

Tank War
1939–1945

by
Janusz Piekalkiewicz

Translated from the German by Jan van Heurck

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Translator's Note

This book contains extensive quotations from documents originally written in a variety of different languages. The English translation is in many (not all) cases based on Janusz Piekalkiewicz's German translation of these documents rather than on the originals. The English version also contains some retranslations into English of passages originally written in English whose originals were not traceable. Where possible, the attempt was made to trace the originals of English-language quotations. Thus, all quotations from correspondence between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin are authentic as quoted in Churchill's own history of *The Second World War* in 6 volumes (London, 1948–50). *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt & Truman 1941–45* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958); and the 1984 Princeton University Press edition of the complete correspondence of Roosevelt and Churchill. Churchill's address before the House of Commons and radio speeches are quoted from the official House of Commons records and from standard compilations of his speeches.

It proved impossible to trace the originals of some English-language passages such as first-hand accounts by individual soldiers. These have been retranslated into English from German.

Other quoted material includes brief passages from the standard English translation of General Guderian's memoirs, *Panzer Leader* (London, Michael Joseph, 1952).

The sources of all quoted material are listed in the body of the text, accompanying the quotations.

Jan van Heurck

Prologue

A cold wind drove along the snowflakes and dark clouds covered the sky outside Hradcany Castle in Prague, the residence of Dr. Emil Hacha, the president of the Czechoslovakian republic, as armored reconnaissance cars of the German 4th Infantry Division rolled up to the gates. It was 8:45 A.M. on 15 March 1939. By noon General von Schwedler, the commander of IV Corps based in Dresden, and his energetic chief of staff General Model, had arrived at the same spot despite the ice-covered roads. At 4:00 P.M. Hitler, accompanied by an SS squad, arrived at Hradcany Castle in his heavy Mercedes, having driven there from Dresden.

The occupation of Czechoslovakia not only gave Hitler strategic advantages in his planned attack on Poland, but also brought crucial reinforcements to the German panzer arm, which now acquired several hundred sturdy and well-armed Czech tanks highly respected by military experts. Previously the German panzer divisions had been rather weakly armed, mainly with two types of light tank known as Panzer I and II (short for Panzerkampfwagen I and II, often designated PzKpfw I and II).

The tank was first deployed in World War I, and its aim was to eliminate once and for all the type of paralysis that developed in trench warfare. A tank could face fire from machine guns and cannon and yet keep moving, mowing down the barbed wire barricades of the no-man's-land and rolling over trenches. Strategists valued its mobile capability more than its fire-power.

In World War I, Germany did not manage to build a successful tank prototype, and after the war the Treaty of Versailles banned the defeated nation from developing tanks. The victorious powers permitted Germany an army of only 100,000 men without aircraft, tanks or heavy artillery, and a 15,000-man navy. The army and navy together made up the Reichswehr ("German Defensive Armed Forces"), whose duty was to maintain internal order and secure the nation's borders. The Reichswehr was authorized to furnish 105 armored personnel transport vehicles under the condition that they were never to be converted into fighting vehicles.

A group of younger officers with an enthusiasm for tanks now began to form within the Reichswehr's motor vehicle troop; among them were Guderian, Kempf, Lutz and Nehring. The strict international controls on Germany's military forces left them no way to keep abreast of modern developments but to study foreign military publications and the service regulations of foreign armies. They tried to evolve a theory of management of motorized units in line with changing military conditions. At first they relied heavily on the French model of an "armored infantry" in which armored forces were only an infantry adjunct, but then they rejected this initial scheme. While strategists elsewhere were still hypnotized by the concept of trench warfare, the Reichswehr experimented with mobile operations, which had a strong advocate in General Hans von Seeckt, the army chief of staff.

In 1921, exercises were held in the Harz Mountains to test the problems of motorized deployment. Some companies in the seven motorized divisions were formed into tank troops, originally called "motorized combat troops" (*Kraftfahrkampftruppen*) and later "mobile troops" (*schnelle Truppen*).

The Treaty of Rapallo between Germany and the Soviet Union, signed on 16 April 1922, provided for extensive military cooperation between the two nations especially in projects involving modern weapons technology such as tanks, aircraft and chemical warfare agents.

In the winter of 1923/24, German Lt. Col.



Left: Winter 1929/30 near Potsdam: German Reichswehr maneuvers using 3/15-PS-Dixi mock tanks

Opposite page: First page of an autumn 1929 article by Adolf Hitler expressing his thoughts on the German armored service

Walther von Brauchitsch directed a maneuver to investigate the possibilities of cooperation between motorized troops and aircraft; important data on organization and tactics were obtained.

In 1925, under conditions of the strictest secrecy, the Reichswehr leaders commissioned development of 3 light and two medium tank prototypes. The light models—designated "light tractors" to camouflage their military nature—weighed about 9.5 tons. One medium tank, euphemistically called "Heavy Tractor I," had a 7.5-cm cannon and several machine guns. The German machine manufacturing firm Rheinmetall-Borsig built the heavier 21-ton "Heavy Tractor 2" which had a 10.5-cm cannon and travelled at almost 11 mph.

In 1926 the Reichswehr, in a military cooperation program with the USSR, set up a secret aviation and armored vehicle training school at "Kama"—the codename for the Lipetsk spa on the Kama river near Kazan about 500 miles east of Moscow. German air and tank officers—among them future panzer general Heinz Guderian—were trained there until 1933. The Soviets supplied not only the exercise grounds but also training tanks. The various types of tank secretly developed by the Reichswehr in collaboration with German industry, were also tested at Kama. At the same time hundreds of Soviet staff officers, among them Gyorgy Konstantinovich Zhukov, received special training at Reichswehr training academies in Germany.

Germany's collaboration with the Soviet Army also resulted in development of tank tactics which later proved valuable to both sides in World War II. As early as 1927, German army staff chief General von Seeckt stated confidently that "armored combat vehicles are growing into an independent service ranking with the infantry, cavalry and artillery." German military theorists viewed tanks as a promising offensive weapon that could decide a war's outcome quickly.

In 1928, Colonel Oswald Lutz became chief of staff of the Inspectorate of Motorized Transport Troops (known as "In 6"). Colonels Lutz and von Reichenau, and Majors Heinz Guderian and Wilhelm Ritter von Thoma, drew much of their knowledge of modern mobile warfare from abroad, especially Great Britain. The crucial difference between the German theory of armored deployment, and that of Britain and France, was that the Germans wanted in a future war to avoid static trench warfare, i.e. wars of attrition in which material superiority was decisive, and saw the tank as the means to this end.

