of readiness for war," and in peacetime to safeguard ". . . the independent basis of the life and economy of the German people," i. e., to make Germany self-sufficient in such strategic war materials as gasoline, rubber, and steel.

⁵³ Greiner, "Operation BARBAROSSA," *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁵⁴ Hitler Decree "concerning the Economy in the Newly Occupied Eastern Territories," 20 May 41, in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* (Washington, 1948), III, p. 832.

⁵⁵ *Unterabschnitt Ostpreussen I, IV Wi, "Der IV Wi des AOK," 12.VI.41., in KTB.2, Korueck 584. 35615/2; Besprechung mit den Wehrmachtteilen am Dienstag, den 29.IV.41. in I.M.T., op. cit., XXVII, pp. 32-38.*

torates, one of which was assigned to each army group rear area, one for the Caucasus, and the fifth held in reserve. In the army rear areas, a liaison officer of the industrial armament office was to be attached to each of the army commands. For his work in the combat zone this liaison officer was to have technical battalions and reconnaissance and recovery units for raw materials, agricultural machinery, and production facilities. In the army rear areas he was to work through economic specialists in the subordinate commands, supplying the troop units from the country and preparing for the general exploitation to follow.⁵⁶

Such an exploitation was nothing new. Following the defeat of the Polish armed forces in the fall of 1939, Goering had ordered that all raw materials, machinery, scrap metals, and the like, which might be of use for the German war economy, be removed from those areas of Poland which were not to be politically incorporated into the Reich. He directed that all industries that were not absolutely necessary for "the meager maintenance of the bare existence of the population" were to be dismantled and transferred to Germany.⁵⁷

Th policy in Russia was to be similar but more drastic. German needs were to be satisfied without any consideration for the native population. The minimum aim was the provisioning of the Wehrmacht from enemy territory in the third year of the war, and, if necessary, in later years. This was to be attained at any price. Since the grain surplus of Russia was determined not by the size of the crop but by the level of domestic consumption, isolating the grain-producing black soil areas from the less productive regions would place sizeable surpluses at German disposal. Such an isolation would cut off supplies to the entire forest zone, including the industrial centers of Moscow and Leningrad. The people of these areas would naturally face serious distress from famine. If any attempt was made to save them from death by starvation by importing surpluses from the black soil zone it would be at the expense of supplies to Europe, and was unthinkable as it would reduce Germany's staying power in the war and undermine her ability to resist the blockade. This isolation of the forest regions thus was in accord with the political policy, that is, the preservation of the Baltic States, White Russia, the Ukraine, and the Caucasus and the destruction of Great Russia.⁵⁸ Throughout the planning period it was taken for granted that the Wehrmacht would destroy the Red Army. But in connection with

⁵⁶ *Besprechung mit den Wehrmachtteilen am Dienstag, den 29.IV.41. in I.M.T., op. cit., XXVII, pp. 32-38.*

⁵⁷ *Ministerpraesident Generalfeldmarschall Goering, Beauftragter fuer den Vierjahresplan, Vorsitzender des Ministerrats fuer die Reichsverteidigung, St. M.Dev. 9547, 19.X.39. in I.M.T., op. cit., XXXVI, pp. 482-83.*

⁵⁸ *Wirtschaftspolitische Richtlinien fuer Wirtschaftsorganisation Ost, in I.M.T. op. cit., XXXVI, pp. 135-57.*

the proposed economic program many of the German leaders expressed concern over the possible negative reaction of the Russian natives to so obvious an exploitation and the effect it might have on the whole war effort.

Ernst von Weizsaecker, State Secretary in the Foreign Office, admitted the inevitability of the military victory, but doubted that it could be turned to account in the face of Slavic passive resistance.⁵⁹ Thomas believed that if the campaign lasted longer than a few months the success of his program would depend among other things on the collaboration of the people with the economic authorities,⁶⁰ while Staff Oldenburg, in much the same vein, estimated that unless the people were won over, a permanent distribution of 250,000 security troops over the occupied territory would be necessary to ensure the accomplishment of the economic mission.⁶¹ Even Rosenberg had his misgivings about the exploitation, fearing the political reaction in Russia when the extent of German economic intentions became known.⁶² But all these forebodings went unheeded.

Propaganda for Russia

Despite the intensive preparation in other fields that had been under way for several months, it was not until June that OKW issued a directive for handling propaganda in Operation *BARBAROSSA*.⁶³ Apparently no great amount of thought had been given the matter, for even this directive was considered neither final nor complete and the choice of permissible propaganda themes was greatly restricted. Many subjects which had been used in previous campaigns, as statements of German intentions, appeals to nationalistic sentiments or ambitions of ethnic minorities, and references to new pro-German national governments, were outlawed. Such themes as were allowed were to be used against both the Red Army and the civilian population.⁶⁴

The greatest emphasis was to be placed on the thesis that the enemies of Germany were not the people of the Soviet Union, but the Jewish-Bolshevist Soviet government and the communist party working for

⁵⁹ Memo, State Sec in German Foreign Office to Reich Foreign Minister, 28 Apr 41, *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941* (Washington, 1948), pp. 333-34.

⁶⁰ Georg Thomas, *Grundlagen fuer eine Geschichte der deutschen Wehr- und Ruestungswirtschaft in I.M.T., op. cit., XXX*, pp. 259-80.

⁶¹ Notes on conf between economic office and Rosenberg Ministry, in *OKW/Abt. Landesverteidigung, Gruppenleiter II, 28.V.41.* OKW/1759.

⁶² Decree of the Fuehrer Concerning the Economy in the Newly Occupied Eastern Territories, 20 May 41, and attached remarks of Rosenberg, in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, op. cit., III*, pp. 832-33.

⁶³ "Directive for Handling Propaganda for Operation *BARBAROSSA*," *OKW/WFSt/WPr, Nr. 144/41 g.Kdos.Chefs., Juni 41*, in "Fuehrer Directives," *op. cit., I*, pp. 180-83.

⁶⁴ For a definitive treatment of propaganda used against Russia, see: John Buchsbaum "German Psychological Warfare on the Russian Front." MS in OCMH.

world revolution. An especial point was to be made that the Wehrmacht was not entering Russia as an enemy of the people, but to free them from Soviet tyranny. Nevertheless, the natives were to have impressed on them that should any part of the non-Bolshevist populace offer resistance of any kind, the German armed forces would be obliged to break it whenever and wherever it appeared.

The people were to be constantly warned not to participate in the fighting and to remain calm and orderly. They were to have impressed on them the importance of "work as usual" and be made to understand that looting, waste, and destruction of machinery and industrial installations would lead to poverty and famine. For the same reason it was to be announced that the collective farms were not to be broken up and the land distributed immediately, but at some later date. Propaganda was not to lead prematurely to the conclusion that the Soviet Union was to be dissolved.

