

THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC
AND MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS

by

GEORGE W. HOFMANN

A. B. Kansas State University, 1959
B. S. Kansas State University, 1959

A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History, Political Science
and Philosophy

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1961

L D
2668
T 4
1961
H 65
C-2
Document

PREFACE

The battle of Stalingrad will be long remembered as one of the greatest military disasters in history. Not only was it a military catastrophe, but it was also significant in political and economic implications. The purpose of this study to examine and relate the initial planning and strategy of the German attack upon the Soviet Union in 1941, and the series of steps that led to a concentration of effort in the Ukraine and the Caucasus and from there to the catastrophe at Stalingrad. Many myths, charges and countercharges have arisen from the chaos at Stalingrad, prompted by persons involved who have attempted to justify their positions. It will be fundamental with this examination to present all sides of the story, including much of the Soviet version which is perhaps the most reliable account. This is true because the Soviets had nothing to hide and only a great victory to report to the world.

I am deeply indebted to Miss Mary Roberts of the Documents Division of the Kansas State Library for her help in locating and obtaining through inter-library loan the many sources consulted, and to Dr. D. F. Munro of the Department of Modern Languages who translated the German and French sources for me. Appreciation is also extended to the military library of the U. S. Army Intelligence and Military Police School, Europe for the location of Russian sources. I also wish to acknowledge my gratitude to Dr. Werner Barth for his patient understanding and guidance in the preparation of this thesis.

The following transliteration table of Russian to English characters is that adopted in transliterating the Russian words used in this thesis. It is the approved system of the Russian Department of the U. S. Army Intelligence and Military Police School, Europe, inasmuch as it more accurately depicts the true sound of the Russian characters after their transferral to the English alphabet.

А а	Aa	Р р	Rr
Б б	Bb	С с	Ss
В в	Vv	Т т	Tt
Г г	Gg	У у	Uu
Д д	Dd	Ф ф	Ff
Е е	Ee	Х х	Hh
Ж ж	Zh zh	Ц ц	Ts ts
З з	Zz	Ч ч	Ch ch
И и	Ii	Ш ш	Sh sh
- Й	-i	Щ щ	Sheh sheh
К к	Kk	- Ъ	-'
Л л	Ll	Ы ы	Yy
М м	Mm	- Ы	-'
Н н	Nn	Э э	Ee
О о	Oo	Ю ю	Yu yu
П п	Pp	Я я	Ya ya

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	ii
Chapter	
I. INITIAL PLANNING, OBJECTIVES AND CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION	1
II. THE ASSAULT ON STALINGRAD	26
III. THE DEFENSE AND FALL OF STALINGRAD	47
IV. PROBLEMS OF THE UKRAINIAN CAMPAIGN	73
V. THE AFTERMATH	98
APPENDIX A	107
APPENDIX B	108
APPENDIX C	110
APPENDIX D	113
APPENDIX E	114
APPENDIX F	116
APPENDIX G	119
APPENDIX H	124
APPENDIX I	127
APPENDIX J	129
APPENDIX K	130
APPENDIX L	132
BIBLIOGRAPHY	133

CHAPTER I

INITIAL PLANNING, OBJECTIVES AND CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION

The German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 should have occasioned little surprise to the interested scholar. Even before his rise to power, Adolf Hitler had announced at numerous occasions his intentions to pursue a policy of eastern expansion.¹ Implementation of his lebensraum theory would vitally affect the Slavic east, particularly the Soviet Ukraine and the Caucasus. Furthermore, there was also a great ideological clash which would have made permanent peaceful coexistence between communism and national socialism improbable. For these reasons, therefore, a conflict between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union seemed a likely possibility.

Despite the factors which made conflict between these two nations imminent, great attempts were made by both sides to delay hostilities. Insofar as the Germans were concerned, strenuous efforts were made by the military leaders to prevent a war with the Soviet Union. It was a traditional military concept of the German General Staff to avert the possibility of forcing Germany to fight a war on two fronts.² In addition, the threat of a British blockade encouraged German leaders to seek a source of raw materials

¹Ihor Kamenetskii, Hitler's Occupation of the Ukraine, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1956), p. 4.

²A. Rossi (Angelo Tasca), The Russo-German Alliance, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951), p. 45.

which would be cut off when the blockade began. The Soviet Union would seem a likely source for these materials.

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was also quite anxious to avert war. The military purges of 1937 had seriously affected the combat effectiveness of the Red Army, and apparently the Soviets were willing to go to great lengths to forestall any outbreak of hostilities until such time as the army was rebuilt and combat tested. When Soviet overtures toward the allies of Great Britain and France failed because of the sphere of influence question in the Baltic States and Poland, Stalin began to orient his diplomacy toward Hitler and Nazi Germany.

It came as a great shock to the west when Germany and the Soviet Union announced in a joint communique on August 23, 1939 that they had signed a treaty of non-aggression and an economic agreement which was to remain in effect for ten years. In addition to the announced pacts, there was also a secret protocol which provided the groundwork for the fourth partition of Poland.³ In this manner both nations sought to attain their traditional objectives. In little more than a month later, Poland ceased to exist as a national entity.

The beginning of the breach between Germany and the Soviet Union came in early July, 1940, when Russia absorbed Bessarabia. German diplomats feared that it was the beginning of a Soviet penetration that would end only with the Dardanelles.⁴ It was perhaps

³Rossi, The Russo-German Alliance, p. 40-41.

⁴Rossi, The Russo-German Alliance, p. 121.

this factor coupled with the failure of the decisive defeat of Great Britain that caused plans to be made for the attack on the Soviet Union. The open breach between Germany and the Soviet Union became very pronounced in late August, 1940, when the two began to quarrel over areas of influence in the Balkans. In addition, Russia became suspicious over the Three Power Pact signed between Germany, Italy, and Japan. In the middle of November, 1940, Foreign Minister Molotov traveled to Berlin in order to arrive at an agreement over the Three Power Pact and to resolve the differences in the Balkans. Although the Soviet Union was invited to come into the Three Power Pact, no agreement could be reached over Soviet demands to naval bases in the Dardanelles and interests in Hungary, Romania, and Greece.⁵ This breach continued to widen until the actual outbreak of hostilities ten months later. It was Germany, however, that continued to place pressure on the weakening ties of friendship. The Soviet diplomats seemed to be prepared to go to great lengths to maintain the peaceful relations and in vain made more concessions.⁶

The initial formal staffing for the attack on the Soviet Union

⁵Rossi, The Russo-German Alliance, p. 168.

⁶On April 25, 1941, the Soviet Union suddenly accepted Germany's plan for delimitation of the frontier between the Igorka River and the Baltic. In addition Stalin officially recognized the pro-German government of Iraq on May 3, the day after that government had attacked the British airfield at Bassara. All through April and May, the Soviets continued to send shipments of raw materials according to the economic agreement of August, 1939. Rossi, The Russo-German Alliance, pp. 197-199.

was begun as early as the end of July, 1940, when 'Operation See-loewe,' the invasion plans for England, were scrapped.⁷ The first assignment given to the staff officers at the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW), was drafting the directive which would enlarge troop concentrations in western Poland. This directive was later to be known as Aufbau Ost (Build-up East). The date for the commencement of the attack was originally designated for May 15, 1941.⁸

Generalmajor Erich Marcks of OKW was given the assignment of drafting the plan for the conduct of operations under the supervision of Generaloberst Franz Halder, the Chief of the Generalstab. The initial plan proposed a two fold thrust into European Russia; a southern drive toward Kiev into the Dnyepyr bend, supported by Luftwaffe neutralization of the Odessa complex; and a northern one across the Baltic states in the direction of Moscow. A secondary

⁷During a meeting in Berlin on July 31, 1940, Generaloberst Halder cites Hitler as stating:

In the event that invasion does not take place, our efforts must be directed to the elimination of all factors that let England hope for a change in the situation... Britain's hope lies in Russia and the U.S.A. If Russia drops out of the picture, America too, is lost for Britain, because the elimination of Russia would greatly increase Japan's power in the Far East...Decision: Russia's destruction must therefore be made a part of this struggle...The sooner Russia is crushed the better. The attack will achieve its purpose only if the Russian State can be shattered to its roots with one blow...If we start in May, 1941, we will have five months in which to finish the job. Alan Bullock, Hitler: A Study in Tyranny, (London: Odhams Press, 1952), pp. 547-548.

⁸Rossi, The Russo-German Alliance, p. 174.

operation to seize the Baku oil fields was to take place at a later date. To carry out this plan, Hitler directed that the strength of the army, instead of being cut as recently ordered, was to be increased by activating forty new divisions.⁹

The main effort was to lead to the destruction of the Russian forces west of Moscow by a direct assault on the Soviet capital. Once in possession of Moscow and northern Russia, elements of the main attack force would turn south and seize the Ukraine in conjunction with the southern groups. Since surprise and speed of movement were of the essence, the technique of mobile operations (Blitzkrieg), as recommended by General Guderian, was adopted. Panzer and motorized forces, supported by tactical air, were to break through the Russian lines in the classical Arabela maneuver, leaving isolated units to be destroyed by the following infantry.¹⁰

The planning estimates called for an attack force of 147 divisions, consisting of 110 infantry divisions, 24 panzer divisions, 12 panzer grenadier divisions, and one cavalry division.¹¹ Since the bulk of the initial offensive would rest in the north, Army

⁹U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operations, Pamphlet No. 20-261a (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, March, 1955), p. 53.

¹⁰The principle of concentration initiated by Alexander the Great against the Persians in 331 B.C. at the Battle of Arbela in which Alexander, with a smaller number of troops, concentrated them at one point in the Persian center and crashed through, separating the Persian forces so that each could be defeated piece-meal. J.F.C. Fuller, The Second World War, 1939-1945, (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1949), p. 59.

¹¹U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in Russia: p. 7.

Group North was to have a total of 68 divisions at its disposal, while Army Group South was to consist of only 35 divisions.¹² The precise instructions given to Army Group North included the seizure of Moscow by driving through the forest regions between Rogachev and Vitebsk. At the same time, Army Group South was to destroy the Soviet troops in the western Ukraine and to establish bridgeheads across the Dnyepyr in order to be able to continue the attack after the reduction of Moscow.¹³

Because the operations were expected to take six months to achieve success, the attack was scheduled to commence no later than May 15. Any delay would prolong operations into the winter. The attacking German forces were to be responsible for the physical occupation of all Soviet territory west of the axis Rostov-Gorki-Arkhangelsk. A successful seizure of this territory during the first stage of the campaign would insure that during the winter of 1941-42, no Soviet aircraft would be able to bomb the German homeland or disrupt German troop concentrations preparing for the spring assault of 1942.¹⁴ It was considered unlikely that the destruction of the Soviet Union could be achieved in one single operation. Consequently the initial offensives entailed twin drives north and south of the Pripyat Marshes.

¹²U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operations, p. 10.

¹³U.S., Military Academy, Operations on the Russian Front, Vol. I, (New York: Military Academy Press, 1946), p. 157.

¹⁴U.S., Military Academy, Operations on the Russian Front, Vol. I, p. 145.

The overall operation was divided into four phases. The OKW estimates stated that Phase One would meet Russian delaying tactics while the Soviet forces withdrew to previously prepared positions. The spatial factor for these operations was estimated at 250 miles and therefore three weeks were allotted for this phase. Phase Two would be the fight for the forest areas and control of the western waterways to a depth of sixty to 100 miles, and hence two to four weeks were allotted to this phase. Phase Three would be the battles for Moscow and Leningrad covering another 200 to 250 miles. Three to six weeks were allotted to this phase. The final phase would be the pursuit of the Russians to the Don and Volga Rivers, with their final destruction. This operation was expected to take five to seven weeks.¹⁵

In late 1940, the Operations Division of the General Staff had submitted its own plans for the reduction of the Soviet Union. The General Staff had taken several factors into consideration. First, the German numerical strength was far inferior to the estimated Russian strength. Second, the vast terrain to be covered presented many problems that could not be surmounted in six months with a division of forces in the initial offensive. Third, and contrary to the first two factors, since the Red Army had performed so badly on the Finnish front, considerations were that the Red Army could be overrun quickly by concentrating all available strength at one point and directing the assault on Moscow through Smolyensk. Because the purges of 1937 were considered to have seriously weakened

¹⁵U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operations, pp. 11-12.

the Soviet officer corps, it was expected that Moscow could be taken in six months.¹⁶ This was the first under-estimate of Russian strength and capabilities. It laid the groundwork for future disputes between the various German planning agencies and perhaps caused Hitler to lose confidence in his staff agencies. It undoubtedly contributed to Hitler's decision to personally assume command of the campaign after the failure of the initial Moscow attack.

A compromise solution was finally adopted by General Halder. Three army groups would be established with the designations Army Group North, Center and South. Army Group Center would have the preponderance of forces and would drive through Smolyensk towards Moscow while Army Group North would keep the Russian forces engaged by driving through the Baltic states toward Leningrad, and Army Group South would neutralize the Soviet forces in the south by driving on Kiev with comparatively weak forces.¹⁷

In December, 1940, Reichmarschall Hermann Goering assigned General der Infanterie Georg Thomas, Chief of the OKW Economic Office, the task of making an economic survey of the implications involved in a campaign against the Soviet Union. General Thomas arrived at conclusions that were very significant in light of the subsequent conduct of operations in Russia. Thomas stated in his report that occupation of European Russia would improve Germany's

¹⁶U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operations, p. 14.

¹⁷U.S., Department of the Army, Terrain Factors in the Russian Campaign, Pamphlet No. 20-290 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, July, 1951), p. 46.

food and raw material supplies if the destruction of Soviet stock-piles could be prevented and if the Caucasus oil reserves could be seized intact. He also stated that if the war should continue longer than the original estimate, Germany would benefit only if the civilian population could be induced to remain and cooperate with the German occupying authorities.¹⁸ However, this was not consistent with Hitler's attitude toward the eastern peoples, nor with his lebensraum theories. The Civil Affairs/Military Government concept of governing occupied areas was to be completely ignored. Little was it realized then how serious this mistake would be.¹⁹

On December 18, 1940, the accepted plan for the attack on the Soviet Union was approved and entitled 'Operation Barbarossa'. The plan of operations was the same as mentioned earlier with the exception that Army Group South was strengthened slightly and given a rather vague assignment of seizing the Donets Basin.²⁰ The entire concept rested on the fact that the Russians would give battle west of the Dnyepyr-Dvina line. The question as to whether the German forces were logistically strong enough or prepared to carry out a campaign of attrition in the east was a moot point. Four months before the attack, the commanding general of Army Group Center,

¹⁸U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operations, p. 21.

¹⁹This problem will be discussed in detail in Chapter IV.

²⁰A.D. Tchenkeli, "Collapse of German Forces in Russia," Voice of Free Georgia, No. 6, 1954. p. 26.

Field Marshal Fedor von Bock, expressed doubts that if the Russians did not elect to face a decisive issue, the German forces might be hard pressed to come out of it in one piece.²¹

The plan suffered a severe setback at the beginning of April, 1941, when Germany unexpectedly became involved in a Balkan campaign, launched by Italy against Greece. Because troops were pulled off the eastern front to fight in the Balkans and afterward required rest, the invasion of Russia had to be postponed for nearly six weeks. Many speculations have been made, especially by German generals, that if 'Operation Barbarossa' had been launched on time, the initial campaign in the east would have been over before the winter of 1941 arrived.²² Although this may not be entirely correct, certainly German planning, in regard to possible winter warfare, was not well advanced in the early stages of the campaign.

By the end of June, 1941, the Army High Command (Oberkommando des Heeres) had available some 146 divisions, including nineteen panzer divisions, for the assault on the Soviet Union. Army Group Center was commanded by von Bock, Army Group North by Feldmarschall von Leeb and Army Group South by Field Marshal von Rundstedt. Army Group Center, as has been previously mentioned, was the strongest of these army groups with sixty-one divisions, Army Group South was next with fifty-five divisions, and Army Group North was the smallest with thirty divisions. In this manner ninety-one divisions

²¹Heinz Guderian, Panzer Leader, (New York: Dutton and Co., 1952), p. 127.

²²Guderian, Panzer Leader, p. 117.

were north of the Pripjat Marshes for the drive to Moscow.²³

Perhaps the most striking feature of the distribution of forces for the campaign in Russia, was the small number of reserve divisions committed to the direct assault, OKW had the choice of allotting reserves to the army groups or keeping them as strategic reserves under direct control. The apparent reason the latter choice was made was that it gave Hitler the necessary control over the course of operations in the east without actually assuming specific command of the OKH, whose task it was to run the Russian campaign. In any case, regardless of who controlled the reserves, they were much too small for such a grandiose operation such as the invasion of Russia.²⁴

On the morning of June 22, 1941, the Germans launched their attack on the Soviet Union. The Germans achieved a complete tactical surprise. The Luftwaffe achieved decisive air superiority and the panzer units forced the Russians to give battle instead of withdrawing. By July 9, Hitler expressed an opinion of the conduct of the campaign up to that time. He stated that: "I constantly try to put myself in the enemy's position. For all practical purposes the enemy has lost the war. It is a good thing that we have destroyed the Soviet tank and air forces right at the beginning. The Russians will be unable to replace them."²⁵

²³U.S., Military Academy, Operations on the Russian Front, Vol. II, (New York: Military Academy Press, 1946), p. 27.

²⁴U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operations, p. 41.

²⁵Felix Gilbert (ed.), Hitler Directs His War, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 59.

Field Marshal von Rundstedt's Army Group South also made good progress. The only indication that the operations in the south were not moving along satisfactorily was the low number of prisoners that were being taken. This was an indication that the envelopments were not successful and that the Russian troops were executing successful delaying actions.²⁶ By the middle of July, Hitler directed that the campaign be continued with the emphasis on preventing the Russian units from escaping by breaking contact with the German units and withdrawing.²⁷

The conduct of the Soviet Armed Forces in the initial stages of the campaign can be an interesting guide to explaining the German successes at the onset of the assault. When the German troops opened hostilities against the Soviet Union, they met an enemy whose arms and training they had largely under-estimated. According to German intelligence reports, the Soviet forces on the German eastern boundary amounted to one hundred rifle divisions, thirty tank divisions and twenty-five cavalry divisions.²⁸ Their total number roughly equaled the attacking German force but the Germans regarded the Soviet forces as inferior to their own in fire power, mechanization, and training. As the campaign proceeded, the Germans were surprised to learn that the Soviet troops had more self-propelled guns, operational aircraft, and tanks, and that the

²⁶Guenther Blumentritt, Von Rundstedt, the Soldier and the Man, trans. Cuthbert Reaveley (London: Odhams Press, 1952), p. 221.

²⁷U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operations, p. 50.

²⁸U.S., Military Academy, Operations on the Russian Front, Vol. I, p. 79.

quality of the Soviet T-34 tank was superior to that of the German Mark III and IV.²⁹

The Soviet High Command (Stavka) had anticipated Hitler's attack and had been preparing for it for a long time. In addition, the Soviet forces had but one front on which to fight, they had able generals, and they had numerically superior manpower and arms. Furthermore, Russian military technique was equally as modern as the German, and had demonstrated it by using the blitzkrieg against the Japanese in the Far East before Germany had put this concept to use.³⁰

One should ask why Hitler succeeded, in spite of all the above-mentioned facts, in reaching the gates of Moscow within a few months, conquering almost all the Ukraine, taking 3,806,000 prisoners of war, and bringing under his control a territory twice as large as France?³¹

It would be out of the question to attempt to explain Soviet losses of territory in terms of tactical withdrawal, similar to the Russian retreat during the Napoleonic invasion. The Red Army, unlike the Russian Army of 1812, did not avoid decisive battles, but fought them almost on their boundaries and only retreated eastward after suffering tremendous casualties. Another distinct difference between the campaign of 1812, and Hitler's invasion in 1941, was in the numbers of prisoners taken. The number of Russian

²⁹Guderian, Panzer Leader, p. 190.

³⁰Kamenetskii, Hitler's Occupation of the Ukraine, p. 29.

³¹Kamenetskii, Hitler's Occupation of the Ukraine, p. 30.

prisoners taken in 1812, has been claimed the smallest that Napoleon had ever captured in a campaign.³² The number of Russian troops that the German army took was only slightly short of fantastic.

The early Soviet debacles and later Soviet victories provide a confusing picture unless an examination is made of two important factors in Soviet military potential; the fighting morale of the Red Army, and the sentiments of the Soviet population. The importance of the fighting morale of troops has been recognized throughout military history. It is not only the physical but also the psychological factors in combat that count. A soldier requires not only something to fight with, but also something to fight for. The proof of this is illustrated by the conduct of the Red Army in the Second World War.

In the initial stages of the campaign, there seemed to be little that the Red soldier had to fight for. It probably was not for the regime which through its policy of purges, arrests, re-settlements, forceful collectivization, and elimination of hostile classes had affected great numbers of Soviet families in one way or another and had seemingly created a sense of political insecurity in the Soviet Union.³³ The peasant soldier could hardly be expected to fight enthusiastically for the preservation of the collective farm, especially after the forced collectivizations and famines of the 1930's. It should be understood that the Soviet authorities recognized that the ideology of communism was not enough to win

³²Armand de Caulaincourt, With Napoleon in Russia, (New York: Morrow, 1935), pp. 102-103.

³³Kamenetski, Hitler's Occupation of the Ukraine, p. 31.

victories, and began to issue proclamations to the people that the war was in defense of Mother Russia.³⁴

Hitler apparently, ignored this factor and began to push his brand of politics in eastern Europe. His policies excluded cooperation with any national group in the area. The German objective was to secure the victory and to dominate the Slavic regions by military and police force. Thus, the Germans contributed partially to their own defeat, by refusing to follow the dictates of good sense and political know-how.³⁵ Therefore, the stiffening of Red Army resistance was the first, but not the only factor which later jeopardized German chances for victory in the Soviet Union.

In addition to the political mistakes, Hitler made his first serious tactical blunder at this time. With the Russians in full confusion following the initial success of the blitzkrieg by the German panzer forces, Hitler on July 23, issued his famous Supplement to Directive Number 33. In this supplement to a tactical directive, Hitler ordered that all units begin to mop-up their respective areas and reduce the pockets before making any further advances.³⁶ This order brought Hitler into his worst conflict with

³⁴Kamenskii, Hitler's Occupation of the Ukraine, p. 32.

³⁵One German military leader realized the mistakes that were being made. General Keitel wrote a letter to Hitler, in which he stated:

We can say without exaggeration, that the mistake in the treatment of prisoners of war is responsible to a great extent for the stiffening of resistance of the Red Army and therefore also for the death of thousands of German soldiers. Gilbert (ed.), Hitler Directs His War, p. 165.

³⁶U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operations, p. 57.

the OKW. General von Brauchitsch, the chief of the OKW, raised his objections on the basis that once the Germans abandoned the concept of mobile operations the initiative would be lost to the Russians. Hitler maintained that he was concerned with the panzer losses and that the infantry must be given the opportunity to support the panzer forces, hence the objectives must be more limited in order that the infantry could keep pace.³⁷

Furthermore, Hitler suggested changing the main direction of attack from Moscow to the south or perhaps to Leningrad. Although the drive on Moscow had not been officially called off, it was dependent on the success of the Leningrad operation before it could begin.³⁸ It was at this point that Hitler met with serious opposition from the OKW on the conduct of the war. Since Hitler emerged victorious from the struggle with the OKW, the final decision for the campaign in the south must rest squarely on his shoulders.