In summer 1929, Guderian conducted a war game based on use of what would later become a panzer (armored) division. He was imitating field exercises going on in Britain at the time, which were also being copied in the USA and the Soviet Union. Guderian later noted in his memoirs: "My historical studies, the exercises carried out in England and our own experiences with mock-ups had persuaded me that tanks would never be able to produce their full effect until the other weapons on whose support they must inevitably rely were brought up to their standard of speed and of cross-country performance. In such a formation of all arms, the tanks must play the primary role, the other weapons being subordinated to the requirements of the armour." [Quoted from p. 24 of 1952 English translation of Guderian's *Panzer Leader* published by Michael Joseph, London] An important principle of the German armored-warfare theoreticians was that offensive tanks should initially detour around the strongest points of the enemy defense so as to isolate them and allow their flanks and rear to be attacked from the conquered ground; thus the forward momentum of the tanks would not be interrupted.

Adolf Hitler too was concerned with the problems of a future armored war, and published his thoughts about tanks in a 1929 article in the Nazi



WEHRPOLITISCHE BETRACHTUNG VON ADOLF HITLER

Im Jahre 1911 reichte der österreichische Oberleutnant Burstyn beim Kriegsministerium in Wien die Pläne für einen neuartigen Panzerwagen ein, der sich von früheren Konstruktionen dadurch unterschied, daß die Fortbewegung nicht mehr durch Räder, sondern Raupenketten erfolgen sollte. Es war der erste Tank. Wohl existierten in Amerika schon vordem Raupenfahrzeuge, allein sie dienten nur friedlichen Zwecken (zum Transport von Holz!), und waren ebenso unvollendet wie vereinzelt. Der Entwurf von Burstyn eilte seiner Zeit weit voran. Er wurde deshalb, wie dies nun einmal noch immer so gewesen zu sein scheint, von den „Sachverständigen", in dem Falle von den militärischen, als eine vollkommen unsinnige und verrückte Idee abgelehnt.

zu können. Daß man nach modernen Flugzeugen nicht mit gewöhnlichen Haubitzen zu schießen vermag, war langsam klargeworden. Allein, daß man einen modernen Tank ebensowenig mit für ganz andere Aufgaben bestimmten Kampfwaffen vernichten kann, leider nicht. Es offenbart sich hier eine Mißachtung der Technik, die sich später entsetzlich gerächt hat. Es war dabei noch ein Glück, daß die Engländer die neue Kampfwaffe ungefähr genau so verzettelt und daher unzweckmäßig einsetzten, wie wir Deutsche es mit ähnlichen Waffen ebenfalls getan haben (z. B. Gas!). Dadurch konnte sich noch langsam mit den vorhandenen Waffen eine wenn auch unbefriedigende Abwehr einrichten lassen. Erst am 20. November 1917 erfolgte vor Cambray der erste massierte Einsatz dieser neuen, beweglichen Angriffs-Waffe. Wenn es auch nun gelang, einen Durchbruch zu verhüten, so lag dies weniger an der Wirksamkeit der deutschen Abwehrwaffen als an der Unfähigkeit der Engländer, den errungenen Erfolg augenblicklich auszunützen und den Durchbruch zu einer großen Operation zu erweitern. Im Laufe dieser Kämpfe wurden zahlreiche englische Tanks „erlegt". Teils durch Artilleriefeuer vorgezogener Geschütze sowie durch

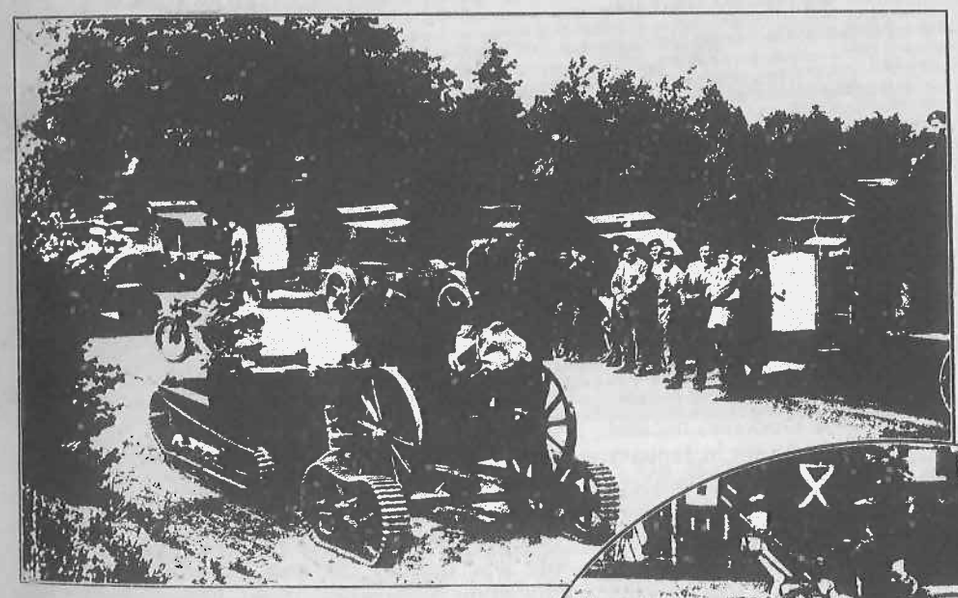
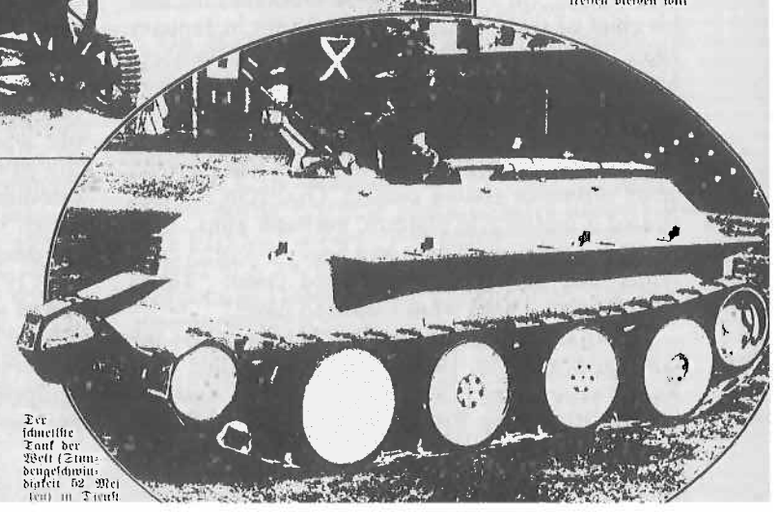


Bild oben:
Amerikanischer Panzerzug in der Nähe von Fort Bliß am Rio Grande. Der für den Grenzschutz bestgeeignete Schnelltank auf Schienen

Nebenstehend
Bei den englischen Manövern in Aldershot konnte man sich überzeugen, daß die englische Armee bei dem Tankwettrüsten nicht im Hintertreffen bleiben will