The expressions "Russia," "Russians," and "Russian armed forces" were to be avoided, and the terms "Soviet Union," "people of the Soviet Union," and "Red Army" used instead.

Wherever it should be found possible to control the press, several large newspapers were to continue to appear under German censorship, especially in the Baltic States and the Ukraine. Similar use was to be made of such radio networks as were captured undamaged. In the use of these media, special emphasis was to be given to policies which would exercise a calming influence on the inhabitants and dissuade them from committing any acts of sabotage. In places where it might be found impossible to control the press, the activities of information bureaus were to be suppressed entirely.⁶⁵

Just where this negative approach originated is unknown. The evidence points to Hitler himself as the author, or at least the inner Nazi Party circle.⁶⁶ In publishing the directive the Wehrmacht Propaganda Division, which was strictly an operating and not a policy-making body, was merely passing on to subordinate propaganda commands instructions it had received from above. For the execution of this directive, one propaganda company of five platoons was assigned to each field army. Of the platoons, only one was actually to engage in propaganda operations, three being allotted respectively to newspaper, film, and radio reporting for German consumption, and the fifth being a service unit.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ "Directive for Handling Propaganda for Operation BARBAROSSA," *op. cit.*

⁶⁶ See *Aktenvermerk, Fuehrerhauptquartier 16.VII.41*, in *I.M.T.*, *op. cit.*, XXX-VIII, pp. 86-94; ltr, Lammers (on behalf of Hitler) to Keitel, 20 May 41, in Buchsbaum, *op. cit.*; memo on Briefing of the Chiefs of Staff of Rear Area Commands, 11 June 41, in Buchsbaum, *op. cit.*

⁶⁷ Buchsbaum, *op. cit.*, ch. IV, pp. 17-18.

Invasion Planning

The German Lineup

Under the German plan of operations, the immediate task of the Army was the destruction of the Red Army in the western border zones of the USSR by means of deep penetrations and encirclements by armored spearheads. Special emphasis was to be placed on the prevention of a strategic retreat into the void of the Russian land mass where space might be traded for time and German communications stretched to the breaking point. The final aim of the entire operation was the erection of a barrier against the infinity of Asiatic Russia along the Archangel-Astrakhan line.

The attack was to be launched by three army groups simultaneously, two to the north and one to the south of the Pripyat Marshes, with the main effort in the north. *Army Group Center*, under the command of Generalfeldmarschall Fedor von Bock was to move directly eastward and encircle and destroy the enemy forces in White Russia. This would cover the right flank of *Army Group North* and enable it to advance swiftly to the north to capture Leningrad and free the Baltic States coast to the German navy. Once the Baltics were secure, and his left flank thus anchored, he was to throw the entire weight of his armies at Moscow. His force for this task consisted of the *Second Panzer Group* (Generaloberst Heinz Guderian), the *Third Panzer Group* (Generaloberst Hans Hoth), the *Fourth Army* (Generaloberst Guenther von Kluge), and the *Ninth Army* (Generaloberst Adolf Strauss), the whole totaling 48 divisions of which 9 were armored and 7 motorized.⁶⁸

The assault was to be spearheaded by the two panzer groups attacking from points some 120 miles apart in a series of gigantic double envelopments, the *Third Panzer Group* on the extreme left and the *Second Panzer Group* to the south in the vicinity of Brest-Litovsk. The infantry was to push forward all along the line and reduce the tank-encircled pockets.

Opposing *Army Group Center* was Timoshenko's West Front,⁶⁹ comprised of the Second, Third, Tenth, and Twelfth Armies, made up of some 45 rifle and 2 armored divisions.

Poised in East Prussia for the thrust through the Baltics to Leningrad was Generalfeldmarschall Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb's *Army Group North*, made up of the *Fourth Panzer Group* (Generaloberst Erich Hoepfner), the *Sixteenth Army* (Generaloberst Ernst Busch), and the *Eighteenth Army* (Generaloberst Georg von Kuechler), totaling 27 divi-

⁶⁸ All figures for the German order of battle at the beginning of the campaign are taken from DA Pam 20-261a, *The German Campaign in Russia, Planning and Operations (1940-1942)*.

⁶⁹ In the Red Army a "front" corresponded roughly to a German army group.

sions, of which 3 were armored and 3 motorized. Despite the obvious fact that the Baltic topography would channelize Von Leeb's movement and throw his armor along but a few avenues of advance, the attack was expected to roll rapidly.

Von Leeb planned to attack with his *Fourth Panzer Group* in the center generally along the line Vilna-Dvinsk-Pskov-Luga-Leningrad with the *Sixteenth Army* covering his right flank and the *Eighteenth Army* on the left where it was to clear the coastal regions and occupy the Baltic ports.

Facing him were the Eighth and Eleventh Armies of Marshal Voroshilov's Northwest Front consisting of an estimated 32 divisions, of which at least 2 were armored.

To the south of the Pripyat barrier was *Army Group South*, commanded by the dean of the German officer corps, Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt. Von Rundstedt's task, a secondary one, was to roll up and destroy the southern Russian armies along the course of the Dnepr River with a force consisting of the *First Panzer Group* (Generaloberst Ewald von Kleist), the *Sixth Army* (Generaloberst Walther von Reichenau), the *Seventeenth Army* (General der Infanterie Henrich von Stuelpnagel), and the *Eleventh Army* (Generaloberst Eugen Ritter von Schobert), the latter including the *Third Romanian Army* under General Ion Antonescu. The force totaled 40 German divisions, of which 5 were armored and 3 motorized, and 14 Romanian divisions.

Von Rundstedt planned to make his main effort on the left of the line with the *Sixth* and *Seventeenth Armies*, holding back the panzers until the infantry had breached the immediate border defenses. Assembling on the Romanian border, the *Eleventh Army*, separated from the remainder of the army group by a 150 mile stretch of the Carpathian Mountains, was not expected to be ready to move before the beginning of July.

Facing Von Rundstedt were the four armies of Marshal Budenny's Southwest Front, the Fifth, Sixth, Twelfth, and Second, from north to south, estimated at a strength of 64 rifle divisions and the equivalent of 5 armored divisions.

In OKH reserve was the *Second Army* (Generaloberst Maximilian Freiherr von Weichs) consisting of seven infantry divisions, later to be added to von Bock's forces. The attack was to be supported by the tactical aircraft of three air forces, one for each army group.

Minor operations were to be undertaken in Finland by *Army, Norway* under the command of Generaloberst Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, and the *Finnish Army* commanded by Field Marshal Carl Gustaf Emil von Mannerheim. These two forces comprised a total of 16 divisions, 13 Finnish, and 3 German, plus one German brigade.

