Ostfront 1941/42

Kampfhandlungen im Bereich der Heeresgruppe Mitte
(22.6.41-1.5.42)

Notebook 11:

„Stalin & Hitler“
(Additional Notes)

Research Notes:
Dr Craig W.H. Luther

Tehachapi CA
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“Die Stimme des Blutes deines Bruders schreit zu mir von der Erde.“

Genesis 4:10

“And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.”

Revelation 6:8
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---11.2.11: Adolf Hitler. John Toland. 1976.3


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3 *Note:* Toland’s book based on more than 250 interviews w/ Hitler’s adjutants, secretaries, chauffeur, pilot, his doctors, his favorite warriors, architechts, first foreign press secretary, his military leaders, and the women he most admired.
Notebook 11:

„Stalin & Hitler“

11.1: Josef Stalin


The Rise of Stalin:

During the early 1920s, the influence of Joseph Stalin rose within the party. [Note: For background on Stalin’s rise to power see, pp 1045-48. Stalin was often arrested for his revolutionary agitation and exiled to Siberia.] Ruthless political infighting was “as natural to Stalin as breathing.”

In Apr 22, the Central Committee named Stalin to the important, recently created post of general secretary, which allowed him to appoint allies to various important posts and to repress dissent within the party. . . In May 22, Lenin suffered a stroke. His increasing incapacitation set off a struggle of succession . . . Stalin was thus well placed as a potential successor to Lenin. (1047)

Dec 22: A day after suffering another stroke, Lenin dictated his doubts about Stalin: “Comrade Stalin, on becoming general secretary, concentrated boundless power in his hands, and I am not sure whether he will always know how to use this power w/ sufficient caution.” Lenin’s death in Jan 24 led Stalin to step up his efforts to consolidate his power. Stalin placed his own men on the Central Committee . . . (1048)

1927: The Central Committee, w/ Stalin completely in charge, voted to expel Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Communist Party and refused to publish Lenin’s “Political Testament,” which had suggested that Stalin be replaced as general secretary. The Soviet Union entered the long period of the dictatorship of Joseph Stalin. (1048)

Forced Collectivization & Accelerated Industrialization:

After purging the Left Opposition, Stalin openly favored their plan of accelerated industrialization. This would be paid for by extracting more resources from the peasantry. In 1928/29, Stalin resumed the forced requisitioning of “surpluses” and expropriated the land of richer peasants. When this led to growing peasant opposition, he took the next step in 1930: the forced collectivization of agriculture – the elimination of private ownership of land and animals. The Five-Year Plan would mark a complete abandonment of Lenin’s New Economic Policy, which Stalin believed would have allowed capitalism to be restored. (1049)

1928-33: The first Five-Year Plan (1928-33) led to a bloodbath in the countryside. Hundreds of thousands of peasants who refused to turn over their harvests, animals, or farms were killed. . . Peasants resisted in many ways w/ determination and resourcefulness. There were waves of protest, often led by women. . . Many peasants slaughtered livestock rather than allow them to be taken by the collective farm. The number of horses fell from 36 million in 1929; to 15 million four [4] years later, cattle from 67 million to 34 million in same period. (1049)
Small plots were forcibly consolidated into collective farms. . . The state supplied machinery, seed and clothing. The free market disappeared, w/ the state establishing production quotas and setting prices. One of the primary goals of the collectivization of agriculture was to force peasants into industrial labor. During the first Five-Year Plan, the Soviet Union’s industrial and urban populations doubled, as 9 million peasants were conscripted to work in the factories.  

The Five-Year Plan ended in 1932 [i.e., not 1933] (in part because of the effects of peasant resistance) after 4 years and 3 months, w/ 62% of the peasants now working for the state in collective farms. The campaign continued, though somewhat less brutally; four [4] years later, the figure was 93%. . . Overall, living conditions deteriorated during the Five-Year Plan. . . Hundreds of thousands of peasants had been killed, and perhaps 2 million had been exiled to Siberia or other distant places under the sentence of hard labor. Around 7 million people died of hunger between 1930-33, and 4-5 million people starved during 1932/33, most in Ukraine. . . Overall, living conditions deteriorated during the Five-Year Plan. . . Hundreds of thousands of peasants had been killed, and perhaps 2 million had been exiled to Siberia or other distant places under the sentence of hard labor. Around 7 million people died of hunger between 1930-33, and 4-5 million people starved during 1932/33, most in Ukraine. . . Overall, living conditions deteriorated during the Five-Year Plan. . . Hundreds of thousands of peasants had been killed, and perhaps 2 million had been exiled to Siberia or other distant places under the sentence of hard labor. Around 7 million people died of hunger between 1930-33, and 4-5 million people starved during 1932/33, most in Ukraine. . . Overall, living conditions deteriorated during the Five-Year Plan. . . Hundreds of thousands of peasants had been killed, and perhaps 2 million had been exiled to Siberia or other distant places under the sentence of hard labor. Around 7 million people died of hunger between 1930-33, and 4-5 million people starved during 1932/33, most in Ukraine. . . Overall, living conditions deteriorated during the Five-Year Plan. . . Hundreds of thousands of peasants had been killed, and perhaps 2 million had been exiled to Siberia or other distant places under the sentence of hard labor. Around 7 million people died of hunger between 1930-33, and 4-5 million people starved during 1932/33, most in Ukraine. . . Overall, living conditions deteriorated during the Five-Year Plan. . . Hundreds of thousands of peasants had been killed, and perhaps 2 million had been exiled to Siberia or other distant places under the sentence of hard labor. Around 7 million people died of hunger between 1930-33, and 4-5 million people starved during 1932/33, most in Ukraine. . . Overall, living conditions deteriorated during the Five-Year Plan. . . Hundreds of thousands of peasants had been killed, and perhaps 2 million had been exiled to Siberia or other distant places under the sentence of hard labor. Around 7 million people died of hunger between 1930-33, and 4-5 million people starved during 1932/33, most in Ukraine. . . Overall, living conditions deteriorated during the Five-Year Plan. . . Hundreds of thousands of peasants had been killed, and perhaps 2 million had been exiled to Siberia or other distant places under the sentence of hard labor. Around 7 million people died of hunger between 1930-33, and 4-5 million people starved during 1932/33, most in Ukraine. . . Overall, living conditions deteriorated during the Five-Year Plan. . . Hundreds of thousands of peasants had been killed, and perhaps 2 million had been exiled to Siberia or other distant places under the sentence of hard labor. Around 7 million people died of hunger between 1930-33, and 4-5 million people starved during 1932/33, most in Ukraine. . . Overall, living conditions deteriorated during the Five-Year Plan. . .

The campaign for heavy industrialization proceeded successfully, it the human cost is conveniently forgotten. . . The state did meet some ambitious production targets in heavy industry (iron and steel), fuel production (oil and electricity), new industries (esp. chemicals), and in the manufacture of tractors. While a harsh economic depression devastated Western economies, between 1929 and 1934 the Soviet economy may have had an annual growth rate of a remarkable 27%. . . (1051)

1933-37: The second Five-Year Plan (1933-37) relied less on the shrill rhetoric of class warfare, despite ongoing collectivization. In the meantime, Stalin reinforced his dictatorship. . . The grandson of a Soviet minister recalled, “Stalin was like a God for us. Somebody told me that Stalin could be the best surgeon. He could perform a brain operation better than anyone else, and I believed it.” (1051)

A poem from the 1930s, entitled “There Is a Man in Moscow,” reflects this bizarre and troubling adulation: (1051)

Who is that man who appears to the toilers,  
Spreading happiness and joy all around?  
It is Stalin, I shout, so the whole world will hear,  
It is Stalin, our Leader and Friend

Stalin’s Purges:

By 1934, Stalin was no longer content to expel from the party those who did not share his views. . . As arrests mounted in number, executions replaced sentences of hard labor. . . The first of the great show trials – staged before audiences and cameras – took place in 1936, the last in Mar 38. . . Children – who could be executed at age 12 [!] – were encouraged to denounce their parents for crimes against the state. At least 680,000 people were sentenced to death in 1937/38, and probably about 1 million people were executed in the camps (in addition to those who died of harsh conditions). Estimates of the number of prisoners in labor camps, colonies, and prisons have ranged from about 1.5 million to 7 million. The included an elderly women sentenced to camp terms for having said things like, “if people prayed they would work better.” . . The purges weakened the Soviet armed forces. Among the 30,000 to 40,000 officers who perished, all

Note: In other words, forced collectivization of agriculture and rapid industrialization went hand-in-hand.
8 Soviet admirals were executed, as were 75 of the 80 members of the Supreme Military Council. (1054-55)

Under the rule of Stalin, the Soviet Union’s industrial capacity increased dramatically, but at a terrifying human cost. (1055)

11.1.2.: World War II in Europe. An Encyclopedia. David T. Zabecki (ed.)

Stalin was the absolute dictator of the Soviet Union between 1929 and his death in 1953. His major political accomplishment was to convert Communism in the Soviet Union from what had been a relatively egalitarian, revolutionary movement into an authoritarian, repressive, and bureaucratic political system. He established an industrial system that enabled the Soviet Union to defeat Hitler. In accomplishing these ends, he institutionalized terror to a degree seldom seen in world history. It is estimated that he had as many as 20 million Soviet citizens murdered in the process. (506)

After Lenin's death, Stalin consolidated his power, driving all of his political rivals out of the party. When he succeeded in expelling Leon Trotsky from the Soviet Union in 1929, Stalin’s position became virtually unassailable. (506)

Through a series of brutal five-year plans that enforced collectivism and industrialization, Stalin changed the Soviet Union from a backward agrarian country into a modern industrialized state. During the 1930s, he continued to tighten his grasp on the reins of power by eliminating internal enemies through a series of treason trials and purges. (506)

Foreign policy: In the years before WWII, Stalin’s foreign policy was aimed at defending the Soviet Union from the openly expansionist policies of Nazi Germany. When he concluded that a series of treaties negotiated w/ France and Czechoslovakia would not achieve this objective, he decided to deal w/ Germany directly. The result was the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of Aug 39, which in a secret protocol agreed to the division of Poland and the placing of the Baltic States under the Soviet sphere of influence. (506)

German-Soviet War: When the German leviathan steamrolled across the Soviet frontier and the Red Army on 22 Jun 41, Stalin was dumbstruck. For days he dithered in a melancholic daze as the sheer scale of the catastrophe, largely of his own making, became apparent. On 30 Jun 41 his psychological paralysis began to lift as he approved the creation of the overarching State Defense Committee (GoKo), w/ himself as its head. He quickly regained his merciless composure, executing failed Red Army commanders and placing the government on a total war footing. In the meantime, his belief in his own mastery of military affairs and strategy revived – w/ ominous consequences for Red Army operations. (506)

Military Leader: Stalin injected total dominance into military planning. He fostered a deeply held belief, dating from the Civil War, that any dedicated Bolshevik could master strategy and tactics in a matter of days. Initially, this resulted in a myriad of orders from Stalin to defend untenable lines or counterattack, orders that meant little to the shattered and encircled forces that

5 Note: This entry prepared by Stephen Donahue.
6 Note: This “conventional wisdom” has been significantly revised in recent years – i.e., Stalin was something more than a “zombie” during first week of war.
7 Note: GKO?
receive them. His appointment to senior commands of incompetent cronies from his Civil War days, Semyon Budenny and Kliment Voroshilov chief among them, exacerbated the spiraling crisis. (506)

By mid-1942, Stalin had learned to adopt a more cautious tact to his personal interventions into combat operations. . . The Battle of Stalingrad ended the myth of German invincibility, and the summer campaign of 1943 – and history’s greatest tank battle at Kursk – verified that the war had reached its strategic turning point. Despite some early vacillation, Stalin subdued his impulse for a frontal assault and accepted the entrenched, defensive posture advocated by his commanders, who had possession of detailed intelligence regarding the imminent German attack, Operation ZITADELLE. (507)

When the attack came [at Kursk], the German panzer echelons broke against the prepared Soviet positions in what was a decisive defensive victory. The resulting [Soviet] counterattack then permanently shifted the strategic initiative to the Soviets. By the end of Nov 43, the Red Army had established three [3] bridgeheads across the Dnieper River, and was poised for the advance into Eastern Europe and the Balkans. (507)

With Soviet success, however, Stalin returned to his previous single-minded insistence on continuous offensives on broad fronts, instead of the closer assault frontages to spearhead the advance desired by the field commanders. This led to many ill-prepared attacks and resulted in high Red Army casualties. (507)

Stalin’s role as a military commander in 1941/42 was marked by disastrous defeats and enormous battlefield losses, to which he apparently was completely indifferent. Indeed, Zhukov considered Stalin’s worth as a commander primarily in that “he excelled above all as a military economist who knew how to collect reserves even while the front was consuming manpower in gargantuan mouthfuls,” while also deploying those reserves to decisive effect – such as the Soviet counteroffensive at Kursk. Otherwise, the main point in Stalin’s military performance was that by Sep 42, he finally learned to listen to his experts. Militarily, this is probably the biggest difference between Stalin and Adolf Hitler, who never did quite grasp this vital lesson. (507)

Stalin was an uncertain military commander, but his deficiencies in the military realm were overridden by two primary considerations. The first was his absolute mastery over the apparatus of the Soviet state. The second was his keen, overriding feel for grand strategy; the geopolitical, diplomatic, economic, and industrial factors that defined his wartime and postwar objectives. (507)

Crux: Stalin will most likely be remembered as one of the greatest mass murderers of all time. (507)

11.1.3: Stalin’s Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939-53. Geoffrey Roberts.⁸

For decades, Cold War politics – and then revisionism – caused historians to emphasize Stalin’s ruthlessness and paranoia, while downplaying his contribution to the war effort. Just as most Germans blamed Adolf Hitler for all their defeats, so Soviet leaders from Khrushchev onward

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⁸ Note: Review of Roberts’ book by Jonathan M. House (U.S. Army CGSC.)
tended to depict Stalin as a **bungling butcher** who was saved by the undoubted self-sacrifice of the Soviet peoples.⁹

Geoffrey Roberts, a history professor in Cork, Ireland, has undertaken a systematic review of the dictator’s role in both WWII and the ensuing Cold War. In an unusual form of **revisionism**, Roberts concludes that the **contemporaneous view of Stalin as a great war leader was largely justified**. Without minimizing Stalin’s mistakes or his paranoia, the author maintains that the dictator was a **key factor** in the Soviet victory: “Without him the efforts of the [Communist] party, the people, the armed forces and their generals would have been considerably less effective.” (p. 373)

To demonstrate his contention, Roberts uses the growing, if still limited, **access to Soviet archives** that historians have been exploiting for over one decade. For example, analysts [sic] of Stalin’s official appointments calendar have indicated that he was involved in a series of critical meetings and decisions immediately after the **1941 German invasion**, at a time when (according to Khrushchev) the dictator was in **shocked depression** as a result of the attack.

The author uses a similar source to argue that G.K. Zhukov, the deputy commander in chief, had **exaggerated his own role** in convincing Stalin of the **1942 counterattack plan** that eventually destroyed German 6. **Army** at Stalingrad . . .

This account repeatedly endorses the conclusions of **David Glantz** and others that **Stalin learned to trust the professionalism of his generals**, resulting in a fundamental change in his leadership style.

**11.1.4: Stalin’s Wars.** (Jamie Glazov¹⁰ interviews Geoffrey Roberts for: *FrontPage Magazine*, 12 Feb 07)

**FP:** So what inspired you to write this book?

**GR:** I am a historian of the Soviet Union and I specialize in Stalin, Soviet foreign policy, the Great Patriotic War and the Cold War. . . Stalin’s Wars is a follow-on to work I did in the 1980s and early 1990s on Soviet foreign policy in the 1930s. the last 15 years or so an enormous amount of new material on Stalin during the war and early Cold War has become available from Russian archives. This new material has made possible a major reassessment of Stalin as a war leader and a postwar peacemaker. . . In terms of my personal history the origins of this book date back to the 1970s when I was a communist activist. . . In the 1980s my politics changed and I lost interest in discourses centered on the idea of a socialist transformation. . .

**FP:** What is the **main argument** of your book?

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⁹ **Note:** And yet, there remains more than a kernel of truth to this harsh assessment!

¹⁰ **Note:** Glazov’s parents were Soviet dissidents. He “grew up sitting at a dinner table that was surrounded by individuals who fought Soviet tyranny and who had been barbarized by Soviet tyranny. I can tell you that none of them were inspired by Stalin’s leadership and central role during the war. . .”
GR: I argue, firstly, that Stalin was a highly effective and successful war leader and I reject many criticisms of his leadership that I see as rooted, on the one hand, in western Cold War polemics, and, on the other hand, in the de-Stalinization campaign in the USSR. I think that Stalin and the Soviets played by far the greatest role in the defeat of Hitler and the Nazis and characterize Stalin as the dictator who, ironically and paradoxically, saved the world for democracy.

Secondly, I argue in great detail – and this is the most original and most extensively researched component of my book – that Stalin was very committed to the grand alliance w/ Britain and the United States and wanted to see it continue after the war. While Stalin’s actions contributed to the outbreak of the Cold War, he strove to avert the breakup of the grand alliance. . .

FP: . . . To say that Stalin saved the world for democracy is also, of course, in no way to suggest that he wanted a world of democracy. . .

GR: . . . In Stalin’s case, the truth is that he was a mass murderer and a great war leader who did humanity an immense service in helping to defeat Hitler and the Nazis. . . For me the interesting question is how it was possible for Stalin to be a great war leader AND a mass murderer[er]. As is apparent in my book, the answer to this question is that there was more to the Soviet system and to the Stalin regime than terror and mass repression. It was a regime that had a significant degree of popular support and was capable of evoking great public enthusiasm, not least during the war. It was a system that proved capable of mobilizing its resources and population in a total war effort that demanded immense personal sacrifice and which resulted in the greatest military victory in history. Stalin’s leadership and central role in this whole scenario seems to me to be undeniable. . .

FP: Well if Stalin did humanity an immense service in helping to defeat Hitler and the Nazis, all I can say is how tragic that someone didn’t do humanity an immense service during Stalin’s reign and help to defeat him and the evil empire that he ruled. . . You state that the Stalinist regime had “a significant degree of popular support.” Why someone would praise the Stalinist regime by referring to the ‘support’ it enjoyed amongst a victimized and terrorized populace that was run by a totalitarian evil empire is beyond me.

GR: . . . I had and have no illusions about the Soviet system and have never, ever sought to minimize its repressiveness and brutalities. But my research and my conversations w/ many people who lived in the Soviet Union and live in Russia today tells me that among the Soviet people there were a diversity of views and experiences of the Stalinist system, including many who were genuinely inspired by Stalin’s leadership and enthusiastic supporters of his regime.  

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11 Note: These comments by Roberts are vitally important, for they get at the heart of the matter of how and why the Soviet Union defeated Hitler’s Germany.

12 Note: Glazov took real issue w/ this contention of Roberts: “”

13 Note: This is unequivocally true – Stalin did find such support. A good example would be the inspired reaction of so many Russians to his decision to remain in Moscow in mid-Oct 41, when German capture of the city appeared imminent. More fundamentally, as Roberts opines, w/o such popular support Stalin’s regime would never have survived the German onslaught. Why he enjoyed the support of so many must lie (in part) in the history and character of the Russian people themselves.
Without that base of popular support the regime would not have survived the war. Violence and terror alone are not sufficient explanations for the durability of the Soviet system.

**FP:** Ok, well, let’s discuss some of the things you found out as a historian about Stalin. In the context of your thesis, what is the angle you take on the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact in 1939?

**GR:** I have written extensively about the Nazi-Soviet pact, beginning w/ my book, The Unholy Alliance: Stalin’s Pact w/ Hitler (1989). In Stalin’s Wars, I devote two chapters to Soviet-German relations after the pact was signed. These chapters update my previous research and record two important developments in my view of the pact.

Firstly, I’m more inclined to agree that Stalin contemplated the possibility of a long-term alliance w/ Hitler, at least until summer 1940 when Nazi-Soviet relations entered a crisis period that climaxed w/ the German attack in Jun 41. Secondly, I highlight the importance of new evidence from Soviet military archives about the Red Army’s plans for an offensive war against Germany. This does not mean Stalin was preparing or planning to initiate hostilities w/ Germany but it does mean that when war broke out the Red Army would counter-attack and counter-invade. The great surprise of 22 Jun 41 was not the fact of the German attack itself but the failure of Soviet defenses to hold while the Red Army prepared its own offensive action. This disastrous miscalculation was certainly Stalin’s but the responsibility was shared by the members of his High Command who did not believe that the Germans could surprise them the way in which they did.

**FP:** If it is possible to do so briefly, can you give us an insight into who Stalin was [as] a person? What made him tick? . . .

**GR:** Stalin’s personality remains the greatest mystery of all. For all the new evidence from Russian archives we still don’t know very much about his inner life. In my book I don’t give a systematic presentation and analysis of his personality, allowing instead the different aspects of his character to emerge incrementally in the detailed narrative . . .

The indexer of my book took a different view, however, and drew together all these different elements under the heading of “character,” including such descriptors as bully, charm, modesty, paranoia, rages, realism, sadism, humor, shrewdness, simplicity, toughness, vengefulness, will to power and wit. This listing neatly captures the complexity and contradictions of Stalin as a person but it also misses the main point I make in the book: that what defined and explained Stalin as a personality was his politics and ideology, particularly concepts of class conflict and class struggle. . . What made Stalin’s paranoia, for example, so dangerous, extreme and murderous was its class ideological content.

**FP:** Can you give us an example of one or two of the battles on the Eastern Front in which Stalin can really take credit for playing a decisive role?

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14 Note: Of course, the same could be said for his nemesis – A.H.
GR: The obvious example is Moscow in Oct-Nov 41. As the Germans approached the city gates Stalin held his nerve and maintained the coherence of his command structure; made a good decision when he called in Zhukov to lead the defense of the city; inspired popular confidence and enthusiasm by remaining in Moscow himself and by making some classic patriotic speeches; and did not get panicked into deploying all available forces for defense and allowed the Red Army to build up its forces in the rear in preparation for the successful counter-offensive in early Dec 41.\(^{15}\)

The Battle of Moscow was the first of the great turning points of the Eastern Front war; it marked the failure of Operation Barbarossa and meant that the Germans now faced a long war of attrition – a struggle that they could only win by a bold stroke – which they tried and failed to execute at Stalingrad in 1942 – another battle in which Stalin displayed the aforementioned qualities, although the pressure of Stalingrad seems to have got to him more than Moscow – perhaps because he, like most Soviet people, did not expect to have to fight such a decisive battle again.

FP: If Hitler had been a war leader like Stalin and Stalin had been a warlord like Hitler, is there a chance the Second World War might have been won by the Nazis?

GR: Philosophically I’m an individualist and voluntarist. I believe that people make history and that particular individuals can play a critical role at decisive turning points. Stalin’s war leadership is one such example – which, I argue in the book, was indispensable to the Soviet victory over the Nazis. So, yes, had Hitler been as effective a war lord as Stalin and Stalin as dysfunctional as Hitler then the Germans would have won the war on the Eastern Front and, by extension, the Second World War as a whole.

At the same time I don’t go along w/ all the criticisms of Hitler’s military leadership spawned by the mythmaking of his surviving generals making excuses for their own failings and failures. Stalin was a better warlord than Hitler because of the efficiency w/ which he ran the Soviet war machine, because of his ability and willingness to learn from his mistakes and because of the good relations he maintained w/ his High Command – even at moments of dire crisis.

11.1.5.: “Stalin as Supreme Commander,” Dmitrij A. Volkogonov.\(^{16}\)

The unofficial title “Leader” (vozhd’) concealed a despot, a dictator, a ruler w/ unlimited power over state and party. (463)

On 6 Mar 43, when Stalin became Marshal of the Soviet Union, he was already Supreme Cdr, Chairman of the State Defense Committee (GKO) and the Stavka, People’s Commissar for Defense, and, on top of all this, all-powerful Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (B) and Chairman of the Council of Ministers. In other words, this man held immeasurable power in his hands. (463)

\(^{15}\) Note: This latter point – calmly building up reserves despite the ongoing crisis at the front – is a vital one indeed!

\(^{16}\) Note: In general, this article is a devastating indictment of Stalin.
Stalin was not the “gifted military leader” that hundreds of books, films, poems and studies had portrayed him to be. This does not mean that he was a mediocre blunderer. On the contrary, I will attempt to prove, on the basis of documents and eye-witness accounts, that Stalin was an armchair general, w/ a practical, “strong-willed,” but evil brain, who entered into the “secrets” of the art of warfare at the cost of bloody experiments. (463)

Napoleon once said that a military leader has to possess “as much intelligence as character.” He added, however, that it was not enough just to have these components, but rather that they had to be in the right proportion. . . Thus a true military leader is one whose will is equal to his intelligence. (464)

Stalin certainly did not lack will-power. . . As for Stalin’s character, it was strong but dogmatic, tending to overestimate the importance of directives, orders, rules. (464)

Stalin, above all, had no professional military knowledge. Military science was unknown to him, as was the theory of the art of warfare. He did not learn the secrets of strategy and operational-level thinking until he had begun a bloody empirical process, w/ many attempts and errors. His experience of the Civil War, in which he had participated as a member of the war councils of a variety of fronts and as plenipotentiary of the Bolshevik headquarters, was clearly not enough to hold the post of Supreme Commander. (464-65)

But Stalin’s renown as a military leader profited from the collective intelligence of the General Staff, i.e., from the exceptional capabilities of a series of top commanders, who aided him during the war, but about whom little is said. Four Soviet military leaders and commanders had the greatest influence on Stalin’s development as Supreme Commander, i.e., B.M. Shaposhnikov, G.K. Zhukov, A.M. Vasilevskij, and A.I. Antonov. . . It can be seen, from an analysis of Stavka documents, military correspondence, the Supreme Cdr’s directives and orders, and his personal telegrams and lectures, that these four Marshals and Generals of the Army worked most closely w/ Stalin during the war, had the most contact w/ him, and made the greatest impression upon his complex personality. (465)

Through these four men, Stalin, during the bloody day-to-day business of war, learned the “ABC” of operational art and strategy. Although he remained mediocre in the first discipline, he had more success in the second field. (466)

Meetings in Stalin’s office took place daily, sometimes more than once a day. . . De facto, Stalin’s word was final and law, independent of whether the decisions were formulated by the Politburo, the GKO, or the Stavka. . . As a rule, no minutes and no shorthand notes were kept. Thus, for example, the Stavka archive contains thousands of different documents – announcements, reports, directives, orders, decrees – but there is practically no material informing us how the Stavka discussed any kind of strategic questions. (466-67)

Twice daily, provided there was no unexpected turn of events, the Supreme Cdr was informed of the situation on the fronts. The Chief of the General Staff or one of his deputies stood near the map spread out on the table (for some reason, Stalin did not want it hung on the wall), upon which the changes in the last few hours were marked, and gave his report of the situation. While

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17 Note: This is an incredibly important point – Stalin was surrounded by military minds which were far superior to men like Keitel, Jodl and Brauchitsch. And, as time progressed (as author makes clear) Stalin began to listen to his advisors and follow their advice. Hence, Stalin “grew” as a military leader during the war, while Hitler regressed.
this was going on, Stalin paced up and down in his office, now and again asking the questions that came into his head. (467-68)

As the Soviet historian N.G. Pavlenko, who met Zhukov many times after he had retired from active service, reports, the famous Marshal once said of Stalin: “He was a civilian, and a civilian he remained.” (468)

Shaposhnikov – whose vital role as the “teacher” of Zhukov, Vasilevskij, Antonov, and Stalin has not as yet been sufficient recognized. . . (469)

Thousands of documents bearing Stalin’s signature affected people, masses of people, in some way or another. Stalin became used to manipulating human fates, often not considering the consequences of his decisions. (And even if he did so, this only serves to emphasize even further the weak nature of his intelligence.) They were the masses – he was the Leader. He was convinced that it had always been that way, throughout history, and would always remain so. I must have read through thousands of operational-level documents that Stalin had dictated or signed during the four years of war, but I did not find one where he specifically reduced the possible loss of life, avoided throwing his troops away in unprepared attacks, or worried about the lives of his fellow countrymen. In wanting to cause as much damage as possible to the enemy, he never wasted much time wondering what damage this would cause the Soviet people. [Note: As example of one of Stalin’s most egregious orders, he cites his scorched earth order, No. 0428, of 17 Nov 41.] (470-71)

From 1941/45, the forces on the fronts under Stavka command carried out around 50 strategic operations, about 25% of them defensive in nature. These were forced upon them by the enemy; he chose where to fight the Soviet army and often enough made them fight spontaneous defensive battles. This is due to the fact that, between 1939/41, questions of organizing and commanding a long-term strategic defense covering the entire country and involving all arms of the service had neither been dealt w/ in exercises and manoeuvers nor in theory. Anyone who had suggested that the defense of the Dnieper, Moscow, and Leningrad be examined would presumably have been accused of defeatism and treason on the spot. However, there had not even been an abstract examination of problems concerning the organization of large-scale, long-term defense. (471)

As a military leader, Stalin in 1941/42, attempted to maintain the moral fibre of his forces by the comprehensive use of specifically “Stalinist” methods. . . Stalin tried to solve the problem by means of punishment details and blocking units; he paid less attention to strengthening the roles of commanders and political commissars in this extremely difficult situation. . . Stalin, who was neither a military man nor a subtle psychologist, relied more upon violence and punishment. Let me state once again: Stalin was not a military leader in the widest sense of the term. . . (472)

Another weak point in Stalin’s thinking as a military leader was his total ignorance of the realities of time, a problem mention by both Zhukov and Vasilevskij. The man who never visited divisions, staffs, field CPs, who had no idea how a military system functioned, often got into difficulties (esp. during the initial phase of the war) owing to his lack of appreciation of the time factor in coordinating operations in a theater of war, as well as in judging the actual capability of his forces. Very often Stalin, inflamed by some idea or other, demanded that it be put into practice at once. He repeatedly only gave the front involved a few hours’ time to carry out a directive he had signed – a fact that usually forced staffs and divisions to mount actions that were unprepared, hasty, and thus doomed to failure. . . Stalin simply did not see how complex this process was. (473)
However, Stalin, the military amateur did gradually learn the ropes – as early as after Stalingrad, as Zhukov wrote, “he coped well w/ the larger strategic problems.” . . . Stalin began to “cope” mainly because the Stavka had a working body like the General Staff. And, as I have already mentioned, its role cannot be more highly regarded. (473)\(^{18}\)

For Stalin, only the end was important. He never had fits of conscience or feelings of bitterness or pain over the massive losses. (473)

Following the battle at Moscow and Stalingrad, Stalin constantly sought means by which he could combine the efforts of the various fronts in more and more strategic combinations. The Kursk and Belorussian Operations, the East Prussian, the Weichsel/Oder, the Berlin and Manchurian Operations; all represented not only the objective situation but also Stalin’s subjective penchant for all things big, comprehensive, unbelievably gigantic. . . .\(^{19}\) As always the Supreme Cdr hurried things along from the start, was unhappy w/ the speed of the operations, and got angry when delays occurred. (475)

During the last year and a half of the war, Stalin coped well w/ operational and strategic problems. . . Let me say again that Stalin himself did not as a rule produce strategically important operational ideas, but that, between 1943/45, he was able to pick the right ones. . . His “genius,” during the second and third phases of the war (i.e., from Nov 42), was, in most cases, to grasp and to agree w/ the (usually reasonable) suggestions made by Zhukvo, Vasilevskij, Antonov, and the front commanders. (476)

Owing to his fragmentary knowledge of the theory of warfare, his introvertedness, and his lack of any idea of the workings of the military system, the Supreme Cdr was unable to reach the heights of true strategic thinking. (476)

Stavka: All main ideas realized in defensive and offensive operations arose in the “think-tank” of the Stavka, w/in its military environment. In spite of his lack of military professionalism, Stalin was able to grasp these ideas and intensions, now and again even making important changes regarding the scope, dimensions, and time-limits, aims, and dates of such and such an operation. Thus it can justly be said that the “intellectual element” of military leadership really belonged to the Stavka and its main working body, the General Staff. . . (476)

Not until 1944/45 did Stalin approach the level of command knowledge possessed by his military advisors. His highly amateurish and incompetent military leadership, especially during the first year and a half of the war, manifested itself in catastrophic losses in terms of materiel and manpower. But the Soviet people were able to withstand this, not because of Stalin’s genius but in spite of it. (477)

We know that the true talent of a military leader is measured by his ability to achieve the highest aims w/ the least possible losses. Stalin did not possess this talent. . . According to my calculations, based upon the analysis of a wealth of data, the direct losses suffered by the Russian people during the war amounted to 26-27 million. No other nation in history has had to pay such a terrible price for its freedom and independence. (477)

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18 Note: Again, here Stalin was much better served than was Hitler.
19 Note: This can also be said of his strategic “vision” in Jan 42, calling for major offensive operations all along the Soviet-German front.
Stalin’s demand for success “whatever the losses” was no coincidence. It is a particular characteristic of a Supreme Cdr who, to echo the words of the well-known Russian theoretician M. Dragomirov, emphasized a style of leadership based on will-power rather than intelligence. Stalin never succeeded in creating a balance between these factors. (477)

Voltaire’s statement that “a victorious general never made a mistake in the eyes of the people” fits Stalin like a glove. No-one ever spoke to him about his “mistakes.” Instead, many, indeed countless millions, spoke of the greatest military leader “of all times and nations.” The Supreme Cdr of the Soviet Union also never doubted he was a “genius,” and he scarcely considered that history could ever judge him otherwise. (478)

11.1.6: **Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy**, Dmitri Volkogonov.