Der schnellste Tank der Welt (Stundengeschwindigkeit 52 Meilen) in Tätigkeit

Es läßt sich kaum ausdenken, welchen Eindruck es im Jahre [illegible] erzeugt hätte, wenn die Mittelmächte plötzlich mit einer so neuen Waffe auf den Kriegsschauplätzen erschienen wären. Wie die militärischen „Sachverständigen" in Wien und Berlin als wertlos, ja verrückt anjahen, wurde von den Engländern im Weltkrieg angewendet. Die dort von 1915 auf 1916 gebauten Raupenpanzerfahrzeuge gleichen auf das Haar den von Burstyn seinerzeit vorgelegten Entwürfen. Um ihre Geheimhaltung zu ermöglichen, nannte man sie einfach „Tanks". In der Sommeschlacht traten sie zum erstenmal in Erscheinung. Der Eindruck, den die grauen, Gräben und Granattrichter überkletternden Ungetüme auf den durch Trommelfeuer bereits zermürbten Soldaten ausübten, war ein um so demoralisierender, als diesem eine wirksame Abwehrwaffe nicht zur Verfügung stand. Nun wiederholt sich zum zweitenmal der in einem Mangel an technischen Fähigkeiten und technischer Einsicht begründete Standpunkt der militärischen [illegible]. Man glaubte einer [illegible]

weekly, the *Illustrierter Beobachter*. This article, which has since fallen into oblivion, makes clear the significance of tanks in Hitler's future arsenal of military conquest. The last paragraph expresses his most important ideas on the subject:

Illustrierter Beobachter, 1929

Tank Armament in the Day of Disarmament:
Thoughts on Military Policy by Adolf Hitler

. . . . .

The significance of this weapon can best be seen from the fact that the Treaty of Versailles expressly prohibits Germany from using it. Its possession gives our foes an undeniable lead; but they could be overtaken at any time. Modern weapons technology is in such a state of flux, and weapons prototypes are undergoing such continuous and rapid improvement, that any nation which assembles too many weapons, both offensive and defensive, must risk one day having to fight using antiquated weapons. The tank of old has become an infinitely complex war machine that runs on tracks and wheels, is impervious to water and gas, and some models can even swim. This development means that every nation must content itself with a few prototype specimens and concentrate on maintaining the capability to mass-produce them if needed. Of course this applies to defensive as well as offensive weapons. The army leaders of an oppressed people have the duty to protect the nation from enemy attack by this means. To be sure, the internal political system must then move with bloody stringency to eliminate treason and industrial espionage. The National Socialist state will one day do so!



German Panzer II light tanks, version A (Sd Kfz 121) during field exercises. The first mass-produced Panzer IIs came out in 1935 but were not delivered to the troops until 1937.

At the end of the twenties, the theoretical speculations of German armored specialists began to carry more weight. On 1 April 1931 Colonel Lutz became a major-general and inspector of motorized troops; on 1 October 1931 Guderian became his chief of staff. Hitler came to power in January 1933 and appointed General Werner von Blomberg as War Minister and General Walter von Reichenau as Chief of the Ministerial Office, both of whom favored development of the tank. That same year on the exercise field at Kummersdorf (the German army ordnance testing center), Guderian demonstrated a motorcycle platoon, antitank guns, Panzer I light tanks, and light and heavy armored cars. Hitler was deeply impressed and cried: "That's what I need! That's what I want to have!"

The first comprehensive German theory of the tank appeared in 1934 in a book called *Der Kampfwagenkrieg* [*Tank Warfare*] by the Austrian general Ritter von Eimannsberger [see Bibliography]. One novel element of the theory was that it advocated use of tank spearheads which would make surprise deep-penetrating thrusts cutting off or surrounding enemy groups; another new principle was that of massing tanks and motorized troops for decisive operations. Eimannsberger also recommended the build-up of mobile divisions, which in his view were alone capable of meeting the demand of modern mechanized combat.

In 1934 cavalry regiments in Germany were converted into armored and rifle regiments. Around 40% of the armored troop officers were former cavalrymen. The first panzer battalion was equipped with the Panzer I light tank (PzKpfw I) built by the Krupp munitions firm based on a British Vickers model and armed with two machine guns.

At the end of 1934, when Italy was preparing to attack Abyssinia, Hitler sensed that the coming conflict would provide a suitable opportunity for Germany to break out of the military isolation imposed by the provisions of the Versailles treaty. He decided to reinforce the Ethiopian emperor against Mussolini and in January 1935 ordered retired Major Steffen, the Abyssinian honorary consul-general in Berlin, on a secret mission to Addis Ababa. To breach the Italian news cordon in Abyssinia, a radio set was installed in the cellar of the German mission to keep Hitler informed of events there.

On 17 July 1935 the Abyssinian councillor of state came to Berlin, where Hitler gave him 3 million Reichsmarks from a special fund so that he could buy German weapons. Abyssinia also received thirty 3.7-cm antitank guns, bought by the German army weapons ministry from the Rheinmetall-Borsig machine manufacturers under Hitler's personal orders. The brand names were removed and an English freighter transported the weapons to Djibouti. The Italians seized the guns after their invasion march into Addis Ababa.

In March 1935 compulsory military service was reintroduced in Germany. On 15 October 1935 the first of three panzer divisions was set up. It had two panzer regiments of two battalions each, a



total of 561 tanks. The attached infantry, light artillery, antitank units and engineer platoons were fully motorized. The panzer division lacked heavy artillery, the duties of which were to be assumed by Stuka dive-bomber aircraft.

Admittedly, the new division was equipped only with Panzer I and Panzer II light tanks which did not make suitable battle tanks; its infantry still lacked armored fighting vehicles and its motorcycle rifle units had limited cross-country mobility and were largely tied to the roads. Nevertheless the division was entirely self-reliant and had the resources to master any operation without additional support. Independent themselves, the panzer brigades could lend direct support to the infantry.

Tank production had top-priority status in the German rearmament program. It soon became apparent that the tank models had not yet been perfected technically, and to begin with, one in three tanks produced was not fit for action.

In 1937 Guderian published his theory of mechanized warfare in the book *Achtung! Panzer*!, in which he expressed the view that Germany could afford only a short war and must therefore try to bring it to a successful end before the arms industry was paralyzed by a shortage of raw materials.

In 1938 the panzer divisions were converted into a panzer corps in which at last the motorized and armored units were combined into one force under panzer general Guderian, who was designated leader of the "mobile troops." Now, twenty years after the collapse of the old German empire, the German Reich had the best armored force in the world, and Hitler devised the concept of "blitzkrieg," a lightning strike against another country by cooperating German air and land forces. The organization of the panzer army into panzer divisions made up of tank, artillery, infantry, engineer, and communications and supply units, now made possible the massed deployment of large armored formations against operational targets.

Particularly important was the idea of close cooperation between the armored force and the German air force, the Luftwaffe. In Guderian's theory the Luftwaffe would support the armored spearheads in tactical situations, fly tactical and strategic reconnaissance, prevent the enemy from bringing up reserves, secure the air and supply the advancing mobile troops.