PART TWO

1941-1942: THE PERIOD OF GERMAN ADVANCES

CHAPTER 3

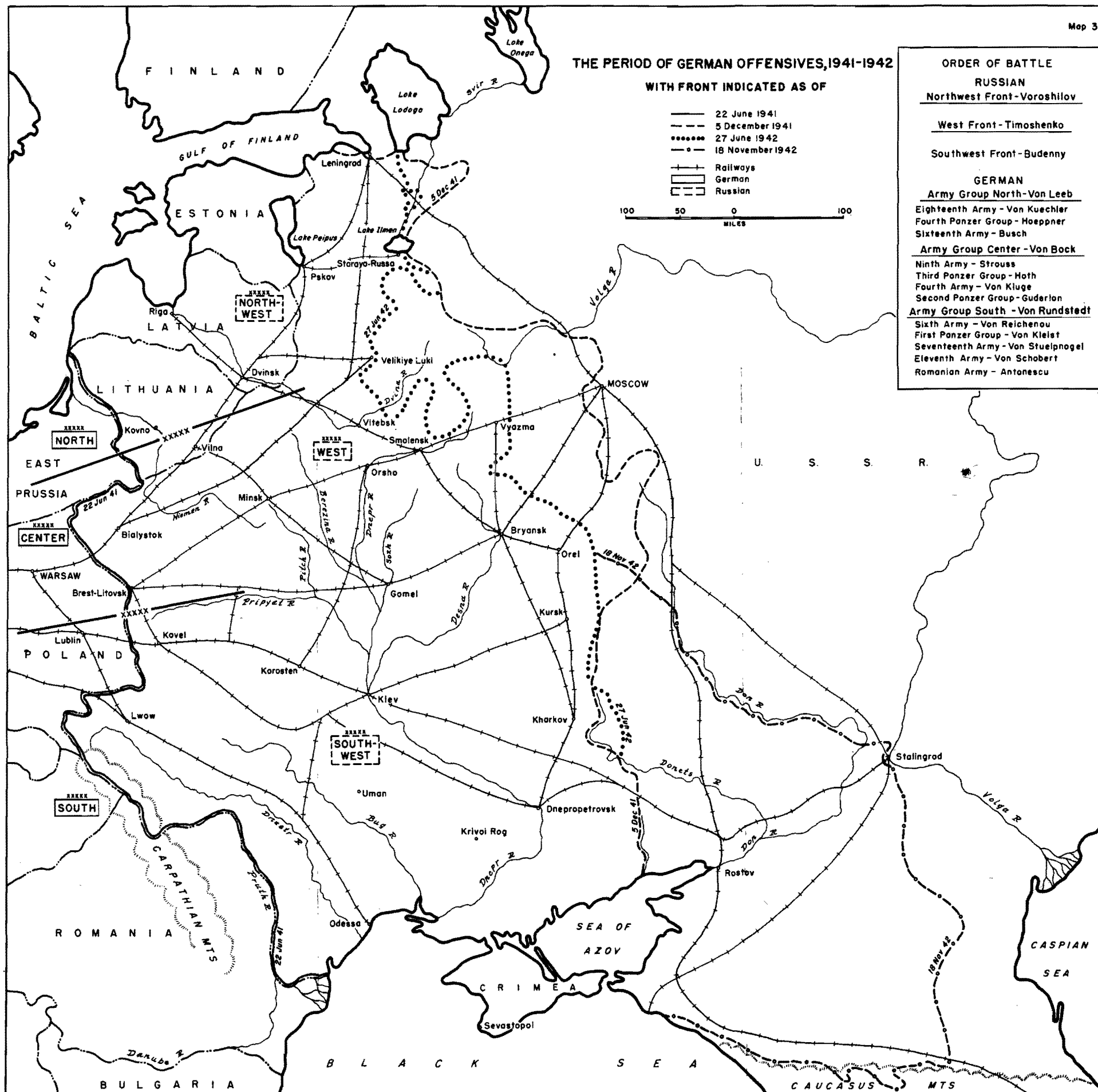
GERMAN OPERATIONS TO THE STALINGRAD DEBACLE ¹

The Attack Through White Russia

The general assault was mounted on 22 June 1941. In the pre-dawn hours Von Bock launched his attack from two points near the center of the front, the *Fourth Army* attacking on the right and the *Ninth Army* on the left. Tactical surprise was almost complete. Bridges in the Brest-Litovsk area were seized intact and crossings further north were quickly established in the face of slight opposition. The infantry, moving through the only partially manned border defenses, rapidly opened holes through which the armored and motorized units of the *Second* and *Third Panzer Groups* could start their operations. Their immediate task was to close a gigantic pair of pincers on Minsk in order to trap both the Russian forces along the frontier and the reserve units hastily committed to stem the assault, while the infantry at the same time enveloped a large Russian concentration about Bialystok. Both moved rapidly and by the 24th was less than 30 miles from his goal, while Guderian drove more slowly eastward along the Warsaw-Minsk highway, repeatedly checked by local counterattacks. On the 29th the two linked up beyond Minsk, but, constantly harassed by attacks in their rear and on their inner flanks and lacking the mass of the more slowly moving infantry, they were unable to completely close the gap before large numbers of Russians managed to escape to the east.

In the first 10 days the tank units of *Army Group Center* moved some 190 miles into Russian territory but still were unable to achieve complete operational freedom. Strong opposition was encountered on all sides: the enemy units caught in the pincer movement were wildly attempting to break out in all directions. Minsk fell on 30 June, but the inner pocket was not completely reduced until 10 July. During the three-week period, 323,000 prisoners were reported captured and 3,000 tanks and 1,800 guns taken or destroyed.

¹ For a detailed account of German operations in Russia in 1941-42, see DA Pam 20-261a, *The German Campaign in Russia, Planning and Operations (1940-1942)*.



Map 3. Period of German Offensives, 1941-1942.

Following the fall of Minsk units were quickly regrouped for the drive to the next important objective, the "dry route" to Moscow between the headwaters of the Dvina and Dnepr Rivers through the triangle Vitebsk-Orsha-Smolensk. On 3 July Von Kluge with his *Fourth Army* headquarters, redesignated the *Fourth Panzer Army*, took over command of both panzer groups, his infantry divisions going to *Second Army*, which had moved up from OKH reserve to carry on the mopping up west of Minsk in conjunction with the *Ninth Army*. On the same day Hoth and Guderian resumed the attack, making good progress against stiff opposition. By 16 July the latter reached Smolensk. Hoth meanwhile reached out east of Vitebsk and cut to the north to pinch off the enemy forces still in the west against the swamps south of Lake Ilmen. Heavily counterattacked day after day along their extended communication lines and on their exposed flanks, both groups soon found that the supply lag and the need for rest and rehabilitation of troops and materiel precluded a continued eastward movement. Any further thrust toward Moscow had to be postponed until the infantry could move up to stabilize the rear and liquidate the huge pocket formed west of Smolensk. Again enemy attempts to break out were aggressively executed, and it was not until 10 August that the trap was completely sprung with the capture of 310,000 prisoners and 3,200 tanks. Even with such a bag the Germans were unable to prevent an almost wholesale escape of thousands of others. By the middle of August the Smolensk operation was complete.