**Preface:**

Dmitri Volkogonov was not a typical member of the intelligentsia: he was a Col-Gen w/ responsibility for the army’s political education and its publishing activities. In this position he latterly had unique access to archives, he had talked to long-pensioned-off party bosses and army top brass w/ personal experience of the Stalin era. . . Born in 1928 in Chita, Eastern Siberia, V. is the son of an agrarian specialist father and schoolteacher mother. In 1937, his father was arrested, and as was later learned, shot. The rest of the family were then exiled to Krasnoyarsk in Western Siberia. In 1945, V. joined the army and, despite his politically dubious background, quickly rose in rank, entering the Lenin Military Academy in Moscow in 1961, where he attained a Ph.D. and professorship. . . He began writing his book in 1978 and completed the first part of it in 1985. (xiv-xv)

**Forward:**

All his life, Stalin tried (w/ some success) to turn one of his weaknesses into a virtue. Already during the revolution, when he had to visit a factory or a regiment or attend a street meeting or mix w/ a crowd, he would experience a sense of insecurity and fear which in time he learned to hide. He did not enjoy speaking before an audience, nor was he good at it. Though his style was simple and clear, w/o flights of fancy, catchy phrases or platform histrionics, the heavy Georgian accent and monotonous delivery combined to make his speeches unexpressive. . . He was a mediocre writer, whose arguments were both fairly consistent and invariably categorical. His newspaper articles are black or white. . . Stalin made it a rule not to come into direct contact w/ the masses. With rare exceptions, he never visited a factory or a collective farm, never traveled to any of the republics, or to the front during the war. (xx-xxi)

My work is based on party documents and materials from numerous holdings:

- Central Party Archives;
- USSR Supreme Court Archives;
- Central State Archives of the Army;
- Ministry of Defense Archives;
- Armed Forces General Staff Archives;
- Archives of a number of museums, etc.
On the military aspect of Stalin’s activities, I became acquainted w/ many interesting, original and unpublished documents in the Ministry of Defense. (xxi)

Gazing at Stalin’s orders, written in bold, legible strokes, as a rule in red or blue pencil, I have to ask myself where the deep springs of his irrationality, harshness and cunning lay. . . Trotsky’s characterization of Stalin as “our party’s most outstanding mediocrity” is well known. On the other hand, Trotsky was apt to make similar remarks about other opponents. (xxiii)

My book is called *Triumph and Tragedy* to suggest how the triumph of one man [Stalin] became a tragedy for a whole people. (xxiii)

We now know that at the beginning of the war, Stalin repeatedly resorted to harsh punishment of many military men, using them as scapegoats for the heavy Soviet losses. Looking back, one is astounded by the forbearance of the Soviet people, above all of the Russian people. Where does it come from? 250 years of Tartar domination, or the succession of wars for liberation and freedom? Or having to struggle w/ the Russian winter and the great expanses of territory? Or was it bred of the wisdom of historical experience, their faith that they were in the right and their loyalty to their historical tradition? Perhaps it was the conviction that they had taken the right course in 1917.

Intellectually and morally, Stalin was no match for most of the leaders of the revolution, but in the struggle for succession [following Lenin’s death] it was purposefulness, political will and cunning that counted. (xxvi)

**Chapter 36: Stalin and the Army:**

Discussion of status of Red Army on eve of German invasion. (367 ff.) Below some of author’s key points:

Voroshilov was removed as defense commissar in May 40. . . His place as defense commissar was taken by S.K. Timoshenko, who was also made a Marshal of the Soviet Union. The new commissar’s first major decision, ratified by a decree of the Sovnarkom of 6 Jun 40, was to create mechanized corps of two tank divisions and one motorized division. Only six [6] months earlier, the tank corps administration had been dismantled. (367-68)

The purges resulted in a sharp fall in the intellectual quality of officers. By the beginning of 1941, only 7.1% of the commanding officers had a higher military education; 55.9% had secondary education; 24.6% had been through accelerated courses; and 12% of officers and political personnel had no military education at all. . . A huge deficiency of officers existed as war loomed. . . Situation in some military districts catastrophic, and in the army as a whole the officer corps was the weakest element. By the summer of 1941, about 75% of officers and 70% of political officers had been in their posts less than one year. The backbone of the army lacked the necessary experience of command. (369)

**Official doctrine:** The USSR’s official military doctrine was defensive, but Stalin and the leaders who parroted his views were always proclaiming that the best defense was attack. Regulations, orders, directives, the commissar’s speeches and now Stalin himself expressed a single idea:

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20 Note: Interesting that the author does not cite the Russia people’s deep religious faith.
21 Note: In reaction, of course, to stunning German victory over France.
“The war would be fought on the enemy’s territory and victory must be won at the cost of little bloodshed.” (369)

Stalin mistakenly believed that Hitler would not attack in the east until he had won in the west: he would never engage in a war on two fronts, and Stalin laid stress on this notion in his speeches at the time, notably that of 5.5.41 in the Kremlin. (370)

**Dec 40 / War Game: ** It would be hard to find a precedent in history when one of the sides on the eve of a mortal conflict had so damaged itself. Zhukov recalled that during a large-scale war game in Dec 40, he was given command of the “Blues,” that is the German side, while Army General Pavlov, C-in-C of the Western Special Military District, commanded the “Reds.” It so happened, Zhukov recalled, that he developed his operations precisely along the lines that the real battles would take in six months’ time. He claimed that his tactics were dictated by the configuration of the borders, the terrain and circumstances. He deduced that the Nazis would make the same calculations. Even though the umpires artificially slowed the progress of the “Blues,” in eight [8] days they advanced to the district of Baranovichi. (See text for more details, 370-71)

Stalin ordered Timoshenko to see for himself the real battle-readiness of the troops. In the course of 1940, T. visited all the western military districts, put a number of units on alert and observed some training courses and manoeuvres. . . These tours of inspection revealed many serious shortcomings. Military and political officers, lacking experience, were proving slow to master the new elements of combat training. . . (371)

**Chapter 37: The Defense Arsenal:**

**Anecdote:** How literally on the eve of the war production of small-calibre tank guns was halted w/ Stalin’s agreement. It was a serious mistake. (See, 373)

**Defense budget:** If the budget allocation for defense in the period 1928-33 was only 5.4% of gross national product (GNP), by 1941 it had risen to 43.3%. . . (374)

People knew war was coming and that they would have to perform the impossible. . . The rise in output was everywhere accompanied by severe discipline. The level of absenteeism fell dramatically. . . Stalin himself was now working 16-17 hours a day and the yellow glint in his eyes had become dimmed by lack of sleep and overwork. He knew that only by the total mobilization of the country’s resources could the approaching test be withstood. . . The aircraft industry began working at a furious pace. Every day its commissar reported to Stalin on the number of planes and engines built. People had to remain in their laboratories and workshops for days on end. (375)

And yet – production of new weapons had barely begun on the eve of the war. In his book on the war economy, published in 1948, N.A. Voznesensky wrote: “The war found the Soviet war industry in the process of mastering the new technology, and the mass production of modern military hardware was not yet organized.”22 (375)

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22 **Note:** In other words, just like the Red Army, the Soviet war economy found itself in a state of transition when war began.
May 41: As Timoshenko and Zhukov reported one month before the war began: “Fulfillment of the plan for the supply of the military technology the Red Army needs so acutely is extremely unsatisfactory.” Stalin, the Politburo and the commissars sought a solution and found it in raising the effort of the Soviet people to the limit. (376)

Chapter 39: Secret Diplomacy:

Author notes that what Stalin needed was time – he needed time and he needed peace, peace at any price. (384)

23 Aug 39 / Nazi-Soviet Pact: The pact might not have been signed on 23 Aug 39, for on that day, the two giant Condor transport planes bringing the Ribbentrop delegation to Moscow were fired on in the region of Velikie Luki. (386)

The second major action Stalin embarked on was to move the Soviet border further west. . . The decision to take over Western Ukraine and Belorussia, in the face of the advancing German armies [?], was in my view justified. . . But, regrettably, Stalin’s action, violating the 1921 Riga Treaty, was conditioned by his agreement w/ Hitler on future borders and territorial “re’ arrangement.” (386)

10 Sep 40: On this day, Beria sent a note to Molotov: “In connection w/ forthcoming changes in the deployment of NKVD border troops of the Kiev and Belorussian military districts, the line of the Soviet state border is extended from 1412 to 2012 kilometers, or by 600 kilometers.” (386)

Apr 41: During this pre-war period, there was one final diplomatic action for which Stalin was responsible – the treaty of neutrality signed w/ Japan. . . The USSR’s strategic position in the Far East was markedly improved by this act. . . For the last five [5] years relations between Japan and the USSR had been rife w/ conflict, friction, the frequent and sharp exchange of notes and major armed clashes. The most serious of these – involving more than a million troops! – took place in Mongolia at Khalkin Gol and Lake Khasan and were no doubt the reason the Japanese decided finally to sign the treaty. Stalin knew that he was untying Japan’s hands to carry out the Tanaka Plan of 1927 for the conquest of the Pacific, but he had no choice while Hitler was the greater threat. (388-89)

Stalin was in two minds: He knew that war was inevitable yet he refused to believe it was imminent. He therefore repeated over and over that “we must not be provoked.” The Germans, meanwhile, realizing that Stalin’s sole purpose was to gain time, became more brazen. For instance, from the beginning of 1941, German planes began violating Soviet borders by the dozen and penetrated deeper and deeper into Soviet airspace. Even if they were forced down, both crews and acft were immediately returned to the Germans. (389)

It had been clear since the middle of 1940 to both Hitler and Stalin that relations between them were deteriorating. (389)

Stalin’s One-Man Rule: On 27 Sep 40, the Germans signed the Tripartite Pact w/ Japan and Italy. . . Stalin, who by now ought to have seen reality staring him in the face, persisted in his belief that the war, though inevitable, was still two or three years away. Instead of consulting w/ his military leadership and his diplomats, he had relied on his own judgement, knowing no doubt that they would in any case only try to agree w/ him. The bureaucracy he had so assiduously
cultivated was only capable of approving his decisions. *He was now reaping the harvest of his one-man rule.* (390)

**14.6.41 / TASS Communique:** In the last two [2] months before the war, Stalin received several reports from a variety of intelligence, diplomatic and other sources, warning of Hitler’s impending attack on the USSR. The British and U.S. governments also sent warnings. . . The warnings accumulated to a point where Stalin felt it prudent to test them out in Berlin itself. He ordered TASS to publish a statement dismissing rumors of German troop concentrations on the USSR’s borders as nonsense and clumsy propaganda put out by forces hostile to Germany and the USSR. . . The strange statement [see p. 391] was read by millions of Soviet citizens and the entire armed forces, and it had a profoundly disorienting effect. . . It was everywhere understood in the same way, according to L.M. Sandalov, a staff officer during the war: “Coming from an authoritative state body, such a statement was bound to dull the forces’ vigilance. . . Officers stopped sleeping at the barracks. The soldiers started undressing for bed.” (391)

**Chapter 40: Fatal Omissions:**

**19.6.41:** Soviet troops were ordered to begin camouflaging aerodromes, transport depots, bases and fuel dumps, to disperse acft around airfields. The order came hopelessly late, and even then Stalin was reluctant in case “all these measures *provoke* the German forces.” Timoshenko and Zhukov had to ask him two-three times to approve their operational orders. While agreeing w/ the military, he clung to the idea that Hitler *would not risk a war on two fronts*, and *did not appreciate that in fact there was no real second front in the middle of 1941*. The nature of Stalin’s miscalculations lay not only in his wrong assessments. . . His unforgivable mistakes stemmed from his personal rule. (393)

**Defense Planning:** A revised defense plan was ready for review by Aug 40. It had been prepared under the leadership of Chief of Staff K. A. Meretskov, w/ Vasilievsky again in charge of the planning and again maintaining that Soviet forces must concentrate on the Western sector. The plan was submitted to Stalin on 5 Oct 40. He listened carefully to the defense commissar and the chief of staff, looked at the map a few times, paced the room in silence for a while, and finally pronounced:

> I don’t fully understand the General Staff’s insistence on concentrating our forces on the western front. They say Hitler will try to send his main attacking force in the direction of Moscow by the shortest route. But I think the most important thing for the Germans is the grain in the Ukraine and the coal of the Donbass. Now that Hitler has established himself in the Balkans, it’s all the more likely he’ll launch his main attack from the southwest. I want the General Staff to think again and submit a new plan in ten days time.

The defense plan was resubmitted to Stalin on 14 Oct 40. His proposals had naturally been incorporated, meaning that the basic orientation of the forces was *shifted to the southwest*. Military intelligence, meanwhile, was perfectly aware that the *Wehrmacht’s* main attacking force . . . was routed to Smolensk and Moscow. Yet none of the army chiefs had the nerve or the arguments to persuade Stalin. (397)
Zhukov probably put it best when he said that all Stalin’s actions and thoughts on the eve of the war were subordinated to the single effort to avoid war, and this generated in him the certain belief that it would not occur. (399)

Stalin’s Personal Letter to Hitler: Zhukov told Simonov that, in early 1941, when the flow of reports of German troop concentrations in Poland increased markedly, Stalin wrote a personal letter to Hitler to say he was surprised by these events, for they created the impression that Hitler was preparing to fight the USSR. Hitler replied w/ a personal and, as he stressed, confidential letter, saying that the information was correct and that large troop units were indeed concentrated in Poland. Being sure that this would go no further than Stalin, he wanted to explain, however, that his troops in Poland were not being aimed against the Soviet Union and that he intended to observe the Pact strictly on his honor as head of state. He found an argument that, according to Zhukov, Stalin must have believed – namely that the British were carrying out heavy bombing of western and central Germany and, since they could observe the territory from the air at will, he was compelled to move large numbers of troops to the east. (399)

Zhukov said later that Stalin resisted all attempts by the military leadership to put the troops on alert on the western frontier. His fear of “provoking” Hitler had become “maniacal.” One can understand the desire not to give Hitler an excuse to attack, but he can hardly have imagined that Hitler would attack if provoked, if invasion of the USSR did not already figure in his plans. . . (400)

According to author, an important feature of Stalin’s psychological makeup was that of great cautiousness. . . His hyper-cautiousness in dealing w/ Hitler, however, was counter-productive, for Hitler outwitted him. . . Berlin took note of Stalin’s obsessive avoidance of “provocations” and concluded that the USSR was weak. 23

Chapter 41: A Paralyzing Shock:

22 Jun 41:

At about 4.00 a.m. on 22 Jun 41, Stalin telephoned by Zhukov and informed of the German attack. Stalin finally mumbled: “Come to the Kremlin w/ Timoshenko. Tell Poskebychev to summon all the members of the Politburo.” He returned to the Kremlin and went up to his office by the entrance reserved for him alone. [Note: See text for detailed account of this meeting and Stalin’s behavior in days following German attack, 405 ff.]

Stalin had never had so great a shock in his life. His confusion was obvious, as was his anger at having been so misled. [!] The Politburo members remained w/ him in his office all day, waiting for news from the border. . . No one doubted that Hitler would receive a resounding rebuff. . . The penetration achieved by German mobile units of up to 50-60 km in the first day was totally unexpected. . . (406)

On 22 Jun 41, Stalin received no news of victories and so was in a state of alarm and confusion, but he was confident that in two-three weeks he would repay Hitler for violating their agreement. . . The paralyzing shock only struck him after 4-5 days, when he finally understood the invasion was a mortal threat to him, and not only to the country. (407)

23 Note: A classic example of appeasement before WWII, even though rarely examined that way in comparison to Munich and 1938.
Stalin waited nervously, lifting his head expectantly each time someone entered the room. All that first day only a single glass of tea passed his lips. (408)

At 10.00 p.m., that night, Vatutin reported that Red Army infantry had beaten back the attacks over most of the border w/ heavy enemy losses. Everyone came to life and spirits lifted. Stalin and his entourage still did not know that German forces had penetrated deep into Soviet territory. Their illusions only began to be dissipated on the morning of 23 Jun 41. (409)

28.–30.6.41: Towards the last days of Jun 41, the scale of the fatal threat finally sank in on Stalin and for a while he simply lost control of himself and went into a deep psychological shock. Between 28–30 Jun 41, according to eyewitnesses, Stalin was so depressed and shaken that he ceased to be a leader. On 29 Jun 41, as he was leaving the defense commissariat w/ Molotov, Voroshilov, Zhdanov and Beria, he burst out loudly: “Lenin left us a great inheritance and we, his heirs, have fucked it all up!” (409-10)

Now it seemed to Stalin that the situation was hopeless. . . In his nervous state, he behaved in an unsettled way, dividing his time between the nearly dacha and the Kremlin, but in general making himself scarce. . . Everyone knew that Stalin still held all power and authority, but he was acting impulsively and his state of depression was obvious. This naturally was transmitted to the military leadership to a certain extent and some of their orders bore the mark of desperation. . . (410-11)

29.6.41: Stalin’s mood made a rapid shift from apathy to nervous agitation and on this day he twice turned up unexpectedly in the defense commissariat and subjected the military leadership to course abuse. His face grey w/ fatigue, and w/ bags under his eyes, he at last grasped the scale of the danger hanging over the country. . . (412)

Stalin was shattered by the news that Minsk had fallen. He went to the dacha and stayed there the whole day w/o returning to the Kremlin. (412)

Jul 41 / Surrender to Germany?: Apparently, early in the month, Stalin, Molotov and Beria met secretly w/ the Bulgarian ambassador, Ivan Stamenov. Together, they discussed in private the question of surrendering to Germany. According to Beria, Stalin said nothing during the meeting w/ the Bulgarian. Only Molotov spoke, asking the ambassador to contact Berlin. According to Beria, Molotov described the offer of territory in exchange for an end to the fighting as “a possible second Brest Litovsk Treaty,” and said that, if Lenin could have the courage to make such a step, we had the same intention now. The ambassador, however, declined to act as mediator, adding, “Even if you retreat to the Urals, you’ll win in the end.” [!] [Note: This must be carefully checked out, w/ other sources!] (412-13)

Chapter 42: A Cruel Time:

Stalin, working 16-18 hours per day [!], going w/o sleep, became still more harsh and intolerant and often vicious. (415)

Jul 41 / Lying to Stalin!: After two [2] weeks of battle, statistics on comparative losses given to Stalin; in them, Soviet losses were artificially reduced, while those of the Germans inflated. For example, it was stated that the Germans had already lost 2625 tanks (vs. only 900 Russian tanks lost), and that the enemy’s KIA amounted to 1,312,000 men! (417)
Crux: It was Stalin who bore the responsibility for the catastrophic start of the war but, typically, he had to have scapegoats and hence exacerbate the already cruel nature of the war by his own cruelty. (422-23)

Of the millions of Soviet troops who fell into enemy hands, those who managed to escape and get back to Soviet lines were immediately put into “special camps for checking.” After being “checked,” some servicemen were sent to newly formed detachments, others were executed on the spot, and others sent for long terms to concentration camps. (423)

Chapter 43: Disasters and Hopes:

Aug 41: At the beginning of the month, Shaposhnikov was summoned to the dacha at midnight to give Stalin an account of the situation on all fronts. What emerged sounded to Stalin like the gloomiest of lectures. . . Referring to the map that had been spread out on Stalin’s desk, S. began: “We can say that we have utterly lost the first phase of the war. . . The enemy has all the strategic initiative. . .” However, S. also states that the engagement at Smolensk “enabled us to stop the enemy on the most dangerous, i.e. western thrust. . .” From all this, Stalin drew the conclusion that the Red Army was capable of stopping the enemy, even where he had concentrated his main force. . . [Note: See text for more details of S.’s report.] (425-26)

Sep 41 / Kiewer Kesselschlacht: According to Volkogonov, “only” 452,720 men were encircled, including about 60,000 officers. 24 Stalin and his Staff were mainly responsible for the tragedy. . . Showing no sign of emotion, Stalin merely told Shaposhnikov to “Plug the hole quickly. Quickly!” (429)

Oct 41 / Stalin to stay in Moscow: See text for terrific anecdote concerning Stalin’s decision to stay in Moscow and not leave capital. In mid-Oct 41, Beria told Stalin that a special train was ready for him at one of Moscow’s stations, as well as four [4] airplanes, including his personal Douglas DC-3. Stalin said nothing. He pondered, but something deep down told him that, as long as the army and the people knew that he, Stalin, was still in Moscow, they would feel more assured, and so, after long deliberation, he decided to stay to the bitter end. (434-35)

Nov 41: On the eve of the 1941 anniversary of the revolution, he asked Molotov and Beria: “How are we going to have the military parade? Maybe two or three hours earlier?” The others thought they must have misheard. A parade, w/ the Germans literally just outside Moscow? As if unaware of their doubts, Stalin continued [see text]. . . It was undoubtedly a bold and far-

24 Note: German sources give figure of over 650,000 Soviet POWs. Also, the figure of 60,000 officers seems quite high.
sighted move, reflecting the sure hand w/ which Stalin influenced public opinion and guided the people’s mental state. (436)

Chapter 45: Headquarters:

Discussion of Stalin’s capabilities as a military commander – covers much of the same ground as the author’s article above. (Section 11.1.1)

Again, author notes that, despite his flaws as a military leader, he gradually did learn; and by the time of Stalingrad, according to Zhukov, “he had a good grasp of the broad strategic issues.” (451)

As a rule, no minutes or notes were made [of the top level meetings and conferences]. The Stalin archives are full of documents containing reports, enquiries, orders and dispositions, but there is practically nothing on the General Staff’s discussion of strategic questions. Once he had recovered from his initial shock [i.e., following the German invasion], Stalin would simply summon two or three members of the General Staff and together they would decide operational issues. (452)

Never hesitant when it came to dealing w/ individual officers, Stalin constantly moved commanders from one position to another, usually for no apparent reason. (455)

Strategic planning was devised by Stalin IAW the ideas of Shaposhnikov, Zhukov and Vasilievsky. According to author, Shaposhnikov’s role as the “teacher” of Zhukov, Vasilievsky, Antonov and Stalin himself is still unrecognized. (455)

As examples of Stalin’s cruelty, and lack of concern for human lives, the author notes two “appalling orders.  The first was No. 0428, signed on 17 Nov 41, implementing a “scorched earth” policy [my term] in belts of territory along and behind the front.  The second instruction, No. 170 007, was sent to the commander of the Kalinin Front on 11 Jan 42, ordering the capture of Rzhev, a city of 54,000 people.  It called for capture of the city on that very day, or no later than the next day, 12 Jan 42.  All available artillery, mortars and acft were to be used to smash the city and the Russian attackers were not to be deterred from destroying it. (For more details see, pp 456-57)

Chapter 47: The Commander and His Generals:

See this chapter for detailed sketches of the top generals Shaposhnikov, Zhukov, Vasilievsky and Antonov.

Shaposhnikov:

Died in Mar 45, “but his intellectual influence on the military leadership is beyond doubt.” As a marshal and professor, S. who had been a colonel in the tsarist army, combined high military culture w/ an excellent education, much experience as a commander, theoretical depth and great personal charm. . . S. did not have an overbearing personality, expressing his will rather thru his subtle, flexible and wide-ranging mind, and Stalin evidently found this irresistible. Everyone was aware of this and Zhukov wrote of the Supremo’s great respect for S. “He always addressed him as Boris Mikhailovich, his name and patronymic, and never raised his voice when they
spoke, even if he disagreed w/ him. S. was the only man Stalin permitted to smoke in his office.” (465)

This was a rare example indeed of Stalin’s confidence in one of the old regime military experts, the rest of whom he had liquidated before the war. Shaposhnikov was one of the very few people to whom Stalin would actually turn w/o embarrassment for an explanation, advice and help. . . The former tsarist colonel’s intelligence disarmed Stalin, and it was this quality that helped him tactfully to teach Stalin strategic thinking, military skill and even tactics. (465)

Zhukov:

If S. helped Stalin acquire the stern logic of armed conflict, then it was Zhukov who inspired Stalin as a man of strong will and uncompromising military leadership. . . Stalin knew that Z. conceded nothing to him in toughness of character. He noticed this especially at the beginning of the war. [Note: See text of anecdote of Z. countermanding order of Stalin re: Scuttling of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet. Sep 41.] (466)

Zhukov was audacious and far-sighted; yet he could be merciless toward panic-mongers and cowards and was capable of the harshest measures. . . Stalin often lost his temper w/ Zhukov, esp. at the start of the war. (466)

Stalin did not have favorites. He simply relied on some people more than others. (467)

Vasilievsky:

One of the main links between Stalin and the front was Alexander Mikhailovich Vasilievsky, who was the Deputy Chief of the General Staff’s Operational Administration when the war began, becoming its chief and Deputy Chief of Staff on 1 Aug 41, and Chief of the General Staff and Deputy Commissar for Defense from Jun 42 – Feb 45. Vasilievsky commanded the 3rd Belorussian Front and later served as C-in-C in the Far East. (470)

His role in the General Staff reflected Stalin’s original style of work in the highest military body, the Staff HQ. Most of V.’s time was spent as the Staff representative at the front, where he carried out Stalin’s orders. . . V. rarely raised objections nor was he temperamental like Zhukov, but he was perfectly capable of quietly pursuing his line in argument w/ Stalin. With rare exceptions, on every day of the war, either face to face if he was in Moscow or by telephone when he was on his innumerable trips, V. gave Stalin the benefit of his counsel, always patient and economical w/ words, as if he was thinking aloud. (470-71)

Note: After the war, Stalin ascended to glory, like Caesar, on the triumphal chariot. But whereas Julius Caesar had racked his brains to find ways of rewarding his loyal legionaries, Stalin gradually distanced those whose presence most reminded him of the contribution they had made to the victory. (472)

Chapter 48: The Thoughts of a Strategist:

For Stalin, only the goal mattered. He was never tormented by conscience or grief at the enormous losses. News that large numbers of divisions, or corps or armies had been destroyed would alarm him, but there is not a single document in Staff HQ archives showing his concern about the number of human lives lost. (475)
1.8.43 / Stalin’s visit to the front: For account of Stalin’s attempt to visit the front, near Rzhev, see p 481. This visit was required for “history” – to ensure that his image as a war leader was safe.

11.1.7: “Stalin: Victors are not Judged,” Evan Mawdsley. Feb 05. 25

Stalin’s activities as a war leader extended over 35 years. In 1918 he was an organizer of primitive revolutionary armies, of men on horseback. At the end of his life, in 1953, he was dealing w/ nuclear wpns and missiles. (1)

Although the revolutionary Dzhugashvili-Stalin was a man of action, he did not take any interest in military affairs as a young man. (1)

Stalin occupied high posts as a commissar in the Russian Civil War of 1917-20. . . In the Soviet-Polish War of 1920, Stalin was commissar of one of the two army groups that drove the Poles back west. . . Had Stalin died in 1921, his place in history would have been that of one of the dozen outstanding Soviet leaders of the Civil War. (1-2)

The Civil War exposed Stalin to military affairs, and he showed a flair for it. In an open letter, written nearly 30 years later to a professor of military science, Stalin contrasted his own knowledge favorably w/ that of the great Lenin. (2)

What Stalin’s experience, his links, and the élan of the Revolution did do was to predispose him to mobile, offensive, warfare – and perhaps to make him over-confident. (3)

Marshal Zhukov in a 1966 lecture: He divided the Soviet dictator’s wartime (1941-45) command activities into three [3] periods. Zhukov stated that in the first period (up to the Battle of Stalingrad) Stalin dealt poorly w/ the demands of modern warfare and remained fixed in the past. “He frequently accused us, the military leadership, of being preoccupied w/ the traditions of the Civil War. But I must say that he himself was essentially preoccupied w/ those same traditions.” (3)

Stalin withdrew from direct involvement in military affairs after the Civil War. In the early 1920s, his focus was on building up the administrative structure of the Communist Party, and securing his own place w/in it. (3)

Voroshilov: By the late 1920s, w/ the death of Lenin and the political defeat of Trotsky and other opponents, Stalin had emerged as the leading veteran of the pre-revolutionary party. He installed Kliment Voroshilov – a Civil War comrade from Tsaritsyn and one of his closest political allies, as People’s Commissar responsible for the Red Army. Despite V.’s limited abilities and lack of military knowledge he possessed the vital virtue of loyalty, and from 1926-40 Stalin delegated the organization and training of the Red Army to him. (4)

Shaposhnikov: Schneider’s suggestion that the “military genius” of Stalin was cultivated by the Tsarist military theorist Boris Shaposhnikov during these years seems unfounded. Trained at the Tsarist General Staff Academy, Shaposhnikov produced important writings, notably on the General Staff. He would be treated, during the war, w/ unusual respect by Stalin. However, while

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25 Note: This is draft of article sent to me by Evan in Feb 05.
Shaposhnikov served as Chief of the General Staff in 1931-32 and 1937-40, he was, according to Stalin’s appointments diary, received a mere eight [8] times between 1930 and Jun 39. Not only is there little evidence of Shaposhnikov “tutoring” Stalin, but Stalin’s comments about the military in 1940/41 show that his grasp of military affairs, in an organizational and technical sense, was still rudimentary. (4)

A second aspect of Stalin’s war-related activities in the late 1920s and 1930s was his larger role as an industrializer. With his shift to the “Left” in 1927, Stalin became associated w/ the policy of rapid industrialization. In a 1931 speech, delivered toward the end of the first Five Year Plan, Stalin used the demands of war to justify the rapid tempo of economic development: . . . “To reduce the tempo means to fall behind. Those who fall behind get beaten. . . We are 50 to 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must make up this distance in ten [10] years. Either we do it, or we shall go under.” (4-5)

1927-53: During this period Stalin oversaw a huge buildup of the Soviet armed forces. Charges were made later, notably by Khrushchev’s 1956 “Secret Speech,” about Soviet “unreadiness.” These charges were far wide of the mark. The USSR was the first of the great powers to rearm. Stalin’s government not only expanded the number of personnel and divisions, it also supported a policy of comprehensive doctrinal and technical modernization.26 This was a side effect of the investment, modernization, and “motorization” which affected the whole Soviet economy, both civilian and military. Huge resources were lavished on the acquisition or design of “state of the art” tanks, aircraft, motor vehicles and artillery. Stalin took a personal interest in all this; he was “sponsor” of the Red Army Air Force and of the acft industry. . . Soviet factories produced 9600 tanks in 1937-40, 50,000 artillery pieces, and 31,000 military acft. The manpower of the armed forces grew from 1,600,000 in Jan 38 to over 5,000,000 in mid’1941. (5-6)

Purges: Author notes that Stalin did preserve his old comrades in arms – the 1st Cavalry Army group. . . On balance, however, Stalin’s purges had a devastating effect on the Red Army. Some “dead wood” was removed, but also the best trained and most senior commanders that the Red Army possessed. The purge also reduced the cohesion of the High Command – cohesion that in political (and conspiratorial) terms was a threat to Stalin, but cohesion that was essential for an effective fighting force. It had other negative effects. For the British and French, the purge reduced the credibility and value of the USSR as a potential ally, while for Germany and Japan the weakened Red Army lost its deterrent threat. (7)

1939: Stalin’s original aim was to keep the USSR out of the war between the two “imperialist” blocks, or at least to delay his country’s entry until a favorable moment. Stalin’s remarks to close comrades in late Sep 39 showed that he still adhered very closely to Lenin’s view of international relations, and that he believed the conflict had certain advantages for the USSR: “A war is on between two groups of capitalist countries . . . for the re-division of the world, for the domination of the world! We see nothing wrong in their having a good hard fight and weakening each other. . . .” (8)

1941: Historians argue about whether in the spring of 1941 Stalin felt he was dealing w/ Hitler from a position of strength. The most authoritative source, Gabriel Gorodetsky’s Grand Delusion, takes the view that Stalin knew that the Red Army was weaker than the Wehrmacht and that he therefore followed a policy of appeasement. Some evidence, however, suggests that Stalin was

Note: According to Walter S. Dunn, the problem w/ the Red Army in 1941 was not so much the legacy of the Purges, but fact that it had grown at much too fast a pace and, hence, was unable to absorb or assimilate all the changes.

26
more confident. Certainly in this period of “armed neutrality,” the Red Army was much used as an instrument of policy. (8-9)

The most common charge about Stalin as a war leader was that he ignored warnings about an imminent German attack. The purges had weakened Soviet systems for collecting and analyzing intelligence. Over-centralization led to an intelligence apparatus in which overall strategic analysis was confined to Stalin’s hunches. Stalin had no illusions about the hostility of Germany, but he was mentally locked into the notion that Hitler would not willingly attack the USSR while the British Empire was still at war. Stalin based this assessment partly on the experience of the First World War, where Germany had fought on two fronts and been defeated. Hitler might, however, be tipped into war by accident, or by less “far-seeing” generals, and it was therefore essential for Russia to avoid any kind of “provocation,” which would include overt mobilization or border preparations. Stalin’s strategic logic was not unsound. . . German troop movements in the East were seen as bluff or diplomatic pressure. (10-11)

Soviet Doctrine: Mawdsley rejects view of Rezun-Suvorov and others that Stalin was actually planning to attack Germany, and that this attack was only prevented by Hitler’s invasion. It was critically important, however, that the Red Army was oriented towards offensive operations, and had been so oriented since the Civil War. This was not necessarily the same thing as planning aggressive war . . . yet once war came, it was to be fought w/ offensive action, and on the territory of the enemy. This was the logic behind the “deep battle” concept developed at the end of the 1920s by Tukhachevskii and others. It was also the raison d’être of the massive tank and air forces built up in the 1930s. There was no intention to rely on passive defense, and any doubts were resolved by the defeat of France’s Maginot Line strategy in 1940. Stalin himself would famously declare in May 41 that “the Red Army is a modern army, and a modern army is an offensive army.” (11)

Oct 40 – Mar 41: At this time, Stalin had accepted an outline war plan that envisaged a decisive offensive – either as a preemptive attack or as a near-immediate counterattack – in the event of war w/ Germany. This plan was confirmed in Mar 41 after Zhukov became Chief of the General Staff. To mount these operations Soviet units were based as close as possible to the border, but this in turn made them vulnerable to enemy attack. In addition, the specific plan approved by Stalin meant mounting a deep Red Army offensive into southern Poland. This led to a concentration of strength in the Kiev Military District, and the acceptance of relative weakness in the Belorussian Military District. Unfortunately, it was on Belorussia that the main German blow would fall on 22 Jun 41. (11-12)

ab 22.6.41: Stalin seems initially to have taken the failure of his assumptions w/ some equanimity. It is a myth that he suffered a nervous breakdown on hearing the news of the German invasion; his appointments diary shows that he was frantically busy throughout the first days of the war. He was badly shaken a week later when he learned that most of his Western Army Group in Belorussia had been cut off and destroyed. Even so, he returned to Moscow after a day, created the State Defense Committe (GKO), and assumed control of the overall war effort. . . (12)

Note: And yet was not Stalin himself responsible for such institutional flaws; after all, he had largely created this system.