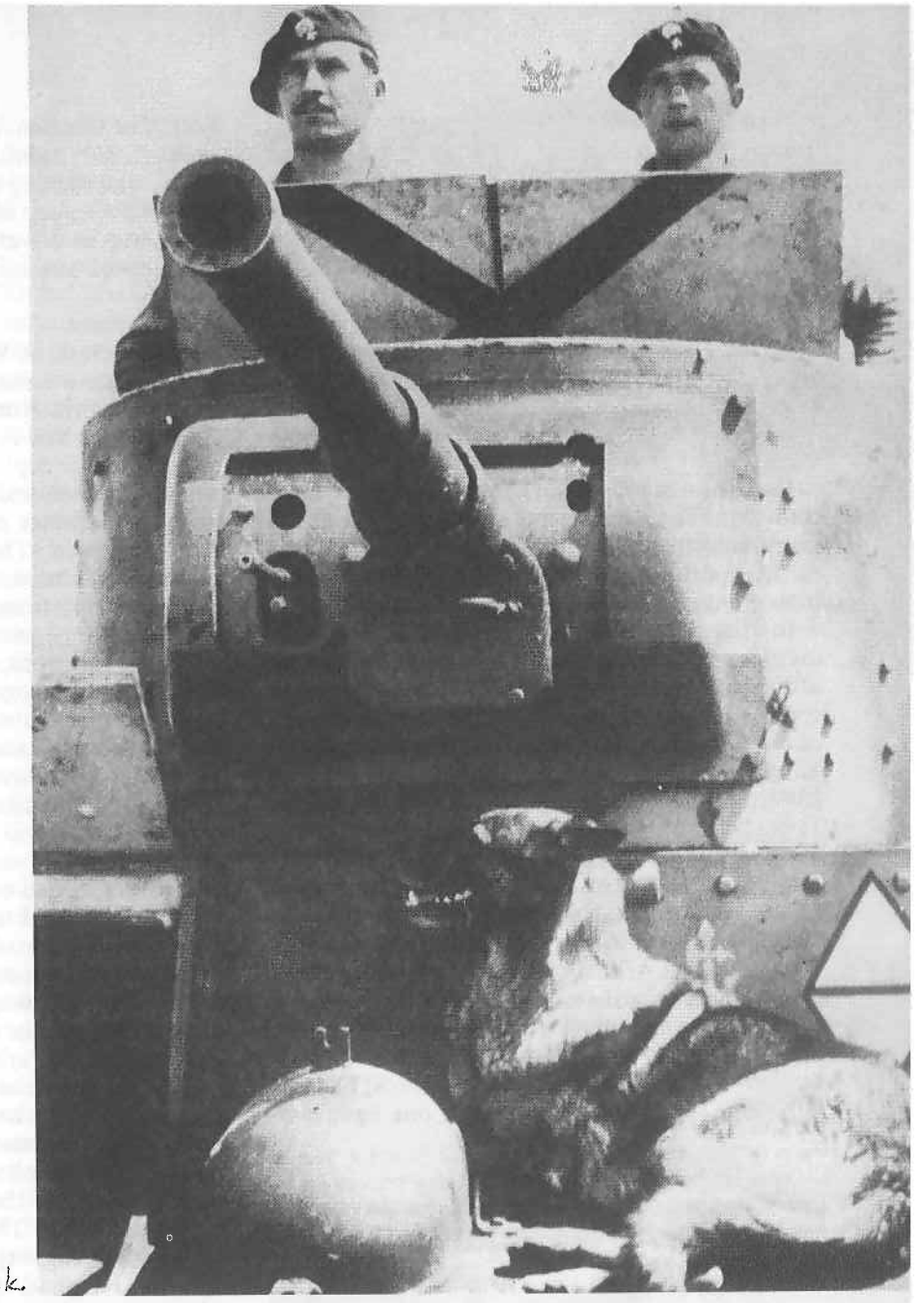
In Hitler's view of blitzkrieg, the enemy should first be politically isolated from other nations; but above all this mode of warfare involved exploiting the element of surprise in a strategic attack, and massing forces in the direction of the first strike. The enemy was to be encompassed on two sides and his main forces encircled and annihilated in the opening phase of the war. The massed deployment of tank and motorized infantry divisions along the main line of thrust was among the most important principles of blitzkrieg.

One disadvantage of the blitzkrieg theory was the expense. Other arms of the military had to suffer substantial budget cuts to finance the tank formations.

The recipe for successful blitzkrieg was intensive combat strength, skilled tactics, superlative morale and technological superiority. As the war unfolded it became apparent that the crucial factor in the German victories was not numerical superiority but the high morale of the German panzer divisions. Hitler's most successful secret weapon was the courage of his soldiers.

The civil war that broke out in Spain in 1936 came as a welcome opportunity for tank theoreticians to pursue their researches. German and Italian tanks fought on the Fascist side, Soviet tanks on the side of the Republicans. The German Condor Legion in Spain included one panzer unit, the

Opposite page: July 1937, the Spanish Civil War after the battle at Brunete. In the background are Soviet T-26 light tanks fighting on the Republican side.



Spain 1937. A tank of the German 88th Armored Division, part of the Condor Legion. Russian T-26 Tank. Republican tank

88th Armored, made up of volunteers under Major Wilhelm Ritter von Thoma, who were equipped with Panzer I and Panzer II light tanks. The first models of the Panzer I and II (also known as PzKpfw I and II) were tested here under wartime conditions. Originally intended only as training vehicles, they were now able to perform with some success as armored combat vehicles; but both types were too weakly armored to confront even the light antitank guns deployed in Spain. The wide battle fronts in Spain did not permit any deep-penetrating offensive operations and the Germans were unable to test their armored tactics adequately; but cooperation between tanks and the Luftwaffe was tried out and proved successful.

Apart from the German tanks, the Panzer I and II, the main tank types that took part in the Spanish Civil War were the Italian Carro Veloce, the antiquated French Renault M 17/18, and the Soviet T-26, T-27 and T-28. The tanks on both sides were used almost exclusively for direct support of the infantry. Only twice during the Civil War—at Sevena in autumn 1936, and at Guadalajara in spring 1937—did a group of tanks penetrate to the enemy artillery emplacements. The lack of support weapons like motorized infantry and artillery, prevented the tanks from carrying out their operational missions. In Spain the Condor Legion also successfully tested antiaircraft guns, deployed on the ground against bunkers and tanks. German

8.8-cm flak guns shot off more than 90% of their ammunition in ground fighting [rather than against aircraft]. The German armed forces—the Wehrmacht—made a very extensive analysis of their experiences in the Spanish Civil War. The use of localized data led to some serious mistakes. Only small numbers of tanks were deployed on both sides, so their performance was incorrectly evaluated. The German general staff also failed to realize that Panzer IIs were too weakly armored, so even though this armored vehicle was completely obsolete by 1938/39, it continued to be mass-produced.

On 15 March 1939, the Germans annexed Czechoslovakia. The Wehrmacht took over all the Czech army tanks including those that were being built to fulfill export contracts: 469 tanks distinguished for their sturdiness, reliability and fine armament.