On July 28, 1941, General Halder sent Hitler a memorandum stating his reasons for a continuation of the attack on Moscow. The Russians were massing troops in the Moscow area and a drive in any other direction would be exposing a flank to these massed troops. In addition, Halder maintained that Moscow was the only target that could be reduced before the onset of winter, and by cutting the Russian transportation network, could prevent reinforcement between the north and the south and hence each could be reduced

³⁷Gilbert (ed.), Hitler Directs His War, p. 70.

³⁸Gilbert (ed.), Hitler Directs His War, p. 130.

piecemeal.³⁹

Hitler's reply to Halder was startling in its implications. According to the Fuehrer the most important objective was no longer the capture of Moscow. Top priority was to be given to the capture of the Crimea and the industrial region of the Donets Basin while the Russian oil supply was cut off by taking Stalingrad and blocking the Volga River shipping.⁴⁰ In vain did General Guderian attempt to intercede with Hitler.⁴¹ Finally at the end of July, General Jodl pleaded with Hitler to reconsider his plans to drop Moscow from the main point of concentration. He stated that the fight for Moscow should be continued not because it was the Russian capital, but because the Soviets would have all available strength in this area for the defense of the city. It was also an opportunity to once and for all defeat and annihilate the Russians in the field, ending forever their threat against German forces.⁴² All attempts to persuade Hitler failed and the OKW was forced to implement his new orders. It was not until November that the generals were successful in finally obtaining permission to launch their attack on Moscow. It was to be an abortive attempt, for the German troops were, by this time, physically exhausted, their supply system had deteriorated and their growing inferiority in

³⁹U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operations, p. 69.

⁴⁰U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operations, p. 70.

⁴¹Guderian, Panzer Leader, p. 151.

⁴²U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operations, p. 76.

numbers and winter equipment to the Red Army nearly led to complete catastrophe. With the end of December, 1941, all operations ground to a halt. Thus the last German all-out effort to force a decision in 1941, ended in failure.

It was a serious error on the part of Hitler that the drive on Moscow, favored by Guderian, Halder and most other generals in the Army High Command, had been abandoned in August, 1941, in favor of the conquest of the Ukraine. An earlier offensive against Moscow might have yielded decisive results if it had been pursued as the main objective of the campaign. The Soviet Union might have been paralyzed by such a thrust, for it was the heart of the Soviet regime, a great industrial area and, perhaps most important, the center of the railroad system of European Russia.

The southern campaign was to be the one which would eventually lead to Germans on the road to military collapse. An examination should be made of the reasons that Hitler had for ignoring the purely military consideration of attempting to defeat the Russian army and crush it while there was still time to do so. For some time Hitler had been immersed in the study of Haushofer's theories of geopolitics. These theories which placed their emphasis in the importance of geographical 'key points' - those areas of a nation which must be retained if it is to continue to exist, and which, if lost, would paralyze a nation's war-making capacity, had apparently captured his imagination.⁴³

The study of geopolitics or political geography is a legitimate

⁴³Terrance Smith, "Stalingrad or Bust," Infantry Journal, No. 59 (August, 1946), p. 14.

discipline that was adopted from writings of the Swedish geographer, Rudolph Kjellen. The term geopolitik, was advanced by many noted geographers but the leading German exponent of this comparatively new science was Karl Haushofer. In 1923, Haushofer came into a position of influence with some of the leaders of the Nazi Party. He became editor of the Zeitschrift fuer Geopolitik, as chairman of the Institut fuer Geopolitik, while serving as a professor at the University of Munich. It has been stated by a leading geographer that: "The basic incontestable truth is that Haushofer, directly in some instances, indirectly in others, coordinated, integrated and rationalized the whole field of comparative geography for the uses of the Fuehrer."⁴⁴

The concept behind the ideas of political power of the state was its location with reference to a specific relationship of the distribution of land masses and oceanic areas. The expression of the power of the state during time of war involved the study of Wehr-Geopolitik, or political geography during time of war, because the aim of power was war. Haushofer adopted General Karl von Clausewitz' definition of war, in that war was: "a continuation of policy with an admixture of other means."⁴⁵ In addition to the above beliefs, Haushofer enlarged and adopted the writings of Halford J. Mackinder, the noted British geographer who was famous for his concept of the World-Island theory. This concept states that:

⁴⁴Edmund A. Walsh, "Geopolitics and International Morals," Compass of the World, ed. Hans W. Weigart and Vilhjalmur Stefansson (New York: Macmillan, 1944), p. 22.

⁴⁵G. Etzel Percy and Others, World Political Geography, (New York: Crowell and Co., 1948), p. 18.

Who rules Eastern Europe commands the Heartland:
 Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island:
 Who rules the World-Island commands the World.⁴⁶

General Haushofer, because of his field commands and general staff experiences during World War I, was one of the few geographers of that time who appreciated Mackinder's theory and perhaps recognized what military control of this area meant. He was personally acquainted with Hitler and, although he never actually advocated outright war with Russia, he frequently mentioned that there should be a conquest by subversion, beginning with a German-Soviet alliance.⁴⁷ This alliance would then be followed by a gradual German encroachment on Russia's military and economic systems. Haushofer's writings and personal contacts presented to Hitler general ideas about the future of the Third Reich in the world and seemed to justify Hitler's position about the control of Zwischen-Europa.⁴⁸

Hitler, therefore, decided that the German objective on the coming campaign should be the seizure of Russia's 'key points' and, after careful study, decided upon two such areas, Stalingrad and Baku.⁴⁹

The capture of Baku and the rich oil fields of the Caucasus meant an oil supply for the German forces and an oil famine for the Soviet Union. According to Haushofer, taking Stalingrad meant

⁴⁶Halford J. Mackinder, Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction (New York: Henry Holt, 1942), p. 150.

⁴⁷Lewis M. Alexander, World Political Patterns, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1957), p. 11.

⁴⁸Pearcy, World Political Geography, p. 19.

⁴⁹Smith, Infantry Journal, No. 59, p. 16.

acquiring a great armament center and the control of the Volga River, Russia's spinal column. Once the Volga was reached and Stalingrad was captured, a double victory would be won. The vital Volga traffic would be halted and the Red Army deprived of the thousands of tanks and artillery being constructed in the Stalingrad factories. The important decision for Hitler was apparently how to take these areas, and not if he should do it.

And so, because of the above geographical reasons and for the later-mentioned social and economic considerations, Hitler's ambitions toward the Ukraine had the most important impact on military operations. The Ukraine, due to its size, fertility, and richness in raw materials, was from the beginning, the most important goal of Hitler's expansion policy in eastern Europe. To conquer and secure this area was an essential part of the lebensraum theory.⁵⁰ Therefore, it is not surprising that Hitler should supersede all other considerations to select the Ukraine as the logical striking point after the failure of the 1941 campaign.

It is at this point that an important question should be examined. What constitutes a victory in a war with another nation? Is it the complete defeat of the enemy's army in the field? Or is it capturing the enemy's means with which he wages war? Or perhaps is it both? Regardless of the answer, it is popularly agreed that to capture the enemy's means to make war means being prepared to wage a war of attrition. It can be severely doubted that Hitler recognized this factor because it can be assumed that he realized that Germany was in no position to wage a war of

⁵⁰Kamenetskii, Hitler's Occupation of the Ukraine, p. 11.

attrition and on several occasions he expressed cognizance of problems involving limitations in resources.⁵¹

The differences in strategic considerations concerning the selection of the main effort for the 1942 campaign pinpoint the principal differences between Hitler and the OKW. An offensive against Moscow offered the possibility of smashing the main Soviet forces which were concentrated not only for the defense of the capital, but also because of the great and manifold significance of the city as the hub of the whole Soviet communications network west of the Urals. Of less obvious importance were the economic implications. The Moscow solution could be considered as the most attractive from a military point of view. It is sound military logic that the destruction of the enemy's main forces will inevitably sooner or later produce economic results also; if his military strength is eliminated or reduced to negligible proportions, his vital industrial areas will inevitably fall, thus obviating the opponent's need to fight for them.⁵²

The Stalingrad and Caucasus solution, on the other hand, was a victory for the economic and political point of view. It was predicated on the theory that the destruction or elimination of the enemy's essential industries and food supplies would so weaken his war potential indirectly, that his army in the field, no matter how strong it might be in theory, would in practice be useless. Hitler's train of thought seemed to be dominated by the obsession: Ukrainian corn and cattle, coal and iron from the

⁵¹Smith, Infantry Journal, No. 59, p. 15.

⁵²Smith, Infantry Journal, No. 59, p. 16.

Donets Basin and Krivoy Rog, Caucasian oil and the blockade of the Volga.⁵³

A strategy directed at the destruction of the enemy's economy is probably more certain and longer lasting than a purely military one, but it is much slower. A nation that adopts such a strategy must itself be very strong economically and must have plenty of time and be able to take the long view. None of these conditions existed for Germany, or at least, not in sufficient quantity. German strength and superiority rested with the Wehrmacht, in the purely military possibilities of offensive action.

The Chief of the General Staff, Halder, may have preferred the Moscow solution and even strongly urged the adoption of it, but he could not completely ignore the economic factors. Although he expresses his doubts on several occasions, he eventually acquiesced to the southern decision. The decision was an important and a difficult one, and it is here that Halder must share part of the blame for the disaster that was to follow.⁵⁴

It had been proposed that Hitler had even more grandiose plans than the seizure of the Ukraine for lebensraum. There is the possibility that Hitler had more in mind than oil when he ordered the seizure of Baku. Baku signified the portals to Asia. This could have been a continuation of Napoleon's dream of conquest in India and the smashing of the British Empire. Baku, was, after all,

⁵³Heinz Schroeter, Stalingrad, trans. Constantine Fitzgibbon (New York: Dutton and Co., 1958), p. 9.

⁵⁴Guderian, Panzer Leader, p. 170.

only 700 miles from the Persian Gulf. A German army at Basra would stand squarely on Britain's life-line. It would sever the link between India and the British Isles. It has since been advanced that this was Hitler's true 1942 objective.⁵⁵

The proposal suggests that there was a grand strategy involving a double envelopment using von Kleist in the north and Rommel in a drive through the Suez linking up with von Kleist at Basra.⁵⁶ This particular plan should not be considered seriously, however, for the treatment accorded to the Panzerarmee Afrika during the Libyan Campaigns does not lead one to believe that Hitler seriously intended using Rommel for this gigantic scheme.⁵⁷ In fact, the same difficulties occurred in Libya that were later to occur at Stalingrad. Hitler refused to permit Rommel freedom of action and insisted that he retain every piece of ground instead of permitting the type of mobile defense that Rommel could execute so brilliantly.⁵⁸ The fact that the Supreme Command ignored the logistical problem in Africa tends to prove the premise that Rommel was not involved in any such planning. It is true, however, that von Kleist did receive planning orders for the invasion of Persia, to be implemented after he secured the Caucasus. These orders came from General Warlimont, Keitel's deputy at OKW

⁵⁵Smith, Infantry Journal, No. 59, p. 17.

⁵⁶Guderian, Panzer Leader, p. 18.

⁵⁷Fuller, The Second World War, 1939-1945, p. 134.

⁵⁸Friedrich Wilhelm von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles, trans. H. Betzler (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955) p. 146.

In July, 1942.⁵⁹

Thus the selected area for the spring and summer assaults of 1942, was to be the southern third of the Eastern Front, a 300 mile stretch between Kursk and the Sea of Azov. Here the Russian armies were weaker in men, guns, and tanks than in the Moscow area. Many of the generals favored one feature of Hitler's strategy, the seizure of the oil in the Caucasus, because the German oil crisis was acute. During the entire winter there had been successive, though brief, oil famines along the snowbound eastern front, first in one army, then in another. These shortages resulted from the transportation difficulties that the Germans were experiencing. The fronts now lay far from the source of oil, six hundred miles from the synthetic plants in central Germany, three hundred miles from the Romanian refineries. The hastily constructed military railroads crossing the vast steppes were overtaxed and it was obvious that oil could not be supplied to the armies in sufficient quantities if the distances grew any greater.⁶⁰ And so, the stage was set for the German campaign of 1942, one which would bring to them military catastrophe.

⁵⁹von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles, p. 147.

⁶⁰U.S., Department of the Army, Terrain Factors in the Russian Campaign, p. 27.

CHAPTER II

THE ASSAULT ON STALINGRAD

Before the Germans could open their summer campaign toward Stalingrad, the Russians launched an attack of their own on the southern front. This attack, led by Marshal Timoshenko, was directed toward Kharkov, probably the strongest point on the entire German front. The Soviet troops drove forward on a seventy mile front and at the end of the fifth day of the battle, Timoshenko's divisions had advanced from twelve to thirty-seven miles. On May 13, 1942, the Soviet Information Bureau issued a communique stating that Timoshenko was striking toward the weak German front to relieve possible German pressure on Moscow.¹ The issuance of the announcement demonstrates how successful the German forces were in deceiving the Russians about the build-up of their forces on the southern front in preparation for the drive on Stalingrad and the Caucasus.

This deception was evidenced when, on May 19, Army Group South directed by Field Marshal von Bock (later by Generaloberst von Weichs) launched a counterattack at the Russian flank in the Iziurn-Barenkovo sector, just south of Kharkov. The Russian troops, very much surprised by the German strength, could not continue the attack and by May 30, the battle was over. Both sides claimed victory in this engagement but the truth of what happened can be surmised from the curious figures listed by the Soviet government

¹Stalingrad (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1943) p. 5.

for its own casualties: 5,000 dead and 70,000 missing.² While it might be reasonable to accept the Soviet claims that it was merely trying to forestall a German offensive, Moscow could hardly assume that it had been successful, for only a little more than a week later, on June 10, the Germans launched their summer offensive that was to take them all the way to Stalingrad.

Timoshenko rapidly disengaged his troops when he realized that his army was in no condition to meet the fresh German panzer forces which were moving to the front. By this time the Eleventh German Army under the command of Feldmarschall Erich von Manstein had nearly completed the successful operation in the Crimea. Sevastopol had fallen and it was just a matter of time until the peninsula was entirely in German hands.

The German summer offensive and the subsequent breakthrough to the Don River clearly illustrate the principles which governed the German conduct of operations before the assumption of command by Hitler. Mobile operations and the coordinated tank warfare explain why the Germans achieved such spectacular initial successes. The German offensive during June and July, 1942, demonstrates most emphatically the importance of maneuver in modern warfare. As Generaloberst Heinz Guderian repeatedly expressed it: "The engine of a tank is no less a weapon than its gun."³

The summer offensive was initially entrusted to the forces of Army Group South (redesignated Army Group B on July 1), which

²Walter B. Kerr, The Russian Army: Its Men, Its Leaders, Its Battles, (New York: A.A. Knopf and Co., 1944), p. 188.

³Guderian, Panzer Leader, p. 239.

comprised three armies including the Sixth and Second German Armies and its main striking force, the Fourth Panzer Army. The mission of Army Group South was to break through the Soviet front in the Kursk sector. After the breakthrough the Fourth Panzer Army was to swing south, incorporating the tanks supporting the Sixth German Army on its flank, and continue southwards along the Don. It was hoped that many Soviet divisions would thus be encircled in the bend of the river between Rostov and Voronezh and could then be dealt with piecemeal.⁴

As Marshal Timoshenko withdrew with the bulk of the Russian forces, he committed the 62nd Soviet Army under General-Leutenant Vasili Chuikov to slow the German advance. Chuikov's army was ordered to delay in depth, while Timoshenko regrouped his entire forces northeast between Stalingrad and Moscow. Apparently the Russians were still in doubt as to exactly where the German main attack was going to be directed, and by moving his force north Timoshenko would be in a position to reinforce both the Moscow and Stalingrad areas. Chuikov realized that he would not be able to stop a German advance before it reached Stalingrad, but he was confident that he could furnish enough opposition to force the Germans to commit the bulk of their strength in that area, thereby enabling the Soviet High Command to plan counter measures.⁵

Plan Blue, as the German offensive was called, left the bulk

⁴von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles, p. 155.

⁵Vladimir I. Chuikov, Street Fighting - The Lessons of Stalingrad, (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1943), p. 18.

of the hard fighting to Army Group South and the Fourth Panzer Army. This army group attack was to be supported on the right flank by the newly formed Army Group A consisting of the Seventeenth German Army and its striking force, the First Panzer Army. Following closely behind the attacking echelons on a broad front were to be four allied armies, namely the Third and Fourth Romanian Armies, the Eighth Italian Army and the Second Hungarian Army.⁶ The Sixth and Second German Armies were to attack simultaneously and protect the flanks and rear of the panzer forces, particularly the northern flank which would be exposed and highly vulnerable. Army Group South was to advance across ideal tank country, the Russian steppe, consisting of open rolling plain, on which tanks could maneuver unopposed by any natural barrier.

Because Marshal Timoshenko's Front had been weakened in his abortive attack south of Kharkov in May, and because the Soviet High Command had disposed its strategic reserves in the apparent belief that the Germans would attack in the Moscow area, the German assault between Kursk and Kharkov, launched on June 28, came as a complete tactical surprise. A breakthrough was achieved, and the Fourth Panzer Army thundered through the gap and headed for the Don.⁷ The die had been cast, the troops committed and Stalingrad lay just around the corner.

The Germans managed to achieve rather startling success in

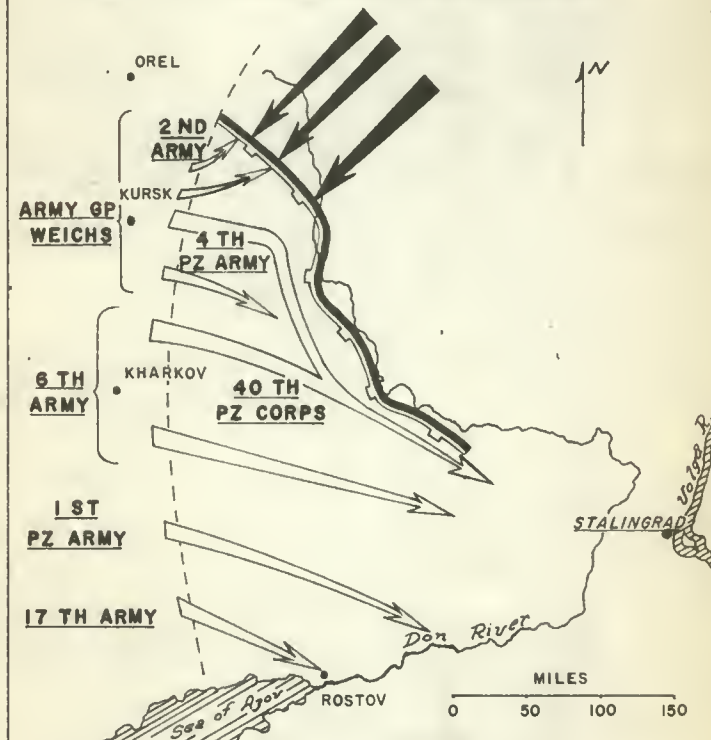
⁶U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operations, p. 144.

⁷See map on page 30. von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles, p. 156.

ATTACK BY GERMAN SOUTH WING

SUMMER 1942

DIRECTION OF GERMAN THRUSTS 
 GERMAN DEFENSIVE FLANKS 
 RUSSIAN FRONT 
 THRUSTS OF RUSSIAN ARMORED RESERVES 



the opening stages of this summer campaign.⁸ Generaloberst Hoth, the commander of the Fourth Panzer Army, had orders to reach the Don River at Voronezh and then make a turn to the south. He met this objective, covering 120 miles in ten days, fighting continuously on the way. Twelve miles a day is excellent progress even for tanks. The attack was so successful that many generals in the High Command felt that the Russians had been entirely routed.⁹

Speculation on the reasons for the spectacular successes led to disputes in the OKH. Some felt, as mentioned, that the Russians had been entirely smashed. Actually only a small number of prisoners had been taken, thus rejecting the contention that the Germans had been able to encircle any Soviet forces as they had originally intended. Other generals in the OKH felt that they had only smashed through a weakly defended sector of the Russian front and that the bulk of the Russian forces had not yet been committed. This latter evaluation proved to be the case.¹⁰

On July 1, Army Group South was redesignated Army Group B.

⁸Ten days before the beginning of the attack, on June 18, the chief operations officer of the 23rd Panzer Division was making an aerial reconnaissance of the route that his division, the leading one in the assault, would take. In his brief case, contrary to all operating procedures, was the complete corps operations order for the attack. This particular officer flew out too far over the lines and was shot down by Russian anti-aircraft fire. A patrol was sent out immediately to try and rescue him, but when this patrol reached the scene, they found him gone, and with him, all his papers. It therefore seems that Soviet intelligence authorities had available to them all the information needed to combat the planned attack, but apparently this breach of security was not exploited and although the attack was assumed by the German commanders to be compromised, it turned out to be a success. Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 20.

⁹Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 21.

¹⁰Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 22.

Four days later Field Marshal von Bock was relieved of his command, outwardly because Hitler was dissatisfied with the manner in which von Bock had exploited the Voronezh operation, but in reality because Hitler wanted to tighten his control over the summer campaign.¹¹ The command of the Army Group was given to Generaloberst Maximilian von Weichs, the former commander of the Second German Army under von Bock.

The German advance to the Don River and the subsequent exploitation toward Rostov and the Don bend illustrate the tremendous offensive power of the blitzkrieg concept when properly applied and executed. The tactical superiority of the panzer units over Russian armor was demonstrated over and over again. The concept of mobile operations in excellent tank terrain requires control by commanders who are at the front and can see first-hand what measures have to be taken on the spot. The German forces possessed such leaders, but they also had Adolf Hitler.

Hitler apparently regarded the Russians as completely defeated, and prepared to act accordingly. He began urging speed in securing the Caucasus. The rapid advance toward the Don had brought about a severe logistical shortage to the attacking troops. Hitler now believed that it was not necessary to maintain so fast a pace, since the Russians were so badly beaten. He divided his main force into two portions, thereby forming two salients. The more northerly pointed straight towards Stalingrad and now the southern one towards the Caucasus. Salients have

¹¹U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operations, p. 145.

always been regarded by military commanders as dangerous, since their flanks become prime targets for counterattack. If the base of the salient in addition is also narrow, it is doubly dangerous, for a counterattack can then easily cut off the salient and encircle it. In actuality, however, the Russians had never deployed large forces along their southern front. Since this was the case, it meant that the Russians had large reserves in the Moscow area, and it was logical to assume that sometime they would appear on the scene. It was therefore undesirable, and even foolhardy for the German forces to divide their strength in the manner in which they did. Hitler's misconception of the situation regarding Soviet strength and capabilities marked another glaring error in his military ability.

Generaloberst Friedrich von Paulus, commanding the elite, battle-proven Sixth German Army, received the mission to capture Stalingrad. Despite the fact that the Sixth Army was essentially an infantry organization, Hitler chose it instead of a panzer army to accomplish the task because of the acute fuel shortage that existed in Army Group B at this time. To grasp the full impact of Hitler's decision to entrust the Sixth Army with the major responsibility of continuing the attack on Stalingrad, it is necessary to understand the terrain in this vicinity. The land between the Don and Volga Rivers is steppe country with desert characteristics. The altitude varies between 225 and 500 feet above mean sea level. There could be no finer terrain for tanks than this area, yet the infantry was later to be impeded by numerous balkas (literally translated: ravine) marking the area,

which made excellent defensive locations for opposing infantry. Artillery support was made very difficult since the highest points in the entire region did not exceed 600 feet, thereby making accurate adjustment of fire from the ground exceedingly difficult.¹² As a result the infantry had neither tank nor accurate artillery fire support for their operation.