Note: Not so sure I concur w/ this assessment by Mawdsley. Hitler would certainly not have been forced into war w/ Russia by “accident!” No “provocation” on the part of the Russians would have resulted in war w/ Germany, unless that was precisely what Hitler intended all along. Soviet appeasement simply validated the German sense that Russia was weak.
Stalin & Role of Reserves: According to a 1949 article ascribed to Voroshilov: The accumulation of reserves of Red Army personnel and materiel, was going on even at the times of the great defeats of 1941/42. “Stalin always paid especially serious attention to reserves . . . That is why in the first stage of the Great Fatherland War, along w/ the organization of active defense, the accumulation of strategic and operational reserves for carrying out a long victorious war occupied the lion’s share of Stalin’s attention.”

Zhukov: In a passage of his memoirs that Soviet editors had censored out of early editions, Marshal Zhukov claimed that Stalin displayed limited ability as a military commander in these early years: (14)

Up until the defeat of the German forces at Stalingrad he had only a superficial understanding of combined-arms operations. Not having a thorough grasp of the complexities, methods, and means of preparing modern army-group level operations I.V. Stalin frequently demanded patently unrealistic periods of time for the preparation and carrying out of operations.

Jul-Sep 41: Two fateful command decisions were made in the summer of 1941, after Stalin took over at the Stavka. One was to try to hold the city of Kiev at all costs; the other was to mount waves of counterattacks in the Western Theater, around Smolensk. In military terms both were ultimately unsuccessful, perhaps even disastrous. The first decision went against the advice of at least some of Stalin’s military advisors, notably Zhukov. In Stalin’s justification it can be said that Kiev had vital political significance. And the heavy fighting around Smolensk, although it would cost the Red Army dear in later battles before Moscow, helped to halt the Wehrmacht. The protracted Smolensk battles also persuaded the Japanese that the USSR was not about to collapse. Tokyo chose to drive south against the British, Americans, and Dutch, rather than north against the Russians. (15)

The Battle of Moscow “changed the nature of the war,” but Stalin’s limitations as a commander were still evident. Two general counter-attacks were mounted in early 1942, one in Jan-Feb 42 and the other in May 42. Both evidently went against the advice of the General Staff (now under Shaposhnikov). There were actually strong reasons for Stalin’s counter-attacks, especially to relieve the besieged Leningrad and Sevastopol before they fell to the enemy. But his approach also came from his predilection for offensive warfare, from wishful thinking about the state of the Wehrmacht, and from an exaggerated picture of Hitler’s problems at home. . . Then, in the summer of 1942, Stalin failed to anticipate where Hitler’s “second offensive” would be struck. He assumed a drive in the centre of the front, towards Moscow, rather than in the south towards the Caucasus (and eventually towards Stalingrad). (15-16)

Stalingrad: The turning point in Stalin’s command activities was at Stalingrad. He agreed to build up an attack far out on the flanks of German 6. Army, rather than to mount repeated immediate attacks closer to the besieged Volga city . . . Zhukov saw an improvement in Stalin’s command skills, although he was not unlimited in his praise: “In the second period of the war, which went from the preparation of the Battle of Stalingrad and up to Kursk, inclusive, I must say that Stalin showed definite flashes of insight into modern war.” In an interview w/ the writer

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29 Note: Of course, in 1949, Voroshilov would not have dared to have written anything critical of Stalin, so should his remarks be taken w/ “grain of salt?”

30 Note: So just how, then, was the decision to counterattack furiously around Smolensk from ca. mid-Jul 41 to early Sep 41 a “fatal command decision?”
Konstantin Simonov in 1968, Zhukov spoke tellingly about Stalin’s greater realism. Stalin’s wishful thinking, after all, had led him to be caught by surprise by Operation “Barbarossa;” wishful thinking also explained the unsuccessful Soviet winter counter-offensives in 1941/42, and the retreat of the summer of 1942. “The notion, ‘what I decide can and must happen,’ was replaced by a more sober notion, based on an objective assessment of reality. . . Marshal Vasilevskii, who worked very closely w/ Stalin, especially in the middle third of the war, also saw a change. V. thought Stalin underwent a “deep reconstruction as Supreme C-in-C” in Nov 42. (16-17)

Jul 43 / Kursk: Stalin took advise again in mid-1943. He allowed the Germans to deliver the first blow at Kursk, despite some reasonable doubts – given the experience of 1941/42 – about letting them take the initiative. The defensive Battle of Kursk, and the successful Soviet counter-offensives that followed it – the Orel & Belgorod-Khar’kov operations – changed the war into a steady pursuit of the Wehrmacht. (17)

1944/45: It is difficult to argue w/ success in the later parts of the war. The wave of offensives launched by the Red Army in 1944 was called the “Ten Stalinist Crushing Blows.” One attack after another kept the Wehrmacht off balance. As the 1949 Voroshilov article put it: “All these operations were carried out in the style of the classical Stalinist offensive strategy, on a gigantic scale.” (17)

In his 1966 lecture, Zhukov was unstinting in his praise:

And as far as the third period of the war is concerned . . . I must say to you – and here Zhukov’s voice took on a special tone – here was a real military commander [polkovodets] of modern world war on a large scale. And coming to a general conclusion, said Zhukov, in this war we had a worthy Supreme C-in-C. (19)

Throughout all three periods of the war, Stalin was in direct control of the Red Army. One prominent historian of the war, Earl Ziemke, argued that Stalin had “a largely counterfeit military image.” This was surely not the case. As John Erickson put it, Stalin’s “regulation of his command was minute, strict, and all-prevading. The considerable amount of Russian documentation now published shows constant “hands-on” control by Stalin. Foreign observers were impressed by his grasp of overall strategy and logistics. (19)

Stalin selected effective subordinates in both the Stavka and the GKO functions, but he made his own decisions. . . Stalin [did not visit the front]; he ran the war by teleprinter and telephone and only made one very short visit to the front line. The exertion of the war took its toll on a man in his 60s. In Zhukov’s words, “When the war ended . . . I.V. Stalin immediately seemed to age, he became less mobile, more silent and pensive. The past war and all that had been linked w/ it strongly and perceptibly affected him.” (20)

That said, James Schneider’s appraisal of Stalin as “the first true strategist of the twentieth century” is really not convincing.31 (21)

Stalin was fond of a saying attributed to Catherine the Great: “Victors are not judged.” It did not matter what mistakes were made along the way, victory justified everything. . . Yet Stalin himself admitted shortcomings in a remarkable speech published at end of war:

Our government made not a few mistakes, we were in a desperate situation in 1941 and 1942, when our army had to retreat, had to abandon our native villages and towns . . . abandoned them because there was no alternative. Any other people would have said to the Government: you have not lived up to our expectations, get away from us, we will put in place another government which will make peace w/ Germany and give us rest. (25)

In any other system, Stalin would have been removed from power for his mistakes. (25)

Stalin as a war leader must also be “judged” for the length and cost of the fighting. As John Armstrong, one of the most astute writers about the war, observed: “Rarely, if ever, has an invading force maintained itself on enemy territory for so long a period of time when it was enormously inferior in manpower and military equipment.” (26)

Summary:

Stalin was a tyrant who inflicted untold harm on Russia over 25 years. He was also an “exceptional” war leader – just as Hitler was. He was not a military genius, nor was he just a blundering dilettante . . . As a war leader Stalin was ultimately a victor, partly due to his own efforts, and partly despite them. Stalin was both a great war leader and a disastrous one. Any analysis that makes him exclusively the one or the other is inadequate. (26)


Historians have devoted much attention to a minute investigation of the ample available data concerning the origins of Operation “Barbarossa.” These studies, however, focus almost entirely on the military aspects of the operation. The study of Soviet policies seems to reveal strong ideological predilections and fails to relate to the political and diplomatic framework w/in which the military decisions were taken. Moreover, the invasion is explored exclusively on the basis of German-Soviet relations, while Soviet relations w/ Britain, crucial for a wholesome interpretation, have been left out. The aim of this chapter is to shed new light on Stalin’s supposedly erratic and illogical behavior on eve of “Barbarossa.” (343)

Stalin on eve of war:

The total absence of testimony on Stalin’s intentions and strategy on the eve of the war has led historians either to agree w/ Churchill in dismissing Stalin and his lieutenants as “the most completely outwitted bunglers of the Second World War so far as strategy, policy, foresight and competence” were concerned, or to attribute to him a dubious plot. . . . The absence of evidence led even John Erickson, the foremost expert on Soviet military history . . . into a blind alley when seeking a rational explanation for Stalin’s politics in the months preceding the German invasion. (344)

33 Note: The recent most extreme and inaccurate presentation of these events as Hitler’s “pre-emptive strike” is in Victor Suvorov, Der Eisbrecher: Hitler in Stalins Kalkuel. (343, f.n. 1)
It is now a fully established fact that Stalin was indeed in possession of accurate intelligence on German intentions and deployments from various sources. . . The accumulated evidence points to 20 Mar and 5 May 41 as dates on which Golikov [head of GRU] transmitted crucial intelligence on German intentions to Stalin. Golikov attached such significance to the information that he stressed its meaning to Stalin, despite the latter’s disposition to mute intelligence that did not conform to his idea that Britain was attempting to provoke a crisis in German-Soviet relations by spreading rumors of a build-up. (344)

Common assumption is that Stalin could not bring himself to believe that Hitler would conduct a war on two fronts. He therefore interpreted the warnings as a “war of nerves” that was bound to culminate in an ultimatum [from Germany]. He was thus inclined to assume that the British sought salvation from their deteriorating strategic posture by provoking a war between Germany and the Soviet Union. Stalin’s predisposition was to avoid a conflict at whatever cost. (345)

**Russian policy:** An examination of the diplomatic scene in the period between the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact [i.e., Aug 39] and the German attack on the Soviet Union [Jun 41] reveals that the terror of a separate Anglo-German peace severely hampered Stalin’s judgement and contributed to the paralysis that became more pronounced as the German offensive drew nearer. 35 The origins of his pathological suspicion lay in fears of renewed intervention. The major international events in the inter-war period [i.e., 1919-39] were examined in Moscow within this framework. Thus, the exploitation of differences among the Western Powers had been the cornerstone of Soviet foreign policy since the Peace of Brest-Litovsk in 1918 and the Rapallo Treaty of 1922; it was clearly demonstrated by the Aug 39 Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. The logic of the pact was undoubtedly based on the establishment of a buffer zone in the wake of the failure to achieve security arrangements through diplomacy in the 1930s, and particularly since the guarantees given to Poland by Britain in Mar 39. It was assumed that, while Germany and Britain were engaged in hostilities, Russia would be able to improve her military preparedness. (346-47)

**Sep 39-Jun 40:** The fallacy of this assumption was first diagnosed when Poland was crushed before the British had been able to mount their Expeditionary Force. [?] The “phony war” that ensured was accompanied by constant Soviet fears of a separate peace. The lightning campaign in France and subsequent German encroachments in the Balkans were even more alarming. In his memoirs, Khrushchev vividly depicts the panic that seized Stalin when the news of the occupation of Paris reached the Kremlin; Stalin “let fly w/ some choice Russian curses and said that now Hitler was sure to beat our brains in.”36

Stalin, who had acquired ample evidence of German intentions and deployments, was equally aware of the weakness of his armed forces. . . By the end of Apr 41, after the fall of Yugoslavia and Greece, Stalin must have realized that the overwhelming need for a “breathing space” forced him into further submission to Germany rather than an aggressive strategy, as is suggested by Suvorov. (347)

35 **Note:** In other words (I assume), hampered his judgement in that he was even more suspicious of British warnings of an impending German attack – i.e., Britain might be trying to lure Stalin into war w/ Germany – and contributed to his paralysis because he did not want to make any move that might be remotely interpreted by Hitler as being aggressive, potentially pushing Germany into a modus vivendi w/ Great Britain (to free Germany’s “rear” for moving East).

36 **Note:** Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers, 1970, pp 176-77.
The situation was, however, complicated by Stalin’s conviction that Hitler would not risk waging a war on two fronts. Dismissing the accumulating information in spring 1941 about the Germans’ menacing deployment, Stalin told his entourage that “as long as Germany does not settle her account with Britain (and this, he thought, could not happen before the middle or end of 1942) Germany would not fight on two fronts and would keep to the letter the obligations undertaken in the Non-Aggression Pact.” However, if Germany were set on an earlier war in the East, Hitler would be bound to make peace overtures to Britain. (347)

This suspicion was enhanced by the pattern of relations existing between the Soviet Union and Britain since the outbreak of war. (348)

**Apr 41 / Awkward British diplomacy:** What follows is discussion of activities – some unauthorized – of Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Ambassador in Moscow. He attempted to play on Soviet fears of a separate peace [with Germany] as a device for drawing Russians toward Britain. The British Foreign Office, however, objected to this approach, “which may encourage Stalin to cling more tenaciously to this policy of appeasement.” Read in conjunction with Churchill’s famous warning of German intentions, which Cripps submitted to the Russians a few days later [21.4.41], it [Cripps’s long memorandum to the Russians, w/o waiting for instructions from London] achieved the opposite effect, and had serious repercussions in intensifying Soviet suspicion that, in desperation, Britain was striving to embroil Russia in war. . . . What seemed to worry the Russians the most was Cripps’s warning that it was not outside the bounds of possibility, if the war were protracted for a long period, “that there might be a temptation for Great Britain (and especially for certain circles in Great Britain) to come to some arrangement to end the war. (348-49)

The fresh insinuations of a separate peace introduced unprecedented anxiety in Moscow during the last week of Apr 41. (349)

**12.5.41:** Examined in the light of events heretofore described, the flight of Rudolf Hess, Hitler’s deputy, to England on 12 May 41 on a peace mission emerges as a key to understanding the Soviet attitude to the approaching conflict. . . The British government, taken aback by Hess’s unexpected arrival, maintained silence over the affair, overlooking the impact this might have in Moscow. Maisky [Soviet Ambassador in London] interpreted [the English government’s reticence over the Hess affair] to mean that the Cabinet was actually giving the peace offer serious consideration. . . Cripps’s extempore warning suddenly seemed to be materializing. . . Maisky’s impression was not the only vindication of the presumed meaning of the Hess mission and the Cripps memorandum. Soviet intelligence sources pointed in the same direction. . . (349-50)

Shortly afterwards, Maisky learned that Lord Simon, the apostle of appeasement, had been entrusted w/ Hess’s debriefing. Given the extreme suspicion prevailing in Moscow, the recall of Cripps [to London in early Jun 41 for consultations in suspicious circumstances], combined w/ the disinformation spread by the Foreign Office on the nature of his journey, seemed to lend force to the hypothesis that some kind of arrangement was after all being worked out behind the scenes, allowing Hitler a free hand in the East. (351-52)

Just as alarming was circumstantial evidence implying that American pressure was being exerted on Churchill and Eden to sacrifice Russia in exchange for peace proposals. . . It is in this context that the famous Tass communiqué of 12 Jun 41, denying the probability of war, should be
analyzed. The communiqué – which dismissed the possibility of war w/ Germany – was published by Tass on **14 Jun 41**.³⁷ (352-53)

**Jun 41:** Contrary to Churchill’s subsequent account, the massive German concentration in the East was interpreted in London, as late as the first week of **Jun 41**, as pressure mounted by the Germans to secure positive results in negotiations that (Britain supposed) must be impending w/ Russia. (348)

**Jun 41:** Maisky’s hunch that Britain was desperately trying to entangle Russia in war **seemed to be confirmed** by his interview w/ Eden after Cripps’s return on **13 Jun 41**, just when the communiqué was being released. Maisky dismissed Eden’s warning, general in nature, on the German deployment. He “felt sure that England exaggerated the German concentrations. He did not believe in the possibility of a German attack on Russia.” (354)

**15.6.41:** The decision to part w/ momentuous evidence obtained through Ultra was finally sanctioned by Churchill only late on Sunday, **15 Jun 41**. Maisky was thus astounded when summoned to the Foreign Office on Monday morning to face Cadogan’s detached and monotonous recital of “precise and concrete” evidence. . . Maisky hastened to cable Moscow reversing his earlier appreciation.³⁸ (355)

**21.6.41:** On Saturday, **21 Jun 41**, Cripps provided Maisky w/ the essence of Ultra’s most recent and precise information on what was anticipated the next day. (355)

The attitude of the British government to the developing crisis had been central to the Kremlin’s own evaluation. In the atmosphere of terror prevailing in the Kremlin, Stalin’s unshaken belief in a provocation on the one hand, and in a German ultimatum to precede an attack on the other, was discouraging his entourage, intelligence sources as well as Maisky, from formulating a clear-cut evaluation. (355-56)

According to a recent stunning revelation by the Russians, Count von Schulenburg, the German Ambassador to the Soviet Union (a disciple of Bismarck’s school of avoiding war w/ Russia at all costs), disclosed to the Russians the precise date of Hitler’s attack; Stalin scornfully dismissed it in a meeting of the Politburo: “We will now consider that disinformation has reached the level of ambassadors.” (356)

As now becomes obvious, the object of the subtle communiqué issued on **14 Jun 41** was to forestall provocation. Its unequivocal message that no Soviet-British entente was in the making was at least expected to produce a British confirmation and a German denial of belligerent intentions. . . However, it was not even published in Berlin. Pondering w/ his advisors over the absence of a reaction, Stalin was faced on **16 Jun 41** w/ Maisky’s revised appreciation after his talk w/ Cadogan. (356)

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³⁷ Note: Somewhat unclear from text, I assume author is taking about a single communiqué, not two of them. Or perhaps one date is in error.

³⁸ Note: In other words, up until only a few days before the invasion, Maisky had apparently not believed that Germany would invade Russia.
18.-19.6.41: [Now there was] sudden frenzied activity in the Kremlin. While the fresh information did not eliminate the possibility of British provocation, it increased the likelihood of war regardless of what was happening in London. Hitherto, priority had been given to attempts to prevent provocation. That would explain the extreme secrecy w/ which the troops were being moved to the front. Only on 18 and 19 Jun 41 were instructions issued to both the air and ground forces to take precautionary measures. The earlier instructions were reversed and the commanders of the Baltic and Northern Fleets were ordered to put their crews on alert. On 19 Jun 41 General Yeremenko was ordered to hand over his Far Eastern command and proceed to Moscow w/o delay. (357)

21.6.41: On this day, Stalin clearly admitted the uncertainty of the situation. In a similar way, Molotov intimated to the Turkish ambassador that the situation had become “confused and uncertain.” Zhukov remembers Stalin as being torn between anxiety and fear of triggering off an unwanted war. At the insistence of the General Staff he now issued Directive 1, pointing out the possibility of war and implementing essential defensive measures; it still warned the field commanders against “any provocative action which may cause serious complications.” . . . At long last the Russians had come to grips w/ the magnitude of the crisis on their doorstep. (357)

22.6.41: Well into the morning of 22 Jun 41, the Kremlin did not exclude the possibility that Russia was being intimidated into political submission. As Molotov confessed to Cripps, as early as 27 Jun 41, it was not anticipated that war “would come w/o any discussion or ultimatum.” It was still assumed that Hitler would not have embarked on a full-scale attack unless it had been condoned by the British government. (358)

Neither was Cripps surprised to find Stalin, in their first meeting after the invasion, apprehensive about a possible separate peace. After all, he disclosed in his diary, “we have tried to make them [apprehensive] in the past so as to prevent them going to far w/ the Germans.” “All believed,” recalled Litvinov in Washington a few months later, “that the British fleet was steaming up the North Sea for a joint attack, w/ Hitler, on Leningrad and Kronstadt.” [*] (358-59)

It thus comes as no surprise that, in negotiating w/ the British in the early stages of the war, Stalin did not seek a second front but single-mindedly sought an agreement which would pledge both sides not to negotiate a separate peace. These fears lasted well beyond the German invasion. (359)

Crux: It seems, thus, that the deployment of the Red Army was a last-ditch attempt to thwart a German attack prompted by Churchill’s release to Stalin of very precise Ultra signals revealing Hitler’s intentions and by corroborating evidence transmitted to Stalin from Tokyo by his master spy, Sorge. . . Thus, an examination of the Soviet reaction to the German deployment within its proper political and military framework renders absurd any suggestion that Stalin was on the brink of mounting an offensive against Germany that was forestalled by the surprise, and even perhaps (as some German historians now eagerly suggest) pre-emptive, attack on Russia. (359)

39 Note: I assume the Ultra information passed on to Maisky.
11.1.9:  **Stalin. The First In-Depth Biography Based on Explosive New Documents from Russia’s Secret Archives.** Edvard Radzinsky. 1996.

**Prologue: The Name:**

**Stalin Cult:** Every day the largest country in the world woke up with [Stalin’s] name on its lips. All day long that name rang out in the voices of actors, resounded in song, stared out from the pages of every newspaper. That name was conferred, as the highest of honors, on factories, collective farms, streets, and towns. During the most terrible of all wars, soldiers went to their deaths intoning his name. . . During the political trials organized by him, his victims glorified his name as they died. Even in the camps, his portrait looked down on millions of people who, corralled behind barbed wire at his behest, turned rivers back in their course, raised cities beyond the Arctic Circle, and perished in their hundreds of thousands. Statues of this man in granite and bronze towered over the immense country. (3)

**Anecdote:** A gigantic statue of Stalin stood beside the Volga-Don canal – one of several built by his prisoners. [**Note:** See text for this wonderful anecdote, pp 3-4]

Winston Churchill recalled: “Stalin made a very great impression on us. . . When he entered the conference room at Yalta everybody stood up as if at a word of command. And, strange to tell, for some reason stood with their hands along the seams of their trousers.” Churchill also said that on one occasion he was determined not to stand up, but when Stalin entered it was as if some extraterrestrial force lifted him from his seat. (4)

**Two Leaders:**

Until 1938, foreign policy had remained subservient to domestic policy. But now that Stalin had created a new country he could afford to begin realizing his external aims. Or rather his main aim. The secret one. The Great Dream! We see that with the accession of Stalin nothing had changed. It was just that the Great Leninist Dream, world revolution, which the activists of Lenin’s Party, all those defunct big mouths, had openly shown their eagerness to export, had become a secret. The Boss had relegated it to the underground. . . He was playing his favorite game: quieting his enemy’s suspicions. But propaganda at home was preparing his people for something quite different. His tame writers extolled the Great War for the realization of the Great Dream. . . I found traces of these preparations for a major war in the President’s Archive. The Red Army was rapidly rearming in the 1930s – even before the advent of Hitler. As a result, Tukhachevsky wrote Stalin an anxious letter. . . [on 19.6.30] There followed a detailed plan for the rearmament of the Red Army for a “war of engines” – a Great War. (425)

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**Note:** Publisher’s Weekly calls this book “a vivid, astonishingly intimate biography.” Radzinsky one of first to draw on previously unavailable primary-source documents in recently-opened party, state and KGB archives. PW: “He portrays the Soviet dictator as even more sadistic and methodically demoniacal than Western historians had supposed. Radzinsky admits in his “Preface” that, at a young age, he “hated” and suffered a “revulsion of feeling” toward Stalin, after first having a “mindless adoration” for the Soviet leader, a “change of heart” brought about by his father and by his “dangerous stories” about Stalin. His father was an intellectual from a well-to-do Jewish family. Still, author avers that he wrote his book “with no feeling of hatred for the Boss.” (x)

**Note:** Radzinsky’s account appears to be fairly close to that of Suvorov’s revisionist perspective. Radzinsky sees continuity of revolutionary aims from Lenin to Stalin.

**Note:** See also, Bogdan Musial, Kampfplatz Deutschland, for similar interpretation.
In Mar 38, Hitler annexed Austria. Clouds gathered over Czechoslovakia. It was as the Boss had expected. Hitler really was drawing Europe into war, and Germany would bring down the ruin of the whole capitalist system. It was no longer a mirage, no longer a dream – world revolution was advancing on empire. All that was needed was to egg Hitler on. . . (426)

Aug 39 / Non-Aggression Pact: Stalin had no doubt that his scheme would succeed. He sensed that Hitler was like him – insatiable. Czechoslovakia was just the beginning. He would give Hitler his alliance – to make sure that farther would mean farther away from the Soviet Union. . . For Stalin the change in orientation had no ideological implications. Hitler and the Western democracies alike were enemies. Alliance w/ either side was merely a turn on the tortuous road to the Great Dream. . . Hitler invaded Poland, and England and France declared war on Germany. Stalin’s tactics had proved correct: Hitler had, as expected, drawn Europe into a world war. The path to the Great Dream lay open. . . (427-29)

But the match went on. Stalin went into action himself, taking back parts of the empire of the Romanovs lost after the Revolution. On 17 Sep 39, his troops entered Poland. . . The western Ukraine and western Belorussia, parts of the former Romanov empire, had returned to the bosom of Stalin’s empire. (429)

Note: In narrative which follows, author speculates on possible secret meeting between Stalin and Hitler in Oct 39 in Lvov, Poland. (430 ff.)

Note: Author states that for its “aggression against the Soviet Union,” Finland was expelled from the League of Nations. [!] (433)

The Empire Reestablished: Meanwhile Hitler was reaping rewards beyond his dreams all thru 1940. Denmark, Norway, Holland, Luxembourg and finally France fell swiftly. After each act of aggression, Stalin unfailingly congratulated Hitler on the Wehrmacht’s “brilliant success.” But w/ these congratulations he always called in a bill. One by one, he occupied the Baltic States. . . He turned hurriedly toward the Balkans. In the summer of 1940, he presented Romania w/ an ultimatum, demanding the return of Bessarabia, annexed by Romania in 1918, and of northern Bukovina. A powerful army group was concentrated on the Romanian frontier. Romanian oil was feeding the whole German war machine, and Hitler, fearful of a possible military conflict on Romanian soil, was compelled to put pressure on that country’s government. Romania meekly consented to cede the disputed territory. While grabbing more than had been agreed upon, Stalin still tried to demonstrate his loyalty to Hitler. (433-34)

NKVD Purges: In discussion of NKVD “purges” of annexed areas, author states: Train after train carried fresh convicts – the bourgeoisie, intellectuals, well-off peasants, White émigrés, politicians – to swell his labor force in Gulag. They were carried in freight cars – two tiers of plank beds, w/ a discharge pipe for the sanitary bucket in the middle of the car, tiny barred windows which admitted little air. One such freight car carried into imprisonment a Jew arrested in Lithuania: Menachem Begin, future prime minister of Israel. (434)

Stalin & Barbarossa:

Throughout that half-year [Jan-Jun 41] not only Churchill but the Comintern spies who had voluntarily remained behind in Germany kept warning the Boss that Hitler meant to attack. Richard Sorge gave him the same message. . . Sorge even managed to communicate the exact date of the German invasion. (435)
Stalin, however, did not believe Sorge, or any of the others. The sudden German invasion took him completely by surprise. His first game in an international tournament ended in a debacle. That, at least, is what people have generally believed. But this version of events beggars belief. (435)

The wily Boss, a leader whose first rule was “trust no one,” whose whole strategy consisted in misleading the enemy, suddenly proves gullible in his dealings w/ the archenemy, is suddenly himself so easily gullied that he pays not the slightest attention to repeated warnings, but puts implicit trust in the liar Hitler, who had betrayed so many and broken his words so often. . . It would be believable if we were talking about a different man, and not our Stalin. He had proven conclusively in the 60 years of his life that he was not a bit like that. (435-36)

What, then, did happen?

As early as Mar 41, his intelligence service had supplied him in effect w/ the full details of Barbarossa. The date for the German invasion was somewhere between 15 May and 15 Jun 41. But the Boss was a pragmatist and expected people to behave rationally. Hitler simply could not afford such a risky venture. As a Marxist, Stalin respected economic realities. It seemed incredible to him that Hitler would wage war simultaneously on several countries whose combined resources were incomparably greater than those of Germany. (436)

As for Churchill, he made a comic error w/ one of his predictions. He had warned Stalin of a possible German attack in May 41, but in that month the Germans attacked the British on the island of Crete instead. The Boss could ask w/ his quiet smile why British intelligence, which showed such concern for the Soviet Union, was unable to help itself. The answer, as he saw it, was easy: Britain was losing too much blood in an unequal fight, and Churchill wanted to push Stalin into a war at any price. He could not, therefore, believe Churchill. Nor could he believe his own agent, Sorge. Sorge had refused to return to the Soviet Union. How could the Boss believe a defector? (436)

Balkan Campaign: When Hitler began his Balkan campaign early in 1941, Stalin had reason to feel reassured. The Yugoslavs capitulated in Apr 41, and Hitler moved against Greece. Hitler’s objective now seemed clear to the Boss: Once he had seized Greece he would be able to destroy the British in Egypt and take Suez. . . (436)

Anecdote: There was yet another proof – an amusing one – that Hitler could not possibly attack the Soviet Union in the near future. In May 41 he was in the Balkans, so an attack could not possibly take place before the end of Jun 41. Hitler would then have to be prepared for the Russian winter. One sure sign that the Germans intended to attack so late in the year would be the provision of sheepskin coats. Millions of them would be needed. If Hitler really had decided to attack, he should be treating sheepskin coats as a matter of urgency. That would mean a fall in the price of mutton, and a rise in the price of fleece. Nothing of the sort was reported by Soviet intelligence. All in all, Stalin was entitled to conclude that Churchill was determined to draw the USA into the war by supplication, and Russia by false information. (436-37)

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43 Note: Reference to Churchill’s famous warning of 21.4.41?
44 Note: This is an interesting point, which I haven’t seen made before.
45 Note: This is also an interpretation I’d yet to see – however, there is another interpretation: Hitler was merely trying to clear his southern flank before beginning “Barbarossa.”
Vladimir Rezun [Suvorov]: An officer in the intelligence division of the KGB, Rezun was astonished to find that Stalin had stepped up arms production with feverish haste after conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, and that on the eve of war he had deployed more and more divisions on his frontier with Hitler. He was following the strategic rules for a surprise attack. What, Rezun asked himself, was the obvious inference? Was it that Stalin was planning to attack Hitler?46

He Was Planning to Attack First:

The Boss’s pact with Hitler had indeed been intended to spur him on to fresh conquests. And while Hitler, intoxicated with his victories, was destroying capitalist Europe, the Boss was planning his great about-face: His Great War with Hitler. Once he had won that war he would become the liberator of a Europe bled dry. And its lord and master. . . The Boss had appreciated to the full the importance of Hitler’s emergence for the triumph of the Great Dream. [Note: Author goes on to “butress” his point along lines of arguments made by Suvorov and other “revisionist” historians who claim Stalin was preparing to attack Germany (hence, Hitler’s attack was pre-emptive. Radzinsky writes of Soviet redeployments on the western frontier; the training of airborne troops in unprecedented numbers (by 1941 Stalin had more than one million parachutists); the frantic construction of a new air-raid shelter in the Kremlin (in which Stalin took uncommon interest); the much discussed and disputed comments of Stalin at a graduation banquet for officers at the Red Army Academy on 5 May 41, etc. (437-39)

15 May 41 / Pre-emptive war plan: „No, Stalin was not planning an attack on Germany in 1941.” That is the view of D. Volkogonov, author of a book on Stalin. A lieutenant general and an eminent Russian military historian, V. was the first person to be permitted to work in all the secret archives. [Note: Radzinsky lays out V.’s position, then states that he sees the situation “differently.” Main focus of his disagreement with V. is over the 15 May 41 plan, drawn up by Zhukov, for a pre-emptive strike against Germany. V. concluded that document was never submitted to Stalin; in response, Radzinsky writes: „Their signatures are in fact missing. But this does not mean that the document was not submitted to Stalin. . . Minutely detailed work of this sort on the part of the General Staff could not have been carried out w/o the Boss’s knowledge. It is significant that according to Stalin’s official engagement book, Zhukov, Timoshenko and Vasilevsky – all three of them – were in and out of Stalin’s office on May 12, 19, and 24. [See text for more details, 439-41)

Hitler, too, had decided to make the first move. Knowing that Stalin was planning an offensive47 and that he discounted the possibility of a German attack, Hitler made an insane decision. In fact, he had no alternative. Stalin might attack tomorrow himself. . . Stalin, meanwhile, still did not believe that Hitler would make such a mad move. Convinced that time was on his side, he went on calmly making ready for his turnaround – the sudden blow of which his generals had written in their “reflections.” But for all this certainty, he grew nervous as the fateful day approached. There were too many reports of German troop movements near the frontier. (441)

14 Jun 41: Stalin sent up a trail balloon. On 14 Jun 41 a press release from the official news agency, Tass, stated: “the rumors which have appeared in the British and not only the British press that war between the USSR and Germany is imminent are clumsy propaganda put out by

46 Note: Of course, this argument of Suvorov’s – which Radzinsky here supports – is on very tenuous ground!
47 Note: This assertion is patently false, of course. Neither Hitler nor the German High Command – nor “Fremde Heere Ost” – shared this view.
forces hostile to the USSR and Germany.” He waited, but there was no response from Hitler. Meanwhile, members of the German embassy staff were going home. This was the normal leave period, but they seemed to be departing en masse. Again, he reviewed the situation, and again he concluded that Hitler could not attack at that time. Summer would soon be ending, and the German army was not dressed for winter. Stalin saw only one explanation: Hitler was obviously scaremongering. (442)

Anecdote / Sepulchre of Tamerlane: While all this was happening, the Boss, as usual, took a hand in everything. A scientific expedition was at work on Uzbekistan. Mikhail Gerasimov, an expert in reconstructing human faces to fit skulls, had suggested opening the sepulcher of Tamerlane, and Stalin had agreed. He wanted to see the great conquerer’s face.48 . . . When the expedition first started work, the Boss had been told about a local tradition that “the War God’s sleep must not be disturbed.” If it was, disaster would follow; Tamerlane would return on the third day, bringing war. . . But the Boss himself was an Eastern god. What were Tamerlane’s bones to him! On the night of 19-20 Jun 41, the Guri Emir Mausoleum was floodlit.49 A news crew was there to film the opening of the tomb. A gigantic marble slab was lifted from it. In the dark recesses of the marble sarcophagus stood a black coffin under a rotting cloth-of-gold baldachin. Tamerlane had died a long way from Samarkand and had been brought back to his burial place in this coffin. An old man who worked in the mausoleum begged them not to open the coffin. They laughed at him. Huge nails were pried from the lid. Gerasimov triumphantly removed Tamerlane’s skull and held it up for the cameraman. The film was rushed to Moscow, and the Boss saw the War God’s skull staring at humankind. [Note: Of course, “Barbarossa” commenced three days later!] (See, 442-43)

21.6.41: See text for Stalin’s activities on this day. After he learns that German deserter has stated war to begin at dawn the next day, Stalin issued a cautious order that evening. . . The Politburo was in session all day long. After the meeting the black limousines carried the Boss and his comrades-in-arms to his dacha. . . Molotov recalled that “on 21 Jun [41] we were w/ Stalin at his dacha until 12 P.M. . .” Stalin instructed Molotov to send an encoded telegram to the Soviet ambassador in Berlin, telling him to put to Ribbentrop the questions which Schulenberg had been asked. Molotov drove to the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs and a telegram was sent to Berlin at 12:40 a.m. (443)

22.6.41 / Y. Chadayev: The street lamps were still burning when his [i.e., Stalin’s, after he had being informed by telephone of German attack] car drove into the Kremlin. . . He was the first to arrive at the Kremlin. The other members of the Politburo . . . filed into his office shortly afterward. . . Y. Chadayev, chief administrative assistant to the Council of People’s Commissars, had been chosen to take brief notes at all meetings of the Politburo and of the government held in Stalin’s private office. Chadayev mentions several times in his memoirs that he was “the only one whom Stalin allowed to take notes.” His recollections of the beginning of the war, in the manuscript of his memoirs (written after Stalin’s death), are therefore of the greatest interest. When he himself died, his manuscript seems to have made the rounds of various secret archives before coming to rest in the Secret Fund of the Archive of the October Revolution. That was where I managed, during Gorbachev’s perestroika, to read these still unpublished memoirs, to which the author gave the title, In Time of Dread. (445)

48 Note: Timur, also known as Tamerlane, was a 14th-Century Muslim conqueror of much of western and central Asia. He sought to restore the Mongol Empire. His conquests were often characterized by exceptional brutality. See, excellent “Wikipedia” write up.
49 Note: Tamerlane was entombed in Samarkand, in the Guri Emir Mausoleum. (442)
Persistent Legend re: Stalin: There is a persistent legend that in the first days of the war Stalin, stunned by Hitler’s attack, was at his wits’ end, incapable of action. He then left the Kremlin for the nearer Dacha, where he remained, bewildered and inactive. Knowing Stalin’s character as I did, I found this behavior strange... It was only after reading Chadayev’s memoirs that I began to understand Stalin’s behavior. They, together w/ the dispassionate visitors’ book, give us a quite different picture of those first days after the catastrophe. [Note: For account of Stalin’s activities on first days of war see, pp 446 ff. Author writes that – at first – Stalin continued to cling to the hope that the German attack was simply a provocation and he asked Molotov to get in touch w/ the Berlin again and ring the embassy. ... Chadayev writes: “I caught a glimpse of Stalin in the corridor [on 22.6.41]. He looked tired, worn out. His pock-marked face was drawn and haggard...” Radzinsky – again from examination of Stalin’s visitors’ book – makes clear that Stalin worked indefatigably for the first few days after the start of Operation “Barbarossa.”]