The Drive to Leningrad

Meanwhile *Army Group North* moved north through the Baltic States at the same fast pace. Kovno fell to the *Fourth Panzer Group* on 23 June with little opposition and Dvinsk on the Dvina River was occupied by noon on the 26th. The infantry elements of the *Sixteenth* and *Eighteenth Armies*, on the right and left respectively, maintained the swift pace, Liepaja falling to the *291st Division* on the 27th and advance elements of the *61st Division* entering Riga on the 30th.

On 2 July Hoepfner renewed his attack out of the Dvina bridgeheads, and on the first day advanced elements of his command halfway to Pskov. Ostrov, thirty miles below Pskov, was reached two days later with armored units fanning out to the right to occupy the exposed flank between Velikiye Luki and Lake Ilmen. Von Kuechler's *Eighteenth Army* moved north to clear Estonia, and Busch drove hard on the right flank to relieve the panzers there and free them for further offensive action in the center.

The drive was continued, but by the middle of the month the panzers had been perceptibly slowed down by a combination of bad roads, diffi-

cult terrain, and increasing pressure from the right and direct front. During the next six weeks their gains were modest: they were canalized by Lakes Ilmen and Peipus to routes through swamps and deep forests heavily defended by the enemy. The *Eighteenth Army*, moving more surely against lighter opposition, reached the Gulf of Finland on 9 August and swung eastward toward Leningrad, leaving one corps to mop up the coastal areas. The progress in the center continued to be slow, both terrain and strong enemy resistance preventing any clean breakaway. This drive was considerably strengthened when one armored and two motorized divisions were shifted to it from *Army Group Center*, and by 1 September the spearhead stood within 20 miles of Lake Ladoga. Continued attacks on the ring of defenses around Leningrad counted for little gain, even with the *Eighteenth Army* moving over from Estonia and joining in the assault. Finally, with the capture of Shlisselburg, a fortress on Lake Ladoga, the isolation of the old Tsarist capital was complete, and a stalemate set in. By 21 September most of the armor was out of the area and the *Eighteenth Army* took over the siege zone.

Clearing the Dnepr Bend

Concurrently with the twin attacks of Von Leeb and Von Bock further to the north, Von Rundstedt struck across the border with the panzer group and two of the three armies which comprised his *Army Group South*.

As elsewhere along the line, almost complete tactical surprise was achieved, and by noon the border areas had been sufficiently cleared for Von Kleist to move out his *First Panzer Group* to the attack. Given an opening and protected on both flanks by Von Reichenau's *Sixth Army*, the panzers thrust rapidly forward, reaching the Styr River on 24 June and taking Dubno the following day. But on the 26th strong armored counterattacks developed on their right flank and progress was slowed. Such gains as were made, however, threatened the Soviet forces holding up Von Stuelpnagel's *Seventeenth Army* and made untenable their salient in the vicinity of Przemyśl, forcing them to withdraw. Thus freed of opposition the *Seventeenth Army* drove to Lwow by the 27th and occupied the city three days later.

To the south of the Carpathian barrier, Von Schobert attacked across the Pruth River with his *Eleventh Army* on 2 July. The attack made slow progress, the Russians fighting stubborn rear guard actions as they fell back, and the Dnestr River was reached only on the 15th. On the right of Von Schobert the Romanian Army began to move forward as the Soviets evacuated Bessarabia.

The main effort continued with Von Kleist's armor still in the van, the *Seventeenth Army* to the south moving more slowly on a broad front.

By 11 July one panzer unit had reached the outer defenses of Kiev, but violent tank-led counterattacks from both north and south in the vicinity of Zhitomir and Berdichev, the twin cities that controlled the western approaches to the Ukrainian capital, brought forward movement to a halt and inflicted heavy casualties on several of the armored divisions. Meanwhile, the *Seventeenth Army*, moving deliberately, was pulling up on the right.

During the first three weeks of the campaign Von Rundstedt pushed steadily to the east, but had scored no gains comparable to those of Von Bock in the center. Kept off balance by Budenny's counterblows, he had been unable to encircle any large groups of the enemy or prevent large-scale withdrawals to the Dnepr. From a strategic point of view, Budenny's fighting retreat was a success, for it provided the time necessary for withdrawing much of the Ukrainian industry to the east.

By 16 July Von Kleist had eliminated the opposition about Zhitomir and Berdichev and began a series of moves designed to place his armor behind the Reds being slowly forced back by the *Seventeenth* and *Eleventh Armies*. Despite heavy pressure from the north which virtually tied down the *Sixth Army* in the Kiev-Korosten area and the appearance of fresh enemy units on his immediate left flank which at times occupied the attention of an entire armored corps, Von Kleist swung all of his available units to the south and drove hard on Pervomaysk and Uman to trap the Russians against the eastward-moving infantry. By 3 August the trap was sprung on a number of Red divisions, although others were able to make good their escape to the east.

The Pervomaysk-Uman pocket was reduced and by 7 August the line of the Bug River secured. The tank units then drove on toward Kirovo and Krivoi Rog—the iron ore center of European Russia—and occupied the latter on the 14th. Meanwhile the Romanians had reached Odessa and were preparing an assault. Two days later the Soviet forces were in retreat along the whole southern front, and on the 17th Von Rundstedt moved to clear the entire western bank of the Dnepr. The Russian salient around Kiev held fast, but the Soviet Fifth Army, which had battered so hard against the northern flank of the army group at Korosten, withdrew across the river followed by Von Reichenau who forced a crossing above Kiev on the 25th. The same day Von Kleist secured a bridgehead at Dnepropetrovsk, and on the 30th the *Eleventh Army* was over the river at Kherson. Two days later the *Seventeenth Army* established another bridgehead east of Kremenchug. Thus by 1 September *Army Group South* had cleared the right bank of the Dnepr with the exception of the Ukrainian capital and had established bridgeheads for each of its armies out of which to resume the offensive. In the far south the Romanians had launched their assault on Odessa, but with little immediate success.