The second large task force, Army Group A, was concentrated near the Sea of Azov under Field Marshal von List. It was von List's mission to overrun the whole Caucasus area and capture Baku. The principal elements of this force were the Seventeenth Army commanded by Generaloberst Ruoff, and the First Panzer Army under Generaloberst von Kleist. However, before the offensive in the Caucasus began, trouble developed between Hitler and von List. Von List apparently did not like Hitler's far-reaching plan, and he believed that his southern army group was too weak in numbers ever to reach Baku. When von List made these views known to Hitler he was relieved of his command and von Kleist was appointed in his place.¹³ This action undermined German confidence in the entire operation.

In the north von Paulus received his orders to attack Stalingrad on June 18, 1942.¹⁴ The attack across the Don was fixed for August 19, but was later postponed to August 21. The attack

¹²N.T. Mirov, Geography of Russia, (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1951), p. 144.

¹³Smith, Infantry Journal, No. 59, p. 16.

¹⁴A text of this order is included in Appendix C.

was well organized and proceeded according to schedule, despite severe losses suffered from the pockets of Russian resistance along the Sixth Army's path. Without the support of tanks, the infantrymen had to reduce these pockets of resistance themselves. By the evening of August 23, many elements of the Sixth Army had reached to within thirty-six miles of the outskirts of Stalingrad. Because of the high losses that the Sixth Army was suffering, von Paulus was finally able to obtain tanks, released from assignment to elements of the Fourth Panzer Army, to help in the final stages of the dash to the city. With the aid of this armored support, the Sixth Army was able to eliminate the pockets of resistance with little difficulty.

Farther south, in the Donets Basin near the Sea of Azov, the assault on the Caucasus began at about the same time. Initially this attack also made good progress. Rostov was captured on July 27. Here von Kleist's Army Group A turned southeastward and headed for the mountains. With every mile the Germans advanced, their logistical support problems grew. The railroads in these regions had been few and poor even in peacetime. Now the Russians had destroyed them. In consequence of this, the German engineers were confronted with the perplexing problem of rebuilding them quickly enough to keep the advancing troops supplied. This task was beyond the limits of their capabilities. Hence, the initial speed of the German advance could not be maintained. To maintain movement at all, an even greater reliance had to be placed on the motor supply columns. Actually, there were no paved roads in all southeast Russia, but in good weather the treeless steppes were

dry and firm and they presented no serious obstacle to the panzer columns.¹⁵ It was the winter months that road movement in the Caucasus became hazardous. Thus, the second salient on the German front was established. Of the two salients, the one towards Stalingrad was faced with the greatest danger.

From Moscow many railroads led to the south and southeast, and it was not a difficult task for the Soviet High Command to move southward the large reserves they had been assembling throughout the winter and spring around Moscow. Sooner or later a counter-attack against the northern shoulder of that salient was bound to come. Furthermore, the left flank of the Sixth Army depended on the unreliable protection of the Italian, Hungarian and Romanian troops that had been earlier assigned this mission. The inherent danger in a salient of this magnitude should have been recognized by the Supreme Command after the disaster in 1918, when the French and American troops attacked at Soissons into the flank of the Chateau-Thierry salient, and forced a general retreat of the German armies in that area. Hitler apparently never profited from any study of military history that he may have made. He may not have even been aware of the danger he was running when he made the decision to extend the salient into Stalingrad. It seems inexcusable, however, for the generals in OKW to have permitted such a situation to develop. Even front line commanders, such as Manstein, have expressed amazement that the Supreme Command would

¹⁵Theodore Shabad, Geography of the U.S.S.R., A Regional Study, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 91.

have allowed this to occur.¹⁶

By August 24, the first German units had reached the little villages of Rinok and Erzovka on the Volga River just north of Stalingrad. This action severed Stalingrad from the north because the capture of these villages cut the rail line leading into the city. The only avenue of communication left with the north was the Volga itself.¹⁷ The First Battle Group of the 79th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was the first German unit to reach the Volga. If at this time there had been two infantry divisions available in the northern sector to attack Stalingrad itself, they would have taken the city with practically no resistance since the Russian troops under Chuikov were attempting to consolidate their positions and were not prepared for an assault.¹⁸ The 62nd Army, being extremely short of personnel due to its severe fighting to delay the Sixth Army in its drive toward the city, began to recruit personnel from the civilian ranks that had remained in the city.¹⁹ Resistance against the German infantry literally rose from almost nowhere. In the last operating factory (Red October) the last Christy tank had been welded together, the arsenals had been emptied and all civilians capable of bearing arms were given weapons. Boatmen on the river, workers in the

¹⁶Erich von Manstein, Lost Victories, trans. Anthony G. Powell (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1958), p. 290.

¹⁷Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 30.

¹⁸Andre D. Stupov and Viktor L. Kokunov, 62-iya Armiya V Boiakh Za Stalingrad, (Moskva: Voennoye Izdatel'stvo, 1949), p. 38.

¹⁹Chuikov, Street Fighting - The Lessons of Stalingrad, p. 14.

armament factories and half-grown youths were recruited and alerted by the sounding of the air-raid warnings and by the placement of proclamations on the walls of the buildings.²⁰

To achieve an understanding of the situation at this time, a brief description of Stalingrad must be included. The city itself is about twenty miles long and it was within this twenty mile sector that the Sixth German Army was facing the 62nd Soviet Army. There were five main objectives in the city which the Sixth Army Headquarters considered necessary to reduce in order to secure the city. These were, moving from north to south, the Stalingrad Tractor Plant, the Barricades Machine Construction Factory, the Red October Factory, the business center of Stalingrad and the heights of the Mamai Kurgan. All but the latter were eventually taken by the German troops before the initiation of the great Soviet counter-offensive.

While the German divisions held a ring around Stalingrad with a frontage of seven miles facing the north, three miles along the Volga and just over five miles in the northern outskirts of the city, elements of the 16th Panzer Division were caught in a critical position, which a shortage of fuel and ammunition aggravated. In a matter of hours the division had become encircled by units of the 64th Soviet Army which was supporting the 62nd Army on the Russian right flank. This stiffening of resistance was a forewarning of things to come. Through the timely

²⁰Stupov and Kokunov, 62-Lya Armiya V Boiakh Za Stalingrad, p. 39.

arrival of a supply train, however, the division under the command of Generalleutnant Hube managed to break out of the pocket.

Generaloberst von Wietersheim, the commander of the XIV Panzer Corps, of which the 16th Panzer Division was a part, realized that the situation around Stalingrad was deteriorating rapidly, for the Russian attacks were becoming stronger and bolder. The time was fast approaching when his corps would no longer be able to protect the Sixth Army from attacks from the left (north) flank. He made a recommendation to von Paulus that the units operating in the Stalingrad area be withdrawn to the west bank of the Don unless strong reinforcements could be obtained. Had this proposal been accepted, there would have been no Stalingrad disaster. However, it was neither accepted, nor were reinforcements sent forward. The only results of von Wietersheim's report was that he was relieved of his command and replaced by General Hube.²¹

By September 8, the front had stabilized. There was furious fighting within the city, but on the northern front all became quiet. Within Stalingrad, complete chaos existed. Men shot first and asked questions afterwards. Sapping and mining were carried out with great intensity and life in the city was driven underground into the sewers webbing Stalingrad. Each building was a fortress and each room a keep.²² Russian civilians who remained in their homes were ordered evacuated from the city by

²¹von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles, p. 165.

²²Chulikov, Street Fighting - The Lessons of Stalingrad, p. 23.

German units. As a result thousands died from the cold.²³ This action was justified by the Germans on the grounds that any Russian was a possible sniper, and many German lives had been lost due to civilian action.

By the afternoon of September 14, the first of the German panzer columns broke into the center of Stalingrad and seized the Mamai Kurgan, the height which centuries before a Tatar chieftan had used as a burial ground. From this peak the Germans were able to dominate the city. Ten days before the capture of the Mamai Kurgan, the commander of the Stalingrad Front, General-Polkovnik Andrei Yeremenko, had made preparations to neutralize the possible loss of this height by ordering General Chuikov to transfer his army artillery to the east bank of the Volga River where it would be safe from tank raids and observation from the Mamai Kurgan while still being able to shell the German positions in the city. From out of range of the light German assault guns, the 62nd Army Artillery proceeded to make life miserable for artillery observers on the Mamai Kurgan, by raining the favorite Russian 'perets i sol' (pepper and salt; an artillery mixture of alternating rounds of high explosive and white phosphorous designed to both produce casualties and smoke a target) on the height.²⁴

The recapture of the Mamai Kurgan, marks the turn of the tide

²³E.G. Bor-Ramenskii, "Iz Istorii Oborony Stalingrada v 1942 godu," Istoricheskiye Zapiski, No. 53, 1955. p. 27.

²⁴Michail V. Savin, Bitva pod Stalingradom, (Moskva: Voennoye Izdatelstvo, 1944), p. 134.

in the battle for the city. This battle has been widely acclaimed in the Soviet Union since it marks the point where the Russians gained the initiative in the battle, and hence, marks the turning point of the war in the east. While General Chuikov was preparing positions within the remaining areas of the city still held by the 62nd Army, General Yeremenko summoned more reserve divisions from the rear. One of these divisions was the 13th Guards Rifle Division, commanded by thirty-eight year old General-Major Alexander Rodimtsev. To this division went the mission of retaking the heights. When General Rodimtsev received his orders assigning his division to the 62nd Army, he was on the east bank of the Volga. Since the attack had been ordered immediately, the division was forced to cross the Volga in broad daylight, under artillery fire all the way, and to begin the assault right after completing the crossing. The crossing was successful but heavy losses were suffered. Upon landing the regiments of the division made their famed charge to the top of the height. The division suffered nearly 90% casualties but took their objective.²⁵

After the loss by the Germans of Mamai Kurgan, the fighting in the city degenerated to pitched battles for each building. Paulus made a glaring error in this phase of the fighting by calling in most of his engineer units to reduce many of the buildings that had proven too difficult for the infantry to take. Although the engineers did a thorough and complete job in all their assignments, they suffered tremendous casualties (75%) in

²⁵Stupov and Kokunov, 62-lya Armiya V Bolakh Za Stalingrad, p. 157.

their combat assignments. After the encirclement, Paulus sorely needed these same engineers to prepare and maintain the airstrips desperately required to supply the Sixth Army from the air, but replacements in skilled personnel were by that time no longer available.²⁶ The fighting continued on this basis until the Russian offensive. On November 17, Hitler announced the fall of the city. This announcement was premature but not entirely incorrect. The Sixth Army held almost all of the built-up sections of the city, the public squares and all the factories. At two places within the city they controlled the bank of the Volga.

Although they had captured most of Stalingrad, the Germans were never able to retake the most strategic point, the Mamai Kurgan, which dominated the Volga. Nor could they eliminate the pockets of resistance that remained because of the tenacious resistance of the defenders. Furthermore, the constant threat remained to the German flanks from the 64th Army to the northwest of the city. These areas were also supported by the army heavy artillery on the other side of the Volga. So well dug in was this artillery support, that German counterbattery fire never reduced their rate of fire.²⁷

During the middle part of November, Stalin made the decision to launch his counteroffensive. The command structure of the Red Army was reorganized. A Headquarters of the Supreme Command (GKO) was created with Stalin as supreme Commander-in-Chief. (See

²⁶Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 36.

²⁷Chuikov, Street Fighting - The Lessons of Stalingrad, p. 31.

Appendix B)²⁸ In a major command shakeup, Marshal Zhukov replaced Marshal Timoshenko. Zhukov now commanded the entire theatre of operations. Subordinate to him were General-Polkovnik Yeremenko as commander of the Stalingrad Front, General-Polkovnik N. F. Vatutin as commander of the Southwestern Front, and General-Leutenant K. K. Rokossovsky as commander of the Don Front. Aiding Marshal Zhukov in the planning and operations of this theatre were General-Polkovnik A. M. Vassilevskii and General-Polkovnik Artillerii N. N. Voronov. These three men planned and executed the destruction of the Sixth Army.²⁹

At no time was Hitler's ignorance of even elementary strategy more clearly shown than by his lack of effort to broaden the base of the Stalingrad salient to the north and replace the unreliable allies as the flank security. Not a single local attack worthy of mention was made to expand its shoulders. Instead, Hitler sought to push the tip of the salient even deeper into the steppes. Thus, when in September the German forces reached the suburbs of Stalingrad and that epic struggle began on the streets of the city, the salient had become a vast trap and the only question was how soon the Russians would spring it. Von Manstein considered it an open invitation for the Russians to encircle the Sixth Army.³⁰

It would be well at this point to examine the allied armies

²⁸Kerr, The Russian Army: Its Men, Its Leaders, Its Battles, p. 192.

²⁹Stalingrad, p. 2.

³⁰von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 292.

providing the flank security of the attacking forces, since it was to be their collapse that was to initiate the disaster of the Sixth Army. It is of interest to note the reasons why troops of the allied nations, whose combat value was very suspect, were organized into closed military units and, what is more, placed next to one another in the very sensitive place behind the attacking echelons. In the past, the successful method of stiffening such unreliable forces with German units had proved successful. Why then was this method not adopted in the Stalingrad area? The answer seems to be political in nature. In particular, Marshal Antonescu of Romania and Mussolini had made the existence of the independent national units the main condition on which they had agreed to operating in this theatre of operations. Furthermore, in view of the vast amount of man-power required for the extended operations in the Ukraine, it was considered that the risk, which was recognized, might be taken since the allied armies, with a few exceptions, would not take part in any assault operations but would simply take up the rear and be prepared to assume their defensive mission when they reached the Don.³¹ As it was to turn out, the combat reliability of the allied divisions had been overestimated long before the operations had begun. This may have been partly due to the early success of the Romanian troops, who fought well in the early campaigns of 1941. It must be recognized, however, that the early Romanian successes were accomplished by volunteers, while the Stalingrad troops were mostly

³¹William E. D. Allen and P. Muratoff, The Russian Campaigns of 1941-1943, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1944), p. 215.

composed of reluctant conscripts.

And so it came to pass, that the notable victories of June and July, 1942, were thrown away because Hitler lacked the strategic insight to exploit success, and fumbled at the moment when decisive gains were nearly within reach. The Russians had suffered great losses and their High Command (Stavka) was badly rattled, but it was mandatory for the Germans at this time to give them no opportunity to regain their poise.³² Therefore, Hitler's decision to slow up the offensive on Stalingrad because of the German force's shortage of fuel, and his concentration with the assault in the Caucasus during the summer months, appears to be a crucial mistake, assuming, of course, that von Kleist is correct in his statements.

The second great mistake made by Hitler was to weaken the Caucasus force by taking troops for the aid of the Stalingrad garrison after it had been unable to reduce the city. When Stalingrad was not taken in the first rush, it would have been better to have withdrawn this effort in favor of the Caucasus offensive, reducing the Stalingrad salient. By concentrating his offensive on Stalingrad and resorting to siege warfare, Hitler played into

³²Field Marshal von Kleist, commander of the First Panzer Army, has since asserted that Stalingrad could have been taken successfully only in July, 1942, and he informed Basil H. Liddell Hart in an interview:

The Fourth Panzer Army was advancing on my left. It could have taken Stalingrad without a fight at the end of July, but it was diverted south to help me in crossing the Don. I did not need its aid, and it merely congested the roads I was using. When it had turned north again, a fortnight later, the Russians had gathered just sufficient forces at Stalingrad to check it. Basil H. Liddell Hart, The Other Side of the Hill, (London: Cassell and Co., 1948), p. 214.

the hands of the Soviet High Command. In street fighting the Germans lost all their advantages of mobile operations, while the inadequately trained but stubborn Russian infantry exacted a heavy toll of the tied-down German forces. Therefore, in the fall of 1942, Hitler committed a violation of the oldest and simplest principle of war: ignoring the principle of concentration. The diversion of effort between the Caucasus and Stalingrad ruined the entire German campaign and ultimately lost for Germany the war in the east.

CHAPTER III

THE DEFENSE AND THE FALL OF STALINGRAD

The situation in both the Ukraine and the Caucasus had degenerated by the middle of November, 1942, to a positional and static type of warfare. Army Group A's offensive in the Caucasus had practically come to a standstill near the end of August and by November it was on the defensive. Its ultimate objective, the advance through Tbilisi to Baku, had not been achieved. As a result of this failure, Army Group A was faced by an unbeaten enemy, a situation that was fraught with serious hazard to its very survival. The Caucasian operation, with the northern flank advancing towards the Caspian coast, necessitated strategic flank protection along the lower reaches of the Volga. Such protection could not be achieved by operations in the narrow isthms between the Don and Volga River, that is to say between Kalatch and Stalingrad. This flank protection required a strong force which could throw back any force that attempted to move westward across the lower Volga. Such a force would have to avoid being drawn into operations in and about Stalingrad, so that it could remain free to carry out its primary defensive role. Needless to say, the often-proposed solution to evacuate Stalingrad and keep German ground forces away from a battle of attrition, which Germany could not possibly win, was not carried out. Instead, the Fourth Panzer Army and the Sixth Army were entirely committed to the action in Stalingrad and as a result, lost their freedom of movement. Thus, with all available fighting troops tied down by the

operations in the Caucasus and Stalingrad, the Germans had no strategic reserves available anywhere to combat any new Russian operations.¹

The small number of prisoners taken during the summer operations seemed to convince the German leaders in OKW that the Red Army was deliberately avoiding a decisive battle. Hitler's complete failure to appraise correctly the Russian operational strategy resulted in the fantastic miscalculation that the Russians were at the end of their strength. Greatly concerned, General Halder attempted to prove to the sceptics at OKW that the Russians had assembled large forces and equipment in the Volga region. Figures that Halder had available to him showed that the Russians had assembled a million men in the Saratov area and another half-million east of the Caucasus.² Production figures furnished by intelligence sources stated that the Russians were producing 1,500 tanks a month, as compared to German tank production of only 600.³ Figures such as these prove that the Russians were not beaten as yet, and perhaps it would have been well for OKW to consider some of the suggestions made by Halder.

Within the area of Army Group B, the Russians had thrown many heretofore unidentified units into the operations south of Krasno Armelsk. The Fourth Panzer Army observed, and repeatedly reported, evidence that an attack was being planned of far more

¹Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 46.

²Smith, Infantry Journal, No. 59, p. 19.

³Guderian, Panzer Leader, p. 218.

than mere local significance against the northern flank of the VI Romanian Corps and the IV German Army Corps. It suggested that relocations of Soviet forces opposite the Sixth Army, taken in conjunction with the prospect of an attack in the Fourth Panzer Army's sector, might reveal a Russian intention to surround the German and Romanian units then fighting in and around Stalingrad.⁴ The XIV Panzer Corps had also reported that the Russians were transferring strong forces from east to west and were removing their artillery from the northern front. The intelligence officer of the Sixth Army reported that eight Russian armies had been identified, including two tank armies, in the vicinity of the Sixth Army.⁵

It should be explained here that the Soviet Supreme Command was aware of the concentration of German strength in and around Stalingrad and of the fact that a successful breakthrough towards Serafimovitch, combined with an attack launched south of Stalingrad, must force back the German forces in this area into a narrow and constricted pocket. They were also aware that an attack through Milerovo aimed at Rostov would be successful only if the German forces in the Stalingrad area were neutralized by encirclement.⁶

Hitler forbade any disengagement of the troops fighting in

⁴von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles, p. 166.

⁵Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 54.

⁶Stalingrad: An Eye-Witness Account by Soviet Correspondents and Red Army Commanders, (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1943), p. 37.

Stalingrad, and since all the divisions of the Sixth Army and the Fourth Panzer Army were committed, the general situation was scarcely conducive to a sound defense should the need arise. Therefore Hitler's attempt to hold a tremendously over-extended front with no strategic reserves available was perhaps the most serious mistake that he made at this time, and placed the Sixth Army in an untenable position.⁷

The Soviet order of battle by November 18, illustrates the precarious position of the Sixth Army. Facing the Second German Army at Kursk was the 4th Soviet Army. This Russian army formed part of the Voronezh Front. The Second Hungarian Army was opposed by the 6th Soviet Army. The Eighth Italian Army was faced by the 1st Soviet Guards Army and the 63rd Soviet Army. The greatest Russian strength, however, was concentrated opposite the Third Romanian Army and the Sixth German Army. There, two Russian fronts, the Southwest Front and the Don Front, appeared to dominate the scene, directly in front and on the northern shoulder of the Stalingrad salient. In all, thirteen Soviet armies faced five German and allied armies.⁸ Although the Soviet armies varied greatly in strength, each army was probably equivalent in strength to a full strength German army corps. It must also be taken into consideration that the German units were understrength at this time. Generally speaking, Russian combined arms armies usually ranged from between six to ten line divisions with organic tanks

⁷von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 291.

⁸Savin, Bitva pod Stalingradom, p. 93.

and artillery, or from 75,000 to 130,000 men.⁹

At four o'clock on the morning of November 19, 1942, the Russian attack began. For four hours eight hundred guns and mortars rained fire and steel on the German and Romanian positions on both the north and south shoulders of the Stalingrad salient.¹⁰ As is so often true, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. The weakest link in the German defensive chain was the Third Romanian Army. The Russian tanks and assault troops tore their positions to shreds and broke through into the rear areas. The mere sight of a Russian tank seemed to be enough to cause the Romanians to panic and thousands of troops streamed to the rear, running as fast as they could away from the front.¹¹ It must be said in the Romanian's defense, that they had no organic artillery to speak of and had for weeks been pleading to Army Group B that they should receive some artillery, especially anti-tank guns.¹² Neither the Soviet attack nor the breakthrough surprised the Army General Staff, but they had no means with which to strengthen the front and, as has been made clear, Hitler refused to allow a timely withdrawal of the line.

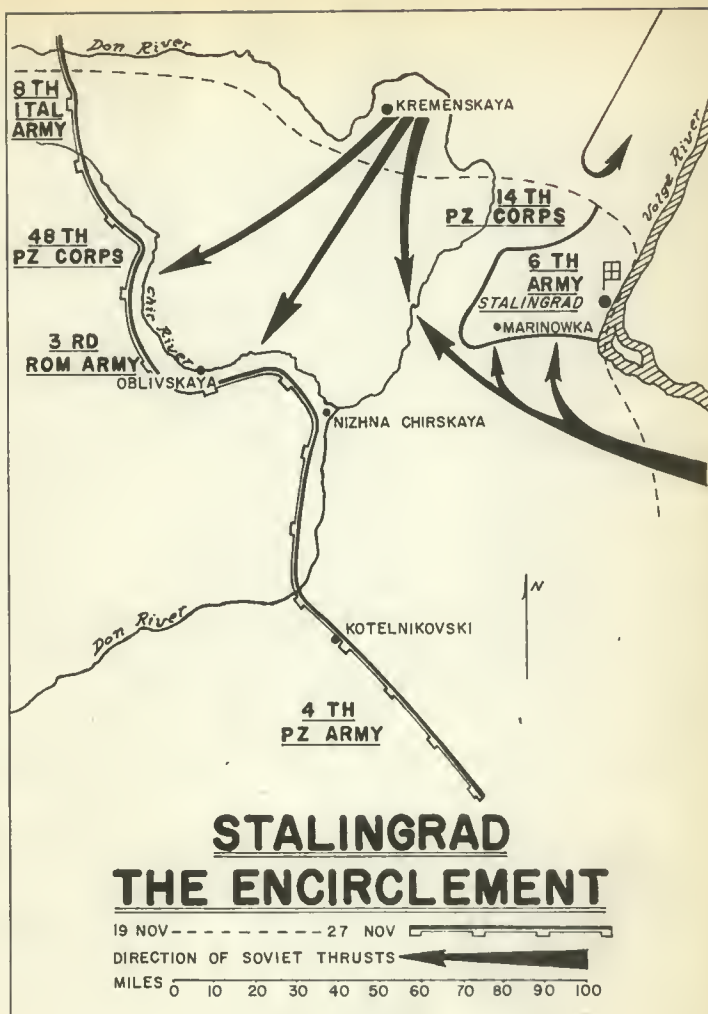
The collapse of the Third Romanian Army should have given

⁹U.S., Department of the Army, Handbook on the Soviet Army, Pamphlet No. 30-50-1 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, July, 1958), p. 60.