23.6.41: Stalin sets up a general HQ – the Stavka. From 3.30 a.m. to the middle of the following night he received an uninterrupted succession of visitors. (448)

24.6.41: It was now 24 Jun 41, and Stalin’s last visitors, Molotov and Timoshenko, did not leave his office until 6.00 a.m. ... There was no sign of exhaustion [in Stalin], of helplessness. His constant state was one of rage. (448)

c. 25.6.41: As always, Stalin tried to take a hand in everything. Chadayev reports that “he concerned himself, for instance, w/ the choice of the design for a sniper’s automatic rifle, and the type of bayonet which could most easily be fixed to it – the knife-blade or the three-edged kind. ... When I went into Stalin’s office I usually found him w/ Molotov, Beria, and Malenkov ... They never asked questions. They sat and listened.” (451)

Chadayev writes: „Stalin often sent for the heads of People’s Commissariats, gave them heavy assignments, and insisted quite unrealistically that they should be carried out in a very short time. People left his office in a state of deep depression.” (451)

29.-30.6.41 / Stalin’s disappearance: There have been many legends about Stalin’s disappearance in those dreadful first days of the war. Now we have Chadayev’s eyewitness account. [Note: See text for details, pp 453 ff. Radzinsky makes clear his interpretation, that Stalin was playing a game based on behavior of his hero, Ivan the Terrible. Stalin was absent from the Kremlin on these two days, only appearing there on 1 Jul 41. Once back at work, he was tireless in his efforts to concentrate power in his own hands.]

Stalin’s work day: According to Chadayev, Stalin usually got to the Kremlin by 2.00 p.m. For half an hour the black cars [i.e., limousines] would drive out of the dacha gates one after the other, w/ Stalin in one of them, no one knew which. Stalin’s workday went on till 3.00 or 4.00 a.m. All members of the Politburo, the top military men, and the People’s Commissars had to observe this routine. (454)

Note: Many soldiers gave themselves up at this early stage of the war, or ran home to their villages, where their parents hid them in the cellar. (458)
Oct 41 / Stalin decides to stay in Moscow: On 1 Oct 41, the Boss decided to evacuate Moscow. Government departments and foreign embassies began withdrawing to Kuibyshev, deep in the rear. . . The Boss, too, was due to leave the capital soon afterward. Members of his bodyguard recall how his daughter, Svetlana, helped w/ the packing. His library had already been transferred to Kuibyshev, along w/ his personal papers. . . The nearer dacha was booby-trapped. A secret train awaited him in a siding. Four [4] planes and his own Douglas aircraft stood ready at the airfield. And then he made a startling decision. (466)

Oct 41 / Moscow in panic: The city was being prepared for the arrival of the Germans. Smoke from bonfires hung over the capital – they were burning archives. Prisoners were hastily shot in the cellars of the Lubyanka. On the night of 15-16 Oct 41, Beria called a meeting of leading Party personnel and ordered them to “evacuate everybody who is unable to help defend Moscow. Foodstuffs in the shops should be distributed to the population so as not to fall into enemy hands.” The highway was choked w/ people leaving the city. Special trains carried women and children to the rear. Thieves were busy in deserted apartments. House managers often told them which were the wealthy ones. Pictures and jewelry were sold dirt cheap. (466)

Fall 41 / Siberian troops: Meanwhile, Stalin was concentrating a powerful striking force just outside Moscow. A woman who lived in the village of Nikolina Gora recalled how “on the eve of the battle Siberian troops were stationed right there in our woods. Lads w/ fat, red faces, wearing newish white sheepskin coats. They contrived to sleep, standing up, leaning against trees. The snoring was terrible.” (466)

Nov 41: For Stalin’s celebration of the anniversary of the October Revolution – this year, because of enormous bomb crater in the Bolshoi Theater, the traditional meeting site of the gala and Red Square parade – at the Mayakovsky Square Metro station underground see, pp 467 ff.

1.12.41: A German reconnaissance battalion was forced back from the Khimki Bridge. They were practically in Moscow. The panicky city was haunted by rumors of German motorcyclists breaking through to Sokolniki Park – 20 minutes’ drive from the Kremlin. In reality, the Germans were getting nowhere. (468)

The Supreme Commander: Unlike his comrades-in-arms from the Civil War, Voroshilov and Budenny, Stalin had succeeded in becoming a modern military leader. The price of this knowledge was millions of lives, and he paid it w/o turning a hair. . . His office at GHQ was the heart of the army. . . He spent whole days, and often nights as well, at headquarters. (469)


Note: In “Preface,” author states: Ernst Topitsch, professor of philosophy at Graz University in Austria, has evolved a unique theory about WWII: Stalin was planning to attack Hitler and was building up his armies to that end; but Hitler got in the first blow. (vii)

50 Note: Hoyt another “revisionist” author, of sorts. But does not subscribe to Suvorov thesis that Stalin preparing to attack in summer of 1941.
Chapter 1: An Unholy Alliance:

To the Russian government WWII was only an extension of the Bolshevik Revolution that had begun in 1918. Germany and Japan were pawns to be used to destroy the capitalist system of Western Europe and America. In the 1930s, Josef Stalin was pursuing the twin aims of assuring his continued power by a campaign of terrorism and the continuation of the Bolshevik Revolution, that, in his mind, would bring all the world under Communist rule. (1)

Nazi-Soviet Pact: Stalin was [equally satisfied w/ Hitler] w/ the secret division of the eastern border states, which gave the USSR rights to Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Bessarabia, and Poland east of the line formed by the rivers Nasrev – Weichsel – Sann. (5)

Stalin intended to attack Germany but in 1939 was not yet prepared to do so. It would be another three [3] years before he could strike [i.e., 1942]. (5)

1940: Beginning at this time, more than half the troops of the Special Western Military District were concentrated around Bialystok and west in an area that projected into enemy territory. From that disposition, historian Ernst Topitsch concludes, the Russians clearly were planning a preemptive attack on Hitler. (8)

Dmitri Volkogonov, head of the Russian Institute of Military History and the first biographer to publish after glasnost, concluded that Stalin’s miscalculations and his wrong assessments stemmed from his absolute control of Soviet society. Everyone was afraid of him – as he had shown so ruthlessly and so recently, he had the power of life and death over them. So, to please Stalin, everyone talked about the Invincible Red Army, knowing they were parroting lies, and the day that the internal stresses of capitalism would bring explosion from within. (9)

Chapter 2: The Coming Storm

Apr 41: The German campaign in Yugoslavia ended when Belgrade surrendered on 13 Apr 41, and the Yugoslav army gave up four [4] days later. Greece surrendered on 23 Apr 41, and Hitler sent airborne troops to capture Crete. . . Actually, the Balkan campaign had not slowed the German preparations appreciably. The worst problem was the weather: the winter and spring of 1941 were unusually wet, and much of Poland was flooded. Even in early Jun 41 the Bug River was over its banks. (12)

According to author, every Russian plan was predicated on a German attack that would threaten in 1942 or 1943, not 1941. (14)

Chapter 3: The German Attack

No notes.

Chapter 4: The First Days of the War

22.6.41: Early histories of the war portray Stalin as going into a deep shock at the attack and retreating to remain incommunicado in his dacha for a week. But recently new documents have
come to light that tell quite a different story. The streetlights were still on when his car drove into the Kremlin that morning. He waited for news of casualties, alone, because he was first to arrive at the Kremlin. The other members of the Politburo, aroused by Poskrebyshev, soon began filing in. . . On this first day of the war everyone believed the German attack was a short-lived venture that would fail. Orders were given to fall on the enemy w/ all the forces and means at their disposal and destroy them in areas where they had crossed the border. Pending further orders, they were not to cross the frontier. . . On this first day, everyone appeared to be optimistic. But, in reality, everyone was feigning that optimism. . . Stalin was also feigning optimism. 51

(31-32)

**ab 22.6.41:** For Stalin, day after day was filled w/ fits of rage. . . From the first days of the war, panic and fear reigned in Moscow. Windows were blacked out. Street lamps went unlit. . .

(37)

**Chapter 5: The Blitzkrieg**

No notes.

**Chapter 6: Moscow**

**ab 22.6.41:** Stalin had just suffered the greatest shock of his life. He was angry w/ everyone. . . For the next few days he functioned irregularly, issuing orders that demanded immediate attack w/ forces that did not exist. . . On 29 Jun 41, when leaving the defense commissariat w/ Molotov, Voroshilov, Zhdanov, and Beria, he burst out, “Lenin left us a great inheritance, and we, his heirs, have fucked it all up.” (52)

**28.6.41:** Stalin’s state of mind was so negative and confused that he was powerless to act sensibly. He divided his time between the Kremlin and his dacha. On the night of 28 Jun 41 he went to his dacha and lay down on his usual couch w/o undressing. He could not sleep so he got up and wandered around in the darkened rooms, pausing in the dining room before Lenin’s picture, which was lighted as always. He waited for telephone calls to bring more terrible news, but they did not come. (53)

**Note:** Hoyt once again avers: “The truth was that the Russians had planned to attack the Germans, and the creation of the military districts along the Western Front had been preliminary buildup to such an attack. But Russian readiness was still months away. . . The sudden realization that the plan had been undone was a major cause of Stalin’s shock.” (54)

**29.6.41:** Stalin turned up twice on this day at the defense commissariat and subjected everyone there to abuse. His face was grey and he had huge bags under his eyes. At last he had recognized the danger that hung like a shroud over his country. (54)

**Chapter 7: The First Fall Guys**

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51 **Note:** Hoyt’s analysis here – at times almost word-for-word – follows that of Radzinsky.
30.6.41: By this day, Stalin had recovered his aplomb enough to function again. On that day, the State Defense Committee was created, w/ Stalin as its head. His first step was to get rid of General Pavlov as C-in-C of Western Front. General Yeremenko was appointed in his place, and Pavlov and his senior commanders were all arrested. That same day, General Kuznetsov, commander of the Northwest Frontier [sic], ordered retreat from the Dvina River and the fortified districts of Ostrov – Pskov – Sebezh. He was immediately dismissed and replaced by Maj-Gen Sobennikov, but he escaped Pavlov’s fate. (57)

**Note:** Author writes that NKVD officers wore “green hats.” (58)

3.7.41 / Stalin’s address to nation: He had never spoken to the Russian people so intimately before. . . The speech was very effective. It raised the morale of the nervous and frightened people. As Alexander Werth put it, “Now they felt they had a leader to look to.” (For more details on speech see, pp 64-65)

10.7.41: To stop the Germans, Stalin began to throw whole armies into the field w/o regard to their equip'ment or readiness, only to see them ground up like hamburger by the Wehrmacht. . . On 10 Jul 41, the Staff HQ was transformed into HQ High Command (later called HQ of the Supreme High Command). Stalin was in charge from that day until the end of the war, and he meddled shamelessly w/ his military commanders. His orders were often erratic, superficial, and incompetent, turning victory into defeat. (58)

**Note:** Whenever Stalin heard of a position being abandoned, he either flew into a rage or he sank into apathy. He jumped to conclusions and he made snap judgements, many of them erroneous. His actions only made a bad situation worse. (68)

**Note:** That said, a couple pages later author avers: “Little by little, the dictator was beginning to learn how war should be conducted.” (70)

Chapter 8: The German Advance

7.-29.7.41: At the end of the first week of war, Guderian’s panzers had reached Minsk, 200 miles east of the Bug River, and linked up with Hoth’s 3 PzGr. A quarrel among the generals ensued. The Panzer men wanted to move fast against the center and capture Moscow. But the infantry generals of the broad front school wanted to move more slowly, cleaning up as they went and not letting the tanks outrun the infantry by too far. Hitler came down on the side of the broad front generals. On 7 Jul 41, Guderian’s troops reached the Dnieper River. He decided to disobey orders and cross. On 10-11 Jul 41, he crossed, losing only 8 men. 52 By 29 Jul 41, he was only 300 miles from Moscow. (71)

6.-7.10.41: On night of 6 Oct 41, Stalin telephoned Zhukov in Leningrad and ordered him to Moscow to see what he could do to save the city. He arrived on 7 Oct 41 and went immediately to the Kremlin. Stalin was in his apartment, suffering from the flu, but Beria was also there. . . Beria remained silent as Stalin told Zhukov that the Red Army was not strong enough to resist the German attack on Moscow. Turning to Beria, Stalin suggested that he find a way of negotiating another Brest-Litovsk – like the one signed by Lenin in Mar 1918, which took Russia out of the

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52 Note: Is this accurate? Check Guderian’s Erinnerungen.
war at the cost of losing the Baltic states, Belorussia, Modavia, and part of the Ukraine. Beria was to ask the Bulgarian ambassador in Moscow to act as intermediary. . . (75-76)

31.10.41: By the end Oct 41, more than 2 million people had been evacuated from Moscow and many more had fled unofficially. . . Through all of this Stalin sat, like a rock, in the Kremlin, a symbol of Russian faith and resistance to the Germans. (85)

Nov 41 / Anecdote: This anecdote offers superb example of Stalin’s interference in military operations. Somehow, he got word that Zhukov’s troops had abandoned the city of Dedovsk, about 10 miles from Moscow, and he became very excited. . . He demands Zhukov retake the city. But Stalin was wrong, having confused Dedovsk w/ the village of Dedovo. Outcome is that Stalin’s interference fouled up two armies, Western Front HQ, and a rifle division for half a day to satisfy a royal whim based on misinformation. (For details, pp 88-89)

Chapter 9: Moscow Counterattack

Stalin had no real military experience outside the Revolution. . . He came to strategic wisdom only through trial and error. (91)

Shortage of trucks: The successes of the Red Army were quite spectacular: they liberated nearly every place between 20 and 40 miles from Moscow [by what date?]. The Red Army’s serious handicap was a shortage of transportation. There were only 8000 trucks available on the Moscow front, a totally inadequate number. Not even half the required supplies could be delivered by motor transport. Hundreds of horse-drawn sleighs were used. And these had limited capacity. It was not for another year, until the Lend-Lease Program of America was in full swing, that the transport problem was solved. (96)

Chapter 10: Bitter Spring

Status of Russia: The Russians had lost nearly 10 million men killed and captured between Jun 41 and Apr 42. This meant they had only [had only?] a manpower reservoir of 9 million men and could no longer withstand losses of the sort they took in the battles from Bialystok to Bryansk. . . The Russians had suffered enormously. Their losses were matched by the economic damage. On the other hand, Stalin had converted the Russian economy to total war. War production had risen from 36% of the total [production] in 1940 to 57% of all industry in the first half of 1942. . . (108)

Feb 42: According to author, the Russians were inferior [to the Germans] in terms of number of men under arms, w/ 5.5 million in first line units, compared to the 6.2 million German and Axis troops.53 (108)

53 Note: These figures seem suspicious. I don’t recall that the German and Axis forces were so large numerically in early 1942.
German Army Group Center stabilized its line along a ragged 900-mile perimeter between Velikiye Luki on the north and Orel in the south. At Agzhatsk, the group’s 4 Pz Army was w/in 90 miles of Moscow. (109)


Deutscher states that, in the concluding passages of his book, he had “anticipated the so-called de-Stalinization. (vii)

He also avers that he did not take all of Khrushchev’s revelations [at the 20th Party Congress in 1956, etc.] “at their face value: I do not accept, in particular, his assertion that Stalin’s role in the Second World War was virtually insignificant.” This allegation was obviously meant to boost Khrushchev himself at Stalin’s expense. (viii)

From the Introduction (1961):

Deutscher: “I had never been a devotee of the Stalin cult; and the cold war was not my war.” [...] . . . „The book has been praised or blamed for the most contradictory reasons, either as a denunciation of Stalinism, or as an apology for it.” (ix)

Few have been those who have paid attention to the full complexity of the character depicted here and to the intricacy of a portrait which shows Stalin en face as the descendant of Lenin and in profile as the descendant of Ivan the Terrible. . . (x)

I had been opposed to Stalinism ever since the early 1930s; I had denounced the cruelties of forced collectivization while these were still being perpetrated (and not, as some of my critics did, 20 or 25 years after the event); I had been, at least since 1931, a stern critic of the Stalinist policy which facilitated the rise of Nazism; I exposed the mass terror, the purges, and the Moscow trials while these were staged; and so on, and so on.54 (x)

Chapter XII: The Generalissimo

22.6.41: Despite all his miscalculations, Stalin was not unprepared to meet the emergency [of the war]. He had solidly armed his country and reorganized his military forces. His practical mind had not been wedded to any one-sided strategic dogma. He had not lulled the Red Army into a false sense of security behind any Russian variety of the Maginot Line, that static defense system that had been the undoing of the French army in 1940. He could rely on Russia’s vast spaces and severe climate. No body of men could now dispute his leadership. He had achieved absolute unity of command, the dream of the modern strategist. (461-62)

3 Jul 41: Stalin at last breaks his silence to offer guidance to his bewildered nation. In a broadcast address he spoke of the “grave danger.” His voice was slow, halting, colorless. His speech was, as usual, laborious and dry. It contained none of those rousing words which, like Churchill’s promise of “blood, toil, tears and sweat,” pierce the mind of a people. His style was strangely out of keeping not only w/ the drama of the moment, but even w/ the content of his

54 Note: Interesting, that Deutscher felt such a need to justify his anti-Stalinism at this time (1961). Makes one wonder if the critics didn’t have a point.
speech. . . He began by . . . [see text for details.] He called for “ruthlessness, ruthlessness, and once again ruthlessness” in dealing w/ the invader and in overcoming chaos and panic behind the fighting lines. Then he made his awe-inspiring call on the people to “scorch the earth” that they must cede to the enemy. [See text.] It was as if the Russia of 1812 had been resurrected and spoken through Stalin’s mouth. . . His speech – at once so great and so flat, so indomitable and so uninspiring. (462-64)

30.7.41: Stalin talked to Harry L. Hopkins, President Roosevelt’s envoy. He admitted that he himself had not expected Hitler to launch the attack; he further said that the “war would be bitter and perhaps long. . .” and that he would like the President to know that he, Stalin, “would welcome American troops on any part of the Russian front under the complete command of the American army.”55 This is one of the most revealing statements attributed to Stalin by the memoirists of the Second World War. Throughout the war Stalin persistently refused to admit to the front any foreign troops not under his command. He kept foreign observers away from the fighting lines; and as a rule, to which there were exceptions, he would not even allow allied pilots to fly over Russia. What then made him so eager to “welcome American troops on any part of the Russian front under the complete command of the American army” in Jul 41, when the United States was not even at war and when his suggestion was completely unreal? One can only conclude that he uttered those words in a mood of flagging confidence, perhaps of despair. (464-65)

Sep 41: After Budienny’s disastrous defeat on the Dnieper, two other visitors, Harriman and Beaverbrook, noticed signs of depression in Stalin; and Stalin then inquired whether the British would not send some of their troops to the Ukrainian front.56

In the first months of the war uncertainty must have gnawed at Stalin’s mind, even though to the world he showed only an iron mask. He wore that iron mask w/ amazing fortitude and self-mastery. Perhaps, indeed, that mask was his most powerful weapon. It gave his will to victory an heroic, almost superhuman appearance. Russia was replete w/ elements of weakness. The slightest sign of flagging in the man in whose hands the nation, half-coerced and half-persuaded, had wholly rested its fate, might have increased those elements of weakness w/ disastrous results. Stalin knew, of course, that to him personally . . . hesitation or weakness spelt an inglorious end. Self-preservation bade him behave as he did; and now, more than ever before, his personal interest was at one w/ the interest of the nation.57 (465-66)

Many allied visitors who called at the Kremlin during the war were astonished to see on how many issues, great and small, military, political, or diplomatic, Stalin personally took the final decision. He was in effect his own C-in-C, his own minister of defense, his own quartermaster, his own minister of supply, his own foreign minister, and even his own chef de protocole. The Stavka, the Red Army’s GHQ, was in his offices in the Kremlin. From his office desk, in constant and direct touch w/ the commands of the various fronts, he watched and directed the campaigns in the field. . . After a day filled w/ military reports, operational decisions, economic instructions, and diplomat haggling, he would at dawn pore over the latest dispatches from the front or over some confidential report on civilian morale from the Commissariat of Home Affairs, the NKVD. . . Thus he went on, day after day, throughout four years of hostilities – a prodigy of patience, tenacity, and vigilance, almost omnipresent, almost omniscient. (466-67)

55 Note: Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins, pp 339-43.
56 Note: Ibid., 387-89.
57 Note: This paragraph is most insightful.

48
Oct 41: People who spent those days in Moscow described later the salutary effect which the news that Stalin had not left w/ the rest of his Government had on the mood of the Muscovites, who saw in it evidence that the will to victory, personified in Stalin, was unshaken. His presence in the Kremlin at this late hour was indeed a challenge to fate. It was as if the fortunes of the world had been balancing on the towers of the old fortress. To both Stalin and Hitler the Kremlin became the symbol of their ambition. . . At least a part of his [Stalin’s] power had lain in his remoteness from the people. If he had left, the spell of his remoteness might have been broken. He might have appeared to the people as a dictator in flight. This is not to say that he could not have conducted the war from some retreat in the country. But to leave Moscow was for him a step awkward and humiliating enough to make him shrink from it to the end. (469)

Stalin’s leadership: Not once, so it seems, did Stalin seek direct personal contact w/ his troops in the field. Trotsky in the Civil War moved in his legendary train from front to front, exploring, sometimes under enemy fire, advanced positions and checking tactical arrangements. Churchill mixed w/ his soldiers in the African desert and on the Normandy beaches. . . Hitler spent much of his time in his advanced field HQ. Stalin was not attracted by the physical reality of war. Nor did he rely on the effect of his personal contact w/ his troops. Yet there is no doubt that he was their real C-in-C. His leadership was by no means confined to the taking of abstract strategic decisions . . . The avid interest w/ which he studied the technical aspects of modern warfare, down to the minute details, shows him to have been anything but a dilettante. He viewed the war primarily from the angle of logistics, to use the modern expression. To secure reserves of manpower and supplies of weapons, in the right quantities and proportions, to allocate them and to transport them to the right points at the right time, to amass a decisive strategic reserve and to have it ready for intervention at decisive moments – these operations made up nine-tenths (9/10) of his task. (469-70)

Nov-Dec 41: Towards the end of 1941 it was precisely from that angle that the situation appeared to be hopeless. This is how N. Voznesensky, Director of the State Planning Commission, describes it: (470)

On the territory that had been occupied by the Germans in Nov 41 lived about 40% of the whole Soviet population. About 65% of the whole pre-war output of coal had come from there, 68% of all pig iron, 58% of all steel, 60% of aluminium, . . . 38% of the grain, 84% of sugar . . . 41% of all railway lines of the U.S.S.R. . .

From Jun – Nov 41, industrial output was reduced by more than half; and the output of steel by more than two-thirds. The production of ball-bearings, so indispensable for modern machines, was less than 5% of normal. At this moment, Russia’s proverbial “inexhaustible reserves” were a myth. Her material resources were infinitely inferior to Germany’s. Even her manpower was not greatly superior; [accurate?] and it was at any rate much inferior to the combined manpower of Germany and her satellites. Thus, Russia’s resistance, especially in the first year of the war, was a triumph of her superior determination and spirit, the spirit that made young Communists die at the outskirts of Moscow w/ the cry: “Behind us is Moscow – there is no room left to retreat.” (470)

Immediately after the outbreak of hostilities, Stalin, as we know, explained the initial Russian defeats by the advantage of surprise which Hitler had secured. In 1946 he put a somewhat different construction on the events, suggesting that he had deliberately lured the Germans into the interior of Russia in order to destroy them there. . . This second interpretation was calculated to stop inquisitive probings into the causes of the defeats of 1941/42 – such probings could not
but detract from Stalin’s prestige. That the Russians were compelled to retreat by overwhelming German pressure, that it could not have been part of their strategic plan to withdraw from their wealthiest provinces is certain. Stalin did not, like Kutuzov, attempt to trap the enemy into Moscow, which was now the capital – in 1812 the capital was St. Petersburg. In 1812 the loss of territory did not impair Russia’s capacity to wage war, and Napoleon’s advance was confined to the roads leading to Moscow. In modern war a deliberate retreat on such a scale and involving such losses as those suffered by Russia in 1941/42 would have been stark madness, if not worse. (471-72)

**Note:** Deutscher goes on to explain how Stalin abandoned the tactics and rhetoric of Marxist internationalism – he carefully refrained from waging the war under the banner of proletarian revolution, believing apparently that this would have wrecked the coalition. . . He studiously cultivated the appearance of a single anti-fascist interest and democratic ideology, common to the whole coalition. To that appearance he sacrificed the Comintern, when, in May 43, he decided to disband it. This was his political contribution to the coherence of the Grand Alliance. (See, pp 474-75)

It was not only the fear of a separate peace that haunted Stalin. Only slightly less grave, but much more real, in his eyes was the danger that the western allies would remain inactive and let Russia and Germany mutually exhaust themselves. (475)

**Stalin & his Generals:**

**Hitler,** exasperated by disagreements w/ his own generals, once told his friends how much he envied Stalin, who could deal much more ruthlessly w/ obstinate generals than he could himself. In this, as in many of his “intuitions” about Russia, the “Bohemian corporal” was superficial and wrong. He probably had in mind the purge of Tukhachevsky and his group, which, incidentally, took place three years after Hitler’s showdown w/ General Schleicher. The truth is that the officers’ corps of the Red Army had been the only organization in the state upon which Stalin had not brought to bear the full measure of totalitarian pressure. To be sure, he kept the armed forces under his control. But he also took care not to involve them too closely in all the controversies and intrigues which shook party and state. He encouraged the non-political general, devoted to his job and bent on making the best of it, as long as that officer paid lip service to the party on one or other rare occasion. . . Military art was one of the few politically important domains in which Stalin encouraged the original and experimenting mind, in which he did not impose the do’s and don’t’s of his pseudo-dialectical catechism. Up until 1937 he had allowed Tukhachevsky a free hand in matters concerned w/ strategic and tactical conceptions and w/ modernization of the armed forces. Thus, the officers’ corps largely escaped that oppressive spiritual drill which, over the years, mained and crushed the civilian character. True enough, the purge of 1937 led to a grave worsening. But it was significant that not one of the indicted military leaders was brought to recite the usual confessions and self-accusations. All faced their judges and executioners like men. That circumstance alone indicated that the officers’ corps had acquired a distinct mentality of its own, an independence of mind and a moral staying power quite exceptional in the climate of totalitarianism. (494)

In the first phase of the war the army paid a heavy price for, among other things, the loss of self-reliance which its commanding staffs had suffered as a consequence of the purges. The warning was not, however, wasted on Stalin. He had the sense to give back to his generals their freedom of movement, to encourage them to speak their mind, to embolden them to look for the solution of

58 **Note:** B.H. Liddell Hart, The Other Side of the Hill, p 207.
their problems by way of trial and error, and to relieve them from the fear of the boss’s wrath, a fear which weighed so heavily on Hitler’s generals. He punished his officers w/ draconic severity for lack of courage or vigilance; he demoted them for incompetence, even when the incompetents happened to be Voroshilov and Budienny; and he promoted for initiative and efficiency. Hitler’s generals had a shrewder appreciation of Stalin’s method than Hitler himself when they said that the top rungs of the Russian ladder of command “were filled by men who had proved themselves so able that they were allowed to exercise their own judgement, and could safely insist on doing things in their own way.”59 (See, pp 493-95)

In the depth of defeat, Stalin radically renewed and rejuvenated the high commanding staffs. He brushed aside all sterile pretentions of seniority and paid attention only to performance in battle. Nearly all his famous marshals and generals held subordinate positions or were juniors when war broke out. The basic selection of the new military elite took place during the Battle of Moscow, when Zhukov, Vassilevsky, Rokossovsky, and Voronov came to the fore. It continued w/ the Battle of Stalingrad, in which Vatutin, Yeremenko, Malinovsky, Chuikov, Rotmistrov, Rotmistrov, and others made their names. It was nearly completed during the Battle of Kursk, the turning point in the meteoric career of the young Cherniakovsky, who within three years rose from major to army general. [!] These men, nearly all in their 30s and 40s, unhampered by the deadweight of routine, avidly learned in the hard school of battle until they became their enemies’ equals and then superiors. (496)

The regeneration of the army, of its morale, and of its commanding staff was one of Russia’s most remarkable achievements, for which credit was due to Stalin. But the political implications of this could not have been quite to Stalin’s taste. His marshals and generals began to steal the limelight... Although Stalin himself had since been accused of being a sort of a Bonaparte, he could not but look askance upon the military legend that was growing around his marshals. (497)


Chapter 11: Dangerous Games

War on Finland:

The whole business [i.e., the military defeat of the Finns], Assistant War Commissar Kulik told the future Marshal Voronov, should be over in 10-12 days. [!] Yet the Finns fought stubbornly and well. The disastrous effects of the purges in the Soviet armed forces now became evident. The command was incompetent, field officers lacked experience and initiative, coordination between the various branches of the armed forces was chaotic. The Red Army kept attacking frontally en masse and suffering fearful casualties – by the Soviets’ own admission these amounted to more than 200,000, a number greater than that of the whole Finnish army, including 50,000 killed, in a war which lasted a little more than three [3] months. (521)