In two months time the Germans had advanced some 400 miles into the Soviet Union and had reached the line generally Leningrad-Smolensk-Dnepr River. The first phase of operations was ended, and Moscow lay only 180 miles further on. Although the Germans had exacted a terrific toll of their enemies, they had not destroyed the Red Army and their own casualties had been high. By 11 August OKH had committed the last of the German reserves, and had identified 360 Red divisions as against an expected 200; by 13 August German casualties totaled 389,984 m killed, wounded, and missing; and by 24 August German infantry divisions had declined in strength an average of 40 percent, and armored units 50 percent.²

The Diversion to the South

During July Hitler had begun to vacillate as to the ultimate direction of his major effort. Because of the development of strong pressure on both flanks of *Army Group Center*, the adverse supply conditions, and the need of the armored formations for rehabilitation, on 30 July he ordered Von Bock to halt all forward movement and shift to the defensive.³ This order was reiterated on 12 August. Finally on the 21st, and against the advice of both the troop leaders and the army high command, he shifted the emphasis of the campaign from Moscow and redirected it toward the Donets Basin and the Caucasus with the focus on *Army Group South*. Von Bock was ordered to assign Von Rundstedt such of his forces as were necessary to enable the latter to trap the Russians in the Kiev sector and gain a secure foothold east of the middle section of the Dnepr River. Moscow was to wait.⁴

In accordance with these orders, Von Weichs and Guderian pivoted their commands to the southeast and pushed toward Kiev. Despite violent counterattacks on his exposed left flank, Guderian made good progress and by 11 September was through Konotop to Romny, with the *Second Army* moving steadily on his inner flank and closing on Nezhin in conjunction with the *Sixth Army*. The German plan called for Von Kleist to strike northward out of the Seventeenth Army's Kremenchug bridgehead for a junction with Guderian on the Sula River, and the two to make a joint attack on the Kiev salient with an inverted front. The *Seventeenth Army*, after enlarging its bridgehead, was to strike to the northeast to secure the flank and rear of the enveloping forces. Although heavy enemy counterattacks and poor weather slowed the *First Panzer Group*, by 10 September German pressure on the Reds pinned against the Dnepr had begun to tell and resistance became in-

² "Halder's Journal," *op. cit.*, pp. 36, 63, 74.

³ Directive No. 34, OKW/WFSt/Abt. L. (I Op.), Nr. 441298/41, g. K. Chefs., 30.VIII.41., in "Fuehrer Directives," *op. cit.*

⁴ Dir, Hitler to Von Brauchitsch, 21 Aug 41, in *ibid.*

creasingly disorganized. On the 14th the two armored units linked up near Lubny. By the 16th the ring was tightly sealed and at 1200 on the 19th the Swastika was raised over the citadel of Kiev. The Germans claimed 665,000 prisoners, 3,718 guns, and 886 tanks captured or destroyed. The armies of Budenny's Southwest Front were destroyed for all intents and purposes, and for the time being the Soviet marshal was left without an effective fighting force.

Von Rundstedt's Fall Offensive

With the springing of the trap on the Kiev salient, Von Kleist reversed his field and moved southward, while Guderian quickly regrouped his units and turned back to join *Army Group Center* in its renewed offensive toward Moscow. Moving rapidly, Von Kleist took the still tenaciously contested Dnepropetrovsk bridgehead in reverse and then pushed on to the south and southeast toward the Sea of Azov and the city of Rostov at the mouth of the Don River, the gateway to the Caucasus.

As a result of the Kiev disaster, Budenny had been relieved of his command and replaced by Timoshenko, Zhukov taking over the West Front defending before Moscow. Under the new commander the remaining units of the shattered Southwest Front conducted a general withdrawal toward the Don River north of Kharkov, though remaining in the city itself.

The Sixth Army in the meantime, having completed the liquidation of the Kiev pocket during the last days of September, began to move eastward as left flank cover for the *Seventeenth Army* which had made slow progress in its push to the east from the Kremenchug crossing. As early as 19 September the infantry units had taken Poltava, where Charles XII of Sweden had been defeated by Peter the Great in 1709, but the fall rains and resultant bottomless roads held them to insignificant gains beyond. With the advent of better weather and with Von Reichenau's pulling up on the left, Von Stuelpnagel bypassed Kharkov to the south, leaving his colleague to invest the city, and joined Von Kleist's panzers in the advance into the Don Basin. Kharkov fell to the *Sixth Army* on 24 October; the *First Panzer Group* crossed the Mius River and reached the outskirts of Rostov by the beginning of November; and the *Seventeenth Army* meanwhile had pushed slowly into the Don bend.

The Eleventh Army in the meantime moved out of its Dnepr crossing at Kherson, drove toward the Crimea, and on 14 September reached Perekop at the head of the isthmus that joined the peninsula to the mainland. Resistance on the narrow neck of land was bitter, and it was not until 29 October that Von Manstein⁵ was able to storm the last of the defenses and break free, capturing Simferopol, the capital, two days

⁵ Generalleutnant Fritz-Erich von Manstein had replaced Von Schobert who was killed in a plane crash on 12 Sep.

later. Odessa, having withstood the Romanian assault, was finally evacuated by the Russians on 16 October.

The Crimea had a special strategic importance in that the possessor of its air fields could effectively dominate the maritime trade routes of the Black Sea as well as easily reach the vital Ploesti oil fields in Romania. With the capture of Simferopol, the Soviets withdrew within the fortress of Sevastopol and into the Kerch Peninsula, but returned in two large sea-borne raids, on 26 and 29 December 1941 respectively, which so occupied Von Manstein that he was unable to mount an assault on the great Russian fortress until the following May.

Advance elements of the *First Panzer Group* entered Rostov on 23 November, but it was an exhausted army that stood at the mouth of the Don. Men and machines alike were worn with fighting both a stubborn enemy and the autumn mud and rain. A week later the Soviets viciously counterattacked on the exposed left flank, and the sagging columns were forced back to the line of the Mius River, some 60 miles to the west, despite Hitler's orders not to retreat one step. (This was the order which caused Von Rundstedt to ask to be relieved.) Thus the year ended in the south, and although operations closed on a note of defeat, the Ukraine with its grain fields and the Don Basin with its industry lay within the German perimeter.

The Battle for Moscow

On 6 September Hitler, apparently emboldened by the prospect of Budenny's destruction in the "biggest battle in world history" and believing that as a result *Army Group South* would be able to proceed with its drive to the Caucasus unaided, reversed his decision of 21 August and revived the original OKH blueprint for the main effort toward Moscow, at the same time ordering Von Weichs and Guderian back to *Army Group Center* control as soon as the situation behind Kiev would permit.⁶ The plan was to trap and crush Zhukov's West Front before the Soviet capital by means of another double envelopment converging on Vyazma with strong supporting task forces on the flanks. The *Third Panzer Group* and the *Ninth Army* were to form the northern pincer arm, with the *Fourth Panzer Group* (to be released from *Army Group North*) and the *Fourth Army* comprising the southern half of the ring. After the completion of this "operation of annihilation" the army group was to attack Moscow along a front bounded by the Oka River on the right and the upper Volga on the left. It was further provided that Guderian's *Second Panzer Group*, when released from the Kiev encirclement, would swing northward along the Orel-Tula axis and join

⁶ Notes on Fuehrer conf, 5 Sep 41, in "Halder's Journal," *op. cit.*, VII, p. 84; Directive No. 35, OKW/WFSt/Abt. L. (I Op.), Nr. 441492/41, g. kdos, Chefs., 6.IX.41., in "Fuehrer Directives," *op. cit.*

the attack, forming an outer arc of the Vyazma trap.⁷ For this final drive Von Bock had at his disposal 69 divisions, of which 14 were armored and 7 motorized. In general the supply situation was satisfactory. Time was the important element, for the early Russian winter was approaching and the attack had to be launched regardless of other considerations.