¹⁰See map on p. 52. Raymond L. Gartoff, Soviet Military Doctrine, (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1953), p. 99.

¹¹Hans Ulrich Rudel, Stuka Pilot, trans. Lynton Hudson (New York: Ballentine Books, 1958), p. 66.

¹²von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles, p. 167.



Hitler an indication of the fate that awaited the German forces at Stalingrad. Yet nothing happened to indicate that he had in any way revised his preconceived opinions. General Halder, greatly concerned over the situation, attempted to prove to Hitler that the Russians were amassing large numbers of troops and equipment in the Volga region. Figures that Halder had available showed that the Russians had assembled a million men in the Saratov area and a further half-million east of the Caucasus. Production figures furnished by intelligence sources stated that the Russians were producing 1,500 tanks a month, as compared to German tank production of only 600. General Halder expressed his concern and was relieved for his pessimism.¹³ General Zeitzler, Halder's successor, had done the same. Now the 'exhausted foe' had broken through the German lines with six corps of infantry and tanks.

In what was apparently typical Nazi fashion, a search was made for a scapegoat to assume the blame for the Russian breakthrough, and one was duly found. In an order of the day (quoted in Appendix H) which Hitler communicated to all senior officers, he sought to lay all the blame on the commander of the XLVIII Panzer Corps, General der Infanterie Heim. During the battle, this corps was ordered to go to the aid of the Romanians, but due to the fact that it was itself surrounded, it was unable to do so. Only after a direct order from Army Group B to escape, did they finally fight their way out of the encirclement. After the loss of nearly half of his command suffered while fighting out of the

¹³Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 48.

pocket, General Heim was met with the general order which relieved him of his command and placed him under arrest. The ridiculous nature of this action can be seen from the final disposition of the Heim case. Heim was flown to the Army prison at Moabit and kept there, in solitary confinement until April, 1943. He was neither charged nor interrogated nor tried for any offense. At the end of April he was transferred to the military hospital at Zehlendorf, and three months later was informed that his dismissal from the army had been cancelled. Exactly one year later Heim was recalled from the retired list and given a front line command of the forces fighting at Bolougne.¹⁴

On the afternoon of November 22, after very intense fighting, elements of the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps joined the 5th Guards Tank Corps at Marinovka, completing the first circle around von Paulus's Sixth Army. Similarly, another Soviet column from the south passed north of Abganerovo and came out on the Karpovka River, only a few miles from Kalatch which was then occupied by the 1st Tank Corps, completing the second ring around the troops in Stalingrad.¹⁵ Generaloberst von Weichs, commander of Army Group B, realizing that if the Sixth Army was to escape, it would have to do so immediately, requested that the Sixth Army be permitted to break out (Appendix E). Hitler refused categorically to grant this permission.¹⁶ Furthermore, von Paulus was ordered

¹⁴Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 66.

¹⁵Stalingrad: An Eye-Witness Account by Soviet Correspondents and Red Army Commanders, p. 56.

¹⁶von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 303.

by Hitler to move his headquarters into the city of Stalingrad and establish a circular defensive position. With this fateful message the Sixth Army was forced to remain in its precarious position without the prospect of an early order to break out of the pocket. Manstein later insisted that the time for decisive action was immediately after the encirclement. Although von Paulus realized Hitler's reluctance to permit a withdrawal, he should have acted on his own initiative and broken out of the pocket without asking Hitler's permission thereby presenting him with the accomplished fact.¹⁷ However, von Paulus seems to have accepted the order with little question for he followed to the letter Hitler's order to establish a complete perimeter defense. Oberst von Hofen, Signal Officer of the Sixth Army, later quoted von Paulus as saying:

If someone else, Reichenau for example, were in my place he would not need so long to decide what he must do. For me the first duty of a soldier is to obey. I am not sure whether independent action on my part might not lead to an even greater disaster. I cannot as yet see with sufficient clarity.¹⁸

The total number of troops cut off within the pocket at Stalingrad, had been subject to a considerable amount of controversy. War correspondent Schroeter contends that the figure reached 330,000.¹⁹ Field Marshal von Manstein insists that it was no more than 220,000.²⁰ In reality, the truth lies between

¹⁷ von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 304.

¹⁸ Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 88.

¹⁹ Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 177.

²⁰ von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 296.

these figures. Certainly Schroeter's figures are too high, since all the German units inside the pocket were greatly understrength. Manstein, however, neglects to mention the LI Army Corps in his tabulation of the units lost at Stalingrad and hence some 50,000 men must be added to his figures, giving the strength at 270,000.²¹ This figure corresponds to the Soviet figures released after the battle. The Soviet Information Bureau in a communique dated February 14, 1943, stated that the Red Army took some 120,000 prisoners at the end of the battle and counted over 130,000 dead left on the scene.²² All units cut off at the beginning of the battle were eventually lost when Stalingrad fell.²³

The situation in which the Sixth Army found itself was now critical, but it did not yet face an impending catastrophe. For the Sixth Army, as for Army Group Don, there was now only one possible decision which would have made military sense: Stalingrad had to be evacuated. From senior headquarters to the OKW, the question was not whether it was absolutely necessary to break out of the pocket, but simply how the Sixth Army must break out. The deciding factors to be considered were; the distances to the German troops outside the pocket, the Russian troop dispositions and the terrain of the area.

From the very beginning, however, there were doubts at Sixth

²¹Joachim Wieder, "Welches Gesetz Befahl den Deutschen Soldaten, an der Wolga zu Sterben?" Frankfurter Hefte, XI, No. 5, 1956. p. 313.

²²Stalingrad, p. 17

²³The unit designations of these organizations are shown in Appendix K.

Army Headquarters concerning the feasibility of this breakout, because of the fuel and ammunition shortage that existed within the pocket. This is, perhaps, the most important reason why Manstein and Paulus could not come to an understanding over the time and place of the breakout. Hitler had remained vague as to when he would issue orders for the attempt, and Manstein virtually demanded that Paulus disobey Hitler and make his break immediately. Manstein actually issued the order from Army Group Don to the Sixth Army for the operation which was thwarted only by a direct order from Hitler to Manstein specifically forbidding it. Partial reason for this refusal seemed to be information received by direct radio communication to Hitler from von Paulus stating that he did not have sufficient fuel for the breakout.²⁴ Manstein must not have fully appreciated von Paulus's position because much of the pressure on Army Group Don had slackened and the front appeared to have become fairly stable.

The fact that it had proved possible for Army Group Don to recreate a front along the Chir capable of withstanding enemy attacks for a protracted period was probably due to the strategy of the Soviet Supreme Command. Zhukov was determined to conserve his forces and therefore did not exploit his initial tactical success by extending the area of operations westwards, but concentrated instead on the completion of its original goal, the encirclement and annihilation of the German forces between the

²⁴von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 340.

Don and Volga.²⁵

It was known that Hitler had overreached himself in the operations of 1941-1942 and that it would therefore not be difficult to hold the German forces pinned down along the rest of the theatre of operations. It was also known that the Germans were struggling with supply problems of magnitude and complexity and that it would take longer for the Germans to reinforce any threatened sector of their front than it would for the Soviets to mount their attack.²⁶ Hitler remained adamant against all the arguments presented by the commanders on the front, that the Sixth Army should break out of the trap immediately after its encirclement.

What reasons did Hitler have in opposing the wishes of the OKW and the front line commanders and demanding that the German troops in the east were not to surrender one foot of conquered soil? It is apparent that there were two important factors in Hitler's decision to force the Sixth Army to remain at Stalingrad: first, the only reason that prevented a German catastrophe in the Moscow campaign in 1941 was his insistence on no retreat or abandonment of captured territory. In the Moscow decision, Hitler apparently was correct, but the same reasons could not be applied to Stalingrad.²⁷ Such a decision at Moscow, maintained Hitler, prevented the repetition of the catastrophe that had followed Napoleon's retreat from Moscow in 1812.²⁸ Hitler apparently

²⁵Bor-Ramenskii, Istoricheskiye Zapiski, No. 53, p. 29.

²⁶Savin, Bitva pod Stalingradom, p. 105.

²⁷von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 303.

²⁸Gilbert (ed), Hitler Directs His War, p. 187.

reasoned that war couldn't be won by retreats.

The second reason, perhaps not so obvious as the first, for requiring von Paulus to stay in the pocket, was one of prestige. The struggle for Stalingrad had become a personal duel between Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin. Evacuating Stalingrad would be a blow to Hitler's status, both at home and at the front, for he had boasted on many occasions that he would never retreat from his objectives. Doing so at this stage would undoubtedly cause Hitler the loss of much of the respect that he enjoyed at Supreme Headquarters.²⁹ With this fateful decision the battle of Stalingrad entered into a new phase, the attempt to relieve the beleaguered garrison.

The reorganization of the German forces, as part of the plan to relieve the Sixth Army, was initiated on November 25, when Hitler created a new command, Army Group Don. This new army group under the command of Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, consisted of the Fourth Panzer Army, the Sixth Army and the Third and Fourth Romanian Armies. Army Group B retained command of the Eighth Italian Army, the Second Hungarian Army and the Second German Army. Manstein was ordered to plan an operation for the relief of Stalingrad by using the Fourth Panzer Army in an attack from the south. Hitler provided the additional reinforcement of the LVII Panzer Corps with the 23rd Panzer Division from Army Group A in the south, as well as other units from the zone of the

²⁹von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 290.

interior.³⁰

Von Manstein regarded the success of the mission assigned to him as improbable, but he believed that he could master the problem by modifying Hitler's orders somewhat. His initial plan envisaged a breakout by the Sixth Army from Stalingrad while the forces of the Fourth Panzer Army advanced to its relief. On the southern flank, Army Group A was to withdraw behind the Lower Don, where a bridgehead at Rostov was to be secured.³¹ Under the assumption that the Supreme Command would accept his plan, Manstein proceeded with the preparation of 'Operation Winterlich Sturmwind', the relief of the Sixth Army, utilizing an attack on two axes.

A special task force of the Fourth Panzer Army under the command of Generaloberst Hoth (Armeegruppe Hoth), consisted of the VII and VI Romanian Corps reinforced by several panzer divisions from the LVII Panzer Corps, was given the mission of attacking east of the Don with the bulk of its forces from Kotelnikovo, driving through the Russian covering forces and establishing a bridgehead on the Don for the Sixth Army.³² The XLVIII Panzer Corps, main striking force of another special detachment (Armeaabteilung Hollidt) was to drive due east from Nizhna Chirskaya. The attack was scheduled to begin on December 8, but was later postponed to December 12.

During the first few days of December, the reinforcing units

³⁰Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 107.

³¹von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 302.

³²von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 323.

from Army Group A assembled in the area of Kotelnikovo to await the impending attack. The distance to be traveled by Task Force Hoth was some sixty miles. Although this distance was over thirty miles farther away from Stalingrad than Army Detachment Hollidt, it was felt by Manstein that it would have a better chance of success than Hollidt would have, since he was striking at the soft underbelly of the Russian forces committed against Army Group B.³³

On December 12, the 23rd Panzer Division and the 17th Panzer Division spearheaded the drive to Stalingrad. Task Force Hoth met with strong Russian resistance and very bad weather but nevertheless managed to cross the Aksay River successfully by December 17.³⁴ With the operation moving so smoothly, it was felt that this force would reach to within thirty miles of Stalingrad no later than December 20.³⁵ Unfortunately for the Germans, this point was the moment that Zhukov launched new twin offensives against the Eighth Italian Army on the middle Don and the XLVIII Panzer Corps along the Chir. The 13th Tank Corps and the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps slashed through the Italian front and opened a gap of sixty miles in the line through which they raced for Rostov.³⁶

³³von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 323.

³⁴See map on p. 62. von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles, p. 178.

³⁵Allen and Muratoff, The Russian Campaigns of 1941-1943, p. 215.

³⁶von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles, p. 192.

STALINGRAD THE DECISIVE BATTLE

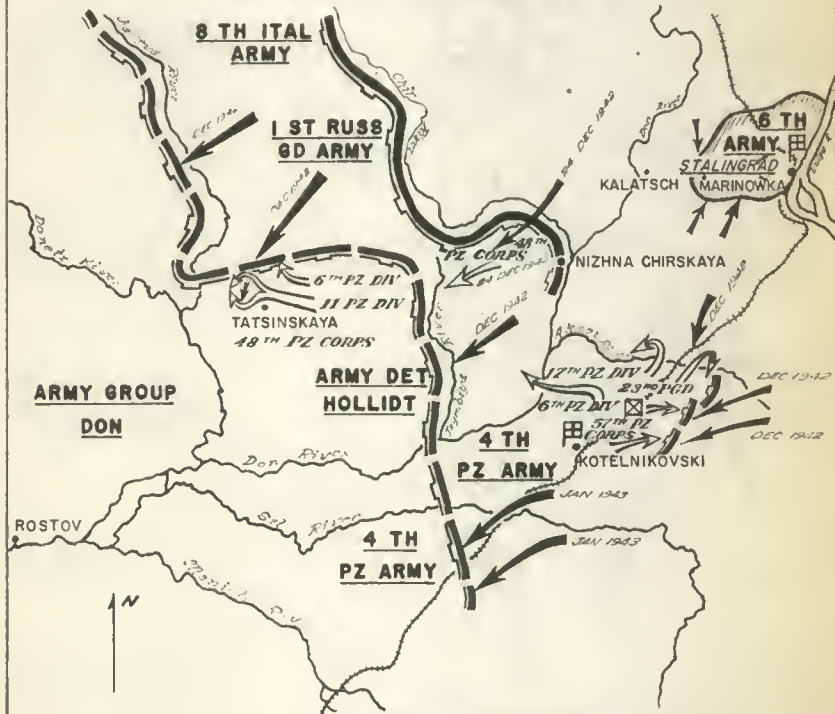
SITUATION - 24 DEC 1942

SITUATION - ARMY GROUP DON - JAN 1943

RUSSIAN ATTACKS

MILES

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



Army Group Don was forced to order the 17th Panzer Division and the 6th Panzer Division away from the attempted relief of Stalingrad in order to attempt to hold the Russian forces in their drive toward Rostov. By December 22, the situation in the rear of the bridgehead was in such a state that the possibility of a further attack on the pocket was virtually ruled out. While the 17th and the 6th Panzer Divisions were able to clear the southern bank of the Myshkova River, they were still tied down near the town of Gromslavka and were unable to disengage in order to return to their original task. In the meantime, to the west of the Don, the Russians had been launching a series of heavy attacks against the XLVIII Panzer Corps. As a result of these attacks, this corps could not begin its coordinating attack and was forced to prepare a withdrawal.³⁷

As these events were taking place the beleaguered Stalingrad Fortress made preparations to break out of the pocket. The Sixth Army felt that it had enough fuel for only nine miles of tank operations, so the order, designated 'Operation Donnerschlag', was to be initiated only when the relieving forces had reached a point eleven miles from the fortress.³⁸ Von Paulus had little confidence in Hoth's ability to reach the Sixth Army, but it had been hoped by Sixth Army Headquarters that the panzer forces could reach a point near enough to the pocket for the Sixth Army to take the opportunity of breaking out and leaving Stalingrad once and for all.

³⁷von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles, p. 199.

³⁸Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 116.

The intention, once the Sixth Army had been saved, was to withdraw the entire army behind the Kotelnikovo line.³⁹

If ever there had been an opportunity to save the Sixth Army after the early stages of the encirclement, this was the time. Manstein considered it mandatory that the Sixth Army attempt their breakout on December 19 and he issued the appropriate orders for its execution. However, von Paulus was unwilling to chance a breakout which would cover thirty miles before it met relieving forces, so when Manstein ordered the evacuation, von Paulus refused. Hitler, concurring with von Paulus's decision to remain in the pocket, promised to continue to supply the Sixth Army from the air. This facet of the operations of the battle will be examined in a later chapter.

Perhaps the success of the Sixth Army's breakthrough had been doomed from the very start for Hitler qualified his permission for the attack by stipulating that the Sixth Army had to continue to hold the city. This was obviously folly on Hitler's part, for the Sixth Army could not possibly both attack and defend with the limited strength it had available, and it cannot be assumed that Hitler would have changed his mind after the breakthrough had started.⁴⁰

General Hoth was willing to risk his entire army in his effort to reach Stalingrad, and began preparations to launch a last attack towards the pocket if von Paulus would agree to

³⁹von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 337.

⁴⁰von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 337.

evacuate the pocket. This agreement was necessary inasmuch as any gains made would be very short ones, and Task Force Hoth would be unable to hold a supply corridor open for any length of time. The attack was to be launched on December 27, provided that von Paulus would concur with the evacuation arrangements. The necessity of making such a decision was taken from von Paulus for on December 24, Hitler announced that he was taking personal command of Fortress Stalingrad and designated it as a 'War Theatre under the Supreme Command'. Hitler further announced that there was to be no withdrawal from Stalingrad and that the attack to relieve the fortress would be renewed after the situation regarding Army Groups A and Don had been restored.⁴¹ With this decision, it was futile and dangerous to permit Task Force Hoth to remain in its precarious position. Von Manstein now ordered a general withdrawal to prevent any further losses on the part of the task force.⁴²

According to later estimates, the Sixth Army had never made the necessary preparations to launch the breakout of the pocket when the relieving forces had reached within thirty miles of Stalingrad. Some critics maintain that if the Sixth Army had taken its opportunity when the attacking forces had reached the thirty mile limit, they might have escaped.⁴³ As it was, von Paulus considered his fuel supply so limited that when the crucial

⁴¹von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles, p. 199.

⁴²von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 346.

⁴³von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 336.

time came, the attempt to break out never materialized.⁴⁴ Hitler had also learned from his personal radio contact within the pocket that von Paulus considered his fuel supply sufficient for only a nine mile operation, and he modified the issue with his order to von Manstein that he was not to consider the Sixth Army in his plans until Hoth's forces actually reached the fortress, which, under the conditions, was impossible.⁴⁵

Hitler's decision to postpone the relief of Stalingrad doomed the Sixth Army. On December 26, von Paulus sent Field Marshal von Manstein a message (Appendix J) stating that his army no longer possessed the ability to launch an attack to aid in its own relief. Hitler announced the plan in which he would build up the Sixth Army's strength by flying in supplies, while he rounded up fresh reinforcements for another relief expedition. On January 1, 1943, Hitler issued orders for the evacuation of the Caucasus by Army Group A. When this evacuation was complete, he would use these forces in the new attempt to rescue the Sixth Army. Army Group A, however, was in an unsuitable position to come to the relief of anyone, for there was still a real danger that Army Group A would itself become encircled if the Russians could achieve the closing of the narrow gap near Rostov. At the same time, the Soviet High Command realized that it could successfully eliminate any possibility of a reinforcement in the Stalingrad area by the

⁴⁴Horst Scheibert, "Nach Stalingrad - 48 Kilometer," Deutsche Soldat, XX, No. 9, 1956. p. 16.

⁴⁵Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 118.

forces in the Caucasus if they could force this army group to withdraw across the straits to the narrow Kerch peninsula. They estimated that it would take several weeks to complete such an operation, and in this time the Stalingrad pocket could be reduced.⁴⁶ Even though the Russians were not successful in surrounding Army Group A, the time consumed in the evacuation of the Caucasus was such that by the time that it was in a position to provide reinforcements to the pocket, the situation at Stalingrad was no longer in doubt. Thus, the Soviet strategy of keeping pressure on Army Group A was very successful.

By early January, two large battles were being fought on the eastern front. One major effort entailed the pursuit of the retreating German reserves to beyond the Kharkov-Kursk line from which Bock had initially launched the German offensive six months before. In the other, the Russians were engaged in the extermination of the encircled Sixth Army. To coordinate these two battles more effectively the Soviet Supreme Command reorganized its order of battle. General-Polkovnik Yeremenko's Stalingrad Front was abolished as an entity, and General Chuikov's 62nd Army in Stalingrad was assigned to the newly formed Don Front, which was commanded by General-Polkovnik Rokossovsky. The remaining armies of the Stalingrad Front were assigned to the newly organized Southern Front under the command of General-Polkovnik Malinovsky, whose mission was to join in the pursuit of the German forces in

⁴⁶Savin, Bitva pod Stalingradom, p. 102.

the west.⁴⁷

The mission assigned to the Don Front was to liquidate the trapped German army. General-Polkovnik Artillerii Nikolai Voronov was sent to the Don Front as the official representative of the Stavka to coordinate the operation of reducing the Sixth Army with the over-all Soviet offensive. He was to coordinate directly with Marshal Zhukov, who had earlier left for Moscow to supervise the lifting of the siege of Leningrad.⁴⁸ General Rokossovsky's Don Front consisted of six separate armies. One of them was Chuikov's 62nd Army. The other armies involved in the reduction of the Stalingrad pocket were the 21st Army under General-Leutenant Mikhail Shumilov, General Makorin's 65th Army, the 57th Army under General-Major Giorkov, the 66th Army of General Maikov, and the 64th Army under General-Leutenant Chistiakov. The total number of this army group was nearly three quarters of a million men.⁴⁹ On January 8, 1943, an ultimatum was sent to von Paulus to surrender his army or suffer the dire consequences. (Appendix K) This ultimatum was rejected by von Paulus, and so on January 10, the reduction of the pocket was initiated. The last struggle of the Sixth Army was begun.

Rokossovsky struck first from the west, keeping his forces to the north of the railroad that ran west from Stalingrad. He

⁴⁷Stupov and Kokunov, 62-iya Armiya V Boiakh Za Stalingrad, p. 79.

⁴⁸Kerr, The Russian Army: Its Men, Its Leaders, Its Battles, p. 216.