By Mar 40, w/ more than one million men thrown into the war against the Finns, Soviet troops finally breached the Mannerheim Line and could be expected to overrun the country and to foist the Communist government on it. But the international situation was menacing. So the Kuusinen

59 Note: B.H. Liddell Hart, The Other Side of the Hill, 232. These comments are most likely accurate for the period of the war beginning about fall 1942. I doubt, however, that they pertain to the initial period of the war.
government [i.e., the puppet Finnish government] was told to disband, and on 12 Mar 40 the USSR concluded a lenient peace w/ Finland. The frontier was pushed away from Leningrad, the USSR obtained military and naval bases; but Finland kept her independence. (522)

Some lessons were drawn from the Finnish affair. A few generals were shot. But Stalin was lenient on those bearing the primary responsibility for the chaos in the army.60 (For details see, 522-23)

The Red Army, Stalin realized, however, had to become more of a Russian army – hence an even greater emphasis on the continuity w/ the Imperial past. In the course of 1940, the rank of general was restored – the title was thought at one time to be so redolent of Tsarism that it had not been used even when the rank of marshal had been introduced. Political commissars were stripped of their equal status w/ the military commanders. Reforms were instituted to restore the authority and self-confidence of the officer corps. Discipline and the privileges of officers were strengthened. . . The gap between officers and enlisted men had already widened; now the salute was reintroduced. But all these privileges and amenities could not undo the fatal effect on the rank and file of seeing so many officers denounced and arrested as enemies of the people. When the Germans eventually struck, units dissolved into fleeing rabbles, the soldiers paying no attention to their commanders’ orders (even pleas). (523)

Hitler attacks in West / May 40:

Stalin awaited w/ mounting impatience the news that a long and inconclusive war in the West had begun. In Apr 40, Hitler obliged him, but not very satisfactorily: the Germans seized Denmark and Norway. . . The Germans had had such an easy time of it. Surely the French Army. . . And this must have been Stalin’s hope when in the early morning of 10 May 40 Molotov awakened him w/ the long-awaited message. This was it [i.e., Hitler had attacked in the West]. . . This was the big test of Stalin’s gamble. (523-24)

Stalin had miscalculated. Within two weeks the Anglo-French armies in the north were either destroyed or forced to evacuate. . . What had seemed inconceivable to practically everybody in Europe became, on 23 Jun 40, a fact: France capitulated. Again oblivious to his word of honor to Hitler, Stalin concentrated substantial forces on the Soviet-German frontier following the German attack in the West. This was intended to become known to Germany, making her retain some divisions against a possible move by her Soviet “ally” and thus slow down the German drive in France. But such was the speed of the German advance that by the time this movement was confirmed by the High Command of the Wehrmacht it was too late. It was 20 Jun 40. The French had already collapsed. . . But Stalin had managed to confirm Hitler’s worst suspicions. And so, like the Poles, the French, and the British before him, he was ungrateful; he would have to pay for it. On 31 Jul 40, at a meeting w/ his military chiefs, the Fuehrer announced his verdict: “In the course of this contest Russia must be disposed of. Spring 1941. The quicker we smash Russia the better.”61 (524)

The Fuehrer’s decision was also prompted by Russia’s unseemly greed for yet more territory. [Note: Here Ulam discusses Soviet seizure of Baltic states, Bessarabia and northern Bukhovina, and impact it had on Hitler. See, pp 524-25)

60 Note: Echoes the comments made by Issac Deutscher (see above, “Stalin & His Generals”).

61 Note: Fascinating analysis – this is first time I’ve seen it posited that Stalin’s movement of Red Army troops to Russo-German demarcation line at time of French Campaign influenced Hitler’s decision to attack Russia.
For Ulam’s analysis see, pp 526-28. Key point: And so the conversation concluded w/ the Russians feeling that the Germans wanted to entangle them in a war w/ Britain, and w/ Hitler more than ever convinced that there was only one way of dealing w/ the Russians. Stalin, on his part, suspected – this was an error of enormous importance in the spring of 1941 – that it was the military men who were trying to provoke Hitler against Russia. Molotov’s report must have strengthened this suspicion, inclining him [Stalin] to seek to appease Hitler still further. (526-28)

Stalin’s appeasement of Hitler:

Hope and despair now fought for mastery over Stalin’s mind. It would be insane for Hitler to attack Russia w/ Britain still unconquered, w/ the United States edging even closer to active participation in the war. . . In the winter of 1940/41 reports multiplied of a forthcoming German attack on Russia. Several Soviet espionage rings, the British, and the Americans all conveyed intelligence that the Germans were switching the bulk of their troops to Poland. Violations of Russian air frontiers by German aircraft became endemic. But Stalin remained wary: obviously the British and their American friends were trying to push him into a war w/ Germany, as were some Prussian generals. For class reasons those aristocrats might try to provoke a border incident and then trigger a war against the Bolsheviks against Hitler’s wishes. (528-29)

The important thing was not to let oneself be provoked. Russia scrupulously kept up her schedule of deliveries of foodstuffs and raw materials, even though Germany fell behind in hers. Soviet batteries were strictly forbidden to fire on German planes violating Soviet airspace. When Admiral Kuznetsov issued an order in Mar 41 to force down those planes – they were now almost openly photographing Soviet naval bases – he was summoned to Stalin and, in the eloquent presence of Beria, told to countermand the order. (529)

The purges, as well as Stalin’s inability to adjust to the possibility of a conflict w/ Germany, entirely sapped the power of initiative of the Soviet generals, and it took the shock of the war itself to restore it – and then at a hideous cost. (530)

Crux: It would be unfair to accuse Stalin of neglecting the country’s defense. In 1940 new regulations lengthened the working day and week. By 1941 the army was more than double the size it had been in 1939. In a number of cases capable people were put in charge of vital departments. But his complex feeling about the approach of war prevented Stalin from preparing the Soviet Union for it. (531)

The Balkans / Spring 1941:

After Rumania and Finland came Bulgaria’s turn. Bulgaria acceded to the Tripartite Pact on 28 Feb 41, and was rewarded by German troops moving in. Stalin now tried briefly what might be described as a get-tough policy w/ Hitler. The pro-Axis Yugoslav government was overthrown by a group of Serbian officers, and the Soviets hastened to fortify Yugoslav resolve to stand up to Germany. There was some hope that the Germans might get bogged down in the Balkans if they tried to punish the Yugoslavs. Mussolini’s armies were currently being trounced by the Greeks. (531)

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Note: Colorfully, Ulam writes: “There was the grandiose expanse of the Reichschancellery, its walls lined w/ blond giants in SS uniforms who snapped to ominous attention as the small Foreign Commissar [i.e., Molotov] and his suite of aides and spies trooped to an audience w/ the Fuehrer.” (527)
5.4.41: The USSR signed a treaty of friendship w/ the Royal Yugoslav Government. . . Within a week the German war machine had rolled over the Greeks and Yugoslavs. The Russians might well have believed that the Balkan terrain would strain the resources of the German panzer, but then it was another hope that crumbled. (531)

9.5.41: Stalin made an unseemly and belated attempt to undo the effect of this defiance of Hitler. On 9 May 41, in flagrant violation of “friendship,” recognition was withdrawn from the Yugoslav government, now in exile in London, and for good measure the same step was taken in relation to the exiled Belgian and Norwegian governments. (531-32)

13.4.41: There was one last diplomatic success [for Russia] before all hell broke loose. On this day Russia signed a nonaggression treaty w/ Japan. . . 13 Apr 41 must have appeared a good if not a great day for Stalin. If Germany let Japan sign a treaty w/ the USSR, there was still hope that Hitler did not really want war. (532)

6.5.41: On this day, Stalin became chairman of the Council of Commissars, the first government office he had chosen to occupy since 1922. Why did he bother? There were two reasons. The Russians were playing the old game of pretending to “discord in the Kremlin.” Several highly situated Germans, Ambassador Schulenburg among them, believed that Stalin headed a “peace party” while Molotov had become anti-German. Stalin’s assumption of the chairmanship might reassure Hitler and avert or postpone the blow. The second reason was that if war came, the informal kind of dictatorship which Stalin exercised might become vulnerable. Otherwise trifling matters – such as who has the legal right to negotiate, issue decrees, sign a peace – can become of life-and-death importance. Stalin left nothing to chance. He now became the highest executive official of his country. (532-33)

14.6.41 / Tass Communique: There were now very precise warnings from several sources – the Americans, the British ambassador, Soviet spies in Tokyo – that the German invasion originally scheduled for 15 May 41 and postponed due to the campaign in the Balkans would take place around 20 Jun 41. But perhaps this was part of some German general’s provocation; therefore Stalin should indicate to Hitler that he stood by his word of honor. On 14 Jun 41, all Soviet newspapers and radio stations carried a Tass announcement bearing the imprint of Stalin’s own style: (534)

“Despite the obvious absurdity of rumors about a forthcoming war, German and Soviet troop concentrations,” “responsible circles” in Moscow had authorized the statement that “according to evidence in the possession of the Soviet Union, both Germany and the Soviet Union are fulfilling to the letter the terms of the Soviet Non-Aggression Pact.” German troop movements to the “eastern and northern parts of Germany” (i.e., German-occupied Poland) were mysteriously “explained by other motives that have no connection w/ Soviet-German

63 Note: Appears to me that Stalin’s foreign policy vis-à-vis Germany was characterized by a large degree of inconsistency in period from about Jun 40 to at least the end of Hitler’s Balkan Campaign in Apr 41. During this period, he seems to have vacillated at times between aggressive moves – which simultaneously infuriated and alarmed Hitler – and abject appeasement. His volte face on Yugoslavia in May 41 is emblematic of this. However, following the lightening German successes against Greece and Yugoslavia, it appears Stalin reverted to a consistent policy of appeasement in a desperate attempt to ward off war w/ Germany.
relations.” It was false to state that “the Soviet Union is preparing for a war w/ Germany.”

Stalin must have realized that the communiqué represented yet another gamble. It was bound to lull the vigilance of the Russian people, and especially the army. But the risk had to be taken. Perhaps Hitler would be impressed, perhaps the troop concentrations were simply a way of pressuring the Russians. (There was an oblique hint in the communiqué that the Soviet Union would welcome new negotiations, perhaps stood ready to make concessions.) (534)

Crux: Mistake upon mistake, miscalculation upon miscalculation! Yet Stalin would not pay for them. The war, like collectivization, would be a monumental national catastrophe, and yet it would be a tremendous political success, and it would end w/ Stalin towering like a giant over prostrate Europe, unwilling to moderate in the slightest his tyranny over a heroic people. In the years to come he must often have reflected on this outrageous favoritism of Providence. . . (534-35)

Chapter 12: For our Country, for Stalin

21.6.41: Saturday was now a regular eight-hour working day, and most Muscovites on 21 Jun 41 were preoccupied w/ one thought: how to rest or amuse themselves tomorrow. With the Tass communiqué of 14 Jun 41 the fear of war had been allayed. Issues of Pravda and Izvestia that went to the press the same night [i.e., 14.6.41, I assume] contained the usual reassuring dull stuff: production achievements in Kazakhstan, a report on the Moscow Party conference. The war was far away – news of military operations in North Africa and Syria appeared on page 5 – and most readers were expected to be more interested in the announcement of an exhibition of aquatic sports that was to open on Sunday. No other European capital awaited the summer of 1941 so calmly and unconcernedly. (536)

There was still uneasiness among the intelligentsia . . . and if they had short-wave radios they heard rumors of Hitler’s next move: Would it be thru Spain against Gibraltar, or finally, against England? By contrast, the highest agitation ruled among officers in the War Commissariat and General Staff. On 21 Jun 41 they received information pinpointing the night of 22 Jun 41 as the beginning of the German attack. (See, pp 536-37)

22.6.41:

News of the war was moving thru Russia w/ the speed of lightning, but the machine of the totalitarian government was for the moment like an overturned car, its wheels spinning in the air, the driver in a daze, no one able to order it to be righted. Until noon, the Soviet radio broadcast music, instructions for calisthenics, and similar trivia. And when the time came to tell the people the frightful news, Stalin . . . could not bring himself to do it. At noon, in a halting voice, Molotov spoke of Germany’s “faith-breaking” deed. “Our course is just . . . we shall prevail." Only now did orders go out for mobilization. (539)

Late in the evening Stalin, accompanied by some members of the Politburo, arrived in the operations room of the Commissariat of Defense. The war had been going on for only 20 hours, but the magnitude of the disaster was already clear. German armored columns had cut deep into Soviet territory, communication w/ many frontier units had been lost, others were known to have

64 Source = Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, Series D, XII, 1028-29.
disintegrated. By *midday* on **22 Jun 41** Soviet planes had been destroyed, **800** of them on the ground. (539)

Stalin exploded. He seemed *clearly unhinged*. Why were the Russian troops retreating? Did they not know they had to carry the war into the enemy’s territory? But such was the *terror* he exuded that at **9:15** p.m. Marshal Timoshenko issued an order although, in view of the situation, it was sheer *lunacy*: The advancing German units were to be “*surrounded and annihilated*;” by **24 Jun 41**, Soviet armies in the north and center were to advance **60** to **90** miles and to seize strategic points within German Poland. As a result, the Soviet armored divisions of the *second line* of defense, which should have been carefully husbanded, were *prematurely thrown in the battle*. Their personnel incomplete, many of the tanks and armored vehicles unavailable because of *repairs*, this precious force was *cut to ribbons*. . . The fatal directive had facilitated German encirclement of sizable Russian forces [i.e., due to the directive, these Soviet armored units advanced right into the trap the Germans were laying]. (539)

**ab 22.6.41 / Myth of Stalin’s Incapacitation:**

Stalin had left the country *rudderless* – or, to use the by now proper term, he had *deserted his post*. After the scene at the Commissariat of Defense on the evening of **22 Jun 41**, which led to Timoshenko’s fatal order, he returned to his villa in Kuntsevo. As far as it can be gleaned from the shamefaced Soviet accounts, *for the next several days he suffered from nervous prostration, which completely disabled him*. The “man of steel” was *incapable of issuing commands*, even of participating in consultations. Everything seemed to be lost; the whole edifice built on the fiction of his *infailibility* was crumbling. . . In his absence Russia in effect *ceased to be ruled*. The *Stavka* – an old Russian word for Supreme Field Headquarters, now synonymous w/ the High Command – was officially set up on **23 Jun 41**. It included military and political officials, Stalin simply being designated as a member, its chief and Supreme Commander being Marshal Timoshenko. For seven [7] days supreme power was in Timoshenko’s hands and, had he been made of a different stuff, Stalin might well have met the fate which in wartime is usually reserved for those who through dereliction of duty have been responsible for a military disaster. . . [Note: Ulam writes of the “seven [7] days when Stalin was absent.”] (540)

**3.7.41:** On this day, for the *first time* in two weeks, the voice of authority was heard throughout the land. Stalin addressed the people on the radio. “He spoke in a *dull, slow voice w/ a strong Georgian accent*.” At one point he *lifted a glass w/ a trembling hand, making a sound against the table, and the radio listeners could hear him drinking water*. “His voice was low, soft and he might have appeared calm, but for his *heavy, tired breathing* and for his drinking water during the speech.” Ambassador Maisky gives a more forthright version: “It came out badly. Stalin spoke in a *dull, colorless voice, often stopping and breathing heavily*. . . He seemed *ailing* and at the end of his strength.” (541-42)

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*Note:* Ulam’s book was published in **1973**, at a time when the myth of Stalin’s disappearance and incapacitation at start of war was “conventional wisdom.” Ulam’s account appears to be one of the “better” renditions of this myth!

*Note:* In light of preceding sentences, this is an incongruous point. How in the first place could such a decision have been taken – i.e., to establish a supreme HQ – w/o Stalin taking the lead in making that decision? And because we know he *did* take the lead in doing so, Russia was certainly not “rudderless” or abandoned by Stalin.

*Note:* Ivan Maisky in: *New World* (Moscow), Dec 64, p 165.
Stalin as C-in-C:

Though he was the only possible C-in-C, Stalin was not a good one. He was, of course, a military dilettante. Stalin’s only military experience had been in the antediluvian campaigns (by WWII standards) of the Civil War. He had quick intelligence and an enormous capacity for work and for mastering details. But these qualities were offset in large measure by his inordinate suspiciousness and stubbornness, which did not allow him to judge men on their professional ability alone, or to accept strategies merely because of their military soundness. As the war progressed, Stalin improved, learned to reward generalship over political reliability, to delegate some authority in the military field. But how costly in lives his education was! (544)

It is not surprising that his first steps in directing the war were almost as disastrous as his failure to prepare the country and army for it. He was obsessed by the necessity of defending every square foot of Soviet territory, blind to the advisability of tactical retreats so that the battered Soviet armies could be re-formed and re-equipped. And his choices for C-in-Cs of the main fronts (this was to be the Soviet designation for an army group) were to prove most unfortunate. On 10 Jul 41, Voroshilov was made C-in-C of the north, Budenny of the south, and Timoshenko on the central front. Apart from their personal loyalty to Stalin, the first two had little to recommend them. Voroshilov was incapable of commanding a major army unit, let alone a front; Budenny lived in the military past, in the era of cavalry raids before such inconvenient innovations as tanks and aviation. Much younger than the other two, Timoshenko would have been a capable division or corps commander, but in 1941 and again even more disastrously in 1942, he showed himself unqualified to be C-in-C of a front. Zhukov, Stalin’s chief of staff in those few weeks, grew increasingly exasperated at his leader’s unwillingness to sanction timely withdrawals. The military disaster grew. (544-45)

For all the incalculable psychological effect of the Wehrmacht’s defeat in front of Moscow in Dec 41, the Germans did not lose their mastery in the field, nor would the Red Army recover technically and, much more important, morally until the Battle of Stalingrad, in the winter of 1942/43. And not until then did Stalin learn the job of C-in-C; not until then did Soviet leadership in military affairs cease to have unfortunate if not disastrous results. (546)

When German pressure slackened temporarily [after the first weeks of the war], the initial panic and then resolution was succeeded by realization of the appalling truth: the system under which they lived was grotesquely inefficient, to the point that the war made it appear unreal.68 (546)

Stalin’s ruthlessness: In the ending of a short story by Solzhenitsyn, the hero, a soldier w/o papers who escaped from an encirclement, is turned over to the NKVD w/ the inevitable consequence. Such stories stand not for isolated incidents but for hundreds of thousands of cases. Whole units that after stubborn fighting broke through a German encirclement were, once in the Soviet lines, disarmed and sent back for “investigations.” Once the superficial layer of unanimity and enthusiasm was peeled off by the war, what was found underneath was “papers,” a synonym for that total distrust of people which was the cornerstone of Stalinism, proclaiming every Soviet man from Politburo members to an army private guilty until proven loyal. In peacetime this distrust enabled Stalin to build his personal power to an extent unprecedented in history; in war it nearly led to an irretrievable disaster. (547)

68 Note: On the other hand,
Stalin panics again?: Ulam contends that, on 16 Oct 41, Stalin actually “fled the capital and was away for two days.” He insists “there is no question” that this happened, though it is “not explicitly stated in any Soviet source.” According to Ulam, this incident was analogous to Stalin’s putative behavior in the first days of the war, when, so Ulam, he disappeared for seven days: “That the Leader himself was not immune to this panic and that for the second time in a year he had lost his ability to command is vividly confirmed by the fact that not until 19 Oct 41 was a state of siege proclaimed in Moscow – the step which logically should have been taken the minute it was realized that the city was in danger. By that time, Stalin was back in the Kremlin in command of himself and the situation.” (553-54)

What if?: A fascinating historical is, What would have happened if the Germans had realized the extent of panic and disorganization that gripped the Soviet regime between 15-19 Oct 41? They were pursuing the textbook strategy of clearing pockets of Soviet resistance, preparing not a frontal assault but yet another pincers operation to encircle the capital. What if they had thrown caution to the wind and sent a Panzer division racing the 50 miles that separated their advance units from Moscow? The capital might still not have fallen or been promptly recovered, but Stalin would have had to leave it and join the rest of the government in faraway Kuibyshev. Russia might still have won the war. Would Stalin? Instead, the next two months raised him to new heights. (554)

Oct-Nov 41: It was the measure of the gravity of the situation that Stalin should have overcome his suspicousness to the point of entrusting the command of the several “fronts” surrounding Moscow to a single general [i.e., Zhukov]. . . For once, if not for long, he let Zhukov have a free hand. . . Memoirs written at the time [i.e., that of Marshal Rokossovsky, etc.] support the impression of Zhukov’s commanding role and exceptional position vis-à-vis Stalin. General Belov, who saw them both in Nov 41, recorded his impression that of the two it was Zhukov who was giving orders, Stalin at times becoming flustered. (555)

Dec 41: The effects of the December victory on the morale of the Russian people were electrifying. . . The great patriotic surge, the War for the Fatherland, really began in Dec 41. (558)

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69 Note: This is the first I’ve ever heard of this theory!
11.2: Adolf Hitler

11.2.1: DRZW / Bd. 8: Die Ostfront 1943/44. Der Krieg im Osten u. an der Nebenfronten (review of by J. Huerter)

In his review, Huerter points out that the book is often based on the memoirs and post-war studies of the German generals: “In dieser ‘Rekonstruktion des Zweiten Weltkrieges aus dem Geist des Generalstabes’ ging es vor allem darum, alle Schuld auf den mil. Dilettanten Hitler abzuwälzen, der die ‘Profis’ dauernd behindert hat. Dieser Linie folgt Frieser weitgehend kritiklos.” Yet as Huerter makes clear, „die Kapitel Bernd Wegners ueber die Strategie der deutschen Fuehrung zeichnen ein wesentlich differenzierteres Bild. Danach sind viele militärischen Fehler nicht auf den Dilettantismus Hitlers, sondern auf Kompetenzengerangel, Ehrgeiz, Eifersucht u. schlichtweg Unfähigkeit innerhalb der Generalitaet zurueckzufuhren.“ Thus, „Frieser unterschätzt den originaeren Anteil der Heeresgeneralitaet an der deutschen Katastrophe.“

11.2.2: „Hitlers „Programm‘ u. seine Realisierung 1939-42,“ Klaus Hildebrand, in: Hitler, Deutschland u. die Maechte, M. Funke (Hsg.)


Ja, es war ihm „von dem Kulminationspunkt des beginnenden Jahres 1942 an“ klar, wie General Jodl es kurz nach der Kapitulation 1945 ausdrueckte, dass „kein Sieg mehr errungen werden konnte.“ Je deutlicher sich aber der Misserfolg auf den militaerischen Schlachtfeldern zeigte, desto konzentrirter wurde der Kampf gegen das Judentum gefuehrt, dessen Fortsetzung Hitler selbst noch im letzten Satz seines Testaments aus dem Jahre 1945 forderte: „Vor allem verpflichte ich die Fuehrung der Nation u. die Gefo lgschaft zur peinlichen Einhaltung der Rassengesetze u. zum unbarmerhzerigen Widerstand gegen den Weltvergifter aller Voelker, das internationale Judentum.“ (90)

11.2.3: „Die ‘Endloesung’ u. das deutsche Ostimperium als Kernstueck des rassen-ideologischen Programms des Nationalsozialismus,“ Andres Hillgruber, in: Hitler, Deutschland u. die Maechte, M. Funke (Hrsg.)


Denn noch immer wird das Unternehmen „Barbarossa“ . . . in mehrfacher Weise missverstanden oder fehlgedeutet: a) als rein machtpolitischer Vorgang, der sich allein aus den Notwendigkeiten
des seit dem Sep 39 im Gange befindlichen europäischen Krieges ergeben habe; b) als „Kreuzzug“ gegen den stalinistischen Bolschewismus. . . c) u. als „nationaler Aufbruch“ der Völker aus dem Raum von Finnland bis zum Schwarzen Meer zur Abwehr einer drohenden Gefahr aus dem Osten. All dies wurde in der NS-Propaganda nach dem 22 Jun 41 in der Öffentlichkeit herausgestellt.

Aus den Äußerungen Hitlers im kleinen Kreis aus den letzten Monaten vor dem Angriff auf die Sowjetunion lässt sich die Kontinuität seiner Zielsetzung bis in die Einzelheiten belegen. Vier [4] Motiven verschlungen sich in seiner Ostkriegs-konzeption ineinander. [Note: Here, Hillgruber lists Hitler’s four objectives for Operation „Barbarossa“, as I’ve delineated below, in 11.2.4.] (99-101)

30.3.41: Wachrend in der Zeit bis zum Angriff auf die Sowjetunion die Aufgaben von Wehrmacht u. SS, im ganzen gesehen, noch relative klar voneinander getrennt waren u. folglich die Wehrmacht den Krieg besonders gegen die Westmächte nach den Regeln der Haager Landkriegsordnung führte, setzte Hitler diese u. andere Prinzipien des Volkerrechts bereits vor Angriffsbeginn fuer den Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion aus eigener Machtvollkommenheit ausser Kraft. Sein Bestreben, die bisher eingehaltene Trennlinie zwischen SS u. Wehrmacht zu beseitigen u. die letztere unmittelbar zum Instrument seines rassenideologischen Krieges zu machen, ging aus seinen Ausführungen in einer grundlegenden Rede vor 200 bis 250 Befehls-haber u. hoher Offizieren am 30 Mar 41 in der Reichskanzlei mit unmissverständlicher Klarheit hervor. (104-05)

3./16.7.41: Stalins Aufruf zum Partisanenkrieg gegen den Deutschen vom 3 Jul 41 bot die Möglichkeit, die Ausrottung der Juden mit der Bekämpfung der Partisanen zu verbinden u. auf diese Weise SS-Aktion u. militärischen Kampf noch fester zu verknüpfen.70 In der Besprechung mit dem engsten Führungsבינde am 16 Jul 41 erfasste Hitler diese „Chance“, indem er erklärte: „Die Russen haben jetzt einen Befehl zum Partisanenkrieg hinter unserer Front gegeben. Dieser Partisanenkrieg hat auch wieder seinen Vorteil: er gibt uns die Möglichkeit auszurotten, was sich gegen uns stellt.“

Die Auswirkung dieser Verklammerung zweier von Ansatz her verschiedener Massnahmen wurde in dem von Hitler als „ausgezeichnet“ bezeichneten Befehl des O.B. der 6. Armee, des dem NS eng verbundenen GFMs v. Reichenau, vom 10 Okt 41 deutlich.71

Das wesentliche Ziel des Feldzuges gegen das juedisch-bolschewistische System ist die voellige Zerschlagung der Macht-mittel u. die Ausrottung des asiatischen Einflusses im europaischen Kulturkreis. Hierdurch entstehen auch fuer die Truppen Aufgaben, die uber das hergebrachte einseitige Soldatentum hinausgehen. Der Soldat ist im Ostraum nicht nur ein Kaempfer nach den Regeln der Kriegskunst, sondern auch Traeger einer unerbittlichen voelkischen Idee u. Raecher fuer alle Bestialitaeten, die deutschem u. artverwandtem Volkstum zugefuert wurde. Deshalb muss der Soldat fuer die Notwendigkeit der harten, aber gerechten Suche am juedischen Untermenschentum volles Verstaendnis haben. . . (106-07)

70 Note: Clearly, the Germans attempted to conflate “Partisan” w/ “Jew,” and vice versa.
71 Note: Dr. Christian Hartmann stresses the seminal importance of Reichenau’s order for the Ostheer as a whole in his new book: Wehrmacht im Ostkrieg. Following this discussion of Reichenau order, Hillgruber goes on to address similar order by GFM v. Manstein of Nov 41. (107)


Note: Raum einer ahnte, dass Hitler – als das Unternehmen „Barbarossa“ nicht, wie erhofft, in wenigen Monaten erfolgreich beendet war sondern sich zu einem jahrenlangen verlustreichen

72 Note: Hillgruber’s remarks here are interesting. Some more recent authors contend that Hitler’s remarks on 30.3.41 encountered virtually no criticism.
Ringen ausweitete – schon im Winter 1941/42 die Wahrscheinlichkeit eines Scheiterns des Ganzen erkannt hatte u. im engsten Kreise auch offen aussprach.73 (111)

**Note:** Near the conclusion of his article, Hillgruber quotes from the final statement (persoenliche Schlusswort) of GFM Keitel at Nuremberg:

. . . Ich habe geglaubt, ich habe geirrt u. war nicht imstande zu verhindern, was haette verhindert werden muessen. Das ist mein Schuld. Es ist tragisch, einsehen zu muessen, dass das Beste, was ich als Soldat zu geben hatte, Gehorsam u. Treue, fuer nicht erkennbare Absichten ausgenutzt wurde u. ich nicht sah, dass auch der soldatischen Pflichterfuellung eine Grenze gesetzt ist. (112)


31.7.41: In Hitlers grundlegenden Ausführungen vor den Militärs am 31 Jul 40 lief sein machtpolitisches Kalkül auf die Schlussfolgerung hinaus: „Wenn (in Grossbritannien) (die) Hoffnung auf Russland wegfaellt, faellt auch Amerika weg, weil (dem) Wegfall Russlands eine Aufwertung Japans in ungeheuerem Masse folgt.“ Damit waren viel früher als erwartet die USA zum Angelpunkt der Gesamtstrategie Hitlers geworden.74 (45)


a. Ribbentrops politisches Konzept der Schaffung eines europäisch-asiatischen „Kontinental-blocks“ „von Madrid bis Yokohama“ (unter Einschluss der Sowjetunion) mit Spitze gegen Grossbritanniens Empire u. gegen die USA;

73 **Note:** See, KTB OKW (WFSt), Bd. IV, S. 1503 (grundlegende Ausführungen des Gen.Obst. Jodl vom 15 Mai 45. (f.n. 56, 111)

b. Raeders, des O.B. der Kriegsmarine, strategische Grundvorstellung einer Schwerpunktlagerung der deutschen Kriegführung in den Mittelmeerraum u. in den Nahen Osten sowie nach Nordwestafrika, um eine breite strategische u. Rohstoffbasis fuer einen erfolgreichen See- u. Luftkrieg gegen Grossbritannien u. die USA im Atlantik zu gewinnen;


Hitler’s Ostkriegkonzeption (“Weltblitzkrieg”):

Vier [4] Ziele verschlingen sich in Hitlers Ostkriegkonzeption ineinander:

a. Die Ausrottung der „juedisch-bolschewistischen“ Fuehrungsschicht der Sowjetunion einschliesslich ihrer angeblichen biologischen Wurzel, der Millionen Juden in Ostmittel europa;

b. Die Gewinnung von Kolonialraum fuer deutsche Siedler in der vermeintlich besten Teilen Russlands;


11.2.5: Hitler as War Lord, Franz Halder.75

18.12.40: Hitler issued his order to the three Services – the „Barbarossa“ Order – to make military preparations for an attack on Russia against the possibility of Russo-German relations undergoing a fundamental change. It was a preparatory measure, no decision had then been taken. . . Precisely when Hitler did take it, can probably no longer be established. . . It can be assumed, however, that it was not taken until after the quick successes of the Balkan campaign, in the course of which Russia’s hostility towards Hitler had been unmistakably revealed.

The decision for the attack on Russia came anything but easily to Hitler. . . On the other hand, he had a firm and not unfounded conviction that Russia was arming for an attack on Germany. To-day we know from good sources that he was right. (38-39)

75 Note: Halder’s book has already been covered in my other notebooks. The above comments of his are interesting when compared to Jodl’s immediately below.