This final drive opened on 2 October, and by the end of the second day had broken the resistance along almost the entire front. Meanwhile Guderian had disengaged his units from the Kiev front and before the end of September was pushing hard to the northeast to join the lower jaw of the trap. By the day of the opening of the attack he had gained considerable operational freedom and his advance elements were nearing Orel. On 4 October he was past Orel and driving hard for Tula, his left flank units at the same time aiding the *Second Army* in an envelopment of Bryansk. On the 7th tanks of Hoth and Hoepfner linked up at Vyazma closing the circle, with the *Fourth Army* pushing in sharply to release the armor for operations further to the east. During the next week the ring was tightened and the Germans announced the capture of 600,000 more Russians. Actually the resistance of some of the cut-off Red Army groups was not completely broken until later in the month. Meanwhile the heavy autumn rains and logistical difficulties slowed the advance perceptibly.

Progress from the middle of October until 15 November was slow. Swamps and heavy forests channeled the advance along a few passable roads and a desperate defense along successive lines and behind antitank obstacles and mine fields held the attack to but a few miles a day. By 15 November the *Fourth Army* had passed through Mozhaysk and come to within 40 miles of Moscow where it was halted by the line of the Nara and Oka Rivers. Guderian meanwhile reached the vicinity of Tula.

The final drive on Moscow was to consist of another double envelopment coordinated with a frontal assault by the *Fourth Army*. The *Fourth Panzer Group* supported by elements of the *Third Panzer Group* on its left flank was to form the northern jaw of the trap; Guderian was to comprise the southern arm, attacking from Tula toward Kolomna to come at Moscow from the rear.

The attack was launched on 16 November. Moving slowly because of the intense cold and a stubborn defense, the northern force reached the Moscow-Volga Canal on 25 November where the fighting grew even heavier. On the southern arm Guderian, unable to take Tula, bypassed it to the east and pressed on, though with both flanks exposed. German casualties were very heavy, and deep snows and temperatures as low

⁷ Directive No. 35, *OKW/WFSt/Abt. L. (I Op.)*, Nr. 441492/41, g. *Kdos. Chefs.*, in "Fuehrer Directives," *op. cit.*

as -40° F. punished the troops. The turning point came on 5 December. One element of Hoepfner's *2d Panzer Division* fought to within sight of the Kremlin while an infantry unit drove into the Moscow suburbs. But that same day Von Bock reported his troops at the end of their strength. Three days later the army group was ordered to go over to the defensive, and for the first time in World War II the Wehrmacht was stopped.⁸

The Winter of 1941-42

Despite the German successes of the summer and fall and the staggering losses suffered by the Red Army, this halt definitely shifted the advantage to the Russians. It was a thinned German army which stood on the outskirts of the Soviet capital, at the end of a long and over-worked supply line, hundreds of miles from its bases, and with the last of its reserves long since committed. The Red divisions facing it were operating in familiar terrain close to their bases on interior lines and still had the manpower to give strength to their moves. The Germans were unprepared for the severe weather, while the Russians were acclimated and equipped for winter operations. The morale of the Germans was low; they were exhausted by long months of fighting and haunted by the spectre of Napoleon's retreat.⁹

On 6 December the Soviets struck back. With two armies¹⁰ they launched an attack on the German left flank along the border between *Army Group North* and *Army Group Center* in the vicinity of Kalinin, and with a third drove into the right wing north of Tula. The German line, thin and with no depth, wavered and then slowly gave way. The Soviet pressure was maintained, and then increased, and before the first of the year *Army Group Center* was forced back generally to the line from which it had launched its final offensive late in November.

The Russian counterstroke, for the first time since the start of the war, was supported by an impressive propaganda campaign. The German troops were constantly reminded by leaflet and public address systems of the French campaign of 1812, the deep snow and bitter cold to which they were unaccustomed, the immediate danger of death by freezing far away from the German homeland, the resurrection of Soviet strength, and the turn of the tide of battle, all of which made a strong emotional impression on the German command and, to an even higher degree, on the troops.¹¹

⁸ Directive No. 39, *OKW/WFSt/Abt. L. (I Op.)*, Nr. 442090/41, g. kdos. Chefs., 8.XII.41, in *ibid.*

⁹ See: Liddell Hart, *The German Generals Talk* (New York, 1948), p. 185.

¹⁰ A Russian army approximated a German corps in size.

¹¹ General der Infanterie Guenther Blumentritt, "Strategy and Psychological Warfare," pp. 11-12. Foreign Studies Br, OCMH.

Faced with a virtually impossible situation and influenced "to some extent" by the Russian winter propaganda,¹² Von Bock and Von Kluge requested permission to withdraw behind the Ugra River. At this juncture, Hitler made the pivotal decision of the entire campaign. Against the advice of many of his military leaders who had continually argued in favor of a general withdrawal to a winter line in the rear, he ordered the armies to stand "regardless of enemy breakthroughs at the flanks or in the rear."¹³ Although the move could hardly be called sound militarily, there seems little doubt that it saved this particular situation. "It was his one great achievement," General der Infanterie Kurt von Tippelskirch has stated. "At that critical moment . . . if [the troops] had once begun a retreat, it might have turned into a panic flight,"¹⁴ for there were no prepared positions to withdraw to.

By the middle of January the earlier Russian tactical successes threatened to develop into a strategic disaster for the Germans. Reinforcing their initial assault units, the Soviets continued to press the attack. With two armies they forced a sizeable wedge between the *Second Panzer Army* and the *Fourth Army* in the vicinity of Kaluga, thus menacing army group headquarters at Smolensk; with four others they struck heavily between Rzhev and Kholm along the army group boundary, threatening to cut off *Army Groups Center* and *North* from one another and at the same time wholly envelop Von Kluge's northern flank.¹⁵ The *Fourth Panzer*, *Ninth*, and *Fourth Armies* stood in grave danger of complete encirclement should this drive succeed in reaching to Smolensk.