In August 1939 the Wehrmacht had five tank divisions and two independent panzer brigades, all of which were mobilized secretly. The ratio of motorized to non-motorized units had changed: 15 out of 106 divisions were now fully motorized. On average, the newly formed infantry divisions were 25% motorized, although some were as low as 15%. Overall, the German field forces were now about 40% motorized.

German forces of the Tenth and Fourteenth armies were standing ready for the attack on Poland. The Tenth Army, under the command of General of the Artillery von Reichenau and based in the Upper Palatinate, had one armored and one light division as well as three motorized infantry divisions. The Fourteenth Army, under Colonel-General List and based in the Vienna area, had one tank, one motorized infantry and one light division. The German Wehrmacht now had at its disposal 2,980 fighting tanks and 215 command tanks. The training of the German tank troop was exemplary: Every armored soldier could if necessary serve as driver or radio operator as well as machine- or cannon-gunner.

One of the first models of the British Vickers Mark IA medium tank (the T 33/ME 9939)



Great Britain:

At the close of World War I, England shared with France a substantial lead in tank construction. Two British military theoreticians, General J. F. C. Fuller and B. H. Liddell Hart, drew up new rules for the deployment of tank units which would, they believed, avoid the wearing-down tactics and the heavy casualties of trench warfare in any future war. They expected small or highly-mechanized armies, made up mainly of tank units and supported from the air, to blockade the enemy's lines of communication, command posts and transport junctions, thus collapsing resistance before the main enemy forces were demolished.

In 1923, in line with General Fuller's ideas, an armored corps was actually set up in Great Britain, intended for deployment independently of infantry, cavalry or artillery.

In the summer of 1927 an experimental mechanized force was set up in Britain. Large-scale maneuvers carried out on Salisbury Plain training ground confirmed the value of this kind of unit, even though the motorized units were outnumbered by conventional troops and had no approved technical aids except elementary radio instruments. In 1928 the experimental force was officially dubbed the armored force.

In 1931, countless military exercises resulted in the formation in Britain of an armored brigade made up of four armored battalions. Another important step in tank development took place in the same year when the tanks were equipped with radio telephones. This meant an increase in combat power because radio command of an armored unit made it possible to take immediate advantage of tactical opportunities and so facilitated instantaneous optimum collaboration of all arms.

In 1934 further advances were made in the British armored service when military exercises were held using an armored brigade made up of light and medium armored cars, under the command of Brigadier Hobart. In addition the brigade was exercised in combination with a motorized infantry brigade. But this privilege brought doom on the British armored troops, for the armored brigade allegedly failed to collaborate efficiently with the motorized infantry and other arms during an exercise, and tank opponents in the military high command took advantage of this to stop development of the tank for several years. The chief argument of the die-hards was that by now antitank weapons had acquired such penetrating power that the tank was already an outmoded weapon.

The influential anti-tank lobby even went so far as to falsify the results of the 1934 autumn maneuvers in order to discredit the improvised tank units. They managed to get General Fuller relieved of his post as adviser to the Royal General Staff. Brigadier Hobart was accused of calling for an army made up exclusively of tanks with no conventional arms. He was discharged, even though he was known to have pleaded expressly for tanks to be supported by artillery and infantry in suitably tailored armored vehicles.

Not until 1937, after evaluating Soviet Army maneuvers in the autumn of 1936, did the British War Office order the development of two basic tank types. One was the so-called infantry tank, a slow, heavily armored car armed with a machine gun. Tanks of this type were expected to advance with the infantry and attack machine gun emplacements and fortified positions. Because of their weak weaponry it was difficult for these vehicles to take up battle with other tanks. Moreover they were weakly motorized to keep pace with the speed of marching infantry; this gave them no chance in combat against the versatile German tanks. The second basic type was a medium fighting tank, the Cruiser. Faster and more mobile, it was designed for enemy pursuit and reconnaissance, but it could attain the necessary speed only at the cost of being lightly armored and lightly armed. These two basic models soon proved to be badly designed and caused the British a deal of grief in their battles in France, the Balkans and North Africa.

In 1936 the British army had 375 tanks, 304 of which were officially designated as outmoded. Even their engines were low capacity. The medium and heavy tanks were equipped with American Liberty aircraft engines of 1918 model: cumbersome, complicated and out-of-date.

In 1937/38 a motorized mobile division was formed in Great Britain. It consisted of two light armored brigades, one armored brigade, two motorized infantry battalions and two small motorized artillery regiments.

The idea of tank warfare had already developed in Great Britain during World War I, yet even by the end of the thirties British minds were still focussed on trench warfare and not on the mass deployment of tanks. The British general staff were convinced that responsibility for breaking through the enemy defense should fall on infantry divisions with tank battalion support; and that only then should the tank battalions be used to extend and deepen their tactical advantage. They did not recognize that this was unrealistic because a tank division had too few support weapons. But the British War Office spared no effort when it came to commissioning more and more new tank models. More than 75 different prototypes were built in all, only a handful of which proved suitable for the tank service.



In 1939 the British mobile division was renamed the armored division. The motorization of British troops had now reached a high level despite the shortage of adequate tanks. This was not too difficult to achieve to be sure, given that in August 1939 the regular army consisted of only nine divisions. In addition to these, Britain had at this time 16 territorial army divisions; and 8 infantry, 2 cavalry and 9 tank brigades.

France:

At the close of World War I France had a powerful tank force of around 4,000 armored vehicles, a

Above: The British "Gloucester Hussars" armored regiment on field exercises. These Bren Carrier, light armored infantry combat tanks were special purpose vehicles highly prized by the Western Allies, who built more than 83,000 of them.

Below: A French Char Somua S-35 medium fighting tank is rolling onto a specialized transport vehicle. The S-35 was a highly maneuverable, well-armored and well-armed tank with an all-cast turret 56 mm thick.





number which no other army in the world could even begin to approximate. The French Renault M-17 light tanks had proved very successful in fact, and served many nations as a model for their own tank designs. In 1921 French general Estienne recommended that French tanks be formed into an independent unit; but he failed to overcome the dominant view that tanks were purely an infantry support weapon. The French started to plan the Maginot Line shortly after signing the Treaty of Versailles, and even more than the military of other nations, the French general staff envisioned future war as governed by the same rules that applied from 1914 to 1918. The defensive character of French military doctrine constricted the development of the modern tank, and vast financial resources went into building the defenses of the Maginot Line; this particularly hindered preparations for mobile warfare. The only way out of the dilemma was to draw up the so-called prototype policy, the design of tank prototypes that would go into production only when needed.

The French regarded the infantry as the dominant force on the battlefield. By their view the infantry needed the support of mobile machine guns and light cannon which would keep pace with its marching speed; consequently no provision was made for fighting tanks to combat enemy tanks. Speed was not a requirement either, so French designers concentrated on armor and fire-power. Thus the dominant development in France was of slow tanks with heavy armor and heavy weapons. The heavy infantry tank Char B was the type of standard armored vehicle used until 1940. Developed around 1924, the Char B had outstanding armor which could stand up to direct hits from the German 50-mm antitank gun, even at close range. Its fixed 7.5-cm gun was mounted in the center of the tank hull and could be aimed only by swivelling the entire vehicle. The German panzer force had nothing of equal quality to put in the field against these heavy French tanks, of which approximately 320 were built. In 1940 it was shown that only 8.8-cm antiaircraft guns were able to destroy them.