P. Schramm: Das Alfred Jodl im Grunde seiner Seele bereits seit dem Winterfeldzug 1941/42, endgültig seit Stalingrad (1942/43), nicht mehr an den „Endsieg“ glaubte, erhellt aus den Aussagen, die ich an der Einleitung angefuhr habe. Seine Tragik besteht darin, dass er sich moralisch verpflichtet fühlte, das, was er mit dem Verstand voraussah, aus „dienstlichen“ Gründen nicht laut werden zu lassen; deshalb trat er allen, die zu derselben Erkenntnis gelangten, mit Schärfe entgegen – dem General Warlimont, d. h. seinem naechsten Mitarbeiter, hat er deshalb auf eine skeptische Bemerkung hin einmal erwidert, er gehöre eigentlich in ein Konzentrationslager. (145)

Alfred Jodl dichtete im Nuernberger Gefaengnis das Folgende: „Der Einfluss Hitlers auf die Kriegsführung (Eine skizzenhafte Betrachtung Hitler als Stratege“:

... Wenn etwas die revolutionaeren Fuehrgunsthoden Hitlers klar vor Augen fuehrt, so die Tatsache, dass er auch seinem militaerischen Arbeitstab, dem OKW u. in ihm dem WFStab, nicht die Rolle eines strategischen Beraters zubilligte. Alle Versuche, die ich in dieser Richtung unternommen habe, scheiterten. Einen Arbeitstab, der Hitlers Entscheidungen als Strategie umsetzte in Befehle, die er dann als O.B. der Wehrmacht zu geben hatte, das liess er gelten, das wollte er haben, aber nicht mehr. Dass selbst Maenner wie Friedrich der Grosse ihre eigenen Gedanken u. Entschliessungen an den oft gegenteiligen ihrer Generale ueberprueften u. kontrollierten, aenderte nichts an Hitlers ablehnender Haltung gegenueber jeder Beratung bei den grossen Entscheidungen des Krieges. Er wollte keine anderen Auffassungen hoeren, ja er geriet uiber sie, sobald sie nur angedeutet wurden, in jaezornige Erregung. Wunderliche u. fuer Soldaten unverstaendliche Konflikte entwickelten sich aus dieser fast mystischen Ueberzeugung seiner Unfehlbarkeit als Fuehrer der Nation u. des Krieges. . . (150)

Der Mann [i.e., Hitler], dem es gelang, vor den Augen der meerbeherrschenden englischen Flotte Norwegen zu besetzen, u. der mit unterlegenen Kraeft en in einem Feldzug von 40 Tagen Frankreichs gefuehrte militaerische Macht zum Einsturz brachte wie ein Kartenhaus, war seit diesen Erfolgen nicht mehr gewillt, auf militaerische Ratgeber zu hoeren, die vorher vor solchen Ueberspannungen der militaerischen Macht gewarnt hatten. Er verlangte fortan von ihnen nicht mehr als die technischen Unterlagen fuer seine Entschiessungen u. den reibungslosen Ablauf der militaerischen Apparatur, um diese Entscheidungen in die Tat umzusetzen. (150)

Inzwischen [i.e., Fruehjahr 1941] hatte das Gespenst eines riesenhaften russ. Aufmarsches an der deutschen u. rumaenischen Ostgrenze Fleisch u. Blut angenommen, u. Hitler trug sich mit dem Gedanken, hier das Praevenire zu spielen. Viele Stimmen hat die Welt inzwischen aus dem Nuernberger Prozess vernommen, die vor diesem Einmarsch gewarnt haben. Alle stimmten darin uberein, dass er Hitlers ureigentste Idee war. Beides sind historische Tatsachen. . . Ich will hier . . . nur feststellen, dass die Gefahr aus dem Osten von allen Soldaten gesehen u. die Sorge Hitlers geteilt wurde. . . Unterschiedlich waren die Meinungen, ob die Gefahr wirklich so akut war u. ob sie nicht politisch zu bannen gewesen waere. . . Uns interessiert hier nur der

76 Note: Here, Jodl states unequivocally that Hitler only made his final decision to attack Russia on 1 Apr 41, after the “Putsch” in Yugoslavia.
77 Note: This perspective, of course, is largely negated by the facts.
Einfluss Hitlers auf die Kriegführung, u. dazu ist zu sagen: Der Entschluss zum Feldzug gegen die UdSSR, der Plan Barbarossa, war sein u. nur sein Entschluss. Allerdings hat er ihn endgültig erst am 1. April 1941 getroffen. Denn um diese Zeit trat ein Ereignis ein, das zwar den Beginn des Angriffs gegen die fast fertig aufmarschierten sowjetischen Kräfte um 4-5 Wochen verzögerte, aber für Hitler doch ein Fanal bedeutete, das ihm die Absicht Stalins offenbarte. (153)


Aber seine militärischen Ratgeber – hoert man noch heute oft sagen – haetten ihm doch früher klarmachen muessen, dass der Krieg verloren sei. Welch ein naiver Gedanke! Früher als irgend ein Mensch in der Welt ahnte u. wusste Hitler, dass der Krieg verloren war. Aber kann man ein Reich u. ein Volk früher verlorengeben, als sie verloren sind? Ein Mann wie Hitler konnte das nicht. . . (154)

b. Aus den Memoiren des Gen.-Obst. Guderian . . Erfahrungen mit Hitler:


Als ich ihn nach der Stalingrad-Katastrophe zum ersten Male nach 14 Monaten der Trennung wiedersah, bemerkte ich die Veränderung seines Zustandes. Die linke Hand zitterte, die Haltung war gebeugt, der Blick starr, die Augen quollen leicht hervor, sie waren glanzlos; die Wangen zeigten rote Flecken. Seine Erregbarkeit hatte zugenommen. . . (156)

c. Aus den Memoiren des GFM Erich v. Manstein . . Erfahrungen mit Hitler: (157)

Man kann Hitler in der Rolle eines militärischen Führers gewiss nicht mit dem Schlagwort von dem „Gefreiten des Ersten Weltkrieges“ abtun. (157)

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78 Note: These remarks are gleaned from Guderian’s memoirs.
79 Note: Ditto – also from Manstein’s memoirs: Verlorene Siege.
Er besass zweifellos einen gewissen Blick fuer operative Moglichkeiten, der sich bereits bei seiner Entscheidung fuer den Plan der Heeresgruppe A im Westen gezeigt hatte. Einen solchen Blick kann man oefters auch bei militaerischen Laien finden. Sonst wusste die Kriegsgeschichte nicht von so manchem Fuersten oder Prinzen als erfolgreichem Heerfuehrer zu berichten. (157)


Das Interesse fuer alles Technische verleitete Hitler zudem zur Ueberschaetzung technischer Mittel. So glaubte er z.B., mit einigen Sturmgeschuetzabteilungen oder durch die neuen Tiger-Panzer Lagen wiederherstellen zu koennen, in denen nur der Einsatz grosser Verbaende Erfolg versprechen konnte. (157)


Hitler verstand es meisterhaft, sich psychologisch auf die Eigenart des jeweiligen Gespraechspartners, den er ueberzeugen wollte, einzustellen. (164)

Ich habe nicht weniger als dreimal versucht, Hitler im Interesse einer vernuenftigen Fuehrung des Krieges zu einer Aenderung in der Frage des militaerischen Oberbefehls zu bewegen. [i.e., after Hitler took over as C-in-C of the Army in Dec 41] . . . Dabei war es mir klar, dass Hitler niemals bereit sein wuerde, offiziell den Oberbefehl niederzulegen. Als Diktator haette er dies auch gar nicht tun koennen, ohne einen fuer ihn untragbaren Prestigeverlust zu erleiden. Meines Erachtens kam es daher darauf an zu erreichen, dass Hitler, bei nomineller Beibehaltung des Oberbefehls, sich bereit fand, einem verantwortlichen Generalstabschef praktisch die Fuehrung der militaer-ischen Operationen auf allen Kriegsschauplaetzen zu ueberlassen u. fuer den Ostkriegsschauplatz einen besonderen O.B. zu ernennen. (166)

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Note: This was surely the case w/ “Barbarossa!”

11.2.7.1: „*Fazit: Hitlers Ostkrieg u. Stalins Kriegskonzeption.“*

**Praeventivkrieg:**

Aus dem Zusammenhang unserer Darstellung hat sich mit aller Deutlichkeit ergeben, dass bei Hitlers Angriff auf die Sowjetunion von einem Praeventivkrieg im üblichen Sinne des Begriffs . . . keine Rede sein kann. Vielmehr war die Eroberung des europäischen Russland zu Aufrichtung eines deutschen Imperiums in Kontinentaleuropa *bereits seit der Mitte der 20er Jahre Hitlers grosses Ziel*, dass er seit seiner „Machtergreifung“ 1933 unbeschadet aller taktischen Wendungen seiner Politik konsequent ansteuerte. (533)


**Kriegskonzeption Stalins:**

Bei einer umfassenden historischen Deutung, die . . . auch die Kriegskonzeption Stalins mit einbezieht, ist der Abweisung der „Praeventivkriegs“-These hinzuzufügen: Dem langfristigen grossem „Programm“ Hitlers entsprach ein weitsichtiges machtpolitisch-ideologisches „Programm“ Stalins, das in seinem Kerngedanken ebenfalls seit der Mitte der 20er Jahren festlag. Jedoch war eine Verwirklichung dieses sowj. „Programms“ nur moeglich, wenn es tatsaechlich zu einem Krieg zwischen den „imperialistischen“ Maeichten in Europa kam. Diese Voraussetzung schuf Hitler 1939 durch seine Expansionspolitik. [Note: Objective of Soviet policy was to exploit war between the „imperialist“ powers in the West for its own purposes, then to enter the war at a time most advantageous to it, after the imperialist powers had exhausted themselves.] Der deutsche Angriff vom 22.6.41 durchkreuzte jedoch Stalins Absicht.


**Crux:** Zwei einander – nicht nur *prinzipiell*, sondern auch wegen ihrer sich in Ostmittel-europa kreuzenden Stossrichtung – ausschliessende machtpolitisch-ideologische Kriegsziele-„Programme“ standen sich 1940/41 gegeneinander. (535)
11.2.7.2: „Fazit: Die weltpolitische Situation um die Jahreswende 1940/41 aus dem Blickwinkel Hitlers.“


Diese Einschätzung seiner verfahrenen Situation im Westkrieg durch Hitler war ohne Zweifel realistisch. . . Es muss konstatiert werden, dass mit den Hitler im Jahre 1940 zur Verfuigung stehenden deutschen Machtmitteln einfach eine Kriegsentscheidung gegen Großbritannien oder gar gegen die beiden angelsächsischen Mächte nicht zu erzwingen war. (389)


Crux: So lautete fuer Hitler im Winter 1940/41 die „Alternative“ nicht Mittelmeerstrategie oder militärische Ost-Loesung, auch nicht „Kontinentalblock“ oder Angriff auf die Sowjetunion, sondern Zertrümmerung der Sowjetunion als Grundvoraussetzung fuer eine entscheidende Wendung des Gesamtkrieges zu seinen Gunsten u. zur Erreichung seiner Kriegsziele im Osten sowie gegenueber den Westmächten – oder aber „Kapitulation.“
Note: Nach Hillgruber war die militärische Ost-Lösung „im Rahmen des Gesamtkrieges in der Situation des Spaetherbst 1940 tatsächlich wohl unvermeidbar . . . wenn Hitler nicht kapitulieren’ wollte.“ (392-93)

Mar 41: Setzte die eigentliche ideologisch-politische Planung des Ostkrieges erst im Mar 41 ein u. erst dann die Konsequenzen des von Hitler beabsichtigten Vernichtungskrieges gegen die „jüdisch-bolschewistische“ Herrschaft über Russland voll erkennbar wurde, zu einem Zeitpunkt also, als die Grundentscheidung zur militärischen Ost-Lösung . . . längst gefallen war. . . Dieser Entschluss [zum Russlandkrieg] hatte Hitler ganz allein, ohne „Beratung,“ gefasst. (393)

[Note: Here the author discusses the putative „efforts“ of Keitel, Ribbentrop, Goering, etc. to dissuade Hitler from attacking Russia. His conclusion is that only Grossadmiral Raeder seriously attempted to push Hitler in another direction: “Die einzige Persönlichkeit, deren Stellungnahme gegen den Ostfeldzug bei Hitler überhaupt sicher verbürgt ist, war Grossadmiral Raeder, dessen verschiedene Warnungen vor einem Zweifrontenkrieg wir schon an anderer Stelle verzeichneten. Die Schwäche seiner Argumentation lag darin, dass er auf eine „Alternative“ hinwies, die bei einer gründlichen Analyse der darin enthaltenen Möglichkeiten keine Entscheidung des Krieges im Westen zugunsten Deutschlands versprach. (393-97)

Nimmt man alles in allem, so bleibt als einzige als voellig gesichert zu betrachtende „Tatsache“ die wiederholte, recht eindringliche Warnung Raeders, der allerdings auch ab Jan 41 resignierte, sich mit der Durchfuhrung des Ostfeldzuges abfand u. ihn als Faktor in seine eigene weit ausgreifende Gesamtkriegskonzeption einfuegte. (397)


Kontinentalblock-Konzept Ribbentrops: Author notes that Ribbentrop also probably lobbied Hitler against war w/ Russia. After all, he viewed the Aug 39 non-aggression act with Soviet Russia as his personal achievement and would have most likely perceived the establishment of a “Continental Block” directed against England as his crowning achievement. Hence it is possible that he “in Unterredungen mit Hitler gegen die militärische Ost-Lösung u. fuer die „Kontinentalblock“-Konzeption plaudiert hat, deren voruebergehende Annahme durch Hitler im Sep/Okt 40 sicher auf seine Argumentation mit zurueckzufuehren ist. (395-96)

11.2.7.3: „Die letzten militärischen Vorbereitungen.“


17.3.41: Jedenfalls wurden die beiden Aenderungen, die Hitler am 17.3.41 befahl, damals nicht als tiefgreifend empfunden, wenn sie auch auf Grund des Feldzugsverlaufs aus der Rueckschau als recht bedeutsam erscheinen. Sie betrafen die Operation aus Nordfinland heraus, also den „Hohen Norden,” u. den Vorstoss am außersten Suedfluegel der neuen „Ostfront,” aus Rumaenien. . . (501)

Folgenreichen als die Ausweitung der Planung im Norden war es, dass Hitler am 17.3.41 auch den Operationsplan fuer den Suedfluegel der Ostfront abwanderte, weil es durch diese zweite Abanderung spater schon vom Ansatz her nicht gelingen konnte, die sowj. Kraefte in der westlichen Ukraine in aehnlicher Weise zangenartig zu umfassen, wie die im Mittel-abschnitt im Raume von Bialystok-Minsk. Der Anlass hierfuer war, dass nunmehr, nachdem das britische Expeditionskorps in Griechenland gelandet war, der bisher nur als Moglichkeit in Aussicht genommene Vorstoss bis zur Suedspitze Griechenlands zur Notwendigkeit wurde. . . Damit blieb nun die Offensive im Anfangsstadion der „Barbarossa“-Operation auf dem Suedfluegel der Ostfront allein die Aufgabe der 1 PzGr u. der 6. Armee in Galizien u. Wolhynien. Die bisher geplante grossraeumige doppelseitige Umfassung in der Westukraine war fallengelassen worden. (503)


Sowohl Hitler als auch Halder zeigten sich „sehr optimistisch in Bezug auf (die Aussicht auf Erfolg angesichts der) Kampfkraft der Roten Armee, die veraltetes Geraet u. vor allem wenig Flugzeuge u. alte Panzer habe.“ Die Ueberzeugung, dass der Feldzug ohnehin in wenigen Wochen zum Ziele fuhren wurde, verdeckte also alle latenten Gegensaetze. (504)

Dies hiess, dass die wachsende Staerke der angelsaechsischen Seemaechte nach Hitlers Auffassung die militaerische Ost-Loesung unumgaenglich machte, da Deutschland nur mit einer nach Osten wesentlich verbreiterten Basis, in einem blockadefesten „Grossraum,“ eine Chance hatte, sich in einem grossen Krieg gegen die angelsaechsischen Maechte, vor allem gegen die USA, zu behaupten. (504)

**Balkanfeldzug:**

Hillgruber goes on to address to coup in Belgrade, the subsequent invasion of Yugoslavia, and its impact (or lack thereof) on the start of “Barbarossa.” The author notes the “vielfach ueberbewerteten Problem der Terminverschiebung.” He goes on to point out that the typical Spring weather most likely would not have enabled the Germans to launch their attack before mid-Jun 41: “Ob ein frueherer Angriffsbeginn als Mitte Jun [41] militaerisch tatsaechlich moeglich gewesen waere, ist mit guten Gruenden bezweifelt worden. Weder waere ein schnellerer Abschluss des Balkanfeldzuges ohne die Einbeziehung Jugoslawiens wahrscheinlich gewesen, noch liessen in der Regel die Wetterbedingungen vor Mitte Jun [41] in Osteuropa eine grossraumige Operation zu. Dabei soll nicht bestritten werden, dass einige deutsche Verbaende, die waehrend des Balkanfeldzuges bis zur Suedspitze Griechenlands vorgestossen waren u. nun in Eiltransporten auf den oestlichen Kriegsschauplatz geworfen wurden, stark ueberfordert waren, doch waere dies ohne die Einbeziehung Jugoslawiens in den Balkanfeldzug kaum anders gewesen. (504-07)

Blumentritt (Ms. „Moskau,“ IfZ, Muenchen) legt dar, dass die „Fruehjahrsschlammerperiode“ 1941 laenger als gewoehnlich gedauert habe u. dass der Bug vor der 4. Armee noch Anfang Jun 41 so weit aus seinen Ufern getreten gewesen sei, dass ein Uebergang mit den der Armee zur Verfuegung stehenden Pioniermitteln nicht moeglich gewesen waere. – Es ist dabei daran zu erinnern, dass auch die deutsche Sommeroffensive 1942 erst am 28.6.42, die Offensive 1943 (Unternehmen „Zitadelle“) sogar erst am 5.7.43 begann. Gleiches gilt fuer die sowj. Sommeroffensive 1944, die am 22.6.44 gegen die H.Gr.Mitte einsetzte. Im Mai konnten in der Regel allenfalls am außersten Suedabschnitt (Krim, Suedukraine) groessere militaerische Operationen durchgefuehrt werden, wahrend in den Hauptabschnitten (Nordukraine, Mitte u. Norden) die „Schlammerperiode“ zu dieser Zeit im allgemeinen noch nicht abgeschlossen war. (f.n. 28, 506-07)

**Festlegung des „B“ Tages:**

Eine weitere Hinauszoe gerung des „B-Tages“ (22.6.) schien vielmehr sogar noch Ende Mai 41 moeglich, nachdem sich Hitler am 21.4.41 zu der bis dahin noch nicht vorgesehenen Eroberung von Kreta (Unternehmen „Merkur“) vor Beginn von „Barbarossa“ entschlossen hatte. Am 28.5.41 schlug das OKH in einer Stellungnahme an das OKW auf eine entsprechende Anfrage hin vor, den vorgesehenen Tag „moeglichst beizubehalten order nur um wenige Tage zu verschieben, um dem Gegner keine Moeglichkeiten zur Umgruppierung, Verbesserung seiner Abwehrbereitschaft oder zu Praeventivmassnahmen zu geben.“ Ausserdem wies das OKH darauf hin, „dass aus Witterungsgruenden“ die Operationen nach Moeglichkeit bis Mitte Sep [41] abgeschlossen sein muessen.“ Daraufhin entschied Hitler am 29.5.41, dass die Vorbereitungen fuer „Barbarossa“ „weiter auf den vorgesehenen B-Tag“ (22.6.) abzustellen sei. . . Erst damit lag der Angriffstag wirklich fest. (507)

30.4.41: Halder trug Hitler ueber den „Zeitablauf Barbarossa,“ d.h. ueber die Transporte zur Ueberfuhrung der Angriffsverbaende nach dem Osten vor. Da sich daraus das Eintreffen der
eigentlichen Stosskraefte (Pz.- u. mot.-Div.) in den vorgesehenen Raeumen in der Zeit vom 3.-23.6.41 ergab (,,Hochstleistungsfahrplan“ fuer den Ostaufmarsch ab 22.5.), nahm Hitler an diesen Tage erstmals den 22.6. als Termin fuer den Angriffsbeginn in Aussicht. An ihm hielt er, nachdem sich das OKH Ende Mai 41 klar fuer die Beibehaltung ausgesprochen hatte, fest, als er am 6.6.41 die Zeittafel fuer die letzten Vorbereitungen des Feldzuges genehmigte u. am 17.6.41 – nach einer letzten grossen Besprechung mit den O.B. der H.Gr. u. Armeen am 14.6. – den endgueltigen Befehl fuer den Angriff zum 22.6. 3.15 Uhr erteilte. (507-08)

Wie die Westoffensive 1940 u. den Balkanfeldzug 81 im Fruehjahr 1941 wollte Hitler den Ostfeldzug von Anfang an als „Feldheer“ persoenlich fuehren. Lediglich die Uebereinstimmung mit den Planungen des Generalstabes des Heeres im grossen u. ganzen (wie es schien) u. die Ueberzeugung, dass der Feldzug keine besonderen Fuehrungsprobleme mit sich bringen werde, da es sich nach den ersten Grenzschlachten im wesentlichen nur um eine schnelle Inbesitznahme des riesenhaftes Gebietes bis zur „AA‘Linie“ handele, liessen Hitler in den ersten Wochen des Feldzuges noch mit Eingriffen in die Operationsleitung zurueckhalten. (508)

Beurteilung des sowj. Gegners:

Wesentlicher als das Problem des Angriffsbeginns u. damit zusammenhaengend der Termin- verschiebung ist die Frage, ob sich an der Beurteilung des sowj. Gegners in den letzten Monaten vor Angriffsbeginn etwas geaendert hatte:


- **17.2.41:** Nach wie vor hielt Hitler die sowj. Luftwaffe, die seiner Auffassung nach jederzeit Ueberraschungsangriffe gegen das Reichsgebiet fuehren koennte, trotz gelegentlicher gegenteiliger Aeusserungen fuer gefahrlicher als die Rote Armee. Am 17.2.41 zeigte er sich sogar „betroffen“ von neuen Informationen ueber die Staerke der sowj. Luftstreitkraefte;

- **30.3.41:** Aeuusserte sich Hitler dann zum erstenmal im Unterschied zu allen seinen bisherigen abfaelligen Bemerkungen recht positiv ueber die sowj. Panzerwaffe, die er als „respektabel“ bezeichnete. Sie sei die zahlenmaessig staerkste der Welt, wenn auch nur wenige Panzer des „neuen Riesentyps“ vorhanden82 u. die Masse veraltet seien;


82 **Note:** Diese Bemerkung trifft fuer den Zeitpunkt Ende Mar 41 zu. Tatsaechlich besass die Rote Armee dann aber bereits im Jun 41 967 Panzer des neuen Typs „T 34“ u. 508 des neuen KW-Modells, obwohl die Serien-Produktion erst im Apr/Mai 41 angelaufen war. (f.n. 46, 509)
7.5.41: Hitler sah in den Aussagen des deutschen Militärattachés in Moskau, General Köstring, u. seines Vertreters, Oberst i.G. Krebs, vom 7.5.41 eine Bestätigung seiner Auffassung, dass die Rote Armee sich trotz der Anstrengungen der sowj. Führung in der letzten Zeit „nicht wesentlich verbessert“ habe u. „kein gutes Führerkorps“ besitze.\(^83\)

So ging die deutsche militärische Führung in den Ostfeldzug mit der Überzeugung, dass der Erfolg sicher sei, während Hitler gelegentlich in der ihm eigenen Witterung künftiger Gefahren im vertrauten Kreise ausserte: „Mir ist, als ob ich die Tuer zu einem dunklen, nie gesehenen Raum aufstösse, ohne zu wissen, was sich hinter der Tuer verbirgt,“ andererseits aber in seiner Reichstagsrede am 4.5.41 öffentlich prophezeite, dass „das Jahr 1941... in die Geschichte als das großeste Jahr unserer Erhebung eingehen“ werde, so dass auch seine psychische Verfassung am Vorabend des 22.6.41 – vor allem auch mit Blick auf die Situation im Westkrieg – die Kennzeichnung „Mischung von Vermessenheit u. Verzweiflung“ wohl zutreffend ist. (Note: These „bullets“ from pp 509-11)

Von militärischer Seite hat in den letzten Monaten niemand mehr versucht, Hitler von seinem Angriffsplan abzubringen. (Note: Author goes on to discuss efforts of the German ambassador to Moscow, Count von der Schulenburg to dissuade Hitler from attacking Russia. H. also points out that State Secretary Frhr. v. Wiezaecker stood in opposition to Barbarossa, yet, once again, was unable to come up with a comprehensive and effective alternative to Hitler’s “Barbarossa” plan. See, pp 511-12)


11.2.7.4: „Politik u. Strategie der kriegführenden Mächte vom Beginn des deutschen Angriffs auf die Sowjetunion (22.6.41) bis zum Scheitern des improvisierten Kriegsplans (Dez 41) – ein Ausblick."


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\(^83\) Note: Köstring u. Krebs weilten am 6./7.5.41 in Berlin. (f.n. 53, 510)

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11./12.7.41: In einem Gespräch in der Nacht vom 11-12 Jul 41 hatte Hitler angedeutet, dass er sich mit einer Herrschaft Stalins, den er als eine der „aussergewöhnlichsten Gestalten der Weltgeschichte“ bezeichnete, in Sibirien abfinden wuerde, da er eine Rueckeroberung des europaeischen Russland von dort aus fuer ausgeschlossen hielt. (f.n. 21, 540)


Anfang Aug 41 sollte nach der Vortragsnotiz der Ops.-Abt. vom 15.7.41 bereits der Rueckmarsch der ueberzaehligen Inf.-Div., Anfang Sep 41 der Abzug der ueber die festgelegte Zahl hinausgehenden Pz.- u. mot.-Verbaende nach Deutschland bzw. in die vorgesehenen Aufmarschrueume fuer die Operationen durch die Turkei nach Syrien u. von Suedwestfrankreich ueber Spanien nach Nordwestafrika beginnen. (541-42)


Jul 41: Der von Hitler befohlene systematische Vernichtungskrieg, der als umfassendes Programm u. nicht als blosse Begleiterscheinung des militaerischen Kampfes spatestens Ende Jul 41 auf der Gegenseite klar erkannt worden war, fuhrte weithin zu einer Versteifung des Widerstandes der Roten Armee u. zu einer Konsolidierung der bereits erschuetterten Herrschaft Stalins. Hitlers Vernichtungskrieg setzte in Russland Energien frei, die mit dem Willen zur Abwehr der drohenden Versklavung durch den fremden Eroberer der Verteidigung des „Vaterlandes,“ damit aber auch der Festigung des totalitaeren Regimes des stalinistischen Sowjetkommunismus zuflossen. (545)

Aug 41 / erste Fuehrungskrise: Waraend Hitler sich bisher – solange die optimistische Lagebeurteilung allseits geteilt wurde – im wesentlichen auf eine intensive Beobachtung des Feldzugsverlaufs u. recht allgemein gefasste Weisungen beschaenkt u. kaum in die Operationsfuehrung u.

84 Note: Aus den folgenden Eintragungen im KTB Halder (Bd. III, S. 108) geht hervor, dass zumindest die letzten Angaben auf die Mentalitaet Hitlers berechnet waren, waehrend Halder diesen Optimismus „nicht ganz“ teilte. (f.n. 40, 542)


**Oct 41:** Der Wille, trotz dieser . . wesentlich zurueckhaltenderen Lagebeurteilung doch noch im Jahre 1941 das Ziel der „Barbarossa“-Unternehmung zu erreichen, bestimmte Hitlers militaerische Entscheidungen im Osten in den verbleibenden Herbstmonaten, da er sich ueber die Konsequenzen eines Scheiterns seines „Blitzkriegs“-Planes *durchaus im klaren war*. . . Die wichtigste der Entscheidungen Hitlers war der Entschluss, nach der erfolgreichen Beendigung der grossen Kesselschlacht ostwaerts Kiew am *2.10.41* nun doch zur Grossoffensive in Richtung auf Moskau anzusetzen, um damit die *Feldzugs-Entscheidung zu erzwingen.* (549-50)


**11./19.11.11:** Noch am *11 Nov 41* hatte Hitler gefordert, dass „vor Eintreten starken Schneefalles . . es einen aeußersten Einsatz rechtfertigen (wuerde), im Sueden durch einen Vorstoss auf Stalingrad bzw. durch baldiges Gewinnen von Maikop u. im Norden durch die Besitznahme von Wologda die beiden Einfuhrlinien fuer englisch-amerikanische Kriegsmaterial zu durchschneiden bzw. unsere beschraenkte Erdoleversorgung zu verbessern u. zu sichern.“ Am *19 Nov 41* aber resignierte Hitler erstmals, wie seine Ausfahrungen im kleinen Kreis an diesem Tage erkennen liessen. „Im ganzen“ kam in ihnen „die Erwartung zum Ausdruck, dass die Erkenntnis, dass die beiden Feindgruppen sich nicht vernichten koennen, zu einem Verhandlungsfrieden fuhrt.“ (551; also, *KTB Halder*)

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85 Note: Als erstes wurde der beabsichtigte Vorstoss auf Murmansk fuer 1941 aufgegeben („Weisung Nr. 36 vom 22.9.41 u. „Weisung No. 37“ vom 10.10.41. (See, Hubatsch.) Damit war auch das Ende *Jul 41* vom OKH noch fuer Herbst 1941 vorgesehene Unternehmen gegen Gibraltar aufgegeben. (f.n. 67a, 68, 69, 549)


16.-20.12.41 / Stalins Kriegsziele: Erst seit Dez 41 stellte sich die angelsächsische Seite auf eine laufend dauernde Allianz mit der Sowjetunion ein. Einer intensiven Erörterung der Kriegs- u. Friedensziele zur Abstimmung der Interessen der ungleichen Bundesgenossen, die Stalin beim Besuch des britischen Aussenministers Eden vom 16.-20 Dez 41 eröffnen wollte, glaubte die angelsächsische Seite aber auch noch weiterhin ausweichen zu können. In den Aussagen Stalins gegenüber Eden zeichnete sich eine Drei-Stufen-Folge der sowjetischen Forderungen ab:

a) Anerkennung der sowjetischen Grenzen vom 22.6.41 (also der Annexion der Baltischen Staaten, Ostpolens u. Ostrumaeniens);

b) Annexion des Gebietes von Petsamo u. Einrichtung sowjetischer Stützpunkte in Rumaenien (als erste Etappe fuer die Aufrichtung einer sowjetischen Herrschaft auf dem Balkan);

c) Teilung Deutschland, noch vage skizziert durch das Kriegsziel, den „Anschluss“ Oesterreichs rücksichtsgemäß zu machen, ein selbstständiges Bayern zu schaffen, das Rheinland vom übrigen Deutschland abzutrennen u. Ostpreußen an Polen zu übergeben. Das Memelland u. Tilsit sollten dabei der Sowjetunion überlassen werden. (558-59)

Sep 42: Eine grosse politische oder strategische Entscheidung gab es fuer Hitler nach dem Winter 1941/42, spätestens nach dem Sep 42 nicht mehr. Der Entschluss zu „Barbarossa“ war die bedeutendste, aber auch die letzte grosse Entscheidung Hitlers. (556)

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86 Note: Die Einsicht, dass der Krieg nicht mehr zu gewinnen war, verstaerkte nur den Willen Hitlers, wenigstens die eine Seite seines Vernichtungskrieges, die Ausrottung aller Juden in deutschen Machtbereich in Europa, zu vollenden. So begann 1942 die systematische Massenvernichtung der europäischen Juden in den Vernichtungslagern auf dem Territorium Polens. (f.n. 84, 553)

Im Osten (nicht im Mittelmeerraum oder gar mit der alliierten Invasion in Frankreich 1944) ist – daran sollte es keinen Zweifel geben – die Entscheidung über den Ausgang des Krieges in Europa gefallen, so bedeutsam auch die späteren Operationen der angelsächsischen Mächte im Mittelmeerraum u. in Westeuropa für die Nachkriegssituation wurden. (557)


Domarus: Ob Hitlers Russland-Feldzug positive oder negative verlief, war für den endgültigen Ausgang des 2. Weltkrieges ohne Bedeutung. Das heisst: Auch wenn es Hitler gelungen waere, ganz Russland zu erobern u. sich untertan zu machen, so haetten ihn die Westmaechte dennoch frueher oder spaeter besiegt u. vernichtet. . . Der erfolgreiche Widerstand der Sowjetunion gegen die Invasion Hitlers ist genau wie im Falle Napoleons 1 in erster Linie ein Ruhmesblatt der russ. Artillerie gewesen. Wie 1812 die Divisionen u. Garde Napoleons, so sahen sich im 2. Weltkrieg auch die deutschen Heere plötzlich der ungeheuren Kampfkraft, Präzision u. Überlegenheit der russ. Batterien u. Granatwerfer gegenüber. (For more of the author’s fascinating interpretation see, pp 1742-43.)