Too weak to maintain a continuous line, the Germans pulled their units into a series of hedgehog defenses around key communication centers. Despite the deep enemy penetrations and the dropping of a number of Soviet airborne detachments in and behind the German defense sectors, the fiercely held German strong points denied important areas to the Soviets and forced them to spread their offensive strength thin. This had the effect of taking the edge off any enemy gain of strategic value. Several of the hedgehogs were cut off for weeks at a time and could be supplied only by air, but all were held. Thus a

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Hitler Dir, Nr. 442182/41 g.K.Chefs WFSt/Abt. L. (I Op.), 16.XII.41, in "Fuehrer Directives," *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Quoted in Hart, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

¹⁵ Following the defeat at Moscow, Hitler radically shuffled the German command. He dismissed Von Brauchitsch and assumed direct command of the Army itself. Halder was retained as Chief of the General Staff, but his authority was heavily curtailed. In *Army Group North*, Von Kuechler replaced Von Leeb and Von Rundstedt was relieved in command of *Army Group South* by Von Reichenau. The latter died in January and was replaced by Von Bock who had given way to Von Kluge in *Army Group Center*. The commands of the individual armies were likewise radically reshuffled.

disaster was averted, but this "one great achievement" of Hitler's had the ironic effect of exalting his faith in himself and his inelastic defense, and, in so doing, foreshadowed the final denouement.

During the same period heavy attacks were launched against *Army Group North*. The *Eighteenth Army* was forced back of the Volkhov River just south of Lake Ladoga and the line of the *Sixteenth Army* below Lake Ilmen was shattered; the entire *II Corps* was cut off and had to be supplied by air for several months, while the principal lateral communications line between *Army Groups Center* and *North* was completely overrun with the exception of the hedgehog at Kholm.

In the southern sector, the Russians late in January scored a signal success when they broke through between the *Sixth* and *Seventeenth Armies* at Izyum and drove halfway to the Dnepr bridgeheads, threatening to cut off and pin the *First Panzer* and *Seventeenth Armies* against the Black Sea coast. They lacked the reserves to follow up and exploit their gains, however, and were forced to a halt by strong German pressure on the shoulders of the penetration.

By the beginning of March the Soviet offensives had spent themselves, and the coming of the spring thaws brought all activity along the entire front to an end. Both sides began to regroup and prepare for the summer campaign. There was no further change in the line until May.

The German Summer Offensive, 1942

In making the strategic decision on the objectives of his next offensive moves, Hitler veered past intermediate goals. Still convinced that the Soviet nation was tottering, he focused his immediate planning on the basic objectives of the whole Russian venture: the destruction of Soviet manpower and the seizure of a source of food supply and raw materials for the German people and German economy.

Generally the plan called for a stabilized front in the center; a limited offensive in the north to isolate Leningrad; and an all-out drive in the south to destroy the Red Army units in the Don River region, block off the Soviets from the south by cutting the Volga River at Stalingrad, and capture the Caucasian oil fields.¹⁶

Since the manpower shortage precluded a general attack all along the southern front simultaneously, the offensive was to be launched to the east and southeast in a series of strikes unrolling from north to south in such a manner as to make maximum use of all arms at decisive points. It was to open with an assault east of Kursk by the *Second*, *Fourth Panzer*, and *Second Hungarian Armies* to take Voronezh on the Don

¹⁶ Hitler Dir 41, OKW/WFSt Nr. 55615/42 g.K.Chefs., 5.IV.42, in "Fuehrer Directives," *op. cit.*

River. Immediately on achieving this objective, the infantry divisions of the northern arm of the pincer were to set up strong defensive positions on the line Livny-Voronezh to anchor the northern flank of the whole army group. With this wing secure, the armor was to move southward along the right bank of the river in support of the second attack. In this second phase, the *Sixth Army*, now commanded by Generaloberst Friedrich Paulus, was to strike northeast from Kharkov to link up with the *Fourth Panzer Army* along the Don and then swing downriver with it in support of the third phase, which was to be launched eastward from the Mius River line by the *First Panzer* and *Seventeenth Armies*. These latter were to join the units sweeping into the Don bend, with one element swinging to the south to retake Rostov and secure bridgeheads over the lower Don in preparation for the final drive to the Caucasus. The payoff phase was to be the final securing of the long left flank of the army group as a defensive front with the capture of Stalingrad and the rapid overrunning of the whole Caucasus region by the *First Panzer* and *Seventeenth Armies*.¹⁷

On 28 June the *Fourth Panzer* and *Second Armies* opened the offensive, sweeping eastward against light opposition. By 4 July the armor reached the Don at Voronezh and on the 7th established firm contact with the *Sixth Army* which had launched its phase of the attack on the last day of June. Despite this progress, all had not gone according to plan; a stubborn defense at Voronezh delayed the armored units' swinging downriver just long enough for several large Russian forces to evade the trap and escape to the east.

The third phase of the offensive was opened on 9 July with the combined *Fourth Panzer* and *Sixth Armies* pushing down the Don as planned and the *First Panzer* and *Seventeenth Armies* moving out from their Mius River line. Fear of the armor being delayed by a strong defense at Rostov caused a last minute change of plan and the main effort of the *First Panzer Army* was made much further to the north and across the Donets River instead of in the bend closer to Rostov. The *First* and *Fourth Panzer Armies* linked up on the 15th with the former forcing the Donets and closing on Rostov, and the latter driving steadily to the south. As the armor moved into the lower reaches of the river, the Russians withdrew before it, while the *Sixth Army* forged slowly into the Don bend opposite Stalingrad. By the 22nd the *First Panzer Army* reached Rostov, holding four bridgeheads over the Don, and the *Fourth Panzer Army* secured a crossing further to the east.

Meanwhile, on 8 May, Von Manstein opened operations with his *Eleventh Army* to sweep the Crimea as a prerequisite to the drive to the Caucasus. He first turned his attention to the Russians in the eastern end of the peninsula and by 2 June was able to focus his efforts on the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

enemy garrisons in the ancient fortress of Sevastopol. Despite fanatical Soviet resistance from a stronghold that contained 19 modern forts and more than 3,600 pillboxes, he snuffed out all resistance and secured the entire peninsula by 2 July.

Preliminary to a continuation of the offensive into its final phase, *Army Group South* was radically reorganized. Von Bock was relieved and his command split into two new army groups. The force in the northern zone, consisting of the *Second, Hungarian Second, Fourth Panzer*, and *Sixth Armies*, was designated *Army Group B* and placed under the command of Von Weichs. The units in the southern sector, the *First Panzer, Seventeenth*, and *Eleventh Armies*, were grouped into *Army Group A* under Generalfeldmarschall Wilhelm List. Hitler's optimism was at its peak. He was convinced that the campaign was all but over despite the fact that the Russian forces had largely been able to avoid encirclement and that the northern flank along the upper Don was but thinly held, since the satellite divisions that were to man the greater portion of it had not yet had time to move into position. He therefore ordered the attack continued according to plan.