In 1930 the new chief of the French general staff, General Louis Maxime Weygand, put through a program to motorize five infantry divisions and five cavalry brigades and to convert one cavalry division into a light mechanized division (*division légère mécanique*, known as the DLM for short). Up-to-date as the organization and composition of the DLM might have been, its principles of deployment were already completely obsolete: for the DLM was supposed to use all its tanks solely to support the infantry, which the French regarded as the crucial factor in combat.

Younger French officers harshly criticized the prevailing conservative and doctrinaire views of the general staff. In 1934 Charles de Gaulle, then an unknown lieutenant-colonel, published a book, *Vers l'armée de métier* [*Toward a Professional Army*] in which he called for the creation of armored divisions containing every branch of land service, which would be combined into large offensive formations that could lead deep-penetration thrusts against enemy troops. De Gaulle pointed out the need to organize part of the army into a professional troop that would be in a permanent state of combat readiness, and that would be capable of instant deployment in the event of a German attack on Austria, Czechoslovakia or Poland.

De Gaulle had not served with the armored troops, but was supported by Deputy (later Premier and President of the War Council) Paul Reynaud and a few generals and journalists. Military authorities and the general public rejected his theory and fought it in the parliament and press. Admittedly his schemes were hazy and the 100,000-man armored units he demanded were much too large to allow them to maneuver successfully. Only 750 copies of the first edition of his book were sold. Both the French war minister and the chiefs of staff refused to countenance any change in the deployment or organization of the tank arm. They viewed the Maginot Line fortifications as the best guarantee of French security.

By 1935 only five mobile units had been set up in France, consisting of partially motorized cavalry divisions, and they included only a few tanks. The French did not begin build-up of mechanized divisions and modernization of the tank until they became concerned over German rearmament and the occupation of the Rhineland in 1935. That year they set up what they called the world's first tank division. Its cavalry were already equipped with armored scout cars, and now they received tanks and were proudly dubbed a light mechanized division. The DLM had one tank brigade, one motorized infantry brigade, one artillery regiment, one armored scout car regiment and several companies of motorcycle riflemen, as well as one engineer battalion and communications (signals) and transport units.

Opposite page. Hotchkiss H-35 French light tank, a rapid mobile vehicle (speed 21 mph) used for direct support of infantry since 1936

Below: Soviet army troops receiving visual instruction about a Soviet T-60 light tank. The T-60, well adapted to winter deployment, had a range of 370 miles and a speed of 27 mph.

The crucial disadvantage of the French tank service at this time was its out-of-date theory of deployment. Thus instead of remaining an independent force the bulk of the tanks were split into 31 separate battalions designed to support the infantry.

In 1937 French premier Édouard Daladier ordered the French army to set up its first genuine armored division (*division cuirassée*); but more than two years passed before it was combat-ready. Its main duty was to break through strongly fortified positions.

In 1939 the French army prided itself on having the best armored tanks in Europe. In fact the 4.7-cm cannon of the medium and heavy French tanks was at that time the best in the world; yet the French tanks continued to be assigned to infantry units in battalion strength, or held back as a reserve. The French army's antitank weapons were also completely inadequate. The arms industry proved unable to carry out its programs, and produced far fewer antitank guns than the planned 88 per infantry division.

When war broke out the only French armored division, the Division Cuirassée, was not yet fully equipped, and it was still unclear how the two light mechanized divisions should be deployed.

Soviet Union:

In the first years after the Revolution, armored tactics in the Soviet Union were still strongly affected by the experiences of World War I, and armored units were intended to serve exclusively as an infantry support weapon.

During the first two Five-Year Plans a productive tank industry grew up in the USSR. Twenty factories and 100 ancillary suppliers were at work



to produce the tanks and their armament.

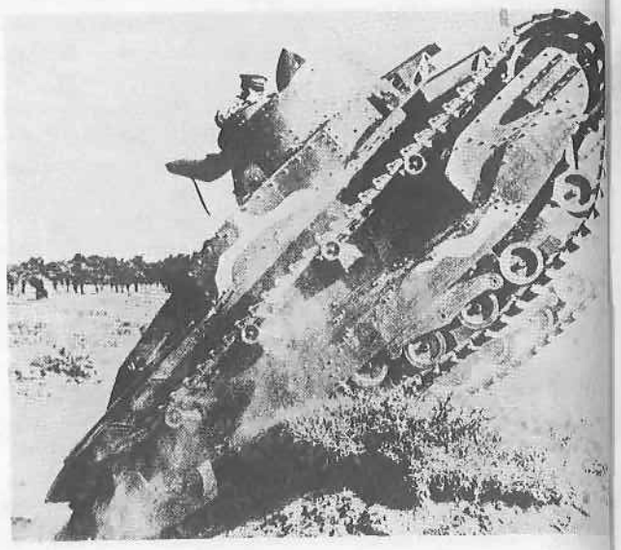
At the start of the thirties, Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky (1893-1937) pursued the idea of massive deployment of tanks in close cooperation with the artillery and air force. His plan was for the accompanying infantry to be completely motorized so that the enemy could be annihilated on his own territory in a mobile war. Command, structure, training and armament were geared accordingly. Attack was viewed as the only mode of combat that could bring a decision. Tukhachevsky calculated that about 5,000 tanks would be needed to conduct this kind of war along the USSR's western border. The independent tank units were supposed to take over the traditional strategic role of the cavalry.

At this time the Soviet army had a substantial lead in its theory of strategic tank deployment. Not only had it set up the first large mechanized units, but also tested them in maneuvers. The armed forces of other nations had nothing of comparable quality to the Soviet strategic armored tank, the Bistrochodny B1 mobile tank. Design of the Soviet W-2 armored tank diesel engine reduced fuel consumption while maintaining performance, and increased range. This efficient and strain-resistant engine encased in aluminum, turned out to be a pioneering development.

The Soviet desire to use tanks in the cavalry role brought about demand for higher-speed tanks, and the Soviets adopted the gears and suspension system invented by American design engineer J. Walter Christie, before its value was recognized anywhere else. Christie had designed large wheels and rollers with an independent suspension, which facilitated higher speeds.

Approximately 50 Soviet tanks took part in fighting in the Spanish Civil War and achieved only modest success. The result was to bring disaster on the entire Soviet tank force. The Soviet adviser in Spain, General D. G. Pavlov, returned to Moscow in 1937 and presented to Marshal K. Y. Voroshilov a report of the war in which he attacked Marshal Tukhachevsky's theory of tank warfare. Devastation ensued: Stalin suddenly ceased to believe in the potential of large-scale tank operations and immediately ordered all the tank units turned into pure infantry support weapons. The seven perfectly drilled mechanized corps vanished overnight and their armored cars were distributed among the infantry corps. Now each infantry corps had a tank regiment which took in the armored vehicles. From now on, the largest armored unit was an independent tank brigade, so the Soviets had lost the capability to deploy mass concentrations of tanks. This was a major cause for the Soviet defeats of 1941/42.