⁴⁹Stupov and Kokunov, 62-iya Armiya V Boiakh Za Stalingrad, p. 82.

cracked this part of the German line and by the night of January 13, he had driven the trapped divisions in towards Stalingrad so that their backs were to the Rossoshka and Cherblennaya Rivers. The day before, the headquarters of the Sixth Army, realizing that their end must be near, worked out the details of two plans christened 'Operation Loewe' and 'Operation Sonnenblume'. 'Sonnenblume' was the code name of the building of a new front. It was to start about nine miles east of Marinovka and was intended to stabilize the positions which had been weakened due to losses in the German ranks. This plan was turned down by the German commanders because of the lack of natural obstacles in this area, and because the German forces were so reduced in strength that many felt that they could not make it back to this area. The other plan, 'Loewe', was a product of despair. The implementing orders for this plan were simply that when the code word was received by the units, the still-surviving troops were to break out of the pocket on their own initiative. The commanders of the line units reported that their troops were now far too exhausted to carry out such a forlorn scheme.⁵⁰

On January 14, Rokossovsky drove up from the south and broke the Cherblennaya line and at the same time his forces pushed in from the northwest to crush the Cossoshka line. Then both columns joined to push the German forces farther towards Stalingrad. By January 17, the Germans were nearly driven to the outskirts of the city. A week later with the Germans holding only an area

⁵⁰Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 180.

some eight miles in diameter in the suburbs of Stalingrad, the end was approaching fast. The time had come for each individual soldier to make up his mind whether he wanted to commit suicide or be taken into captivity. On that day the Sixth Army's radio transmitter, linked with Hitler's headquarters, sent a message to OKW urgently requesting that permission be granted to surrender in order to prevent further bloodshed. Hitler answered the Sixth Army's appeal with the demand that: "Surrender is forbidden. Sixth Army will hold their positions to the last man and the last round and by their heroic endurance will make an unforgettable contribution towards the establishment of a defensive front and the salvation of the Western world."⁵¹

There has been great controversy over the inhumane decision to require the Sixth Army to defend their positions to the last man. Hitler's justification was that with the passing of each day, the Germans were strengthening their defenses on the eastern front while the heroic Sixth Army was preventing Russian reinforcements from reaching the line and affecting the German defenses. Field Marshal von Manstein agreed with Hitler on this matter. He stated that if the two hundred and fifty-nine identified Russian units operating against the Sixth Army were released to join the other Russian forces pressing against Army Group Don, then Germany would have suffered an even greater catastrophe. He further insisted that it was the soldier's duty to defend his position until he lacked the physical means to

⁵¹Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 220.

resist further.⁵² Some critics, on the other hand, criticize von Manstein for not making it clear to von Paulus as to the serious position he was in. Von Paulus apparently felt to the end that he had some chance of surviving with some help from the airlift.⁵³ The fact is that by the end of December the Sixth Army was in such a weakened condition that it could not offer enough strength to aid in its own evacuation.⁵⁴ Another critic states that so much chaos existed after the 1st of January that the Sixth Army was capable of producing only the most feeble resistance, since the average German soldier was interested only in keeping warm or finding a scrap of food, and not in fighting Russian troops.⁵⁵

The post mortems performed by Russian physicians on the German dead after the termination of the battle provide positive confirmation of this view. Over forty percent of the dead examined retained little or no fatty tissue under the skin and inner organs. The mesentery was a watery mass and the organs were pale. Instead of red and yellow marrow, a trembling jelly was found in the bones. The livers were very swollen and the right ventricle and auricle of the hearts were strongly extended and enlarged. The Russian doctors listed the cause of death of this large number of men as due to exhaustion and exposure.⁵⁶ Despite

⁵² von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 353.

⁵³ This phase of the battle will be discussed in Chapter IV.

⁵⁴ Wieder, Frankfurter Hefte, p. 312.

⁵⁵ Benno Zieser, The Road to Stalingrad, trans. Alec Brown (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1955), p. 150.

⁵⁶ Wieder, Frankfurter Hefte, p. 316.

these arguments to the contrary, the Sixth Army was nevertheless able to tie up the entire Don Front until the 1st of February and so prevent release of Russian troops elsewhere.

By January 26, a Russian attack broke the German defenders into groups. One group was surrounded in the southern part of the city and the other in the northern part of Stalingrad. By the next day, Chuikov's 62nd Army inside Stalingrad joined Rokossovsky's other armies in the final destruction of the surrounded groups. On February 1, the southern group surrendered together with the Sixth Army's commander, who only a few days before had been promoted to the rank of Feldmarschall. By doing this Hitler hoped that von Paulus would commit suicide rather than subject himself to capture, since no German field marshal had ever been taken captive. In fact Hitler, at a staff meeting, informed some associates that:

What hurts me most, personally, is that I still promoted him to Field Marshal. I wanted to give him this final satisfaction and place in glory. Instead he permits himself to become a pawn in the hands of the Soviets. A man like that besmirches the heroism of so many others at the last moment. He could have freed himself from all sorrow and ascended into eternity and national immortality, but he prefers to go to Moscow.⁵⁷

That night Soviet planes dropped leaflets on which were pinned pictures showing von Paulus being questioned at Russian headquarters. The following morning the northern group surrendered and the battle of Stalingrad was over. Over 150,000 German soldiers had been killed and over 100,000 had been taken captive.

⁵⁷Gilbert, Hitler Directs His War, p. 21.

CHAPTER IV

PROBLEMS OF THE UKRAINIAN CAMPAIGN

The Guerrilla Factor and Supply Problems

To achieve a basic understanding of the Stalingrad disaster, not only military but also economic and political factors must be examined. The reason for the change in the attitude of the Ukrainian people toward their occupation authorities had the greatest impact on the logistical support of the southern operations. The vast areas of the Soviet Union present, at best, great supply problems to military operations, but when in addition to the space factor, there exists an uncontrollable guerrilla situation, adequate support becomes impossible.

The key to understanding German policy in the Soviet Union can be found in Hitler's Mein Kampf. This work stresses three basic ideas which influenced German occupation policy. The belief that the Slavs were an inferior race; the knowledge that Eastern Europe and especially the Ukraine, would be an ideal place for German agricultural colonization; and the most effective and most lasting way for expansion of a nation is through physical force and conquest.¹ Lasting proof of this policy comes from Hitler's own words:

...for the organization of a Russian state formation was not the result of the political abilities of the Slavs in Russia, but only a wonderful example of the state-

¹Kamenetskii, Hitler's Occupation of the Ukraine, p. 1.

forming efficiency of the German element in an inferior race.²

Under German occupation, the Ukraine became an experimental area where the Nazi theory of a superior race, mass extermination of the subhuman races, and preparation of the German settlement on a large scale were given a thorough test.

Initially, to conceal Hitler's colonial plans, Germany had acted as a champion of an independent Ukrainian state. In the fall of 1938, the German-controlled radio in Vienna started transmitting special broadcasts to the Ukrainians in the Soviet Ukraine and in the Western Ukraine which was under Polish jurisdiction. The Ukrainian national spirit in the Carpatho-Ukraine was encouraged. Insofar as the German allies were concerned, the prospect of having a Ukrainian buffer state on their boundaries instead of the gigantic Soviet Union, must have been welcome to Hungary and Romania.³

The true clarification of Hitler's aims came in a drastic form on March 15, 1939, when Germany occupied Bohemia and Moravia and gave the Carpatho-Ukraine to Hungary. The very successful appeasement by Germany of the Soviet Union was culminated with the non-aggression pact signed between them on August 23, 1939. This politically shrewd maneuver enabled Germany to crush Poland, her last obstacle to the Ukraine. These factors are inseparable to the military decisions later made.

²Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, (London: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), p. 654.

³Kamenetskii, Hitler's Occupation of the Ukraine, p. 15.

Economically the Ukraine was magnificently endowed with natural resources. The Krivoy Rog area in 1940, was second only to the United States in iron reserves and actually produced twice as much as France, the leading European producer. It stood fourth in the world's steel production. The coal mines of the Donets Basin attained essentially the same rank. The potato crop was exceeded in the world only by Germany and Poland, and the Ukraine was the world's largest producer of beet sugar. Grain production, especially wheat, was one of the leaders in the world.⁴

Socially, however, the Ukraine with a population of sixty-six persons per square kilometer or a total of thirty-six million (only 10% lower than that of France) was not well suited for extensive colonization.⁵ Acting in the spirit of National Socialist ideology, which claimed the special rights for the 'master race' and provided none for races branded as 'inferior' or 'harmful', the Germans considered several drastic actions designed to create their lebensraum. The plans were classified into three main categories: 1) biological eradication; 2) dispersion of the native population as slave labor throughout the entire German Reich; and 3) large scale resettlement of the native population in an eastward direction.⁶

In the Ukrainian policy, the enslavement solution seemed to

⁴S.S. Balzak (ed.), Economic Geography of the U.S.S.R., (New York: Macmillan, 1949), p. 149.

⁵Mirov, Geography of Russia, p. 59.

⁶Kamenetskii, Hitler's Occupation of the Ukraine, p. 38.

be of special interest to Hitler. He did not seem to be satisfied with more Ukrainian slave labor camps, but tried to transform a considerable part of the Ukrainian youth into Germans. On October 9, 1942, Hitler personally ordered the immediate deportation to Germany of 400,000 to 500,000 picked Ukrainian girls between the ages of 15 and 35. They were to become domestics in German households to further their Germanization and to help make them permanent residents of Germany.⁷

It is well to examine the initial reception given to the German troops when they arrived in the Ukraine and before Hitler had an opportunity to implement his policies. Initially the German forces were welcomed with open arms in the Ukraine. A provisional government was formed, and the independence of the Ukraine was proclaimed in Lvov on June 30, 1941, and in Kiev in October, 1941. The Ukrainian National Partisan Group, commanded by Ataman Bulba-Borovets, conducted operations against Soviet troops in the province of Polissya and coordinated its actions with those of the Germans. Throughout the Ukraine, the people who were liberated from the Soviet regime started to organize their own administration, national press, economic associations, cultural institutions, and schools. Former Red Army soldiers who either escaped the war or were freed from prisoner of war camps by the Germans went to work collecting the harvest or rebuilding destroyed industrial plants. There was strong popular support in the Ukraine for the organization of a National Ukrainian Army to fight the Red Army and

⁷Gilbert (ed.), Hitler Directs His War, p. 157.

communism.⁸ The opportunity arose for the Germans to join forces with the national movements within the Soviet Union and to utilize these forces to bring about the destruction of the Soviet regime.

But the Germans failed to use the forces which had played into their hands. Initially in the campaign, in order to insure the proper treatment of the Russian population, all German officers and noncommissioned officers appointed to military government posts were given an orientation by German experts on Russia. Implementing proper civil affairs/military government procedures, little friction developed with the civilian populace. The arrival of the regular occupation authorities, in the form of the Geheime Staatspolizei (Gestapo) and the Schutzstaffeln (SS), brought the beginning of Hitler's policies and the end to the harmonious relations which existed between the Germans and the Ukrainians.⁹ The German Civil Administration, through their blundering mismanagement, missed a golden opportunity to direct the Ukraine against their former Soviet masters.

The security of the military supply lines which stretched a thousand miles between Germany and the Eastern Theatre of Operations became a matter of great concern to the major commanders. In spite of this fact, German policy in the Ukraine continued to be harsh and absolutely uncompromising. Hitler's policies repelled

⁸Kamenetski, Hitler's Occupation of the Ukraine, p. 54.

⁹U.S., Department of the Army, Rear Area Security in Russia-The Soviet Second Front Behind German Lines, Pamphlet No. 20-240 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, July, 1951), p. 17.

every national group and every class in Russia. For this reason it is quite understandable why the change from an initially friendly Ukrainian attitude to an anti-German outburst caused much uneasiness among German commanders in the theatre and the military government personnel trying to manage civil affairs.

A member of the Political Department of the Ostministerium and former German consul in the Soviet Union, Otto Braeutigam, warned of the developments in the Ukraine in a report dated October 25, 1942:

Our policy of using the Ukraine as a counterpoise against mighty Russia, against Poland and the Balkans as a bridge to the Caucasus, was a complete failure. The forty million Ukrainians who greeted us enthusiastically as liberators, are quite indifferent to us and gravitate to the enemy's camp. If we do not succeed in checking this situation, we face, at the last moment, a danger that the Ukrainian partisan movement will be able to deny us Ukraine to a great extent as a source of food and to sever communications of the German Army. Consequently its existence will be endangered, and the defeat of the Germans will become imminent.¹⁰

To appreciate the foresightedness of this man, it must be borne in mind that this report was made at a time when the German Army was meeting with great successes in its campaign and the disaster of Stalingrad was still a few months distant. General Thomas in his report to Hitler in December, 1940, also advised that it would be necessary to keep the civilian population in the Ukraine where they were and to see to it that they cooperated with the German occupation authorities because the attitude of the population in the occupied areas was of vital importance to

¹⁰Kamenetski, Hitler's Occupation of the Ukraine, p. 60.

the Germans. Since neither German military nor civilian authorities possessed sufficient police to enforce obedience or, using Hitler's policies, the ability to win the loyalty of the millions of Ukrainians, the problem of securing food and raw materials from the occupied areas became extremely difficult.

This and similar warnings were not heeded either by Hitler or by his close associates. Hitler's policy of annihilation, enslavement, and national oppression continued until the inevitable happened. Late in 1942, in the Ukraine, large-scale anti-German partisan warfare began, just when the Germans most urgently needed a clear line of communications within the rear areas in order to attempt to stabilize the collapsed front at Stalingrad.

The first indications of organized resistance to the German rear areas came in mid-1942. By this time occasional acts of sabotage by groups and individuals became routine. The beginnings of a well-planned partisan organization that operated with a variety of technical and psychological means were clearly noticeable. Initially the rear area guerrilla activity was carried on by Soviet troops, who infiltrated the German lines, or who were dropped behind the lines by parachute. Women were also sent as they caused less suspicion from the German troops. As the repressive measures grew, local indigeneous personnel were recruited and trained.¹¹

To insure a lack of cooperation between the local population

¹¹P.K. Ponomarenko and Others, V Tylu Vraga, (Moskva: Malodaya Gvardiya, 1944), p. 15.

and the German occupation authorities, the partisans used terrorist techniques to discourage fraternization with the Germans.¹² The Soviet regime began to appeal to the inhabitants sense of patriotism by making the war a struggle against despotism and demanding that the 'motherland' be saved. Patriotic propaganda literature subtly changed from 'Sovyetsskii Soyuz' to 'Rodina'. In all fairness to the Ukrainian people, they were probably not taken in by the Soviet literature, but were aroused to resistance by the fact that the German occupation had proven to be much worse than their experiences under the Soviet regime.

An example occurring in the fall of 1942, can be given to demonstrate the effectiveness of the partisan opposition in German rear area control. The Second Panzer Army operating southwest of Orel was ordered to assure that delivery was made of a certain quota of grain and potatoes from the local harvest. Agricultural control officers were posted throughout the entire army area to supervise and direct the harvest operations to be carried out by the local inhabitants. Equipped only with side arms and scattered widely throughout the area, these agents could not be expected to offer any resistance to possible partisan raids. Nevertheless as soon as the crops began to be harvested partisan activity increased tremendously, and in a short period of time they had gained so much control over the rural areas that Russian aircraft were landing and carrying the seized foodstuffs out of

¹²U.S., Department of the Army, Rear Area Security in Russia-The Soviet Second Front Behind German Lines, p. 20.

the area and into the Soviet Union.¹³

Logistical support to organized partisan bands reached a staggering proportion. The Soviet Supreme Command (GKO) realized how important these rear area activities were to the conduct of the war and saw to it that they were nearly as well equipped as regular Red Army units. Most partisan units had heavy weapons and a few even had artillery and tanks captured from the Germans, with spare parts and ammunition flown in from Red Army units.¹⁴

Partisan raids in the latter stages of 1942, and all during 1943, on the German supply routes became more than annoying. The only means the Germans had of bringing up supplies from the zone of the interior was by rail, since the road system was so inadequate for the purpose. A very elaborate system of guarding the railroad was instituted by the Germans, but because the supply of German labor was in such short supply, indigeneous labor had to be recruited, with a corresponding increase of the sabotage rate. Because of the treatment of the local population, and the well organized guerrilla activities, during the winter of 1942-1943, the delivery of supplies from Germany to the front line troops by rail was cut to one train in three.¹⁵ No rear areas were safe and many times German troops sent to the rear for rest, pleaded to be sent back to the front where they would be safe.¹⁶

¹³U.S., Department of the Army, Rear Area Security in Russia-The Soviet Second Front Behind German Lines, p. 21.

¹⁴Ponomarenko and Others, V Tylu Vraga, p. 37.

¹⁵Ponomarenko and Others, V Tylu Vraga, p. 49.

¹⁶Zieser, The Road to Stalingrad, p. 24.

The techniques of disrupting the German supply system varied from location to location. Inasmuch as the rail centers were the most closely guarded, the most inviting target was remote stretches of track between German strongpoints. To prevent attacks on these remote areas, the Germans would cut down the trees for a distance of up to 400 yards on either side of the tracks (the maximum grazing fire on a light machine gun). This system reduced most of the daylight attacks, but had not the slightest effect on night operations.¹⁷ By the early months of 1943 and until the end of operations in Russia, the technique had improved so much that joint operations were held, in which during the course of a single night, many railroads would be attacked simultaneously. The coordination and planning would be handled by the major Soviet unit in the sector being attacked. Demolitions and demolition experts would be flown in for the operations if partisan units had no qualified personnel.¹⁸ The proportions of these combined operations reached such an advanced stage that in June, 1944, the partisans carried out a major operation in the rear area of Army Group Center and succeeded in carrying out 10,500 separate cases of demolition in a single night. The immediate result of this operation was that all double-tracked railroads were inoperable for twenty-four hours and all single-tracked lines were out for forty-eight hours!¹⁹

¹⁷U.S., Department of the Army, Rear Area Security in Russia-The Soviet Second Front Behind German Lines, p. 10.

¹⁸Ponomarenko and Others, V Tylu Vraga, p. 59.

¹⁹U.S., Department of the Army, Rear Area Security in Russia-The Soviet Second Front Behind German Lines, p. 30.

Judging by the success of the partisan operations in the Ukraine, it is not surprising that German pilots complained that they did not have enough fuel to conduct satisfactory air operations and were sometimes limited to two sorties a day.²⁰ Even communications were disrupted. Telephone communications were not the most reliable when the partisans continually cut them, and it required many men to find the breaks and repair the lines.

Insofar as overall military operations were concerned, the partisan movement was not solely responsible for the collapse of the German forces in Russia. Nevertheless, the partisans contributed heavily to the loss of logistical support to the front lines and for this they did contribute to the German defeat. In addition, it can be safely stated that this entire problem was preventable. Any reasonable attempt by the German military administration to foster good relations and establish some sort of self rule would have resulted in harmonious relations. Punishing civilian populations for the wrongdoing of partisans in the field merely infuriated all the Ukrainians.

Bearing these factors in mind there were two possible solutions to the partisan problem in the Ukraine. First, the local German administration could have approached the Ukrainian population as allies and curried their good favor, as Thomas recommended in his report of December, 1940. By so doing, the natural anti-Bolshevik sympathies of the Ukrainian people would have caused these people to work with the German forces for the

²⁰Rudel, Stuka Pilot, p. 72.

destruction of the Soviet Armies. Secondly, assuming that Hitler would not change his intended policy of using the Ukraine for German colonization, an active defense of the rear areas could have been adopted. Examining the situation on the Eastern Front, such an approach would not have been possible, for the Germans had already overextended their lines and had committed nearly all of their strategic reserves almost at the onset of the campaign. The large numbers of troops required for an active campaign against the partisans would not have been available for this purpose. The German failure at rear area security demonstrates that a passive defense based on scattered strong points cannot be successful against guerrilla operations.

The Failure of the Airlift

At the initial assault on the Soviet Union by the Germans, complete aerial superiority was enjoyed by the Luftwaffe. At the beginning of the war, most Soviet aircraft were obsolete and ineffective against the modern Stuka and Messerschmidt makes of the Germans. As the campaign progressed, however, Soviet air operations increased, and became more and more effective. A significant reason for this effectiveness of Soviet air strength was the lend-lease of American P-38 and P-39 fighter aircraft arriving through Murmansk and Arkhangelsk by the middle of 1942.

The basis on which Hitler was willing to accept the risk of not permitting the Sixth Army to make an immediate breakout was that the Sixth Army should receive an aerial delivery of a minimum of 500 tons of supplies daily. Acting on the orders of the

Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe, Generaloberst Jeschonek reported to Hitler that Reichsmarschall Goering was prepared to guarantee the delivery of supplies to the Sixth Army. Goering's only condition was that the army must continue to hold the airfields then in its possession, which he would need for his transport and supply aircraft. Also certain airfields outside the pocket which had been in use by combat planes and for the supply of other units, must from then on be devoted solely to supplying the Sixth Army.²¹ Given these conditions, Goering said that he could fly in 500 metric tons daily to the surrounded army. Field Marshal von Manstein stated at that time that unless this promise could be kept, it would be an inexcusable risk to leave the Sixth Army in the pocket any longer.²²

The Sixth Army had previously reported that it needed a minimum daily delivery of 750 metric tons of supplies: namely 380 tons of food, 120 tons of fuel and 250 tons of ammunition.²³ It was apparent to all the senior officers in the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht that, even in theory, the Luftwaffe transport facilities were incapable of delivering supplies by air at the rate of 750 tons per day. On November 23, 1942, Goering, after talking with his Chief of the Air Transport Division of the Luftwaffe, was assured that the transport facilities available could support operations to the figure of 350 tons of supplies per day. Goering

²¹Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 101.

²²von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 307.

²³Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 102.

was not satisfied with this figure, and after referring to the possibility of switching transport aircraft from other theatres of war, decided on the figure of 500 tons.²⁴ And so the question that remained was would the Luftwaffe be capable to furnish the Sixth Army's needs? Some felt that despite Goering's promise, it was not possible.

One of these sceptics was the commander of supporting tactical air to Army Group Don, Generaloberst Freiherr von Richthofen, the Commander-in-Chief of the Fourth Air Fleet. Richthofen had already strongly criticized the proposed plan of supplying Stalin-grad by air. He stated that the only way in which such an airlift would succeed would be to have three airfields inside the pocket and a transport fleet of one thousand aircraft. In addition he doubted if the airlift could be flown even with the sufficient number of aircraft available, because the weather conditions would not be satisfactory at that time of the year in that particular locality.²⁵ There are also certain practical aspects that must be examined. First, the nearest airfields to the Stalin-grad pocket were 110 and 135 miles away. Therefore, considering the normal time consumed in loading and unloading the aircraft, a maximum of two trips could be made into the pocket in any twenty-four hour period. This would only be in periods of favorable flying conditions.²⁶

²⁴Willi Frischauer, The Rise and Fall of Hermann Goering, (New York: Ballentine Books, 1951), p. 197.

²⁵von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 316.

²⁶von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 317.

To airlift 500 tons of supplies, some 225 Junkers Ju-52's, the standard German transport plane, would be needed. This number of aircraft was available, but this requirement did not consider the losses that the Luftwaffe would suffer flying over the sixty miles of Russian held territory and the normal maintenance procedures. These planes would be unescorted by fighters, since these were diverted on other tactical missions and could not be spared to furnish cover protection.²⁷ In addition the Soviet air operations were gaining at a fast rate. During the period from September through December, 1942, 34,408 sorties were flown by Russian forces. All available aircraft both effective combat and obsolete planes were used to gather the principle of mass in aviation operations.²⁸

Fifty percent of all these sorties were by the Soviet Fighter Command who used their Shturmoviki (assault aircraft) not only for the mission that normally accompanies fighter-bomber operations, but also as pursuit aircraft to combat the supply aircraft flying supplies into the Stalingrad pocket and to combat Stuka operations.²⁹ Through these extensive Russian operations, the Luftwaffe lost some 488 aircraft and about 1,000 men at Stalingrad.³⁰ Bearing this in mind, the German strength in planes was never adequate enough to deliver anything near the necessary 500

²⁷Rudel, Stuka Pilot, p. 73.

²⁸Gartoff, Soviet Military Doctrine, p. 125.