The Drive to the Caucasus

In the drive to the Caucasus, List's mission was threefold. *Army Group A* was first to encircle and destroy the last major enemy forces, which Hitler believed to be south and southeast of Rostov, by a strong armored attack across the Don. For this operation elements of the *Fourth Panzer Army* were attached to his command. Then, with the *Eleventh Army* crossing the Kerch Straits from the Crimea, he was to push to the south, capturing the entire east coast of the Black Sea and the last bases of the Russian Black Sea fleet. The *Seventeenth Army* was to strike across the Kuban River, occupy the Maikop area, and then push across and join the drive down the coast toward Batum. A third force, to be formed mainly of units of the *First Panzer Army*, was to push to the southeast, capture the Grozny oil fields, and then press to the Caspian Sea and down its coast to the Russian oil center at Baku.¹⁸

Army Group B was given the task of establishing the flank defenses along the Don and blocking the Volga by taking Stalingrad and destroying the enemy forces there. Subsequently, fast armored units were to drive down the Volga to Astrakhan.¹⁹

List opened his attack as planned, but the blow that was to destroy the last enemy forces fell on thin air; no coordinated defense of the whole Don area developed, and Rostov was quickly occupied. By 30 July the Soviets were falling back along the line and by 3 August the German

¹⁸ Hitler Dir 45, OKW/WFSt/Op. Nr. 551288/42 g.K. Chefs., 23, VII.42., in *ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

armor was over and beyond the Kuban River. The *Seventeenth Army*, moving behind the panzers, captured the Russian naval base at Novorossiysk on 6 August, while two armored corps rapidly overran the Maikop area and turned southeast behind a third that was driving deep into the Caucasus toward Grozny. Following these successes, however, attempts to force the passes east of Tuapse bogged down in the face of stiff resistance, and the armored units, after a dash all the way to the Terek River, were halted by fuel shortage.

Stalingrad and the Soviet Counterblow

Army Group B was meanwhile making slow progress toward Stalingrad. The *Sixth Army* had moved well into the Don bend, but due to logistical difficulties and the fact that the *Fourth Panzer Army*, which had reverted to Von Weichs, had been forced over to the defensive by a shortage of fuel, no all-out assault had been mounted on the city. By 11 August, however, Paulus had eliminated all of the enemy west of the river with the exception of two small bridgeheads. Then on 23 August he made a surprise crossing and drove a mechanized unit clear to the Volga.

As black as the situation looked for the Soviets, with all of the Don Basin industry, the rich wheat lands of the Kuban area, and the Maikop oil fields in enemy hands, the German position from a tactical standpoint, was far from favorable. *Army Groups A* and *B* together held a front some 1500 miles long and were separated by over 400 miles of territory undefended except for occasional patrols. Their left flank, more than 360 miles in length, was for the most part held by satellite divisions of questionable quality. Each army group was supplied by but one medium capacity rail line. And the autumn rains were fast approaching. To make matters worse, List had asked to be relieved as a result of violent disagreements with OKW over what he considered to be impossible demands made of his command. (Halder was dismissed at this time as the result of a difference of opinion with Hitler as to the feasibility of continuing the offensive.)²⁰

With a restoration of *Army Group B's* supply situation the attack moved on again. The *Sixth Army* exploited its penetration to the Volga and closed directly on Stalingrad, while the *Fourth Panzer Army* attacked from the south. When the Russians were forced to retreat before the German push, they dropped back and joined the defenders of the city, where a new Soviet command, the Stalingrad Front, had been formed to hold the city at all costs. The nearer the German divisions came to the city, the more it seemed to grow in importance in Hitler's

²⁰ Halder was replaced on 22 Sep by Gen Kurt Zeitzler. Von Kleist took command *Army Group A* on 10 Sep.

eyes, and as the defense rose to fanatical heights he became obsessed with its capture. The mere name of the place—"the city of Stalin"—became a challenge as it were. He seemed to believe the fate of the whole war would be decided there,²¹ and all other considerations of the campaign seemed to wane in comparison. The assault devolved into a dull process of battering at block after block of houses and factories. It was an exhausting struggle for both attacker and defender, and as early as 20 September the German troops were beginning to show signs of the strain.²² Casualties grew increasingly heavy on both sides. As the battle progressed, more and more German divisions were drawn from the defensive flanks and thrown into the fight, replaced by new satellite units. By mid-October the Germans were near the heart of the city, barely a half mile from the Volga. But troop morale had degenerated in the face of heavy losses and a growing sense of frustration, and discouragement grew even among the commanders. Still Hitler drove them on.

During October and November Paulus reported growing Soviet concentrations on his northern flank and suggested withdrawal to a winter line in the rear. Hitler saw these reports and seemed to expect some sort of a Russian counter.²³ Still he insisted on continuing the offensive, and persisted in weakening the flanks by withdrawal of German units for commitment in the Stalingrad cauldron. On 19 November the storm broke.

All during the fall the Soviets had been preparing their counterstroke. Under security measures, which proved highly successful in deceiving the Germans as to his true strength, General Zhukov had built up and placed two strong army groups northwest and south of Stalingrad opposite the satellite units. Three armored and three cavalry corps of Rokossovski's Don Front on 19 November broke out of the Serafimovich bridgehead—one of those which the Germans curiously enough had never tried to reduce. The next day, two armored and one cavalry corps of Yeremenko's Stalingrad Front penetrated the defensive positions south of Stalingrad. Both breakthroughs were quickly exploited and on the 23d the two forces linked up west of Stalingrad at Kalach on the Don. The headquarters of the *Fourth Panzer Army* and several of the Romanian divisions escaped, but the *Sixth Army* was firmly entrapped with the enemy in position to attack from all sides.

The German position was desperate. Von Manstein was hurriedly brought in from *Army Group North*, where he had been sent to direct

²¹ See "Halder's Journal," *op. cit.*, VII, p. 363.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 396.

²³ See: Helmuth Greiner, "Notes on the Situation Reports and Discussions at Hitler's Headquarters from 12 August 1942 to 17 March 1943" (MS C-0652, Hist Div. EUCOM), entries 16 Oct-18 Nov 42. Foreign Studies Br, OCMH.

a projected assault on Leningrad, and given a newly formed task force designated *Army Group Don* with the specific mission of breaking through and relieving Paulus. With the Romanian divisions that had escaped the trap and five armored and motorized divisions hastily brought from as far away as France he attacked toward Stalingrad along the Kotelnikov-Stalingrad axis. But the Soviet armies were too well in command of the situation and the attempt fell short. The *Sixth Army* with its 250,000 men was doomed.

Although Hitler had ordered Paulus to hold at all costs, he saw the folly of attempting to remain in the Caucasus. Accordingly he ordered Von Kleist to withdraw the *Seventeenth Army* to the Crimea and the *First Panzer Army* to the Ukraine through Rostov. With Von Manstein fighting desperately to hold open an escape gap for Von Kleist at the mouth of the Don and with Paulus hanging on to a steadily diminishing perimeter in the face of tremendous pressure, the withdrawal was successfully completed. Only on 2 February when the evacuation through Rostov had been completed did Paulus capitulate.