In the wave of purges in 1937-1939, Stalin had



75% of the Soviet supreme war council murdered after inducing forced confessions. He executed 3 out of 5 marshals, 13 out of 15 army generals, 62 out of 85 corps commanders, 110 out of 195 divisional commanders, and 220 out of 246 brigade commanders. The Soviet dictator liquidated not only his closest brothers-in-arms but also 35,000 other commanding officers—including almost the entire officers' cadre of the armored force.

In 1938 reorganization of the armored and mechanized troops in the USSR began again. A mechanized corps now consisted of only two light armored brigades and one motorized rifle or machine gun brigade.

In spring 1939 the Red Army had 4 mechanized corps which in the course of World War II developed into seasoned armored units; 24 independent armored brigades, each armed with 295 BT and T-26 tanks; 4 heavy armored brigades each with 139 T-28 and T-35 tanks; and three flamethrowing tank brigades. Instead of an armored battalion of 54 fighting tanks, the rifle divisions now had an armored company of only 17 fighting tanks. The Soviet armored troops reached their nadir in autumn 1939, when they lacked an experienced officers' cadre and confusion reigned in the areas of command and tactics. The units lacked uniform organization and their equipment was out-of-date.

United States:

In World War I the American army tanks were mostly of French design and were deployed along tactical guidelines adopted from the French.

In 1919 the US Army's armored troops were dissolved. The National Defense Act of 1920 provided for the armored units to be subordinate to the infantry. At this time, in the USA as in Great Britain, lightly armored scout cars were supposed to furnish reconnaissance, and the well-armored, slow and heavy tanks to lend direct support to the infantry.

In 1928 the US Army began to set up a small mechanized trial group based on the British model, which although it was intended to support the infantry, was largely independent; but it was soon dissolved.

After General Douglas MacArthur was appointed US Army chief of staff in 1933, steps were taken to mechanize the cavalry and advance tank development. Although the USA was a world leader in technology, American tanks had surprisingly poor combat qualities compared to those even of small nations like Czechoslovakia. Production figures were also amazingly low. Only one specimen was built of many types. The brilliant American inventor J. Walter Christie earned nothing but contempt for his trend-setting projects and was respected only in the USSR. The US also differed from the USSR in that it neglected to develop efficient tank engines: The most-used engine was the already outmoded air-cooled Wright Continental W-670 radial aircraft engine, which was suitable only for the lighter types of medium tanks.

Japan:

Shortly after World War I the Japanese army bought a number of tanks in France and Britain, and tested them while at the same time evaluating the wartime experiences gleaned by the British and French general staffs.

From the outset the Japanese viewed the tank as a perfect infantry-support weapon and made no attempt to turn their armored units into troops that could if necessary be deployed independently. The tanks built in the Japanese arms factories were designed to combat infantry positions because the Japanese hardly expected to face tank duels in the Pacific theater. The Japanese general staff also had to adapt the tank to the needs of the navy because tanks would have to be conveyed to the future arena in transport ships, and this imposed certain restrictions on their size and weight.

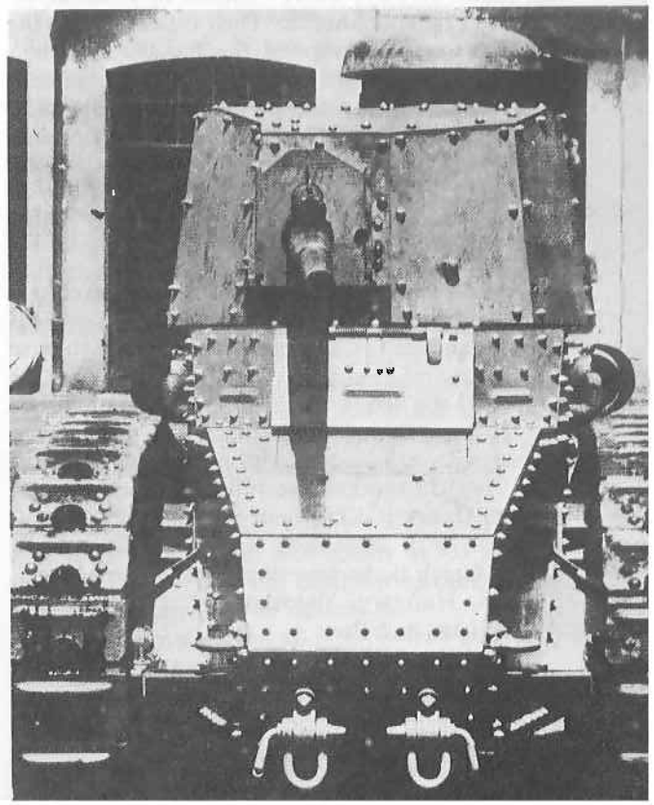
In 1927 the first tank designed by Japanese engineers came into being: Experimental Tank No. 1. Japanese industry was not geared to the mass production of armored vehicles but nevertheless made good progress in development of tank engines. The Japanese air-cooled engines were suited to the extremes of temperature in Manchuria or northern China, that is in the combat zones where the Japanese high command expected them to fight. But in general the Japanese tanks were weakly armored, and inadequately motorized and armed. Japanese tank production was at a disadvantage due to the chronic shortage of raw materials and the concentration of munitions plants on navy and aircraft



Above: Czech Kw Danek Praga tank (the LTL-H) in the service of the Swiss Army, on maneuvers near Thun (Switzerland)

Opposite page: Prototype of the Japanese HO-GO M 2594 light tank running an obstacle course. Further development of the tank was halted after its designer suffered a fatal accident during trials.

Below: Italian Fiat 3000 B light tank, model 30. This tank was modelled on the French Renault FT-17 and remained in service until 1943.



programs.

In 1937 Japanese design engineers developed the 2597 (CHI-HA) medium tank, a powerful mobile fighting vehicle. The CHI-HA and the light tank formed the core of the Japanese armored units which continued to be overshadowed by the infantry, the most important component of the Japanese land forces.

Italy:

Italy's armored forces gave the best example of the conflict between military theory and economic feasibility: Financial troubles compelled the Italian designers to think in terms of lightly armored fighting tanks that afforded only minimal protection.

Although Italian military theory favored mobile warfare, the creation of armored troops was neglected, due largely to Italy's limited industrial capacity and shortage of raw materials. The weakly armored Italian light tanks stood up to colonial warfare but only because they did not face any serious adversary. This initial experience led to many wrong decisions, above all to an underestimation of the potential for tank deployment in the Balkans and Africa.