²⁹Rudel, Stuka Pilot, p. 71.

³⁰von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 316.

tons of supplies daily.

With these factors in mind, we should study the actual aerial operations of the supply fleet. In the pocket itself there were available the two airfields of Pitomnik and Gumrak, with the field at Bassargino as an emergency landing field. The main fields outside the pocket most in use were the large airstrips at Tatsinskaya (135 miles from the pocket) and Morosovskaya (110 miles from Stalingrad). After these had been lost, fields at more distant points had to be used. These were Salszk, Novo-Chirskaya, Stalino, Markievka and Voroshilovgrad.³¹

By the end of November, about 180 Junkers Ju-52, 20 Junkers Ju-86, and 90 Heinkels He-111, were available for airlift operations. The needs of the Sixth Army and the promises made by Goering and Hitler had to be fulfilled by these aircraft.³² As has been previously stated, the Sixth Army had originally demanded 750 tons of supplies per day, later reduced to the minimum of 500 tons promised by Goering. By Hitler's orders, the daily lift was to carry in about 60,000 gallons of fuel, forty tons of bread, forty tons of weapons and ammunition and 100 tons of miscellaneous supplies including other foodstuffs. It was later to be proven that the amount of supplies actually flown into the pocket in no way corresponded with the army's minimum requirements.³³

If the beginning of the airlift is dated November 24, then

³¹Rudel, Stuka Pilot, p. 71.

³²Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 156.

³³von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 316.

up to January 10, the average daily load flown into Stalingrad amounted to 102 tons, or only some twenty percent of the absolutely essential requirements.³⁴ On one occasion, December 19, when 150 planes landed in the pocket, the total reached nearly 280 tons. But on some days it was far below minimum requirements and often no supplies were delivered at all.³⁵ These figures of course, refer only to the period up to January 10, for when Pitmnik fell, most of the landings had to be cancelled and the planes were restricted to dropping supplies by parachute and free-fall. The amount that could still be flown in after January 10, averaged around forty tons; after January 16, parachuted supplies dropped to as little as twenty tons and on January 25, to less than ten tons. From that day on it was not possible to gather accurate statistics on the amount dropped, for the supplies were no longer collected centrally for distribution but were dropped on individual strong points.³⁶

On December 24, Tatsinskaya airfield was lost. This was a severe blow to the German cause, and it was only as the result of great effort that about 120 planes took off while this airstrip was actually under artillery and tank fire. On January 2, the 55th Bomber Group, whose Heinkels had been flying in supplies from Morosovskaya, were forced to abandon their field which was

³⁴Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 156.

³⁵Rudel, Stuka Pilot, p. 81.

³⁶Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 156.

also under fire.³⁷ On January 16, Salszk was lost and the airstrips at Novo-Chirskaya, Sverevo and Stalino were threatened. The loss of each airfield greatly decreased the possibility that the Sixth Army could be even partially supplied by air. When Tatsinskaya fell it was not difficult, from the supply point of view, to see that the end of the Sixth Army was very near.

The Fourth Air Fleet Commander, Generaloberst von Richthofen and General Fiebig, commander of the 8th Air Corps, were the two most responsible air leaders who realized that supplying a whole army was, from the beginning, impossible. In addition to the tremendous numbers of aircraft that would be needed there were meteorological conditions that had to be taken into consideration also. The Volga region is very unstable climatically. The great Asian cold air masses meet the warm maritime air masses in this region. When these warm, moist air masses from the Atlantic Ocean meet the cold masses of the Siberian anticyclone, constant fluctuation in weather occurs.³⁸ The result of these meteorological conditions make the Ukrainian area during time of winter, very bad for flying. Any elementary knowledge of meteorology at the Supreme Command could have foretold these conditions. In addition to the changeable nature of the weather, the cold winter made flying conditions hazardous. The Luftwaffe had to start their engines in temperatures of minus five to ten degrees below zero, without any preheating devices, on snow covered fields.

³⁷von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 345.

³⁸Mirov, Geography of Russia, p. 30.

They were faced with the constant danger of icing-up, of fog and of being bombed while landing or taking off. They had to land on insufficiently prepared airstrips, often under artillery fire and air attack. The airfields themselves were often in deep snow, pitted with bomb craters and scattered with wrecked aircraft and dumped cargos. In addition they had to contend with ignition trouble, defective carburetors, guns that jammed in the bitter cold, and radio equipment that constantly broke down.³⁹

Within the pocket itself, the Sixth Army could not appreciate all the problems that the Luftwaffe was having. Field Marshal von Paulus on several occasions objected that the Luftwaffe was not using the facilities at Gumrak to land supplies. On the other hand, the Luftwaffe complained that the field was not prepared for night landings and the Sixth Army failed to properly prepare the fields by clearing the wreckage from them.⁴⁰ Perhaps both sides have proper cause for complaint. The Luftwaffe was not landing on occasion and the Sixth Army had not sufficient troops to clear the fields without endangering a sector of the front. These are, however, tactical considerations. They could happen to any airlift operation and both sides could have valid reasons for not keeping their side of the bargain. The strategic concept of even considering the aerial supply of an entire army is more suspect if blame is going to be placed for the fall of the Sixth Army.

³⁹Rudel, Stuka Pilot, p. 73.

⁴⁰Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 181.

After the surrender of the Sixth Army, severe criticism was directed at the Luftwaffe for failing in their promise to supply Stalingrad.⁴¹ In all fairness to the flyers and ground support of the Fourth Air Fleet, it must be said that these men performed very well under the tremendous handicaps that they faced. If blame must be laid, it must be placed with the Luftwaffe hierarchy. On January 16, there were exactly two hundred and fifty supply aircraft available to the Fourth Air Fleet, but of these, only seventy-five were operational.⁴² Although there are no reliable statistics available, it is felt that the Luftwaffe High Command could have furnished more logistical support to keep the planes available in the air, considering that it was Goering's duty, once Hitler ordered the Sixth Army to remain in Stalingrad, to commit the Luftwaffe's last reserves or aircraft and logistical support personnel. Even von Manstein expresses the doubt that the Luftwaffe High Command did everything in its power to relieve all available aircraft for the purpose of supplying Stalingrad.⁴³

The question of exactly where the blame should rest is a difficult one to answer. Should Adolf Hitler bear the sole responsibility since he was the man who made the final decision to leave the Sixth Army in place and rely on the airlift to supply the encircled forces: Was it the fault of Reich Marshal Goering for making the fatal promise that the Luftwaffe could successfully

⁴¹Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 159.

⁴²Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 161.

⁴³von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 318.

achieve the supply of the Sixth Army? Can blame be attributed to von Paulus or to his Chief of Staff because they had asked for supplies in November? Perhaps some blame can even be laid at the feet of the hastily created battle groups and fragments of units who had proved unable to hold the airfields at Tatsinskaya and Morosovskaya.

Again, in typical Nazi fashion, the Luftwaffe attempted to provide a scapegoat for the disaster. After months of bitter recriminations between Reich Marshal Goering and Generaloberst Jeschonek, as to the responsibility for the failure of the Luftwaffe to meet its promises, Jeschonek committed suicide on August 16, 1943.⁴⁴ In this manner the Luftwaffe officially closed the Stalingrad incident.

Climatic and Technical Aspects of War in the Soviet Union

In addition to the fiasco of the attempted airlift to Stalingrad, there were other major problems of a magnitude that warrant examination. The obstacles of climate and its effect on German equipment, plus the lack of planning regarding the delivery of winter equipment to the troops in Russia presented to the front line commanders in the Soviet Union a tremendous problem. It must be realized that although the German forces were still superior in quality, and still had tactical air support available, they nevertheless suffered from great disadvantages. The most serious hinderance to German operations on the eastern front was the

⁴⁴Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 102.

completely inadequate nature of the Russian road system. Since the majority of German motorized (Panzer Grenadier) forces were transported by wheeled vehicles, supply and even troop transport was delayed and on occasion, even prevented by the impassibility of the roads during periods of inclement weather. If perhaps the forces were equipped with full tracked vehicles, as was the case with the Soviet troops, the outcome of the entire campaign might have been much different.⁴⁵ The Red Army was apparently very much aware of this situation, for nearly all their troop carrying vehicles and all supporting artillery were either full or half-tracked. It has been speculated that if the Soviet regime had provided their nation with a road system comparable to that existing in Western Europe, the Soviet Union probably would have been defeated with a minimum of delay.⁴⁶

Climatically, the winter of 1941-1942, was the most severe in Russia for a hundred years. The normal issue of clothing to the German troops, consisting of the regulation overcoat, sweater and hood were designed for winter wear in Germany, and were quite inadequate for the winter in European Russia. German civilians attempted to rectify this situation by donating articles of winter clothing for shipment to the eastern front, but these articles did not reach the front until the end of January 1942, after the cold had done its damage.⁴⁷ German troops in the field attempted

⁴⁵von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles, p. 153.

⁴⁶Rossi, The Russo-German Alliance, p. 174.

⁴⁷U.S., Department of the Army, Effects of Climate on Combat in European Russia, Pamphlet No. 20-291 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, February, 1952), p. 18.

to locally procure items of winter clothing by purchasing or confiscating Russian winter equipment, but this later had a tendency to be dangerous, for German soldiers wearing Russian fur caps, were often mistaken for Russians and fired on by German troops.

Maintaining equipment during the winter months in Russia was extremely difficult. German rifles and machine guns often developed misfires due to the non-cold resistant oil and grease used. The Germans were never able to develop in time a satisfactory lubricant for their automatic weapons. For troops in the open, the only means of eliminating stoppages in the weapons was to urinate on the actions to prevent them from freezing up.⁴⁸

In addition to the problems of temperature, there was another problem existant that adequate research and development techniques could have prevented. That was in the field of tank tracks. Deep snow prevented many tank operations since, due to their narrowness and low clearance, many times German tanks became bogged down in deep snow while Russian tanks were not hindered. The Soviet tanks, particularly the T-34, KV-1 and the KV-2, were able to drive through deep snow and attack German positions while the German tanks lay helpless.⁴⁹ Since the German tanks could not negotiate deep snow, during times of snowfall, the requirement existed of assigning one battalion of troops per thirty miles of

⁴⁸Personal conversation in January 1958, with Jacob Krieger, former German enlisted man on the eastern front in the Russian campaigns, and presently a U.S. Army civilian employee, Stuttgart, Germany).

⁴⁹U.S., Department of the Army, Effects of Climate on Combat in European Russia, p. 11.

road for snow clearing operations.⁵⁰ It can be easily imagined how many combat troops were removed from combat assignments because of this requirement. The critical shortage of snow clearing equipment in the German Army merely compounded this problem.

In the case of railroads, heavy drifting snowfall interrupted traffic at a great rate. The Germans attempted to relieve this problem by hiring Russian civilians to clear the tracks. Much to the Germans sorrow, many partisans infiltrated these work crews and planted mines on the tracks, causing large amounts of damage to the passing trains.⁵¹ The German locomotives were not suited to the Russian winters and broke down in large numbers. The Russian locomotives were specially equipped with warming jackets over the boilers, to keep them from freezing up and exploding. The Soviets saw to it that very few of these engines fell into German hands.⁵²

Another factor to be considered in the German defeat at Stalingrad, and the campaign in general, was the disregard for proper research in technical areas, and then in attempting to compensate for this, the indiscriminate modifications of existing equipment, which destroyed the concept of standardization, an absolute must in modern warfare and logistical support. Soviet armor was actually superior to the German throughout most of the

⁵⁰U.S., Department of the Army, Effects of Climate on Combat in European Russia, p. 20.

⁵¹Ponomarenko and Others, V Tylu Vraga, p. 43.

⁵²Shabad, Geography of the U.S.S.R., A Regional Study, p. 84.

campaign. In 1941, the Germans had nothing comparable with the T-34 tank, with its 50-mm homogenous armor, 76-mm high velocity gun and relatively high speed with excellent crosscountry performance. To combat these tanks the Mark III and IV tanks were modified with different guns and provoked an ammunition shortage in many cases.⁵³

Near the end of the Stalingrad operation, Hitler saw to it that numbers of the new Tiger tanks were thrown into the line before they had been properly tested. The result of this was a rash of breakdowns under combat conditions resulting from improper testing conditions. Consequently the Tiger tank was never to be an effective weapon on the eastern front. It can thus be seen that the tactical and strategical blunders coupled with the fiasco of the airlift and the inadequate logistical support through non-recognition of the climatic and human element brought to the Germans complete disaster.

⁵³Guderian, Panzer Leader, p. 237.

CHAPTER V

THE AFTERMATH

Why did the Germans lose the battle of Stalingrad and hence the war in the east? Was defeat inevitable in any case, or can it be ascribed to German failings? What of the role of the Soviet government and armies? One fact seems to emerge clearly, German defeat cannot be ascribed to any single mistake. Let us analyze the major causes of failure and their consequences.

Certainly one of the most pronounced errors in German strategy was the decision to abandon the drive on Moscow in the fall of 1941. Although the attack on this city was finally launched in the winter of that year, the German forces were too exhausted to carry out their mission. The primary role of the infantry and armored forces in any army is to close with the enemy and through use of fire and maneuver, destroy him. The major portion of the Red Army was in Moscow. Why then did not the German forces meet the Soviet forces in a decisive engagement while they still had the advantages and initiative on their side? This was an error in strategy. Why the Germans did not pursue their advantage in Moscow must be ascribed to Hitler's decision, based upon his geopolitical reasoning, to launch instead an attack in the Ukraine.

The fact that Moscow presented an attractive economic objective did not seem to have occurred to Hitler. Moscow was the hub of all the rail network in European Russia. Cutting this network would have placed a tremendous burden on Soviet transportation

and their troop carrying capacity. In addition Moscow was the center of the light industry complex. Taking this area would have cut off nearly half of all Russian light industry and effected their war effort correspondingly. Inasmuch as Moscow lies roughly in the center of European Russia, taking this city would have separated the weaker Russian forces in the Leningrad and Ukrainian sectors, making communication impossible and giving the German forces the opportunity of defeating these forces piecemeal.

Although the strategic mistake of not taking Stalingrad and smashing the major portion of the Soviet forces in this area was a great mistake, certain tactical errors also contributed heavily to the German defeat. Perhaps one of the most important of these tactical blunders was the creation of salients in the Ukraine and Caucasus regions which presented the Soviet forces with an opportunity of making a telling blow on the Germans through flank attacks. It is military dogma that a flank is never exposed indiscriminately, yet the Germans presented not only one flank, but two. The Stalingrad salient was perhaps the most dangerous for it blantly invited the major, undefeated Soviet forces in the Moscow area to move south and attack the north shoulder of the Stalingrad salient. Hitler apparently never learned that a salient is very dangerous. His generals, particularly those at OKW, should have demanded that the purely military factors be taken into consideration.

The division of effort by sending Army Group A into the Caucasus was unforgivable. With the major portion of the Soviet

forces still undefeated, how the German generals could have tolerated the separation of their forces is beyond understanding. Had the German forces had a superiority of manpower, this decision would have been understandable, but with an inferiority of strength, it presented the Russians with an open invitation to launch an attack. The formation of the salients presented the Russians with an attractive target, yet the flank security provided by the Germans was in the form of the unreliable Italian, Hungarian and Romanian troops. This insured that any Russian assault against these flanks would be successful.

Another German error in elementary tactics was the abandonment of mobile operations in favor of static warfare in the salients. By late 1942, the only advantage the Germans possessed was their superiority in the employment of tanks. Although the Soviets had demonstrated that they possessed keen knowledge in this field, by fielding a tank that was actually superior to any the Germans had (T-34), the German employment of armor was still superior. Ignoring this advantage Hitler chose to tie up his forces in the Stalingrad and Caucasian salients.

The fiasco of the attempted air lift to supply the Sixth Army after their encirclement speaks for itself in that it was a complete failure. After the Sixth Army had been cut off, there was still a chance to save it, had it not been for the promises of Hermann Goering to supply this army with all the requested supplies. Despite the warnings of Luftwaffe commanders in the field that such an air lift was not feasible, the decision was made to require that the Sixth Army remain in the pocket. The

loss of over 250,000 men in the disaster at Stalingrad was irrep-
arable to the German cause in the Soviet Union and could have been
prevented with the usage of common sense.

Although, as has been pointed out, many German mistakes,
both tactical and strategic, certainly contributed to final de-
feat, the Soviet effort cannot be ignored. The Red Army seemed
to become more and more efficient as time passed. Over and over
the Russians were able to discover where the German front was
weak, to concentrate their own formations against these sectors,
and to achieve deep penetrations, often a complete breakthrough,
which compelled the withdrawal of the front in the neighboring
sectors as well as those assaulted. The German abandonment of
mobile tactics which had led to early unexpected victories in the
war, and the adoption of the rigid defense of established lines
or advance posts was no match for the Russians, with their supe-
rior man-power, assisted by effective intelligence and partisans.
The modest requirements of the Red soldier and the Soviet's ef-
fective use of railroads all contributed to the German defeat.

The Russian generalship in this battle was outstanding.
There were minor errors of commission and omission in the diffi-
cult phases, but the broad strategical conceptions of their High
Command justify the credit that was later given them. They had
studied their Clausewitz and their principles of war even as the
Germans, but unlike the latter, the Soviets used it. They knew
the inherent weakness of the flanks and shoulders of a salient.
They must have enjoyed the spectacle of the Germans throwing,
week after week, more and more elite divisions into the tip of

the long Stalingrad salient. Zhukov and his generals selected just the right moment to spring the baited trap. However, military history records that every battle of annihilation is the result not only of the superb strategy of the victor, but also of the errors of the vanquished. Just as Tannenburg had its Hindenburg and its Samsonov, so Stalingrad had its Zhukov and its Hitler.

The 1942 campaign in the Ukraine was a reckless military adventure. But while Hitler erred on the side of blantant military ignorance and the sort of mad arrogance which, according to the Greeks, strikes those whom the gods wish to destroy, his generals were guilty of unforgivable moral cowardice and betrayal of their military integrity. Between them they lead the German armies and soldiers to disaster.

Contrary to the statements of many German generals the Sixth Army might have been saved on several occasions, assuming that the encirclement was not preventable. How the Sixth Army could have saved itself was shown by the way that Army Group A in the Caucasus did save itself, under worse conditions, for it had pushed its salient much deeper. The Russian forces surged down the valley of the Don from Stalingrad towards the Black Sea, after von Paulus had been cut off, and came within barely forty miles of the Rostov bottleneck when Kleist's army group in the Caucasus was 400 miles east of Rostov. Hitler had just previously insisted that it had to hold where it was, but at the last moment was induced to permit a withdrawal. Although constantly menaced in the flanks and rear, Army Group A got back to safety through the bottleneck, while the Russian troops were held off. That long

retreat in the depths of winter was one of the most remarkable feats of extrication from a trap in all military history. It can thus be seen that the Sixth Army should have been given the opportunity to attempt to break out of the pocket regardless of what their gasoline supply was. Even assuming high losses, the majority, with stiff fighting, could have survived.

It can therefore be seen that the tragedy of Stalingrad was not a military necessity but a mistake by Hitler and his Supreme Command. After the refusal to allow an immediate withdrawal, an immediate surrender after the abandonment of the Fourth Panzer Army's relief attempt in December, would have had serious and incalculable consequences for Army Group Don, but Hitler might well have spared the Sixth Army its final anguish, which began about the 20th of January.

It should be pointed out that by the time of the fall of Stalingrad, many generals were still considering a possible military stalemate and were not thinking of a lost war. Beyond this, however, a farsighted and responsible group of military and civilians were already striving for an end to the war. The man leading this thinking group was Generaloberst Beck.¹ Beck, in a published letter to von Manstein shortly after the disaster at Stalingrad, asked him what he thought of the conduct of the war and the hopelessness of continuing the struggle. Manstein replied: "The war is not finally lost until the men leading it consider it

¹Wieder, Frankfurter Hefte, p. 321.

so."² It is to be regretted that Manstein did not include his letters to Beck in his memoirs.

Manstein did, however, confide in a lawyer after the war, who had asked him when he thought the war was finally lost. Manstein answered: "In the winter of 1942-43. The German front was torn asunder by the Russians and was untenable. I knew that the Russians with their tremendous reserves of men would bit by bit squish us."³ The contention that remains foremost is that to win a war against the Russians, the methods of attrition can not be used. The Soviet Army must be met in the field and destroyed. A resulting question must be considered. Was the loss of some 270,000 men at Stalingrad necessary? Not only the loss of the Sixth Army must be considered to answer this question, but also the impact on the nearly one million families in Germany and Austria of whom the troops belonged. Morale was destroyed in these families. If one thinks that in total war, the decisive weight is placed on moral factors, then the battle of Stalingrad is to be considered the turning point of the war. Although Field Marshal von Manstein tries to downgrade this battle as just another defeat, it in fact belongs to one of the greatest disasters in German history.

In many phases it was said that the German people had to make sacrifices and the battle of Stalingrad was just one of these sacrifices. This cannot be the case. In any sacrifice, in order

²Wieder, Frankfurter Hefte, p. 321.

³Wieder, Frankfurter Hefte, p. 322.

to justify it, returns greater than that sacrificed have to be gained. Nothing except a slight delay in the German destruction was gained from the Stalingrad sacrifice. In reality this was the end result of incompetent military and political leadership.

An interesting side to the Stalingrad story was in the remarks of the captured German generals. Paul Holt of the London Daily Express interviewed the captured generals after their surrender. Field Marshal von Paulus at the time refused to say anything except: "Friedrich, aged fifty-two."⁴ Von Paulus's chief of staff, General Bielefeld Schmidt and his adjutant, Oberst Adam, would also say nothing. Other captured generals, however, would talk to the press. General Helmut Schlemmer, commander of the XIV Panzer Corps and General Otto Rinoldi, Chief of Sanitary Services for the Sixth Army were willing to speak freely. Both were very bitter of the treatment accorded to the Sixth Army by Hitler. Generalmajor Moritz von Drebber, commander of the 297th Infantry Division, volunteered the statement that he had orders from von Paulus to continue fighting until the last man, but if he had been given the opportunity, he believed that he could have infiltrated out of the loosely woven pocket.⁵ As it was, hunger, cold and lack of ammunition seemed to be the reason that most of the generals had for the final fall of the Sixth Army.

This undoubtedly was in part the truth. There were, however,

⁴Kerr, The Russian Army: Its Men, Its Leaders, Its Battles
p. 226.

⁵Kerr, The Russian Army: Its Men, Its Leaders, Its Battles
p. 227.

other important reasons from the Russian point of view for the defeat. Some of these reasons could include the brilliant manner in which Timoshenko retreated in the early weeks of the German offensive, conserving his men and material for future battles and the long line of German communications, supply lines that included only two railroads which were constantly harrassed by partisans.⁶ The outstanding courage of the Russian soldiers, whose combat efficiency improved consistantly as the campaign progressed, and who refused, under great pressure, to yield all of Stalingrad. Soviet superiority in artillery and months of hard training for battle before Russian divisions went into the line also contributed heavily.⁷

The men at Stalingrad knew at the end that they had been written off the ledger. It must have filled them with disgust when they realized that their abandonment and approaching end were already being hidden behind hypocritical phrases concerning necessity and honor. And so it was that the last message was received by Army Group Don from the Stalingrad pocket on February 2, 1943, at 12:35 P.M. The message read: "Cloud base 15,000 feet, visibility seven miles, sky clear, occasional scattered nimbus clouds, temperature minus 31 degrees centigrade, over Stalingrad, fog and red haze. Meteorological station now closing down. Greetings to the homeland."⁸

⁶Savin, Bitva pod Stalingradom, p. 143.