Chronologie:

10.12.40: „Wo der deutsche Soldat steht, kommt kein anderer hin!“ (Hitler-Rede / 1786)

1941

4.5.41: „Dem deutschen Soldaten ist nichts unmöglich!“ (Hitler-Rede / 1786)


Mussolini: Discussion of M.’s reaction to German attack on Russia: Am 22 Jun 41 um 3 Uhr frühr erschien der deutsche Botschafter von Bismarck mit dem langen Brief Hitlers bei Ciano u. verlangte, dass das Schriftstück sofort dem Duce übermittelt werde. Mussolini war recht ärgerlich über die Art u. Weise, wie ihn Hitler wieder einmal behandelt hatte. . . Mussolins Beteiligung, Hitler gegen Russland zu unterstützen, war jedoch nicht ganz ehrlich. Am 1 Jul 41 erklärte er Ciano: „Ich hoffe nur eines, dass die Deutschen bei dem Krieg im Osten viele Federn lassen.“ (1735-36)

24.6.41: Ueberschritten slowakische Truppen die Grenze, um an dem Kampf gegen Russland teilzunehmen. Ungarn brach am gleichen Tag die Beziehungen zu Russland ab. (1739-40)

25.6.41: Gestattete Sweden auf deutschen Druck hin den Durchtransport einer deutschen Division von Norwegen nach Finnland ueber schwedisches Gebiet. Daenemark brach am 25 Jun 41 die Beziehungen zur Sowjetunion ab. (1740)

27.6.41: Die offizielle Kriegserklaerung Ungarns erfolgte an diesem Tage. (1740)

30.6.41: Gab Daenemark die Aufstellung eines „Freikorps Daenemark“ zur Teilnahme am Russlandfeldzug bekannt. Spanien [Datum?] stellte eine „Blaue Division“ zu diesem Zweck auf. (1740)


2.7.41: Begann die Rekrutierung franzoesischer Freiwilliger fuer eine „Legion.“ (1740)

10.7.41: meldete der OKW-Bericht, die Doppelschlacht von Bialystok u. Minsk, „die groesste Material- u. Umfassungsschlacht der Weltgeschichte,“ sei abgeschlossen. (1744)


14.9.41 / Napoleon: Napoleon hatte 1812 fuer seinen Vormarsch vom Njemen nach Moskau fuer eine Strecke von 950 km 84 Tage benoetigt u. war am 14 Sep 12 am Ziel gewesen. Hitlers Truppen, die ebenfalls am 22 Jun aufgebrochen waren, standen am 14 Sep 41 noch 300 km von Moskau entfernt! (1741)

2.10.41: Die grosse Offensive in Richtung Moskau begann, u. Hitler erliess eine Proklamation, die den Soldaten in der Nacht vom 1 auf 2 Okt 41 verlesen wurde. . . Die Proklamation lautete: [See text for details] Hitler begins by once again insisting that “Barbarossa” was a preventive war which interrupted an imminent Soviet attack. He boasts that, hitherto, over 2,400,000 prisoners have been taken; more than 17,500 tanks and over 21,000 guns destroyed or captured; 14,200 enemy acft shot down or destroyed on the ground. He also states that, behind the front, almost 2000 bridges (of more than 12 meters in length) have been built, along w/ 405 railroad bridges, 25,500 kilometers of railline have been put back into operation; and more than 15,000 km of Soviet track regauged to the European standard. And again he insists that the final destruction of the Soviet Union will also strike a fatal blow to England. (For the entire text of his proclamation see, 1756-58)


4.10.41: Nach Ostpreussen zurueckgekehrt, gratulierte Hitler am 4 Okt 41 Brauchitsch in dessen Hauptquartier persoenlich zum 60. Geburtstag. (1767)


10.10.41: Angesichts der „guenstigen“ Entwicklung auf dem oestlichen Kriegsschauplatz hielt es Hitler fuer nicht mehr notwendig, Murmansk noch im Jahre 1941 zu nehmen, u. erliess am 10 Okt 41 die Weisung Nr. 37. . . (1768; also, Hubatsch, Hitlers Weisungen)

6.11.41 / Anecdote: An diesem Tage trug Ciano in sein Tagebuch ein.89

89 Note: The english text reads: “Anna Maria Bismarsck said to Anfuso that when General Rintelen went to see the Fuehrer on the eastern front [when?] he was approached by the German marshals and generals,
Anna Maria Bismarck hat Anfuso gesagt, dass der General Rintelen, als er den Führer an der Ostfront besuchen ging, von den deutschen Generälen angesprochen wurde u. dass eine Art Versammlung stattfand. Sie haben ihn beschworen, um jeden Preis Hitler zu verstehen zu geben, dass die ganze Entwicklung des Krieges in Russland ein reiner Wahnsinn sei, dass das deutsche Heer sich abnutze, dass es nicht mehr standhalten könne u. dass er auf diesem Wege Deutschland dem Ruin entgegenführe. Das scheint die einheitliche Meinung aller militärischer Führer zu sein, aber niemand wagte es, sich Hitler zu sagen. Natürlieh hat sich auch Rintelen schoen gehütet, dies zu tun. (1770-71)

8.11.41/Hitler in München: Hitlers Rede im Löwenbrauereikeller war recht maßig... Und doch wurde in dieser Rede schon eine Wandlung offenbar, die sich in seinem Kopf anbahnte. Wenn Hitler der Russland-Coup ebenfalls misslang – u. es sah fast so aus – dann blieb ihm nur noch die Drohung mit den Judenmassaker, um die Engländer friedensbereit zu machen... Zwar hatte er die Hoffnung noch nicht ganz aufgegeben, innerhalb der nächsten Wochen die Russen entscheidend schlagen zu können, aber seine Gedanken waren am 8 Nov 41 doch schon stark mit den Juden beschäftigt.

In den ersten Abschnitten des Krieges hatte er die Judenfrage kaum berührt, weil eben alles glatt gegangen war. Erst am 30 Jan 41, als die „Friedenskampagne“ u. die „Luftschlacht“ um England missglückt waren, hatte er die erste massive Drohung ausgestossen. Nun aber begann er die Juden als die Schuldigen am Krieg zu bezeichnen... Hitler begann mit den Worten... [See text for details.] Hitler’s comments included following: (1771, 1780)

So kämpfen wir als Nationalsozialisten heute nicht mehr allein, sondern in einer gewaltigen europäischen Front. Und wir können am Ende dieses Jahres wohl sagen, dass durch diese europäische Front die größte Gefahr bereits abgewendet worden ist.


Und die Führung dieses Kampfes sowohl als die Ausführung wird nicht ermüden u. nicht ermählen. Was der Heldenmut an der Front geleistet hat, ist unsterblich, u. fuer eine so unsterbliche Tat wird auch – das koennen wir als

and that a sort of meeting took place. During the meeting they entreated him to find some way of making Hitler understand that the way the war in Russia is conducted is pure folly, that the German Army is gradually wearing out, that it cannot hold on, and that, finally, he is leading Germany to the brink of ruin. It seems that this is the unanimous opinion of all the military leaders, but that no one dares tell it to Hitler. Naturally, Rintelen, too, was careful not to do so. But if this is true – and it is probable that it is true – it is serious, because in Germany the generals still count a great deal.” (The Ciano Diaries, p 402)

90 Note: Gemahlin des damaligen deutschen Botschaftsrats in Rom, Fuerst Otto v. Bismarck.
91 Note: Filippo Anfuso, Gesandter, Vertreter Cianos.
92 Note: Deutscher Militäratlatche in Rom.
93 Note: Confirm that this quotation is indeed from Hitler’s speech on 8 Nov 41. I did not photocopy pp 1772-79.
Menschen, die an eine Vorsehung glauben, annehmen – ein unvergänglicher Lohn kommen!

Wir dürfen keinen Zweifel darüber machen, dass in dieser Zeit jetzt das Schicksal Europas für die nächsten 1000 Jahre entschieden wird.

**19.11.41:** Sah Hitler bei einem Gespräch mit Halder in der „Wolfsschanze“ den Zusammenbruch Russlands u. Englands wieder einmal greifbar vor sich:

Fuhrer wertet den Erfolg in Russland, den er als eine unerhörte Leistung betrachtet, politisch sehr hoch. Er glaubt, dass durch Verlust wesentlicher Rohstoffquellen, besonders der Kohle, das Rüstungspotential des Russen schwer beeinträchtigt ist u. er rüstungswirtschaftlich nicht so rasch wieder auf die Beine kommt. In England legt er den innenpolitischen, sozialen Spannungen grossen Wert bei.

(1783; Halder KTB, 19.11.41)

**21.11.41:** Nahm Hitler an der Trauerfeier für Ernst Udet im Berliner Reichsluftfahrtministerium teil. Goering hielt die Rede. Hitler legte anschliessend einen Kranz am Sarg nieder. (1783)

**22.11.41:** Wurde schon wieder ein „Flugzeugabsturz“ gemeldet: Oberst Werner Moelders, Sieger in 101 Luftkaempfen, dem Hitler am 16 Jul 41 als erstem Offizier das Eichenlaub-Ritterkreuz mit Schwertern u. Brillanten verliehen hatte, war diesmal das Opfer. Er sollte mit einem Kurierflugzeug, dass er nicht selbst steuerte (!), bei Breslau abgestürzt sein. Hitler ordnete ein Staatsbegraebnis an. (1783)

**28.11.41:** Nahm Hitler um 11.45 Uhr am Staatsakt für Oberst Moelders im Reichsluftfahrtministerium teil u. legte einen Kranz am Sarg nieder. (1785)

**29.11.41:** Allmahlich wurde es Zeit fuer Hitler, sich an die „Front,“ d.h. in sein ostpreussisches Hauptquartier, zurueckzubegeben. Denn im Osten stand es nicht zum Besten. [Note: Author notes that German troops were pushed out of Rostov in the south.] Als Hitler am 29 Nov 41 in der „Wolfsschanze“ eintraf, lagen die reinsten Katastrophenachrichten vor. Gab es denn so was? Soldaten des NS-Grossdeutschen Reiches auf dem Rueckzug? Hitler befahl sofort Halt u. Wiederaufnahme des Vormarsches! An Rundstedt, den O.B. der H.Gr.Sued, telegraphierte er: „Bleiben Sie, wo Sie sind. Kein Rueckzug mehr!“

**2.-4.12.41:** Am 2 Dez 41 flog Hitler mit seiner viemotorigen Condor-Maschine von Rastenburg zum rueckwaertigen Operationsgebiet der H.Gr.Sued. Ausser dem Chefpiiloten Bauer flogen noch mit: Chefadjutant Schmundt, Dieners Lange u. Leibarzt Dr. Morell. Es herrschte kaltes Winterwetter. [Note: See text for this highly revealing anecdote.] Hitler’s plane stops first in

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94 *Note:* It appears he had been away in Berlin from at least 21 Nov 41.
Kiev; then continued on to Potawa. Here, in P., they changed planes, climbing into a faster – albeit also colder! – He 111. GFM v. Reichenau also accompanied Hitler from Poltava, flying in a second He 111.


Abgeschnitten von der Aussenwelt, ohne Nachrichtenverbindungen, eingesperrt in ein altes baufaelliges, verwanztes Schloss, Hunderte von Kilometern vom FHQu u. der Reichskanzelei entfernt, litt er Hoellenqualen bei dem Gedanken, was sich inzwischen dort abspielen koennte. . . Wie, wenn irgend ein General, irgend ein Unterfuehrer in seiner Abwesenheit die Macht an sich riss, ihn wegen erwiesener Unfaehigkeit fuer abgesetzt erklart oder gar den Reichstag einberief?

Am 4 Dez 41 traf Hitler nach sorgenvollem Flug in Rastenburg ein u. war auf schlimmste Aufstandsnachrichten gefasst. Aber in der „Wolfsschanze“ war alles ruhig u. in bester Ordnung. Niemand im ganzen Reich hatte versucht, Revolution zu machen! Hitler fiel ein Stein vom Herzen. . . (1787-89)


Da traf eine Meldung ein, dass japanische Bomberverbaende ohne Kriegserklaerung u. an einem Sonntag – genau nach Hitlerscher Manier – den amerikanischen Flottenstuetzpunkt Pearl Harbour auf Haway schwer bombardiert hatten. Dies war naturlich eine Nachricht nach Hitlers Geschmack. Er schlug sich auf die Schenkel, sprang wie elektrisiert auf u. rief: „Endlich!“

[Note: See text for more details. Hitler, of course, knew nothing of Japanese plans to attack at Pearl. Moreover, he had never, so Domarus, encouraged the Japanese to attack America; he had merely supported a Japanese move against England (for ex., at Singapore). In fact, the Three Power Pact of 27 Sep 40 was to help prevent an extention of the war to the USA. Conversely, in the last few months, Hitler had attempted to induce the Japanese to join in the war against the Soviet Union. In vain, of course. 1791]


95 Note: Vgl. Walter Goerlitz, Der deutsche Generalstab, 1950, S. 574.
Um 15 Uhr hatte Hitler im Reichstag seinen grossen Auftritt, in dessen Verlauf er die Kriegserklaerung an die USA verkundete. Zunachst aber gab er einen triumphalen „Rechenschaftsbericht“ uber den bisherigen Verlauf des Krieges u. scheute sich nicht, auch die Erfolge des doch offensichtlich misslungenen Russlandfeldzuges in diese Siegesuebersicht mit einzu- beziehen. [Note: In this Reichtag address, Hitler lays out course of war in the east in some detail, even providing detailed figures for Germany’s losses in men and equipment; he also, again, justifies the war as a preventive measure: (1793 ff.)

Weil ich Sowjetrussland fuer die toedliche Gefahr nicht nur des Deutschen Reiches, sondern fuer ganz Europa hielt, habe ich mich entschlossen, wenn moeglich noch wenige Tage vor Ausbruch dieser Auseinandersetzungen selbst das Zeichen zum Angriff zu geben. Fuer die Tatsache der Absicht aber des russ. Angriffes liegt heute ein wahrhaft erdrueckendes u. authentisches Material vor. Ebenso sind wir uns im klaren ueber den Zeitpunkt, an dem dieser Angriff stattfinden sollte; angesichts der uns vielleicht im ganzen Umfang aber wirklich erst heute bewusst gewordenen Groesse der Gefahr kann ich dem Herrgott nur danken, dass er mich zur richtigen Stunde erleuchtet hat u. mir die Kraft schenkte, das zu tun, was getan werden musste, es verdanken ihm nicht nur Millionen deutscher Soldaten ihr Leben, sondern ganz Europa sein Dasein. (!)


Hatte Hitler eine Besprechung mit Raeder ueber geeignete Kampfmassnahmen der Marine gegen den neuen Feind, die USA. Man beschloss, sechs [!] grosse U'Boote an die amerikanische Ostkueste zu dirigieren. Aber dieses billige Vergnuegen, die noch unverdunkelten amerikanischen Kuestenstaedte nachts von See aus zu beschissen, sollte naturlich bald aufhoeren! (1812)

Hitlers Verlautbarung ueber den Oberkommandowechsel umfasste einen allgemein gehaltenen Teil, in dem er sozusagen ueber sich selbst berichtete, u. eine Proklamation an die Soldaten des Heeres u. der Waffen-SS. Die Bekanntmachung hatte folgende Wortlaut. [Note: See text for details, 1813, ff.]

Nicht weniger verheerend war der Eindruck, den Hitlers Appell zur Wintersachen- sammlung fuer die Ostfront vom 20 Dez 41 hervorrief. [Note: See text for details.] Dieser Aufruf gab eindeutig zu verstehen, dass die deutschen Soldaten keine ausreichende Winter- ausruestung besessen. (1815-16)

Note: Welches “Material” dies sein sollte, daruber schwieg sich Hitler jedoch aus. (f.n. 531a, 1798)

Note: DNB – Text v. 20.12.41.
1942

**1.1.42:** In seinen Prognosen für das Jahr 1942 war Hitler wesentlich bescheidener als im vorangegangenen. Hatte er vor zwei Jahren erklärt: „Möge das Jahr 1940 die Entscheidung bringen“ u. am letzten Neujahrstag prophezeit: „Das Jahr 1941 wird die Vollendung des größten Sieges unserer Geschichte bringen,“ so verkündete er nun: „Das Jahr 1942 soll, darum wollen wir den Herrgott bitten, die Entscheidung bringen zur Rettung unseres Volkes u. der mit uns verbundenen Nationen!“ (1817)

**1.1.42:** Hitlers Neujahrserklärung [also quoted above] trug die Überschrift: „Deutsches Volk! Nationalsozialisten [innen], Parteigenossen!, u. war wieder ziemlich lang. [Note: For text see, pp 1820-21]

Außerdem erliess Hitler als O.B. der Wehrmacht u. zugleich als neuer O.B. des Heeres einen Tagesbefehl, in dem er den Soldaten erklärte, sie hätten „ganz Europa gerettet.“ Der Tagesbefehl hatte folgenden Wortlaut: (1821-23)

Soldaten!

... Sohne aus allen deutschen Gauen haben Seite an Seite mit den Soldaten unserer Verbündeten auf dem Balkan u. auf Kreta, in Afrika, im Mittelmeer u. auf dem Atlantik ruhmvoll gekämpft. Seit dem 22 Jun [41] aber habt ihr, meine Soldaten, auf den Kriegsschauplätzen des Ostens, von den Zonen des hohen Nordens bis an die Grenze des Schwarzen Meeres Kämpfe bestanden, die in ihrer Ausdehnung u. Haft die unerhörtesten Ansprüche an euch stellten, in ihren Erfolgen aber die glorreichensten Waffentaten der Geschichte sind...

Durch eure Tapferkeit, euren Todesmut u. eure Opferbereitschaft wurde aber nicht nur unsere deutsche Heimat, sondern darüber hinaus ganz Europa gerettet u. vor einem Schicksal bewahrt, an das wir nur mit Schaudern zu denken vermögen...

Soldaten der Ostfront!

Im Jahre 1941 habt ihr in zahllosen Schlachten den zum Angriffssprung bereitenden Feind nicht nur von den finnischen, deutschen, slowakischen, ungarnischen u. rumänischen Grenzen entfernt, sondern weit über 1000 Kilometer in das eigene Land zurückgeworfen. Sein Versuch, im Winter von 1941 auf 1942 das Schicksal zu wenden u. wieder gegen uns vorzugehen, muss u. wird scheitern! Ja, im Gegenteil, im Jahre 1942 werden wir mit allen Vorbereitungen, die getroffen sind, diesen Feind der Menschheit erneut fassen u. solange schlagen, bis die Vernichtungswelle der jüdisch-kapitalistischen u. bolschewistischen Welt gebrochen ist...

**30.1.42:** Die Drohung mit dem Judenmassaker war die letzte „Trumpfkarte,“ die Hitler zu besitzen glaubte. Bereits am 30 Jan 41 hatte er Andeutungen in dieser Richtung gemacht, u. am 30 Jan 42 wiederholte er seine Drohung in massiver Weise: „... das dieser Krieg nicht so ausgehen wird, wie es sich die Juden vorstellen, nahelegend dass die europäisch-arischen Völker ausgerottet werden, sondern dass das Ergebnis dieses Krieges die Vernichtung des Judentums sein wird.“ (1818, f.n. 9)
12.2.42: Nachmittags um 15 Uhr, fand im Mosaiksaal der Reichskanzlei der Staatsakt für Dr. Todt statt.\(^98\) Hitler hielt selbst die Trauerrede u. führte dabei ein solches Theater auf, wie er es seit jener Gedenkrede für Richard Wagner im Jahre 1934 nicht mehr veranstaltet hatte. Er sprach mit traenerstickter Stimme u. war zeitweise vor „Ergriffenheit“ nicht mehr in der Lage weiterzusprechen. Er erklärte: [See text, 1836, ff.]


15.3.42: Erschien Hitler zum Heldengedenktag in Berlin u. hielt um 12 Uhr beim Staatsakt im Lichthof des Zeughauses folgende Rede: (1848-49)

. . . Was immer aber auch die deutschen Armeen in diesen Feldzugeen [i.e., in earlier campaigns] geleistet hatten, es tritt verblassend zurueck gegenueber dem, was das Schicksal unserer Wehrmacht u. den mit uns Verbuendet en im letzten Jahr zu losen u. zu bewaeltigen auferlegt hat.

\(^98\) Note: Reichsminister Todt had perished in a plane crash outside Rastenburg on 8 Feb 42 under suspicious circumstances.
\(^99\) Note: Quote from Goebbels diary.
\(^100\) Note: Hitlers Diener Linge berichtete ueber die Geheimkonferenzen zwischen dem Fuehrer Adolf Hitler u. Himmler, bei denen niemand zugegen sein durfte u. die wohl die Judenvernichtung zum Gegenstand hatten. (1846)
Und heute erste erkennen wir das ganze Ausmass der Vorbereitungen unserer Feinde. Heute sehen wir das Zusammenspiel der juedischen Drahtzieher ueber eine ganze Welt verteilt, das im gemeinsamen Angriff einer Verschweroerung, die Demokratie u. Bolschewismus zu einer Interessengemeinschaft vereinte, ganz Europa vernichten zu koennen hoffte. . .


Hitler as “Feldheer:”

Hitler was far from being a fool in military matters. He had read widely in military literature and he took an eager interest in such technical matters as the design of weapons. His gifts as a politician gave him notable advantages in war as well. He was a master of the psychological side, quick to see the value of surprise, bold in the risks he was prepared to take and receptive of unorthodox ideas. The decisive support he gave to the expansion of Germany’s armored forces, his adoption of Raeder’s proposal for the occupation of Norway, and of Manstein’s for the thrust through the Ardennes, [are] illustrations of these gifts. Nor was Hitler far from the truth when he argued that if he had listened to the High Command he would never have pushed through German rearmament at the pace he wanted, or have dared to take the risks which brought the German Army its sensational triumphs of 1940/41. (665)

His faults as a military leader were equally obvious. He had too little respect for facts, he was obstinate and opinionated. His experience in the First World War, to which he attached undue importance, had been extremely limited. He had never commanded troops in the field or learned how to handle armies as a staff officer. He lacked the training to translate his grandiose conceptions into concrete terms of operations. The interest he took in technical details, instead of compensating for these deficiencies, only made them clearer. He was far too interested in such matters as the precise thickness of the concrete covering a line of fortifications for a man whose job was to think clearly about the overall pattern of the war. Moreover, he allowed himself to become intoxicated w/ figures, w/ the crude numbers of men or of armaments production, which he delighted to repeat from memory w/o any attempt to criticize or analyze them. These were precisely the faults which the professional training of the generals qualified them to correct. . . But this was ruled out by Hitler’s distrust of the generals. (665-66)

To political distrust and social resentment was added Hitler’s inveterate suspicion of the expert, the professional staff officer, who like the professional economist, saw only difficulties. Nothing so infuriated Hitler as the “objectivity” of the trained mind which refused to accept his own instinct for seeing all problems in the simplest possible terms and his insistence on will-power as

101 Note: Did not the “Hoepner incident” also have something to do w/ this?
a universal answer. Hitler was a man who found it difficult to take advice and intolerable to listen to criticism. It required great tact to get him to accept a view which differed from his own, and this was a quality few of the German generals possessed. . . Thus, far from welcoming the very different talents of his military advisors as complementary to his own, he despised them as men hidebound by tradition. . . (666-67)

Reasons for „Barbarossa;”

At the time Hitler gave two reasons for his decision to attack Russia; 1) that Russia was preparing to attack Germany in the summer of 1941; 2) that Britain’s refusal to acknowledge defeat was due to her hopes of Russian and American intervention, and that Britain had actually entered into an alliance w/ Russia against Germany. The way to strike at Britain was thus to destroy her hopes of Russian aid. At most, these arguments reinforced a decision already reached on other grounds. Hitler invaded Russia for the simple but sufficient reason that he had always meant to establish the foundations of his 1000-year Reich by the annexation of territory lying between the Vitsula and the Urals. (651)

Most important of all was the belief, a result partly of [his conviction that the German Armed Forces under his direction were invincible], partly of an underestimate of Russian strength, that the Soviet armies could be defeated in a single campaign. Hitler knew he was taking a risk in invading Russia, but he was convinced that the war in the east would be over in two months, or three at the most. He not only said this, but acted on it, refusing to make any preparations for a winter campaign. (651)

Hitler was not blind to the numerical superiority of the Russians [although he clearly underestimated that superiority!], but he was certain that the political weakness of the Soviet regime, together w/ the technical superiority of the Germans, would give him a quick victory in a campaign he never expected to last much longer than that in which he had overrun France the year before. (652)

Once he had extended his power to the Urals and the Caucasus, Hitler calculated, he would have established his empire upon such solid foundations that Britain – even if she continued the war and even if the USA intervened on her side – would be unable to make any impression on it. Of course, Hitler’s geo-strategic “calculus” would have been dramatically undone by the outcome of the Manhatten Project!

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102 Note: Of course, as Hillgruber pointed out, Britain and America were planning in 1940/41 to wage war against Germany w/o Russia. Neither Anglo-American partner expected Russia to survive a German onslaught. England had hardly pinned its hopes on Russia and, perforce, Hitler’s analysis of her situation was fundamentally wrong.

103 Note: This may have been true at first, but by Aug 41 [confirm month] he had been assured (by OQu Thomas?) that preparations were being taken for a winter campaign. He was clearly stunned when he learned in Dec 41 that this had not been the case.

104 Note: Of course, Hitler’s geo-strategic “calculus” would have been dramatically undone by the outcome of the Manhatten Project!
Wolfsschanze: The “Wolf's Lair” was hidden in the heart of a thick forest, miles from any human habitation. Its buildings resembled Alpine chalets, elaborately fitted with central heating, telephone exchanges, a wireless station, and a cinema, protected by powerful AA batteries and surrounded by a triple ring of guards. Only later did Hitler move, under the threat of air attacks, to the concrete bunker in which he passed the last years of his life, but from the beginning the dim light of the forest produced a feeling of gloom in everyone who went there. (657)

OKW vs. OKH theaters of war: After the invasion of Russia there was no longer a High Command or General Staff in Germany comparable with that over which Hindenburg and Ludendorff had presided in the First World War. Hitler ordered the C-in-C of the Army and his Staff (OKH) to confine themselves to the conduct of the war in the east (excluding Finland). The other fronts were to be left to his own Supreme Command of the Armed Forces (OKW). But the OKW was, in turn, excluded from the eastern front, and in any case lacked the independent authority which the High command of the Army traditionally possessed in Germany. The responsibility for the conduct of operations was thus divided, and the strategic picture of the war as a whole remained the concern of Hitler alone. (665)

Hitler’s direction of “Barbarossa:” Once the attack on Russia had been launched, the war on the eastern front absorbed all Hitler’s thoughts and energies. . . With forces which were numerically inferior to the Russians, throughout the campaign of 1941 Hitler swung between a number of objectives, losing time in switching from one to another, stretching his resources to the limit and fanning out his armies across a 1000-mile front, while always falling short of the decisive blow which would knock Russia out of the war. (655)

Hitler’s “Table Talk:”

From the summer of 1941, date the records of his conversations taken under Bormann’s supervision and subsequently published as his table talk. They give a vivid impression of Hitler’s mood at the peak of his fantastic career, the peer as he saw himself of Napoleon, Bismarck and Frederick the Great. . . On the evening of 17 Oct 41, w/ the Russians (as he believed) already defeated, and Todt and Sauckel to provide an appreciative audience, Hitler let his imagination ride:

This Russian desert, we shall populate it. . . We’ll take away its character of an Asiatic steppe, we’ll Europeanize it. With this object we have undertaken the construction of roads that will lead to the southernmost part of the Crimea and to the Caucasus. These roads will be studded along their whole length w/ German towns and around these towns our colonists will settle. (See text for rest of quote, p 656)

Indeed, the first impression left by reading the Table Talk is of the remarkable extent to which Hitler’s ideas in 1941/42 remained the same as in the 1920s, when he wrote Mein Kampf, or when he talked to Rauschning in the 1930s. . . The most lasting impression left by the 700 pages of the Table Talk is of the vulgarity of Hitler’s mind, cunning and brutal in its sophistries, forceful but devoid of human feeling. . . There is not a hint in the dogmatic expression of his

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105 Note: Yes but – Hitler did indeed shift the mechanized Schwerpunkt from center to north and south and then back again; yet this had always been his plan, as laid out in the basic Barbarossa directive of Dec 40. Hence, I see a fundamental continuity in his direction of the 1941 campaign.

106 Note: For example, by Dr Henry Picker, Hitlers Tischgespräche (Bonn, 1951).
opinion on every conceivable subject – art, religion, women, history, economics, law – that on some he might be less well informed than other people or that a different view might also be possible. . . (672-73)

**Hitler & Winter Clothing:** Throughout **Nov 41** the German armies had been fighting their way nearer to Moscow under steadily worsening weather conditions. . . Confident that the campaign would be finished before the snows, Hitler and his staff had made no provision for winter clothing to be issued to the troops.109

**7.12.41 / Pearl Harbor:**

Taking a leaf out of Hitler’s book, the Japanese kept their own counsel and the news of the attack on Pearl came as a surprise to Hitler. At the time of Matsuoka’s visit to Berlin in the spring of 1941, Hitler had urged the Japanese Foreign Minister to attack Singapore. After the invasion of the Soviet Union, Ribbentrop made persistent attempts through the German ambassador in Tokyo to persuade the Japanese to take the Russians in the rear. The one course, however, which Hitler had never recommended to the Japanese had been to attack the USA: indeed, he had constantly repeated to Matsuoka in the spring that one of the beneficial results of seizing Singapore would be to deter the Americans from entering the war. (661)

It might have been expected therefore that the Fueh er would show some irritation at the independent course adopted by the Tokyo Government in face of his advice. On the contrary, he agreed to give the formal guarantee for which the Japanese asked and appears to have been delighted w/ the news of Pearl Harbor. . . He rapidly decided to follow the Japanese example by declaring war on the USA himself. When Ribbentrop pointed out that the Tripartite Pact only bound Germany to assist Japan in the event of an attack on her by some other Power, and that to declare war on the USA would be to add to the number of Germany’s opponents, Hitler dismissed these as unimportant considerations. . . Hitherto, Hitler had shown considerable patience in face of the growing aid given by the U.S. Government to the British. But he was coming to the conclusion that a virtual state of war already existed w/ the USA and that there was no point in delaying the clash which he regarded as inevitable. (661-62)

**1941/42: Winter Crisis:**

The Russian counteroffensive faced him w/ a crisis, which, if mishandled, might well have turned to disaster. . . If [the German troops] had once begun to retreat it might have turned into a panic flight. Hitler rose to the occasion. By a remarkable display of determination he succeeded in holding the German lines firm. Whatever his responsibility for the desperate situation in which the German Army now found itself . . . in its immediate effects it was his greatest achievement as a war-leader. (664)

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107 **Note:** However, no other themes recur w/ such regularity in Hitler’s conversation as Christianity and the Jews. (672)

108 **Note:** This confidence – on part of Hitler, OKW and OKH – had ended by Aug 41; by then, they were well aware the Russian war would continue into 1942.

109 **Note:** Again, this is something of a myth. Efforts were made to gather clothing and equipment for winter warfare, but by the early fall of 1941, w/ the German logistical system breaking down, it proved impossible to move the items forward to the front. I’ve developed plenty of corroborative material in my other “notebooks.”

110 **Note:** cf. Ribbentrop’s telegram to Ott, 10 Jul 41, and Ott’s reply: “I am trying w/ all means possible to work towards Japan’s entry into the war against Russia as soon as possible.” (661)
Hitler's method of dealing w/ the crisis was simple. In face of the professional advice of his generals and in total disregard of the cost to the troops, he ordered the German armies to stand and fight where they were, categorically refusing all requests to withdraw. This order was enforced in the most ruthless fashion. [Note: Bullock mentions fate of Rundstedt and Hoepner in this context] . . . In certain places it proved literally impossible to carry out Hitler's orders, and he had reluctantly to accept the withdrawal of the German positions after divisions had been decimated by Russian attacks and frostbite. . . The importance of the winter crisis of 1941/42 is not, however, adequately represented by its immediate military results. It marks a decisive stage in the development of Hitler's relations w/ the Army which was to have considerable consequences for the future. (664-65)

As success had followed success, Hitler's conviction that he was what he had long claimed to be – a man marked out by Providence and endowed w/ more than ordinary gifts – was immeasurably strengthened by the experience of the winter months of 1941/42. . . Goebbels was shocked, when he saw Hitler in Mar 42, at the toll which those months had taken on Hitler's health. . . None the less the ordeal had not broken Hitler, and the success of his intervention in checking the Russian counteroffensive exalted his sense of mission and his confidence in his military genius. After the winter of 1941/42, he was less prepared than ever to listen to advice – or even information – which ran contrary to his own wishes. (668-69)

Hitler on Stalin: Hitler's contempt for the “Slav” peoples was unvarying, but his appreciation of Stalin rose sharply in the face of the unexpected Russian power of defense. . . On 9 Aug 42, he described the Russian leader as “half beast, half giant. The people can rot for all he cares. If we had given him another ten years, Europe would have been swept away, as it was at the time of the Huns.” (671; also, Hitler's Table Talk, 8.9.42)

Home Front: No less than the German Army, the home front needed its faith in the Fuehrer's leadership restored, and in the first four [4] months of 1942 Hitler found time to make three [3] big speeches: a) on 30 Jan 42 [anniversary of 30.1.33]; b) in Mar 42 (Heroes Memorial Day); and, c) 26 Apr 42.

26.4.42: It was in this last speech, on 26 Apr 42, w/ the winter now behind him, that Hitler gave the fullest expression of his renewed faith in Germany's eventual triumph. This time he made no attempt to conceal how near the German Army had been to disaster. He deliberately exaggerated the seriousness of the situation on the eastern front in order to throw into more effective contrast his own decision to assume personal responsibility and the news that the crisis had been mastered. “Deputies,” he told the packed and excited meeting of the Reichstag in the Sportspalast, “a world struggle was decided during the winter. . .” Then, picking up the allusion to Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, so often invoked during the winter, he added: “We have mastered a destiny which broke another man 130 years ago.” (674-75)

1942 Campaign Planning: To make good the German losses in manpower, Hitler demanded more of the satellite states. Keitel was sent to Budapest and Bucharest to procure more divisions: the OKW counted on 52 allied divisions for the 1942 campaign, a quarter of the total force available. The bulk of these divisions were to come from Rumania (27) and Hungary (13). But Hitler now began to ask for Italian troops which he had scorned to accept the year before, and in Feb 42 Goering was sent on a visit of several days to Rome.