⁷Chuikov, Street Fighting - The Lessons of Stalingrad, p. 68.

⁸Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 251.

APPENDIX A

Equivalent unit and rank designations for the United States,
Germany and the Soviet Union.

Unit Designations:

<u>U. S. designation</u>	<u>German designation</u>	<u>Soviet designation</u>
Armored units	Panzer	Tank
Infantry units	Infantry	Rifle
Armored Infantry units	Panzer Grenadier	Mechanized
Self-propelled ar- tillery	Assault guns	Assault guns
Engineers	Engineers	Sappers

Military Ranks:

<u>U. S. designation</u>	<u>German designation</u>	<u>Soviet designation</u>
Lieutenant Colonel	Oberstleutnant	Podpolkovnik
Colonel	Oberst	Polkovnik
Brigadier General	Generalmajor	General-Major
Major General	Generalleutnant	General-Leitnant
Lieutenant General	General der (combat arm)	General-Polkovnik
General	Generaloberst	General Armii
General of the Army	Feldmarschall	Marshal
	Reichmarschall	Marshal Sovyetskovo Soyuza

APPENDIX B

The organization of major headquarters within the Wehrmacht:

1. The Supreme Commander, Adolf Hitler, had his own small advisory staff, the Wehrmachtsfuhrungstab (WFStb), headed by Feldmarshall Keitel and Generaloberst Jodl. This is referred to as the Armed Forces Command Staff, as Hitler's Headquarters, or as Supreme Headquarters, depending on its function.

2. The Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW), is translated as Armed Forces High Command. This senior headquarters controlled, in theory, all Germany's armed forces: it was also responsible for all operations other than those on the Eastern Front. The titular head of this organization was Adolf Hitler, in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief Armed Forces.

3. The Oberkommando des Heeres (OKH), is translated as the Army High Command. This headquarters was in command of all the German armies for administrative, supply and other such purposes. It was also responsible for operations on the Eastern Front, but not for the other theaters of operations. After the dismissal of Feldmarschall von Brauchitsch, Hitler assumed the title of Commander-in-Chief of the Army. The Army High Command was, however, in fact headed by the Chief of the General Staff (Generalstab), during the period of this campaign, Generaloberst Hadler and later Generaloberst Zeitzler.

4. The Deutsche Generalstab, is translated the Army General Staff, which supplied the majority of the officers at Army High Command, as well as all the senior and most of the junior staff officers with the units in the field. It was not, itself, a headquarters.

The organization of major headquarters within the Soviet Forces:

1. The Gosudarstvennyi Komitet Oborony (GKO), is translated as the State Defense Committee. It consisted of five to eight members of the Politburo (Political Bureau) headed by Stalin himself. This organization decided on all courses of action throughout the war.

2. The Stavka or General Headquarters consisted of a select personal staff to Stalin of from twelve to fourteen top military officers who advised Stalin and had the task of developing overall strategic plans for the conduct of the war.

3. The Generalnyi Shtab or General Staff is, in organization, very similar to the German General Staff, in that it was not an operational entity, but rather furnished personnel to

various staff functions within the operational organizations.¹

¹Schroeter, Stalingrad, pp. 32-33.

APPENDIX C

TOP SECRET

Sixth Army Command
Opns. Dept. Nr. 3044/42. t.s.

Army Hq. 19. August 1942
1845 hrs.
11 copies
Copy Nr. 9

Army Order
for the attack on Stalingrad

(Map 1:100.000)

1. The Russian enemy will defend the Stalingrad area stubbornly. He holds the high ground on the east bank of the Don and west of Stalingrad and has built defensive positions there in great depth.

It must be assumed that he has assembled forces, including armored brigades, ready to counter-attack, both in the Stalingrad area and in the area north of the isthmus between the Don and the Volga Rivers.

Therefore in the advance across the Don towards Stalingrad the Army must reckon with enemy resistance in front and with heavy counter-attacks against the northern flank of our advance.

It is possible that the annihilating blows struck during the past few weeks will have destroyed the enemy's means for fighting a determined defensive action.

2. Sixth Army will occupy the isthmus between the Don and Volga north of the railway line Kalatch-Stalingrad and will protect its own northern and eastern fronts.

With this intention the Army will cross the Don and Volga between Peskovatka and Ostrovskii. Point of main effort, on either side of Vertiatshi. With standing protection being provided along the northern flank, armored and motorized formations will advance over the high ground between the Rossoshka and the sources of the Karennia into the area immediately north of Stalingrad, and then to the bank of the Volga, while at this same time forces will be detached to fight their way into and occupy Stalingrad from the north-west.

This advance will be accompanied by a subsidiary advance on the southern flank by a detached force advancing long the central reaches of the Rossoshka. This force will establish contact south-west of Stalingrad with the mobile troops of the neighboring army advancing on that city.

Initially a weak covering force will hold a line facing south-west towards the area between the lower reaches of the Rossoshka and the Kartovka rivers and the Don below Kalatch. This area will be mopped up from the north-east as soon as the forces of the neighboring army advancing towards the Kartovka shall have arrived.

With the progress of the advance on the east bank of the Don, the forces stationed along the west bank of that river below Malyi will be steadily reduced in strength, since their task will then be that of a security force. This force will later cross the river on both sides of Kalatch and participate in the destruction of the enemy forces in that area.

3. Objectives:

XXIV Panzer Corps will hold the west bank of the Don from Army's right-hand boundary to Lutchinskole and with the 71 Infantry Division, will prepare to leave a minimum security force to hold the Don while establishing a bridgehead on either side of Kalatch from which 71 Infantry Division will advance eastwards.

Release of this Corps headquarters for further employment elsewhere is to be prepared against.

LI Army Corps will seize a further bridgehead across the Don on either side of Vertiatehl. For this purpose the following Units at present under XXIV Panzer Corps will be temporarily placed under the command, viz. artillery, engineer, traffic control, anti-tank and the necessary signals units.

As soon as the XIV Panzer Corps shall have advanced eastwards from the bridgehead, LI Army Corps will become responsible for covering the right flank of the advance.

With this intention, LI Army Corps will attach across the Rossoshka between Nijni-Alexeievski and Bol. Rossoshka, will occupy the high ground west of Stalingrad, and will temporarily establish southwesterly contact with the advancing mobile forces of the neighboring army to our right.

The corps will then capture and occupy the central and southern parts of Stalingrad. Meanwhile weak forces will form a covering line between Peskovatka and Nijni-Alexeievski. A special Army order will decide when the time has come to annihilate the Russian forces located south of this line and north of the Karpovka.

XIV Panzer Corps, after the capture of the bridgehead by LI Army Corps will push forward through the bridgehead, advancing eastwards over the high ground north of Malrossoshka and Hp. Konaia to the Volga north of Stalingrad. It will prevent all river traffic and cut off all rail communications immediately to the north of the city.

Elements of the Corps will attach Stalingrad from the north-west and occupy the northern parts of the city. Tanks will not be used for this purpose. In the north a covering line will be established running along the high ground south-west of Yersovka and south of the Gratshevala stream. While so doing closest contact will be maintained with the VIII Army Corps advancing from the west.

VIII Army Corps will cover the northern flank of the XIV Panzer Corps. It will launch a sharp attack in a south-easterly direction from the bridgehead captured between Nijni Gerrassimov and Ostrovskii, and then, swinging steadily north, will form a line which must so far as possible be proof against attack by

armored forces, between Kusmitchi and Katchalinskala. Close contact will be maintained with XIV Panzer Corps.

XI and XVII Army Corps will cover the northern flank of the Army.

XI Army Corps will release 22 Panzer Division, as soon as possible, to Army reserve. This division will be assembled ready for action in area Dalii-Perekovskole-Orekhovskii-Sselivanov.

4. D-Day and H-Hour will be announced in a special order.
5. Boundaries as given on map attached.
6. VIII Air Corps will give air support to the Army's attack, with point of main effort initially in LI Army Corps sector, later switching to line of advance of XIV Panzer Corps.
7. Army H.Q. as of dawn, 21 August: Ossinovskole.
8. Contents of this may only be communicated to subordinate commands and only such parts as are relevant to the future operations by the subordinate command in question may be communicated. This order is not to be carried by plane. Attention will be drawn to the secret nature of such parts of this order as are communicated to subordinate commands.

The Commander-in-Chief

PAULUS¹

¹Schroeter, Stalingrad, pp. 24-27.

APPENDIX D

TEXT OF MESSAGE FROM VON PAULUS TO ARMY GROUP B

1800 hours
November 22, 1942
Urgent

Army encircled. Despite heroic resistance while of Tsaritza Valley, railway from Sovietski to Kalatch, the Don bridge at Kalatch, high ground on west bank as far as Golubinskaja, Olskinski and Krainii inclusive now in Russian hands.

Further enemy forces are advancing from the south-east through Businovka northwards and also in great strength from the west. Situation at Surovikino and Chir, unknown.

Intense patrol activity on the Stalingrad and northern fronts. Attacks on IV Army Corps repulsed and also on 76 Infantry Division. 76 Infantry Division reports small local penetrations.

Army hopes to be able to construct a western front east of the Don along the Golubaja line. Southern front west of the Don still open. Whether intensive weakening of northern flank will permit construction of thin line running Kapovka-Marinovka-Golubinka appears problematical.

The Don now frozen and can be crossed. Fuel supplies almost exhausted. Tanks and heavy weapons will then be immobilized, ammunition situation acute, food supplies available for a further six days.

The Army intends to hold the area still in its possession between Stalingrad and the Don, and has taken all steps to implement this intention.

This is, however, conditional on closing the southern front and on receiving ample airborne supplies.

Request freedom of decision in the event of failure to construct southern defensive position. The situation could then compel the abandonment of Stalingrad and the northern front, and an attack in maximum strength against the enemy on the southern front between the Don and the Volga with the objective the re-establishment of contact with Fourth Panzer Army. Prospects of a successful attack westwards are unpromising in view of enemy strength and terrain difficulties that sector.

Signed: PAULUS¹

¹Schroeter, Stalingrad, pp. 90-91.

APPENDIX E

Text of message from Headquarters, Army Group B to Oberkommando des Heeres.

November 22, 1942

Despite the exceptional gravity of the decision to be taken, with the far-reaching consequences of which I am well aware, I must report that I regard it as necessary to accept General Paulus's proposal for the withdrawal of Sixth Army. My reasons are as follows:

1. The supplying of the twenty divisions that constitute this army is not feasible by air. With the air transport available, and in favorable weather conditions, it will only be possible to supply the encircled forces by air with one-tenth of their essential daily requirements.

2. Since the probable future developments do not offer any certainty of a rapid penetration of the encircling enemy forces from the outside, the attack to relieve the Sixth Army cannot, in view of the time required to assemble the relieving force, be mounted before the 10th of December. The Army General Staff has been informed of the detailed time-table for the assembly of the units in question. The rapid deterioration of Sixth Army's situation as regards supplies indicates that these must be exhausted within a few days. Ammunition will soon be expended, since the encircled force is being attacked from all sides.

However, I believe that a breakthrough by Sixth Army in a southwesterly direction will result in a favorable development in the situation as a whole.

With the total dissolution of the Third Romanian Army, the Sixth Army is now the only fighting formation capable of inflicting damage on the enemy. The proposed direction of attack, opening towards the south-west and then being followed by the northern wing advancing along the railway from Chir to Morosovskaja, will result in a relaxation of the existing tension in the Svetnoie-Kotelnikovo area. Finally, the remaining combat strength of Sixth Army will provide an essential reinforcement for the new offensive that must now be built, and for the preparation of our counter-attack.

I am well aware that this proposed operation will entail heavy losses, particularly in arms and equipment. But these will be far less than those that must ensue if the situation is left to develop, as it must do, in existing conditions, with the

inevitable starving out of the encircled army as the certain result.

Signed: FREIHERR VON WEICHS
Generaloberst¹

¹Schroeter, Stalingrad, p. 92.

APPENDIX F

From Commander, Sixth Army

Gumrak Station

26th Nov. 1942

(Written by hand of officer)

Field Marshal v. Manstein
Commander, Don Army Group.

Dear Field Marshal,

I beg to acknowledge your signal of 24th November and to thank you for the help you propose giving. To assist you in forming an appreciation of my position, I am taking the liberty to report the following:

(1) When the large scale Russian attacks on the army's right and left hand neighbors started on 19th November, both my flanks were exposed within two days and quickly penetrated by Soviet mobile forces. When our own mobile formations (14 Pz. Corps) were pulled westwards across the Don, their spearheads ran into superior enemy forces west of the river. This put them in an extremely difficult situation, particularly as their movement was restricted by fuel shortage. Simultaneously the enemy moved into the rear of 11 Corps, which in accordance with orders had fully maintained its positions towards the north. Since it was no longer possible to take any forces out of the front to ward off this danger, I was left with no alternative but to fold 11 Corps left wing back to the south and subsequently to have the Corps fall back initially into a bridgehead west of the Don in order that the elements on that side of the river were not split off from the main body.

While these measures were being carried out, an order was received from the Fuehrer calling for an attack on Dobrinskaya with 14 Pz. Corps' left wing. This order was overtaken by events and could not be complied with.

(2) Early on 22nd November 4 Corps, which had hitherto belonged to Fourth Panzer Army, came under my command. Its right wing was falling back from south to north through Buzinovka, which meant that the entire south and southwest flank was laid open. To prevent the Russians from marching unchecked through the army's rear towards Stalingrad, I had no choice but to pull forces out of the city and the front in the north. There was a possibility that these would arrive in time, whereas they would not do so if drawn from the area west of the Don.

With the forces supplied by us from the Stalingrad front 4 Corps succeeded in establishing a weak southern front with its western wing at Matinovka. This however was penetrated several times on 23rd November, and the outcome is still uncertain. On

the afternoon of 23rd November strong enemy armor, including 100 tanks alone, was identified in the area west of Marinovka. In the whole of the area between Marinovka and the Don there were nothing but flimsy German protective screens. The way to Stalin-grad lay open to the Russian tanks and motorized forces, as did that to the Don bridge in the direction of Pestkovatka.

For the past thirty-six hours I had received no orders or information from a higher level. In a few hours I was liable to be confronted with the following situation:

(a) Either I must remain in position on my western and northern fronts and very soon see the army rolled up from behind. (In which case I should formally be complying with the orders issued to me), or else.

(b) I must make the only possible decision and turn with all my might on the enemy who was about to stab the army from behind. In the latter event, clearly, the eastern and northern fronts can no longer be held and it can only be a matter of breaking through to the south-west.

In case of (b) I should admittedly be doing justice to the situation but should also - for the second time - be guilty of disobeying an order.

(3) In this difficult situation I sent the Fuehrer a signal asking for freedom to take such a final decision if it should become necessary. I wanted to have this authority in order to guard against issuing the only possible order in that situation too late.

I have no means of proving that I should only issue such an order in an extreme emergency and can only ask you to accept my word for this.

I have received no direct reply to this signal. On the other hand, we have today received the two attached O.K.H. signals (enclosures 1 and 2) which restrict me further still. In this connection I might note that both I and all my formation commanders are firmly resolved to hold out to the last. However, in view of my responsibility to the Fuehrer for the odd 300,000 men intrusted to my charge, it will be appreciated why I have asked for permission to take appropriate action in the last extreme. The situation I have indicated can, incidentally, arise again any day or hour.

Today's situation is being communicated to you by map. Even though it has been possible to move more forces up to the south-western front, the position there is still strained. The southern front (4 Corps) has consolidated somewhat and beaten off heavy enemy infantry and armored assaults throughout the last few days, though not without considerable losses to ourselves and

a heavy expenditure of ammunition.

The Stalingrad front is from day to day resisting strong enemy pressure. On the northern front there is trouble in the north-east quarter (94 Inf. Div.) and on the western wing (76 Inf. Div.). As I see it, the main assaults on the northern front have still to come, as up here the enemy has roads and railways with which to bring up reinforcements to the northern front from the west.

The airlift of the last three days has brought only a fraction of the calculated minimum requirements (600 tons equals 300 Ju daily). In the very next few days supplies can lead to a crisis of the utmost gravity.

I still believe, however, that the army can hold out for a time. On the other hand - even if anything like a corridor is cut through to me - it is still not possible to tell whether the daily increasing weakness of the army, combined with the lack of accommodation and wood for constructional and heating purposes, will allow the area around Stalingrad to be held for any length of time.

As I am now being daily bombarded with numerous understandable inquiries about the future, I should be grateful if I could be provided with more information than hitherto in order to increase the confidence of my men.

Allow me to say, Herr Feldmarschall, that I regard your leadership as a guarantee that everything possible is being done to assist Sixth Army. For their own part, my commanders and gallant troops will join me in doing everything to justify your trust.

Yours etc.

PAULUS

P.S. In the circumstances I hope you will overlook the inadequacy of the paper and the fact that this letter is in longhand.¹

¹von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 551.

APPENDIX G

TOP SECRET

By Hand of Officer Only

To: Chief-of-Staff O.K.H.
Operations Branch O.K.H.

9th Dec. 42

APPRECIATION OF SITUATION

1. Information about the Enemy. Enemy has committed further strong forces against this Army Group in last ten days. These consist primarily of the reserves expected in our appreciation of 28th Nov. but also include additional forces. Total formations identified by Army Group are:

86 rifle divisions
17 rifle brigades
54 tank brigades
14 motorized brigades
11 cavalry divisions,

i.e. 182 formations. In addition to these, we have identified thirteen independent tank regiments, tank battalions and anti-tank brigades.

Following is detailed break-down of enemy forces:

(a) Surrounding Stalingrad fortress area:

Volga front.- Sixty-Second Army (eight rifle divisions, three rifle brigades and one tank brigade up; two rifle, two tank and two motorized brigades in reserve).

Northern front.- Sixty-Sixth and Twenty-Fourth Armies (seventeen rifle divisions and one motorized brigade up; four rifle and four tank brigades in reserve).

Western front.- Sixty-Fifth and Twenty-First Armies (ten rifle divisions, seven tank and two motorized brigades, five tank regiments and one anti-tank brigade up; four tank brigades in reserve).

Southern front.- Fifty-Seventh and Sixty-Fourth Armies (seven rifle divisions, six rifle, six tank and six motorized brigades and two tank regiments up; apparently two rifle divisions, two rifle, five tank and one motorized brigade and five motorized regiments in reserve).

In the last ten days the enemy had attacked the northern,

western and southern fronts in turn. His main pressure is undoubtedly directed against the western front, whereas he is relatively weak on the southern one.

(b) Soviet assault on Stalingrad is being covered to the south-west on the Chir front - by Fifth Tank Army (twelve rifle divisions, five cavalry divisions, two motorized cavalry divisions, four tank brigades, one tank regiment and two motorized brigades up; two rifle divisions, four tank brigades and one motorized brigade in reserve). Immediately to the north, facing the centre and left wing of the Hollidt Group, are three more rifle divisions.

Covering the assault in a southerly direction, east of the Don, is Fifty-First Army (four rifle and four cavalry divisions, one tank and one motorized brigade up; one tank and one rifle brigade in reserve). Reason for concentration of further motorized forces behind this front is still not clear.

(c) Reconnaissance during the last few days has revealed unloading operations east of Stalingrad and troop movements across the Don to the south, past the eastern front of the Hollidt Group. While the Soviet covering front east of the Don has remained largely passive, probably because of concentration of motorized forces to the rear is not yet complete, the enemy has attacked across the Chir in strength on the Chir bridgehead and west of the Chir railway station. On account of the north-to-south movements in front of the Hollidt Group we must expect this attack to be extended further westwards.

(d) In the fighting to date the enemy has undoubtedly lost a considerable amount of his armor, but hitherto he has been able to fill the gaps by bringing up new tank regiments etc. The offensive capacity of his infantry remains low; the effect of his artillery has considerably increased, notably on the western front of Stalingrad.

2. Information About Own Troops.

(a) Sixth Army. So far the army has beaten off all enemy assaults, through at the cost of considerable losses. Special report is being submitted on its present fighting capacity. The following were the holdings of the main types of ammunition on 5th December 42, given in percentages of primary issues:

5-cm vehicle-drawn gun	59 %	15-cm mortar	25 %
7.5-cm vehicle-drawn gun	39.4%	Light howitzer	34 %
8-cm mortar	30.8%	10-cm cannon 19	21.6%
Light infantry gun	28 %		
Heavy infantry gun	25 %		

Present ration stocks, with bread cut to 200 gr., will last

till about 14 Dec. for bread, 20 Dec. for midday meal and 19 Dec. for evening meal.

Despite exemplary efforts of the Luftwaffe, biggest air-lift attained to date was 300 tons on 7th Dec. owing to bad weather. Of 188 aircraft used that day, two were shot down and nine failed to return. On all other days tonnage lifted varied between 25 tons (27th Nov.) and 150 tons (8th Dec.), at a daily minimum requirement of 400 tons.

(b) Fourth Panzer Army. Assembly of 57 Pz. Corps not materially completed until 10th Dec., instead of 3rd Dec. as hoped, owing to bogging down of wheeled elements of 23 Pz. Div. 48 Pz. Corps (336 Inf. Div., 11 Pz. Div. and 3 Luftwaffe Fd. Div.) had initially to be thrown in on the Chir front to restore situation there. Battle still in progress.

(c) Romanian formations. Fourth Romanian Army, lying north of 16 Mot. Inf. Div., at present standing fast. It cannot, however, be expected to withstand an attack of any strength from the north, particularly as it has been directed by Marshal Antonescu to avoid being cut off. In the case of Third Romanian Army, apart from reasonably intact 1 Rom. Corps forming part of the Hollidt Group, the fighting power of the remnants of the Romanian divisions committed forward amounts to not more than one or two battalions. No artillery worth mentioning any longer exists. Because of the weapon shortage, reconstitution of formations in rear areas has produced no tangible results. It must also be faced that Romanian formation staffs are not acting with necessary energy. They attribute their defeat to 'force majeure', in which they include the German Command. For the rest, entire front of the Third Rom. Army is held by various types of emergency unit. In view of the absence of artillery and anti-tank guns there must be no illusions about ability of this front to hold out for any length of time should enemy attack it in strength, particularly with armored forces. This motley collection of forces, which have nothing to hold them together from within, must shortly be relieved by proper combat units, since neither their composition nor their combat efficiency qualify them for a protracted spell at the front. Apart from this, those of them formed from specialist units from communications zones cannot be withheld from their proper functions without prejudicing the overall supply position.

3. Own Intentions. Army Group intends, as already reported, to attack as early as possible with Fourth Pz. Army in order to make contact with Sixth Army. For the time being, however, soft state of ground precludes any advance by 57 Pz. Corps. Whether divisions of 48 Pz. Corps can be fully released on the Chir front by 11 Dec. is still uncertain. It will be necessary to bring 17 Pz. Div. into the attack, and orders have been given to this effect. As enemy must thus be expected shortly to extend his attacks on Chir front in general direction of Morosovskaya, Hollidt Group

must co-operate to relieve pressure on this front, either by attacking in general direction of Perelasovsky or by handing over one German division.

4. General Conclusions. The weight of forces brought in by enemy against Don Army Group makes it clear that he sees his main point of effort here. He will carry on the struggle in this sector as long as possible by bringing over forces from other fronts.