Wolfsschanze: From the beginning of the Russian campaign on, Hitler led a retired life. His HQ, which also housed the High Command of the Armed Forces, was once again [?] located in the extensive woods beyond Rastenburg in East Prussia. A system of walls, barbed wire, and mines protected the grouping of bunkers and buildings. The prevailing atmosphere was peculiarly gloomy and monotonous. Visitors have described the place as a blending of monastery and concentration camp. The small, unadorned rooms w/ their plain deal furniture formed a striking contrast to the pomp of past years, the spacious halls, the grand perspectives and all the theatrical lavishness of Berlin, Munich, and Berchtesgaden. Sometimes it seemed as if Hitler had retreated back to the cave. Italian Foreign Minister Ciano compared the inhabitants of the headquarters w/ troglodytes, and found the atmosphere depressing: “One does not see a single colorful spot, not a single lively touch. The anterooms are full of people smoking, eating and chatting. Smell of kitchens, uniforms, heavy boots.” (694-95)

During the early months of the war, Hitler took occasional trips to the front, and visited battlefields, headquarters, or military hospitals. But after the first failures he began to shun reality and withdraw into the abstract world of map tables and military conferences. From that time on, his experience of the war was almost exclusively as lines and figures on paper landscapes. He faced the public less and less often; he shrank from the onetime grand appearances. With the defeats he lost the energy needed for striking poses. Once he had dropped his monumental attitudes, the changes in him showed all too plainly [i.e., his changing physical appearance]. . . The isolation into which Hitler retreated after the quarrel w/ the generals increased after Stalingrad . . . In fact, Hitler began more and more palpably to suffer from his self-chosen isolation. In contrast to his youth, he complained, he could “no longer stand being alone.” His life style, already marked by a spartan note during the first years of the war, became plainer and plainer. The meals at the Fuehrer’s table were notorious for their simplicity. (694-95)

Nature of War in Russia:

From the outset these commandos [i.e., Einsatzgruppen] gave the conflict its frightful, totally unexampled character. And for all that the campaign was strategically linked w/ the war as a whole, in its nature and in its morality it signified something else entirely. It was, so to speak, the Third World War. At any rate, it dropped out of the framework of the “normal” European war, the rules of which had hitherto governed the conflict, although in Poland there had been glimmerings of a new and more radical practice. (675-76)

The SS reign of terror in the conquered Polish territories had evoked opposition among the local military commanders. It was Hitler’s experience w/ this reaction on the part of the regular army that now prompted him to introduce his ideologically motivated extermination campaigns in the very zone of active operations. For after so many complications, detours, and reversed fronts, this war in Russia was in every sense his war. He waged it mercilessly, obsessively, and became increasingly neglectful of all other theaters. (676)

Hitler thought [his generals] biased in favor of the traditional standards of their class and therefore did not content himself w/ mere slogans calling for harshness. Rather, his whole effort was bent toward abolishing the distinction of his special commandos; he wanted to fuse these elements into a totality that would make criminals of all by having all participate in waging his
war of annihilation.¹¹¹ [Note: What follows is a brief discussion of the criminal directives – Commissar Order, etc. – issued on eve of Barbarossa.] (676-77)

These elements [i.e., criminal directives] gave the war in the East its unusual dual character: It was undoubtedly an ideological war against Communism, and the offensive was sustained by a crusading mood; but simultaneously, and to a considerably greater degree, it was a colonial war of conquest in the style of the 19th Century, though directed against one of the old European great powers and aimed at wiping it out.¹¹² (677)

When General Koestring, the last military attaché in Moscow, appeared at the Fuehrer’s headquarters at this time [ca. mid-Jul 41] to report, Hitler led him to a military map, gestured at the conquered territories, and declared: “No pig will ever eject me from here.” The relapse into the coarseness of his early years corresponded to the satisfaction Hitler evidently felt in showing what he was capable of. He described the battles in the east to Spanish Ambassador Espinosa as sheer “massacres of human beings.” Sometimes, he said, the enemy had attacked in waves 12-13 rows deep and had simply been cut down, “the people reduced to chopped meat.” (678)

Dec 41: With failure of “Barbarossa” before Moscow at beginning of Dec 41, following by the Red Army’s counter-offensive, Hitler’s eintre plan for the war had foundered. This was his first severe setback after nearly 20 years of unremitting political and military triumphs. His decision to hold the positions outside Moscow at all costs sprang from his consciousness of being at a turning point. . . In fact, by the middle of Nov 41, he seems to have been filled w/ forebodings. He spoke to a small group about the idea of a “negotiated peace” and once again voiced vague hopes that the conservative ruling call of England would see the light. (681-82)

War w/ America:

Recognition that his design for the war as a whole had failed also lurked behind Hitler’s decision, on 11 Dec 41, to declare war on the United States – the war he had dreaded all along. . . In Berlin, Ambassador Oshima requested that the Reich immediately enter the war on his country’s side. And although Hitler had repeatedly pressed his Far Eastern ally to attack the Soviet Union or the British Empire in Southeast Asia and had made it plain how inopportune a war against the United States would be for Germany, he instantly acted on the Japanese request. He did not even blame the Japanese for their insulting secrecy. . . And he brushed aside Ribbentrop’s objection that, according to the letter of the Tripartite Pact, German was by no means obligated to give aid. The spectacular surprise attack w/ which Japan had begun the war had deeply impressed Hitler. . . “My heart swelled when I heard of the first Japanese operations,” he said to Oshima. (682)

¹¹¹ Note: This hints at a key point others have made: “Barbarossa” was also to be – shall we say – a “teachable moment” for the Wehrmacht, beginning (or perhaps continuing?) the process of turning its generals, officials and soldiers into ruthless, ideological warriors.

¹¹² Note: Fest’s analysis is good, as far as it goes. However, it appears to me that, in a historical sense, “Barbarossa” was something more terrible than “merely” a colonial war of conquest. It will take a bit of research to confirm, but I do not believe the European colonialists – in India, Africa, etc. – were of such a pronounced “exterminationist” bent. In other words, while they often behaved brutally, their policies did not aim at the virtual extermination of the lands they colonized. Hence, was “Barbarossa” a unique event (sui generis) in modern European history? Certainly, it was unique in modern Europe itself in terms of Hitler’s exterminist objectives.
There were some advantages in beginning the war with the United States immediately. The German naval forces were now free to conduct the war at sea w/o restriction, whereas they had previously had to put up w/ all provocations by the American side. Moreover, the Japanese strikes came at the right moment to veil the crisis in Russia. And, finally, defiance also played a part in Hitler’s decision, bitterness at the way the war had gone off the rails, so that in mockery of all his plans he had not been able to win it in a series of lightning blows. (682-83)

The decision to go to war against the United States was even less free, even more coerced, than the decision to attack the Soviet Union. In fact, it was really no longer an act of his own volition but a gesture governed by a sudden awareness of his own impotence. That gesture was Hitler’s last strategic initiative of any importance. (683)

Hitler takes over as C-in-C of Army: GFM v. Brauchitsch was allowed to resign in disfavor. In keeping w/ the prime solution he had found for all previous crises in the leadership, Hitler himself assumed the roll of C-in-C of the Army. It was only one more proof of the totally chaotic organization on all planes that he thus became his own subordinate twice over. For in 1934, after Hindenburg’s death, he had assumed the (predominantly ceremonial) office of Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. And, in 1938, after Blomberg’s resignation, he had taken over the (actual) High Command of the Armed Forces. (685)

11.2.11: **Adolf Hitler.** John Toland. 1976.

Delay in Russian Campaign: Although Hitler blamed the delay of “Barbarossa” on the Yugoslav campaign, the general shortage of equipment for the Wehrmacht – his responsibility – could have been a more determining factor. (655)

**Crux:** Hitler’s only chance for victory in the East was an alliance w/ those millions in the Soviet Union who hated Stalin but, unless he followed the advice of the Rosenberg camp to treat them liberally, he would not only lose his last chance for a genuine Grand Alliance but turn potential allies into relentless enemies. (658)

30.3.41: Hitler summoned his field commanders to the chancellery to announce a definite date of attack and, more important, to deliver a doctrinal lecture on the coming “struggle of two opposing ideologies.” By 11.00 a.m., the senior commanders for Barbarossa, along w/ their leading staff officers, were gathered in the small cabinet chamber where a speaker’s lectern had been set up. More than 200 were seated in long rows according to rank and seniority by the time Hitler entered from the rear. With a shuffling of chairs the assemblage smartly rose, then sat down once Hitler stepped to the rostrum. His mood was grave as he spoke of the military and political situation. The United States could not reach the peak of production and military power for four [4] years. Consequently, this was the time to clean up Europe. War w/ Russia was inevitable, he said, and merely to sit back and wait would be disastrous. The attack would begin on 22 Jun 41. (655)

Hitler said that he, and he alone, could stop the Bolshevik steamroller before all Europe succumbed to it. He called for the destruction of the Bolshevik state and the annihilation of the Red Army, adding an assurance that victory would be quick and overwhelming. The only problem, he added ominously, was how to deal w/ the conquered Russians, how to treat POWs

113 Note: This is a perceptive remark.

114 Note: This is an interesting comment, which I can’t recall seeing before.
and non-combatants. . . The military sat stiff in their chairs. . . As military professionals most of them had been repelled by Hitler’s ruthless measures, after the conquest of Poland, against Polish Jews, intelligentsia, clergy and nobility. Their fears were quickened by Hitler’s next loud threat: “The war against Russia will be such that it cannot be fought in a knightly fashion! This struggle is one of ideologies and racial differences and will have to be conducted w/ unprecedented, merciless and unrelenting harshness.”

There was no utterance of protest, any more than there had been in Poland, not even an involuntary gesture of protest. That morning, Hitler had put his military leaders to the final humiliating test w/ his demand that they compromise their honor as warriors. Now they, like so many in Germany who shared his fear and hatred of Jews and Slavs, were reluctant partners in his crusade. (655-56)

Although Hitler’s military leaders had first been appalled by the thought of invading Russia, they now [Spring, 1941, I assume] almost universally shared the conviction that victory would come quickly. The consensus was that the campaign would be successfully completed w/in three [3] months and GFM von Brauchitsch had just drastically reduced this estimate. After “up to four [4] weeks” of major battle, he predicted, the war would degenerate into a mopping-up operation against “minor resistance.” The hard-headed Jodl concurred and curtly silenced Warlimont who questioned the categorical statement that “the Russian colossus will be proved to be a pig’s bladder; prick it and it will burst.” (658-59)

The Fuhrer, according to General Guderian, “had succeeded in infecting his immediate military entourage w/ his own baseless optimism. . .” (659)115

Hitler vs. Rosenberg:116 Repressive decrees issued by Hitler, German High Command, on eve of “Barbarossa” troubled Alfred Rosenberg, who had recently been appointed Commissioner for the Central Control of Questions Connected w/ the East European Region. A Balt himself, he believed the Soviet people should be treated as anti-Stalinists rather than as enemies of the Reich. He assured Hitler that they would welcome the Germans as liberators from the Bolshevik-Stalinist tyranny and could be trusted w/ a certain amount of self-rule. . . Convinced that a heavy-handed policy in the East would destroy the spirit of Lebensraum, Rosenberg submitted a memorandum to Hitler objecting to the two directives. How could one possibly build a civil administration in the occupied areas w/o using the Soviet civil commissars and officials now administering them? He recommended that “only senior and very senior officials” should be “liquidated.” Hitler gave no definite answer. Characteristically, he was content to take now active part in the power struggle between Himmler and Rosenberg that would surely begin once the Wehrmacht advanced into the Soviet Union. Bormann, the rising star in the NS-hierarchy, would be a decisive factor in this contest. He had already joined forces w/ Himmler. (666-67)

22.5.41: Final preparations for “Barbarossa” continued. Admiral Raeder informed Hitler on 22 May 41 that he would cease delivering important materials to Russia. Comparatively few shipments had, in fact, been sent to the Soviet Union, while many had come from the East. In addition to almost 1,500,000 tons of grain, the Soviets had delivered [by late May 41?] 100,000

115 Note: This quote gleaned from Guderian’s memoirs (p 125). However, the quote clearly involves historical “revisionism” on G.’s part: Yes, he was quite skeptical of “Barbarossa,” at first; yet by eve of campaign he had become quite confident of victory.

116 Note: See also, entry below for 16 Jul 41.
tons of cotton, 2,000,000 tons of petroleum products, 1,500,000 tons of timber, 140,000 tons of manganese and 25,000 tons of chromium. (667)

**6.6.41:** Hitler legalized his threat to wage ruthless ideological warfare by instructing GFM v. Brauchitsch to issue a directive to liquidate captured Soviet commissars as bearers of an ideology diametrically opposed to NS. His C-in-C objected violently until Hitler curtly said, “I cannot demand that my generals should understand my orders, but I do demand that they follow them.” . . . This ideologically motivated order was to be executed by the Wehrmacht together w/ Himmler’s Einsatzgruppen and its issuance by OKW was more than another victory for Hitler over the military. It bound them to his political program and made them unwilling accomplices, along w/ the SS, in his grand plan for the future. (668)

**14.6.41:** In Berlin selected combat officers arrived at the chancellery for a special briefing and luncheon. By now each one had digested his own orders and become reconciled (if grudgingly) to the inhumane methods Hitler had imposed on the enemy. At 2:00 p.m. there was a break for lunch and this, unlike so many other meals at the chancellery, was mellow and relaxed. Nor was the atmosphere of camaraderie dispelled when Hitler ascended to the podium and began a persuasive lecture on the need to launch Barbarossa. The collapse of Russia, he said, would lead to England’s surrender. (669)

**17.6.41:** A final signal went out on this day, confirming 3:00 a.m., Sunday, 22 Jun 41, as zero hour. As zero hour approached, Hitler appeared calm and confident. . . (669)

**21.6.41:** All along the tortuous 930-mile front, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, 3 million men waited. With fear and expectation they huddled in their positions. It was the shortest night of the year, the summer solstice, but it seemed endless to those waiting in the pale light for the command to attack. Just before midnight, the Moscow-Berlin express rumbled over the frontier bridge into German territory. It was followed by a long freight train filled w/ grain, the last delivery Stalin would make to his ally, Adolf Hitler. In Berlin that evening there was an air of expectation. . . Hitler was the personification of confidence. “In three months at the latest,” he told one adjutant [i.e., Puttkamer], “there will be a collapse on the part of the Russians such as the world has never before seen.” But this was only a sham. He could not close his eyes that night any more than he could on the eve of the invasion in the West. (671)

**22.6.41:** Correspondents all over Berlin were being awakened for a 6.00 a.m. press conference at the Foreign Office. Several heard the news [of German attack on Russia] en route to the Wilhelmstrasse from outdoor loudspeakers as a message from the Fuehrer was broadcast: “People of Germany! National Socialists! The hour has come. Oppressed by grave cares, doomed to months of silence, I can at last speak frankly.” He told of the machinations of Russia and England to crush the Axis w/ the aid of American supplies. “I therefore decided today to lay the fate and future of the German Reich in the hands of our soldiers. May God help us above all in this fight!” (672)

By early morning of 22 Jun 41 single-sheet extra editions of Berlin newspapers were on the streets. Although confused by the abrupt attack on an ally, the public felt a sense of relief since few had been able to understand why a treaty had been made w/ the Reds in the first place. Hitler set Goebbels the task of explanation and that morning the propaganda chief began laying down the guidelines to his subordinates. . . The Fuehrer, Goebbels added, had assured him the Russian campaign would end w/in four [4] months. “But I tell you it will take only eight [8] weeks,” said Goebbels. (673)
23.6.41: Within 24 hours, German public interest began to slacken. After the first rush of newspapers, which contained only general reports from the front, the citizens returned to their normal life as if it were only another of Hitler’s exploits. At 12.30 p.m. on 23 Jun 41 he and his entourage left the capital in the Fuehrer train: destination “Wolfsschanze.” (675)

3.7.41: Halder writes in his diary – famous quotation – that it was “no exaggeration” to say the campaign had been won in 14 days.” The Fuehrer told his entourage that “to all intents and purposes the Russians have lost the war.” [date?] Many Western military experts shared this estimate and the talk in the Pentagon was that the Red Army would fold up in a month or so. (675)

Einsatzgruppen: Following in the wake of the advancing troops were four [4] SS Einsatzgruppen of 3000 men each. To supervise the mass killing, Heydrich and Himmler had been inspired to select officers who, for the most part, were professional men. They included a Protestant pastor, a physician, a professional opera singer and numerous lawyers. The majority were intellectuals in their early 30s and it might be supposed such men were unsuited for this work. On the contrary, they brought to the brutal task their considerable skills and training and became, despite qualms, efficient executioners. Heydrich’s most awkward problem was coping with the psychological effects of the exterminators. Some enlisted men had nervous breakdowns or took to drinking, and a number of the officers suffered from serious stomach and intestinal ailments. Others took to their task with enthusiasm. (675-76)  

16.7.41: Rumors of these atrocities distressed Rosenberg, ordered by Hitler to draw up a blueprint for occupation of the conquered Eastern territories. He had envisaged a far different program with a degree of self-rule. Since the Fuehrer had earlier agreed to establish “weak socialist states” in the conquered lands of Russia, Rosenberg optimistically assumed that Hitler approved his own plan in principle and that it would be accepted at a special conference on the subject to be held at the Wolfsschanze on 16 Jul 41. [See text for details of conference, where Hitler states: “In principle we must now face the task of cutting up the giant cake according to our needs in order to be able: first, to dominate it; second, to administer it; third, to exploit it. The Russians have now given an order for partisan warfare behind our front. This guerilla activity again has some advantage for us; it enables us to exterminate everyone who opposes us.” Although Rosenberg left the meeting with the title of Reich Minister of the East, it was a hollow one, for he realized his own dream of the East now had little chance to materialize. What a tragedy, he thought, that Hitler still maintained the false conception of the Slavs, born during his youthful days in Vienna out of inflammatory pamphlets which described the Slavs as lazy primitives, a hopeless second class race. (677)

Jul-Aug 41 / Hitler sick: During the early summer days of 1941, Hitler became sick. To begin with there were the recurrent stomach pains which may have been of hysterical (?) nature. His system was already undermined by an overdose of drugs – 120-150 anti-gas pills a week as well as 10 injections of Ultraseptyl, a strong sulfonamide. Then he was struck down by dysentery – a common malady in the swampy surroundings of the Wolfsschanze. A victim of diarrhea, nausea and aching limbs, he would shiver one moment, sweat the next.

A more serious threat to his health came to light during a hot argument with Ribbentrop late in Jul 41. The Foreign Minister, opposed to Barbarossa from the beginning, lost his temper and

117 Note: This is incorrect – all four of the Einsatzgruppen had collectively some 3000 personnel.
118 Note: Why would the officers have suffered from distinctly different ailments as the enlisted personnel? I’m skeptical.
began to shout his disapproval. Hitler paled at the extraordinary attack. He tried to defend himself but halted in mid-sentence, clutched his heart and sank into a chair. There was a frightening moment of silence. “I thought I was going to have a heart attack,” Hitler finally said. “You must never again oppose me in this manner!”  

Dr. Morell was so perturbed he sent an electrocardiogram of the Fuehrer’s heart to Professor Dr. Karl Weber, director of the Heart Institute at Bad Neuheim and a leading authority on heart disease. He had no idea that the patient was Hitler, only that he was “a very busy diplomat.” His diagnosis: rapidly progressive coronary sclerosis, a virtually incurable heart disease. Morell probably did not pass this information on to Hitler . . . Morell did add a number of other medicines to his patient’s growing list of prescriptions. [See text for details.]

Hitler’s illness came at the height of a bitter conflict with his commanders on the conduct of the campaign in the East. . . By mid-Aug 41, however, Hitler was on the road to recovery. (678-79)

5.9.41: At the “Wolfsschanze” Hitler changed his mind and decided it was now time to launch the attack on Moscow. . . On the afternoon of 5 Sep 41, he told Halder, “Get started on the central front w/in eight to ten days.” (680)

Hitler’s table talk: Hitler’s comments at dinner on 5 Sep 41 were noted down by Werner Koeppen, Rosenberg’s liaison man at FHQu. Since early Jul 41, at Rosenberg’s behest, he had been circumspectly recording the Fuehrer’s table conversations. Koeppen assumed Hitler knew what he was doing and would furtively jot down notes on his paper napkin, then immediately after the meal write out only those parts of the conversation he could distinctly remember. An original and one copy of his records were forwarded to Berlin by courier. (682)

Unbeknown to Koeppen, there was a second Boswell at the main table. Shortly after their arrival at “Wolfsschanze,” Bormann had suggested almost offhandedly to Heinrich Heim, his adjutant, that he surreptitiously note down what the Chief said. So Hitler wouldn’t know he was being put on record, Bormann instructed his adjutant to rely on his own memory. But Heim wanted more accurate results and on his own initiative he began making copious notes on index cards which he hid on his lap. Bormann was taken aback but he gave Heim tacit approval to continue taking notes. . .

Some of these notes were later published in various editions in England, France and Germany, the last under the title Hitlers Tischgespräche, by Henry Picker, who deputized for Heim as court reporter from Mar thru Jul 42. . . Only about 1/6 of his original notes appear in the Picker edition. Heim is positive Hitler never knew his table talk was being recorded. After the war he was assured of this by Hitler’s personal adjutant, Schaub. . . Heim personally omitted all military matters for security; Koeppen did not. Their two accounts complement each other. The latter’s notes, moreover, are valuable as corroboration of Heim’s far more detailed and personalized minutes. (682)

17.9.41: The records of Heim and Koeppen gave rare insight into the momentous events unfolding each day on the eastern front. On 17 Sep 41, for instance, Hitler expounded on the spirit of decision, which consisted, he said, “in not hesitating when an inner conviction

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119 Note: A histrionic bit of “play acting” on Hitler’s part?
120 Note: “Changed his mind?” From beginning, Hitler’s “vision” for the eastern campaign had called for resolving the issues on the flanks first – Leningrad, Ukraine, Donbass, etc.
commands you to act. Last year I needed great spiritual strength to take the decision to attack Bolshevism. I had to foresee that Stalin might pass over to the attack in 1941. It was therefore necessary to get started w/o delay, in order not to be forestalled – and that wasn’t possible before June. . .” . . . He assured his fascinated listeners that the hegemony of the world would be decided by the seizure of Russian space. “Thus Europe will be an impregnable fortress, safe from all threats of blockade. . . He talked at length of his plans to make the Ukraine the granary for all Europe and to keep its conquered people happy w/ scarves and glass beads [!] . . . (682-83)

21.9.41: At dinner on this day, Hitler glowed w/ satisfaction as he told of the capture of 145,000 POWs in the valley near Kiev. This battle of encirclement, he claimed, was the most confused in the entire history of warfare. (683)

Note: In this section of Toland’s book there are several errors of fact. For one, the figure of 145,000 Soviet prisoners at Kiev. Author also states that GFM v. Bock was now warning that it was too late in the season to move on Moscow. Why not spend the winter in fortified positions? Could Bock, a consistent and avid supporter of taking Moscow, really have made such a statement at this time? Finally, author states that Army Group Center had assembled 69 divisions for Operation “Typhoon.” Actual figure is 78. (684-85)

9.10.41: As Hitler emerged from the military conference on 9 Oct 41 he called out to Otto Dietrich that the public could now be informed of the latest operations. Half an hour later, as he paced his study in the bunker w/ vigorous strides, Hitler dictated word for word the victory statement Dietrich was to submit to the press. Dietrich did so the next day in Berlin. . . Hitler’s declaration that the Soviets were defeated and total victory assured was not merely propaganda to raise morale at home. He believed what he said. (685-86)

10.10.41: That morning German newspapers told of a great victory: two Soviet army groups had been encircled. The public reaction was electric. Faces previously wan and drawn were now beaming. In beer-restaurants, people stood and saluted when the radio played “Horst Wessel” and “Deutschland ueber Alles.” Rumors spread throughout the capital that Moscow had fallen. (685)

15.-17.10.41: Panic in Moscow. . . At the Kremlin, Stalin reputedly had lost his nerve. . . In Berlin there was talk in the halls of the Wilhelmstrasse that Stalin had made an offer of peace thru King Boris of Bulgaria. . . At supper on 17 Sep 41, Hitler’s talk was mostly of the bright future. As far as he was concerned Lebensraum was a fact. (686-87)

c. 31.10.41: By the end of the month the situation [for the Germans outside Moscow] was so desperate that Giesler, the architect, was ordered to stop work on the reconstruction of German cities. All workers, engineers, building materials and machinery were to be transported at once to the East to construct highways, repair railroad tracks and construct stations and locomotive sheds. (687)

7.12.41 / Pearl Harbor: For Toland’s account of Hitler’s electrified response to Japanese attack see, p 694. For example, w/ Hewel, the Fuehrer could barely conceal the elation in his voice. “We cannot lose the war!” he exclaimed. “Now we have a partner who has not been defeated in three thousand years.”

121 Note: Of course, the total number of prisoners taken was more like 650,000.
11.12.41: For Hitler’s declaration of war on USA see, pp 695-96. According to Toland, Hitler’s decision to declare war was not taken lightly, nor was its motivation simple. His Foreign Office regarded the decision as a colossal mistake. In addition to the obvious reasons it neatly solved another of Roosevelt’s domestic problems. The President would not have to declare war on Germany and risk opposition from a substantial segment of the citizenry. American national unity, so unexpectedly won by the surprise attack at Pearl Harbor, would remain intact.

Winter 41/42: Sometime early in 1942, Hewel told a friend: “He [Hitler] is not the man he was. He has grown gloomy and obdurate. He will shrink from no sacrifice and show no mercy or forgiveness. You would not recognize him if you saw him.” His morale received another crushing blow on 8 Feb 42, when Fritz Todt, builder of the Westwall and the Autobahn system, died in a plane crash. (707)

Final Solution: In the meantime the preparations for the Final Solution were maturing and Himmler’s Einsatzgruppen had begun another deadly sweep. The death toll was massive and Rosenberg’s staff begged him once more to urge Hitler to treat the peoples of the occupied areas as allies, not enemies. But Rosenberg lacked the strength of character and still trembled at the thought of antagonizing the Fuehrer. By spring, six [4] killing centers had been set up in Poland. There were four [4] in Frank’s Generalgouvernement: Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec and Lublin; two [2] in the incorporated territories: Kulmhof and Auschwitz. (708-09)


Chapter 7: Barbarossa – The Irretrievable Blunder

On 21 Jun 41, an article by Arthur Bryant appeared in the Illustrated London News. It analysed the strategic disadvantage under which Germany labored in spite of all her conquests, all her strength and all her freedom of choice. Hitler had to maintain the offensive; he could not sit back and wait to be attacked; he must himself attack and since he had already overrun so much of Europe, wherever he now advanced would take him further and further from his homeland bases. To break out of Europe meant either warring mastery of the seas from the British – and this particular battle was already raging in the Atlantic – or thrusting through Russia into Asia and Africa. It seemed to Bryant that Russia was the “easier” road “but such desperate steps cannot be taken w/o evoking human and racial imponderables which may well benefit us far more than the enemy. Hitler knows this, and his hour of decision is at hand. It is his fate to strike, and ours to resist and strike back.”

Thus w/ the initiative so securely in his hands (and this was the last time that it was, for thereafter Hitler responded more and more to Allied moves) it was peculiarly, supremely important that he used the initiative decisively. (133)

Author quotes from Alan Clark’s study of the Russo-German war. Clark said: “What an appalling moment in time this is... the head-on crash of the two greatest armies, the two most absolute systems, in the world. No battle in history compares w/ it... In terms of numbers of men, weight of ammunition, length of front, the desperate crescendo of the fighting, there will never be another day like the 22nd of June 1941.” (136)

122 Note: So this gentleman (journalist?) was also aware of the strategic dilemma facing Hitler at this time.
Halder recalled early on in the campaign [in Russia] that it was quite unlike “manoeuvres w/ live ammunition” which they had enjoyed in the West a year before. The Russian’s determination and heroism was something the Germans had not encountered before. Alan Clark’s great survey contains many such stories. One of them is of a wounded Russian tank crew, thought by the Germans to be dead w/in their knocked-out tank, who somehow, w/ no hope of ultimate rescue or survival, managed to live long enough to call down artillery fire on the not-distant German positions for days on end... [See text for this amazing anecdote, 142-43]

Crux: Author notes the “ruinous condition” which was constantly to recur and more than any other robbed Hitler of decision in Russia – no absolutely fixed and immutable purpose to which all other considerations were subordinated. This is not to argue for inflexibility of mind and method. But it is to say that between Jun – Dec 41 in the Supreme Cdr’s handling of his struggle for Russia, singleness of aim – a necessary end, and beginning, for concentration of forces – was absent w/o leave. The struggle became a gigantic encounter battle which, for all the vast distances covered, for all the unthinkable destruction or capture of Russian men and material, was marred by fatal compromises. (134)

Hitler’s supreme tactical error:

15.10.41: By this date, the spearheads of Army Group Centre were at Mozhaisk, a mere 65 miles from Moscow. It was then that the supreme tactical error was made. At this point, in spite of the time the Russians had been given, in spite of the deteriorating weather, victory, if by victory we mean what the German General Staff meant – destruction of the Russian armies disputing the road to Moscow and the capture of the capital itself – was probably still in Hitler’s grasp. But failing once again to observe those prime principles of war – singleness of aim, concentration of forces – failing to select the decisive objective and go for it w/ all the terrifying weight of fire-power that was available (and this time, unlike the Kiev/Moscow controversy, there could be no real doubt as to which this objective was), Hitler chose to go for three, absurd in their dispersion and sheer unattainability: Leningrad, Moscow, the Black Sea coast, Rostov and the Caucasus. (140-41)

October rains and new Russian armies had clearly made the defenses [before Moscow] more formidable. Winter was coming on. Hitler’s interference in the detailed conduct of operations, formerly infrequent, had become a daily affair. Yet despite these drawbacks, it is hard to believe that, if every ounce of effort had been concentrated from mid-Oct 41 onwards to von Bock’s drive on Moscow, w/ von Leeb’s and von Rundstedt’s forces relegated to holding operations, and the entire weight of the Panzer Groups welded into one Schwerpunkt, Moscow could not have been taken. Even w/o the crazy dispersion Hitler insisted on, the city’s suburbs were reached. Had the effort been trebled [how so?], Moscow must have fallen, and “the greatest battle in world history” have gained, if not absolute decision, a victory so great that the future shape of the war must have been altered. Instead, Hitler preferred to pursue many objectives simultaneously, to

123 Note: Actually, there was indeed such a “fixed and immutable purpose,” but it did not pertain to the operational objectives of the military campaign – rather, the one objective pursued from the beginning w/ great concentration of mind was ideological & racial: the enslavement and extermination of the putative enemies of the Reich by the millions.
124 Note: Today, we would say this was the supreme “operational” error, not “tactical,” for it involved movement of corps, armies, etc.
125 Note: This is essentially the point made by Heinz Magenheimer in his new book on the Battle of Moscow, published in 2009.
reject out of hand the advice of his professional soldiers . . . and to fritter away his resources chasing chimerical victories. (141)

**Dec 41:** None of the basic aims which Hitler had laid down were achieved. Moscow had not been captured, nor Leningrad, nor the Caucasian oilfields, nor the Archangel railway; above all, the Russian [field] armies as a whole had not been destroyed nor prevented from withdrawing. The very **diversity of these aims** was the cause, and **diversity itself** was well nigh inevitable because of the sheer **width of front.** (138)

**6.12.41:** Author notes that Zhukov launched his counter-attack in the central sector w/ **17 armies,** about **100 divisions.** (139)

What had Hitler’s part in it [i.e., the failure of “Barbarossa”] been? The **first point** is that his **interference in this campaign** . . . was **more radical and more continuous** than in any that had gone before. Before long it was to become **absolute.** During the first weeks of spectacular success there was no cause for major disagreement between Hitler and his generals. But when it came to deciding what to do after the great **Smolensk battle,** the scene changes. [Author now discusses the Moscow vs. Leningrad/Ukraine conflict] (139 ff.)

In the event the controversy as to which objectives were to be pursued was, not surprisingly, decided by Hitler. The **Ukraine and Leningrad** gave way to the **Ukraine alone.** Although the results were dazzling, **Halder** called the move into the Ukraine the **greatest strategic error of the campaign.** (140)

**Hitler in winter 41/42:** Author notes that, w/ the Ostheer facing a panicked route, Hitler “did not despair; he showed once again that will-power is all. It is hard to better Alan Bullock’s succinct estimate of his remedy. ‘Hitler,’ he writes, ‘rose to the occasion. By a remarkable display of determination he succeeded in holding the German lines firm.’” [Note: See, 11.2.9 in this notebook for rest of Bullock’s assessment.] (144'45)

**19.12.41:** Hitler assumes command of the German Army. “This **fatal step** meant that Hitler now had **formalized his supreme control of all military operations.**” One the one hand, as C-in-C of the Army w/ the staff of OKH he directly conducted the war in Russia; on the other hand, as C-in-C of the Armed Forces w/ the staff of OKW he ran operations on all other fronts. “This division of responsibility between the staffs meant that Hitler alone retained **strategic grasp of the war as a whole.”** By assuming command of the Army, Hitler transferred himself formally from the realms of strategy to those of day-to-day operations, not that he had been slow in usurping this particular office on many pervious occasions. (145-46)

Opinion as to his [Hitler’s] initial command of the Army varies. **Halder,** writing 8 years afterwards, **condemns it absolutely.**126 (146)

Halder also – **post facto** – condemned Hitler’s “stand fast” order in **Dec 41,**127 saying it resulted in losses of men and materiel that could have been avoided. **Blumentritt,** who was GFM v. Kluge’s Chief of Staff in the battle, thought otherwise. He regarded Hitler’s order to **stand fast and hold** every position irrespective of circumstances as “undoubtedly correct.” As there were no prepared positions to withdraw to, no proper line to re-establish, a withdrawal across open country, for roads and tracks were snow-blocked, would, be believes, have led to just the sort of **dissolution of**

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126 **Note:** More dishonesty on Halder’s part! His thinking was quite different in Dec 41!

127 **Note:** More “revisionism” on Halder’s part.
the Army and total cracking of the front which the Grand Army suffered. One of the corps commanders, von Tippelskirch, supports Blumentritt and thought of it as Hitler’s one great achievement. Alan Clark’s judgment is similar: “As for Hitler, it was his finest hour. He had done more than save the German Army; he had achieved a complete personal ascendancy over its ruling class.” 146-47)

Yet this very ascendancy was greatly to contribute to his undoing. . . His own ability to reduce all problems to simple terms, his own iron will-power . . . were no substitutes for careful analyses of relative strengths by which capabilities could be assessed, of enemy intentions, of logistic considerations, of the effect time and space invariably wielded over the deployment and capacity of armies, above all of selecting objectives that were at once attainable and decisive, and then concentrating all efforts to attain them. (147)

Incapable of seeing any point of view which ran contrary to his own, with ever mounting confidence in his own military genius, his own infallibility, the consequence of his success in holding firm the German Army’s line in the winter of 1941/42 was twofold: a) it convinced him that the failure of 1941 had been that of the General Staff, not his own in setting the Wehrmacht a task beyond its means; and, b) it convinced him of the feasibility of a new offensive in 1942 which under his own direction would be the knock-out blow to end the war in the east. (147-48)

War w/ USA: Strawson writes: “If attacking Russia was an irretrievable blunder, declaring war on the United States must run it a close second.”128 (148)

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128 Note: Strawson does not put forth any compelling evidence for this statement.