Regardless of how Sixth Army's own position may develop in the immediate future, therefore, it will still be necessary to maintain a steady flow of reinforcements to Don Army Group. Of decisive importance in this connection is that everything be done to increase their rate of arrival. At the present rate we shall always lag behind the Russians. I further consider it essential that everything be done to restore the usefulness of the Romanian Army, particularly as regards its will to fight and its confidence in the German Command.

As to whether Sixth Army should be taken out of the pocket once contact is re-established, I consider that the following factors must be carefully weighed:

(a) Should the army be left in the fortress area, it is entirely possible that the Russians will tie themselves down here and gradually fritter away their manpower in useless assaults. At the same time it must be faced that Sixth Army is having to live and fight under particularly unfavorable conditions in the fortress and that if the present ratio of strengths remains in force much longer, contact may well be lost again. At best it must be assumed that there will be no decisive change in the next few weeks.

(b) On the other hand, one must also allow for the possibility that the Russians will take the proper action and, while maintaining their encirclement of Stalingrad, launch strong attacks against Third and Fourth Romanian Armies with Rostov as their target. If this happens out most vital forces will be operationally immobilized in the fortress area or tied down to keeping the link with it open, whereas the Russians will have freedom of action along the whole of the Army Group's remaining front. To maintain this situation throughout the winter strikes me as inexpedient.

(c) The corollary of any decision to keep Sixth Army at Stalingrad must therefore be the decision to fight this battle through to completely decisive ending. This will necessitate:

(1) providing Sixth Army with extra forces to maintain its defensive capacity, in the form of Luftwaffe field divisions which would be incorporated into existing formations.

(11) Initial reinforcement of the adjoining fronts of

Third and Fourth Romanian Armies, by German forces, as these fronts cannot be guaranteed to hold with Romanian remnants and ad hoc units.

- (iii) Launching a decisive offensive as soon as our forces permit.

Whether the forces required can be made available and brought into action at short notice is not for me to judge.

v. MANSTEIN
Field Marshal
Commanding Don Army
Group¹

¹von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 555.

APPENDIX H

From: The Fuehrer and Supreme Commander of the Army

ORDER OF THE DAY

December 12, 1942

During the course of the operations against Stalingrad there arose, as early as October, the danger of a threat developing to the long northern flank of our attacking front.

In the first half of November there were indications of an impending attack against the Third Romanian Army. To meet this threat, I gave orders that the 22 Panzer Division should take up a position behind the right wing of the Third Romanian Army and together with the 1 Romanian Panzer Division should constitute the XXXXVIII Panzer Corps, under the command of Generalleutnant Heim.

In the event of an enemy attack or breakthrough, this Panzer Corps was under orders to make an immediate counter-attack, and to prevent at all costs the forcing back of the right wing of the Third Romanian Army.

The forces which were thus deployed to oppose the enemy's attack were exceptionally strong. From the very beginning the way in which the 22 Panzer Division was brought up and deployed gave rise to grave doubts concerning the Corps commander's efficiency. Of more than one hundred tanks, only a little over thirty reached their appointed assembly area.

I regard it as a most serious dereliction of an officer's duty if, at such a time and in such conditions, he fails to exert the utmost energy in bringing the fighting strength of his units to the highest possible pitch, or alternatively in redressing errors already made.

The leader of the Panzer Corps had a duty to make himself immediately conversant with every aspect of the operation which confronted him.

It was his further duty to keep in close touch with the Panzer divisions assigned to him and to discuss thoroughly with the two divisions all questions concerning this operation. Speed of action was all the more essential, in that it must have been obvious: first, that the organization, leadership and general condition of our Romanian allies was not of a sufficiently high standard to make them equal to tasks which could be undertaken

by German divisions in similar circumstances; and, secondly, that, especially with regard to anti-tank weapons, they did not possess the necessary equipment.

When the Russians launched their expected attack on the 19th of November, the sector of front directly concerned was to begin with comparatively narrow. If the Panzer Corps, with a strength of over one hundred and fifty tanks, had been rapidly sent into action, this would beyond any question of doubt have resulted in a German victory.

But the Panzer Corps did not in fact go into action at all during the first twenty-four hours. During the next twenty-four hours the Corps Commander was attempting to establish contact with the 1 Romanian Panzer Division. It was thus impossible immediately to concentrate the two divisions, so that a concerted counter-attack could be launched.

Then instead of at least grimly battling through to join the Romanian Panzer Division, so that a joint counter-attack could be mounted, operations by the 22 Panzer Division continued to be as hesitant as they were unsafe.

This failure by the XXXXVIII Panzer Corps was alone responsible for the fact that the Third Romanian Army was broken through on both wings. This has resulted in a catastrophe of immense proportions, the ultimate consequences of which cannot even now be foreseen. In view of the extremely grave consequences that have followed this disaster, namely the loss of a large number of units and an immense amount of war material and the encirclement of the Sixth Army, the conduct of the Corps Commander must be regarded as not merely grossly careless, but as a crime of negligence hitherto unparalleled in the course of the war.

In addition, the moral effect will have serious repercussions on the German war effort. I am determined that the conditions which prevailed during the Battle of the Marne in 1914, and which German military and historical research has not, after twenty-five years, yet succeeded in explaining, shall in no circumstances be allowed to reappear in the new army. In view of the disastrous consequences that have resulted from the failure of this general, I have decided:

1. That he shall be immediately dismissed from the Army.
2. That while awaiting final elucidation of the failure of this German officer, no further decisions will be made concerning the ultimate action which, in accordance with military tradition in such cases, may have to be

taken against him.

Signed: ADOLF HITLER¹

¹Schroeter, Stalingrad, pp. 63-64.

APPENDIX I

By Hand of Officer Only

3 Copies Issued

TOP SECRET

Copy Nr. 3

19th Dec., 1435 hrs.

To: Chief-of-Staff of the Army

For immediate submission to the Fuehrer

In conjunction with developments in Army Group B, and in consequence of the fact that these have stopped the arrival of any further forces, the situation of Don Army Group is now such that Sixth Army cannot be expected to be relieved in the foreseeable future.

Since an airlift is not possible for reasons of weather and the inadequate forces available (which means, as four weeks encirclement have shown, that the Army cannot be maintained in the fortress area), and as 57 Panzer Corps by itself obviously cannot make contact with Sixth Army on the ground, let alone keep a corridor open, I now consider a break-out to the south-west to be the last possible means of preserving at least the bulk of the troops and the still mobile elements of Sixth Army.

The breakthrough, the first aim of which must be to make contact with 57 Pz. Corps on about the Yerik Myshkova, can only take place by forcing a gradual shift of Sixth Army towards the south-west and giving up ground sector by sector in the north of the fortress area as this movement progresses.

As long as this operation is in progress it will be essential to safeguard the airlift by adequate fighter and bomber cover.

As there are signs even now of enemy pressure on the northern wing of Fourth Romanian Army, it is also vital that forces be quickly brought up from the Caucasus front to safeguard the execution of 57 Pz. Corps' task by protection of its deep right flank.

In the event of delay, 57 Pz. Corps is likely to become stuck on or north of the Myshkova or else tied down by attacks in its right flank. At the same time Sixth Army needs a few days to regroup and stock up with fuel before moving off.

Rations in the pocket will last till 22 Dec. Troops already badly weakened (only 200 gr. a day for the last fortnight). According to Sixth Army, most of the horses have already been put out of action by exhaustion or slaughtered for food.

v. MANSTEIN
Field Marshal
Commanding Don Army Group¹

¹Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 560.

APPENDIX J

From: Hq. Sixth Army

26 December 1942

To: Commanding General, Army Group Don

Bloody losses, cold and inadequate supplies have recently made serious inroads on divisions fighting strength. I must therefore report the following:

1) Army can continue to beat off small-scale attacks and deal with local crises for some time yet, always providing that supply improves and replacements are flown in at earliest possible moment.

2) If enemy draws off forces in any strength from Hoth's front and uses these or any other troops to launch mass attacks on Stalingrad fortress, latter cannot hold out for long.

3) No longer possible to execute breakout unless corridor is cut in advance and Army replenished with men and supplies.

I therefore request at highest level to ensure energetic measures for speedy relief unless overall situation compels sacrifice of Army. Army will naturally do everything in its power to hold out till last possible moment.

I have also to report that only 70 tons were flown in today. Some of the corps will exhaust bread supplies tomorrow, fats this evening, evening fare tomorrow. Radical measures now urgent.

PAULUS
General

1-von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 351.

APPENDIX K

Russian Ultimatum to Surrender to Sixth Army

To: The Commander-in-Chief of the German Sixth Army, Generaloberst Paulus, or his representative, and to all the officers and men of the German units now besieged in Stalingrad.

Date: 8 January 1943

The Sixth Army, formations of the Fourth Panzer Army, and those units sent to reinforce them have been completely encircled since the 23rd of November, 1942.

The soldiers of the Red Army have sealed this German Army Group within an unbreakable ring. All hopes of the rescue of your troops by a German offensive from the south or southwest have proved vain. The German units hastening to your assistance were defeated by the Red Army, and the remnants of that force are now withdrawing to Rostov.

The German air transport fleet, which brought you a starvation ration of food, munitions and fuel, has been compelled by the Red Army's successful and rapid advance repeatedly to withdraw to airfields more distant from the encircled troops. It should be added that the German air transport fleet is suffering enormous losses in machines and crews at the hands of the Russian Air Force. The help they can bring to the besieged forces is rapidly becoming illusory.

The situation of your troops is desperate. They are suffering from hunger, sickness and cold. The cruel Russian winter has scarcely yet begun. Hard frosts, cold winds and blizzards still lie ahead. Your soldiers are unprovided with winter clothing and are living in appalling sanitary conditions.

You, as Commander-in-Chief, and all the officers of the encircled forces know well that there is for you no real possibility of breaking out. Your situation is hopeless, and any further resistance senseless.

In view of the desperate situation in which you are placed, and in order to save unnecessary bloodshed, we propose that you accept the following terms of surrender:

1. All the encircled German troops, headed by yourself and your staff, shall cease to resist.
2. You will hand over to such persons as shall be authorized

by us, all members of your armed forces, all war materials and all army equipment in an undamaged condition.

3. We guarantee the safety of all officers and men who cease to resist, and their return at the end of the war to Germany or to any other country to which these prisoners of war may wish to go.
4. All personnel of units which surrender may retain their military uniforms, badges of rank, decorations, personal belongings and valuables and, in the case of high-ranking officers, their swords.
5. All officers, non-commissioned officers and men who surrender will immediately receive normal rations.
6. All those who are wounded, sick or front-bitten will be given medical treatment.

Your reply is to be given in writing by ten o'clock, Moscow time, the 9th of January, 1943. It must be delivered by your personal representative who is to travel a car bearing a white flag along the road that leads to the Konny siding at Kotlubanj station. Your representative will be met by fully authorized Russian officers in District B, 500 meters southeast of siding 564 at 1000 hrs. on the 9th of January 1943.

Should you refuse our offer that you lay down your arms, we hereby give you notice that the forces of the Red Army and the Red Air Force will be compelled to proceed with the destruction of the encircled German troops. The responsibility for this will lie with you.

Representing Headquarters Red Army Supreme Command:

General-polkovnik Artillerii VORONOV

The Commander-in-Chief of the Forces of the Don Front:

General-leitenant ROKOSSOVSKI¹

¹Schroeter, Stalingrad, pp. 168-169.

APPENDIX L

The following are the headquarters staffs and organizations of the Sixth German Army which perished at Stalingrad.

Hq, IV, VIII, XI and LI Army Corps; and Hq, XIV Panzer Corps

44th, 71st, 76th, 79th, 94th, 113th, 295th, 297th, 305th, 371st, 376th, 384th and the 389th Infantry Divisions

100 Rifle (Jaeger) Division and the 369th Infantry Regiment (Creation)

14th, 16th and 24th Panzer Divisions

3rd, 29th and 60th Panzer Grenadier Divisions

Numerous units of Luftwaffe troops (anti-aircraft and maintenance)

1st Romanian Cavalry Division and the 20th Romanian Infantry Division¹

¹von Manstein, Lost Victories, p. 365.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Blumentritt, Guenther. Von Rudstedt, the Soldier and the Man. Translated by Cuthbert Reavely. London: Odhams Press, 1952.
- Gaulaincourt, Armand de. With Napoleon in Russia. New York: Morrow, 1935.
- Chuikov, Vladimir I. Street Fighting - The Lessons of Stalingrad. London: Hutchinson and Co., 1943.
- Gilbert, Felix (ed.). Hitler Directs His War. New York: Oxford University Press, 1950.
- Guderian, Heinz. Panzer Leader. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1952.
- Kovpak, Sidor A. Our Partisan Course. London: Hutchinson and Co., 1947.
- Liddell Hart, Basil H. (ed.). The Red Army. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1956.
- Manstein, Erich von. Lost Victories. Translated by Anthony G. Powell. Chicago: Henry Regnery and Co., 1958.
- Mellenthin, Friedrich Wilhelm von. Panzer Battles. Translated by H. Betzler. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955.
- Ponomarenko, P. K. and Others. V Tylu Vraga. Moskva: Malodaya Gvardiya, 1943.
- Rudel, Hans Ulrich. Stuka Pilot. Translated by Lynton Hudson. New York: Ballentine Books, 1958.
- Savin, Michail V. and Others. Bitva pod Stalingradom. Moskva: Voennoye Izdatelstvo, 1944.
- Schroeter, Heinz. Stalingrad. Translated by Constantine Fitzgibbon. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958.
- Stalingrad. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1943.
- Stalingrad: An Eye-Witness Account by Soviet Correspondents and Red Army Commanders. London: Hutchinson and Co., 1943.
- Stupov, Andre D. and Kokunov, Viktor L. 62-lya Armiya V Bolakh Za Stalingrad. Moskva: Voennoye Izdatelstvo, 1949.

U.S., Department of State. Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941.
Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office.
 Edited by Raymond J. Sontag and James S. Beddie. Washington:
 U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948.

Weinert, Erich. Stalingrad Diary. Translated by Egon Larsen.
 London: I. N. G. Publications, 1944.

Zieser, Benno. The Road to Stalingrad. Translated by Alec
 Brown. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1955.

Secondary Materials

Alexander, Lewis M. World Political Patterns. Chicago: Rand
 McNally, 1957.

Allen, William E. D. and Muratoff, P. The Russian Campaigns of
 1941-1943. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1944.

Anders, Wladyslaw. Hitler's Defeat in Russia. Chicago: Regney
 and Co., 1953.

Balzak, S. S. (ed.). Economic Geography of the U.S.S.R. New
 York: Macmillan, 1949.

Barnes, G. M. Weapons of World War II. Toronto: Van Nostrand,
 1948.

Berchin, Michail and Ben-Horin, E. The Red Army. New York:
 Norton and Co., 1942.

Bullock, Alan. Hitler: A Study in Tyranny. London: Odhams Press,
 1952.

DeWeerd, Harvey A. Great Soldiers of World War II. New York:
 Norton and Co., 1944.

Ely, Lewis B. The Red Army Today. Harrisburg: Military Service
 Publishing Co., 1949.

Fels, Herbert. Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin: The War They
 Waged and the Peace They Sought. Princeton: Princeton
 University Press, 1957.

Frischauer, Willi. The Rise and Fall of Hermann Goering. New
 York: Baentine Books, 1951.

Fuller, J. F. C. The Second World War, 1939-1945. New York:
 Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1949.

- Gartoff, Raymond L. Soviet Military Doctrine. Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1953.
- Guillame, Andre. Soviet Arms and Soviet Power. New York: Infantry Journal Press, 1949.
- Hitler, Adolf. Mein Kampf. London: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941.
- Kamenetskii, Ihor. Hitler's Occupation of the Ukraine. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1956.
- Kerr, Walter B. The Russian Army: Its Men, Its Leaders, Its Battles. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1944.
- Liddell Hart, Basil H. The Other Side of the Hill. London: Cassell and Co., 1948.
- Mackinder, Halford J. Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction. New York: Henry Holt, 1942.
- Mehring, Walter. Timoshenko, Marshal of the Red Army. Albert Ungar Publishing Co., 1942.
- Mirov, N. T. Geography of Russia. New York: Wiley and Sons, 1951.
- Pearcy, G. Etzel and Others. World Political Geography. New York: Crowell and Co., 1948.
- Plevier, Theodor. Death of an Army. London: Athenaeum Publishing Co., 1948.
- Poloakov, A. Stalin Mammoths: The Dramatic Story of Russian Tanks in Action. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1943.
- Rosinski, Herbert. The German Army. Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1944.
- Rossi A. (Tasca, Angelo). The Russo-German Alliance. Boston: Beacon Press, 1951.
- Siege of Stalingrad. London: Communist Party, 1943.
- Shabad, Theodore. Geography of the U.S.S.R., A Regional Survey. New York: Columbia University Press, 1951.
- U.S. Military Academy. Operations on the Russian Front. Vols. I and II. New York: Military Academy Press, 1946.
- U.S. Department of the Army. Rear Area Security in Russia - The Soviet Second Front Behind German Lines. Pamphlet No. 20-240. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, July, 1951.

- U. S. Department of the Army. The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operations. Pamphlet No. 20-261a. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, March, 1955.
- U. S. Department of the Army. Small Unit Actions During the German Campaign in Russia. Pamphlet No. 20-269. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, July, 1953.
- U. S. Department of the Army. Terrain Factors in the Russian Campaign. Pamphlet No. 20-290. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, July, 1951.
- U. S. Department of the Army. Effects of Climate on Combat in European Russia. Pamphlet No. 20-291. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, February, 1952.
- U. S. Department of the Army. Handbook on the Soviet Army. Pamphlet No. 30-50-1. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, July, 1958.
- Walsh, Edmund A. "Geopolitics and International Morals." Compass of the World. Edited by Hans W. Weigart and Vilhjalmur Stefansson. New York: Macmillan, 1944.

Periodicals

- Bor-Ramenskii, E. G. "Iz Istorii Oborony Stalingrada v 1942 godu," Istoricheskiye Zapiski, No. 53, 1955.
- Dmytryshyn, Basil. "The Nazis and the S. S. Volunteer Division Galicia," American Slavic and East European Review. February, 1956.
- "Friedrich von Paulus, a Portrait," New York Times, March 28, 1943.
- "Impregnable City," Infantry Journal, No. 52, June, 1943.
- Mordal, Jacques. "La Guerre Germano-Sovietique: Stalingrad," Miroir De L'Histoire, No. 84, 1956.
- Schelbert, Horst. "Nach Stalingrad - 48 Kilometer," Deutsche Soldat, XX, No. 9, 1956.
- Smith, Terrance. "Stalingrad or Bust," Infantry Journal, No. 59, August, 1946.
- Tchenkeli, A. D. "Collapse of German Forces in Russia," Voice of Free Georgia, No. 6, 1954.

Wieder, Joachim. "Welches Gesetz Befahl den Deutschen Soldaten,
an der Wolga zu Sterben?" Frankfurter Hefte, XI, No. 5,
1956.

VITA

George W. Hofmann was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on November 14, 1932, to Phyllis Louise Sayre and Charles W. Hofmann. He graduated from Mt. Lebanon High School, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in June, 1950, and matriculated in the University of Pittsburgh in the fall of that same year. After receiving a commission in the United States Army in June, 1954, he entered active duty, spending two years as a rifle platoon leader and executive officer, and slightly over two years as an intelligence officer in Germany. While in the service he attended the Intelligence Specialists Course-Russian, U. S. Army Intelligence and Military Police School, Europe, acquiring a proficiency in the Russian language and an intense interest in military history. After release from the service in August, 1958, he attended Kansas State University, receiving his B.A. degree in history and B.S. degree in education. Since June, 1959, he has been a graduate student and teaching assistant at Kansas State University and is a candidate for the M.A. degree in the summer session of 1961. His permanent address is 1729 Houston Street, Manhattan, Kansas.

THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC
AND MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS

by

GEORGE W. HOFMANN

A. B., Kansas State University, 1959
B. S., Kansas State University, 1959

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History, Political Science
and Philosophy

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1961

The German defeat at Stalingrad marked the turning point of the war on the eastern front. The loss of some 270,000 officers and men by the Germans in the disaster at Stalingrad in November, 1942, through January, 1943, seemed irreparable, for the German forces lost the initiative after this battle and never regained it for the remainder of the war.

It was perhaps a mistake on the Germans part to even have attacked the Soviet Union in June, 1941, for it committed them to fighting a two front war, contrary to the basic theory of the German General Staff. In any case, the German plans to end the war in the east by the winter of 1941 never materialized for several reasons. First, the attack on the Soviet Union was delayed because Germany was forced to aid Italy in concluding a mismanaged Balkan campaign, interrupting the time-table for 'Operation Barbarossa'. Second, it became apparent that Germany was not sufficiently prepared logistically to conduct cold-weather operations, which slowed the winter attack on Moscow considerably. Third, and perhaps most important, Hitler lost sight of the overall military objectives of the campaign, the destruction of the Red Army in the field, by considering and eventually ordering the shifting of the attack into the Ukraine for economic reasons.

Subsequent to strong opposition by many of his generals, Hitler made the fatal decision to divert the main effort of his attack to the Ukraine and the Caucasus. Economically, Hitler desired the coal of the Donets Basin, the iron of Krivoy Rog and the oil of Baku. All of these materials were in short supply in

Germany, and Hitler apparently felt that to obtain these riches would not only greatly aid Germany, but would also fatally affect the war effort of the Soviet Union. To obtain these goals Hitler thrust two salients deep into the Ukraine toward Stalingrad and into the Caucasus toward Baku. Hitler, in making these efforts, completely ignored the bulk of the Red Army, still intact, in the Moscow area and that it was seriously endangering the northern flank of the Stalingrad salient.

In addition to the blunders in military operations that Hitler made, he also was responsible for turning the Ukrainian people against him through his short-sighted occupation policies. Although initially welcomed with open arms, the German occupiers through their inept policies, soon received the undying hatred of the Ukrainian people. Ukrainian partisans, by the latter half of 1942, had made logistical support of the front line German troops a nightmare. This breakdown of the German supply effort at the height of the drive toward Stalingrad certainly contributed to the German defeat there.

On November 18, 1942, the Red Army launched an attack on the northern shoulder of the Stalingrad salient and cut off 270,000 men of the Sixth German Army from the main German front. Hitler's decision to order the Sixth Army to remain in the pocket, without surrendering one foot of ground, paved the way to disaster. By not allowing the Sixth Army to break out of the trap when they might have been able to do so, compounded the earlier mistakes and led to the complete annihilation of the Sixth Army. The loss of

this army could be ill-afforded by the Wehrmacht and at this point the possibility of a decisive victory in the east seemed lost to the Germans.

The complete fiasco of the attempted air-lift to supply the encircled Sixth Army against the recommendations of all the Luftwaffe field commanders led to the destruction of nearly all German cargo and transport operational aircraft in the east and a complete end to German air superiority in this theatre of operations. The end result was a general withdrawal of German forces, ending only with the fall of Berlin.

It should be stated that even after the usefulness of the Sixth Army in preventing Soviet units from being released to join in the pursuit of the withdrawing German units, had been served, Hitler still refused to grant permission for the Sixth Army to end their ordeal and surrender. As a result, of the 270,000 men in the pocket at the onset of the encirclement, only some 120,000 lived to surrender when their positions were overrun on February 1, 1943. Of the prisoners taken, most were badly wounded or suffering from the effects of cold and starvation rations. To this date only 5,000 of these troops have returned to their homeland.