Mechanization of the cavalry began in Italy around 1930. Type L 3/33 and L 3/35 Carro Veloce light tanks were developed for the purpose. A peculiar feature of this mass-produced tank was its turretless design. Among the most important Italian tanks were the Carro Armato M-series developed by Fiat and Ansaldo. Their experiences in the Spanish Civil War showed the Italians that their tanks, with their light armor and weak armament, could achieve little against a determined adversary.

In autumn 1939 the Italian forces had more than 1,400 tanks, but the combat power of the tank regiments was slight because more than 1,300 of the tanks were light L 3s.

Czechoslovakia:

In the twenties Czechoslovakia had developed an efficient tank industry promoted by Skoda Munitions, and created several remarkably progressive and successful models.

In 1935 the Skoda Works produced an outstanding 10.5-ton heavy tank, the LT-35, which was armed with a 3.72-cm cannon and two machine guns. In 1938 another Czech firm, Ceskomoravska Kolben Danek (ČKD), built the LT-38 light fighting tank with armament similar to that of the LT-35. Czech tanks were exported to Switzerland, Sweden, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Latvia and even Afghanistan and Peru.

After the German takeover of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, the Wehrmacht seized approximately 300 LT-35s, redesignated them PzKpfw 35(t)s and formed them into a panzer division. Two more divisions were formed with the LT-38s, now designated PzKpfw 38(t)s.

Poland:

Several factors delayed deployment of the Polish tank arm: the low level of mechanization, the small number of engine manufacturers, an underestimation of the advantages to be derived from motorized troops and, above all, limited financial resources.

By 1925 the Poles were already evaluating British research and experiences in forming armored units. In 1926 they bought Citroën-Kégresse tank chassis in France, to be converted into armored jeeps that would cooperate with the cavalry.

In 1928 Poland bought Carden-Loyd mobile tanks, and in 1932 Vickers Armstrong mobile tanks, from Great Britain. These two models formed the basis for native production of TK armored scout cars and type 7 TP light tanks.

In the mid-thirties, preparations began in Poland to set up an armored troop. Armored units in brigade strength were supposed to serve as a defensive force that would hold up enemy tanks, while independent armored battalions supported the infantry in counterattacks along crucial sectors of the front. Each infantry division was to have one armored company to carry out reconnaissance, consisting of armored scout cars and light tanks, and each cavalry brigade was to have two armored companies.

In 1937 the 10th Brygada Kawalerii (Cavalry Brigade) was motorized, so becoming the first Polish armored motor brigade, under the command of Colonel A. Trzaska-Durski. It was made up of two motorized cavalry regiments, one division of armored scout cars, one division of antitank guns, a company of light Vickers 6-t tanks, a company of TKS reconnaissance tanks, a division of motorized artillery (75- and 100-mm), a battery of antiaircraft artillery, an engineer platoon, a communications (signals) platoon, a traffic control platoon and a transport company. Polish sources say that on 31 August 1939 the armored formations had 1,515 officers, 8,949 sub-officers, and 18,020 men, with 169 Vickers 7-TP 11-ton tanks, 52 Vickers 6-ton tanks, 67 M17 FT Renault tanks left over from World War I, 53 Renault R 35 tanks, 693 TK/TKS tankettes, 14 Type 34 tanks and 11 armored platoons.

1939

September—December

Attack on Poland

Friday 1 September 1939, Berlin
Order of the Day from the *German Army High Command* (OKH):

The hour of trial has come. When all other means have been exhausted, weapons must decide. We enter the fight knowing the justice of our cause and for a clear goal: the permanent security of German people and German living space from foreign trespass and presumptions to power. The new National Socialist Army, as bearers of the proud traditions of the old army, will justify the trust bestowed on it. Under command of the Führer let us fight and be victorious. We rely on the determination and unity of the German people. We know the strength and energy of the German defensive readiness. We believe in the Führer. Forward, with God for Germany!

Panzer Troop Training Regulations

The *OKW (German Wehrmacht High Command)*, Berlin, 1939:

. . . .

VIII. Combat.

76. In the absence of contrary orders, the panzer leader is entitled to open fire independently only when breaching the enemy or to ward off impending attack. The armored platoon leader can use the radio to order combined fire from the platoon. The panzer leader selects his target based on his position in the unit and his [overall] offensive target. Pursue mission independently, provided that no specific target is expressly ordered by radio or guide shots.

77. The machine gun, a weapon with a high rate of fire, high precision of aim and a strong effect on morale, is the main firing weapon. It is deployed against live targets like riflemen, machine gun nests, antitank weapons, artillery et al. It is especially effective against mass targets (troop columns, reserves, cannon being brought into position). Often the MG is not very effective against targets dug in behind strong shelters or 600-mm gun shields. The attempt should be made to outflank such targets. Short bursts are the main mode of fire on the battlefield. When firing from a moving tank, give out a continuous succession of well-aimed bursts of fire so as to maximize the effecton the target in that brief moment when it is in your line of sight. In an exchange of fire, keep firing both when stationary and in motion.

. . . .

79. The 2-cm KwK 30 gun is a weapon with high penetration and a high rate of fire and thus is chiefly designed to combat armored targets. As a rule emeny tanks should be combatted from a standing vehicle at a distance of 600 meters (c. 1,900 feet). In addition the gun can be used to combat antitank weapons from a distance of over 500 meters (1,600 feet) when it is impossible to outflank the target and fire on it with machine guns. Also, a platoon or squad leader can fire a lead shot from the gun to point out the target to the platoon or squad. Short bursts of two or three shots each, are the main mode of fire from a standing or moving vehicle. Cannon and machine guns can be used together against targets—such as gun crews or troop assemblies—behind antitank gun shields or batteries.

. . . .

83. No tanks must fall into enemy hands without the crew and the crews of neighboring tanks doing their utmost to rescue or destroy it.

A crew may abandon an immobilized tank only if they have run out of ammunition or can no longer fire, and if other vehicles cannot be expected to save it. One recourse is to dismount with

machine gun and pistol and defend the tank from close up.

In an emergency, instead of using the turret hatch the crew can dismount from the emergency exits by the driver's and radio operator's seats.

If there is a risk that the tank may fall into enemy hands, it should be destroyed. Waste wool, combustible material, ammunition etc. inside the vehicle should be soaked with fuel (possibly by ripping out the fuel pipe) and the vehicle is to be set on fire.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
[Otto Dietrich]
1 September 1939:

The term "war" is to be avoided at all costs in German press reports and headlines. You can describe the present situation, for example, to the effect that we are merely responding to Polish attacks. Thus the Press should not go beyond the formulations which the Führer used to describe the situation in his speech. In the way of personal information, the Press can reveal that the Polish ambassador is still in Berlin.

Saturday 2 September 1939, Warsaw
The Polish *PAT News Agency* reported:

An authoritative source confirms that the fighting between Polish and German troops is confined to the border zone and that so far no large Polish units have gone into action.

Mokra III: Tanks against Antitank Guns

By German 1st Lt. W. Reibel

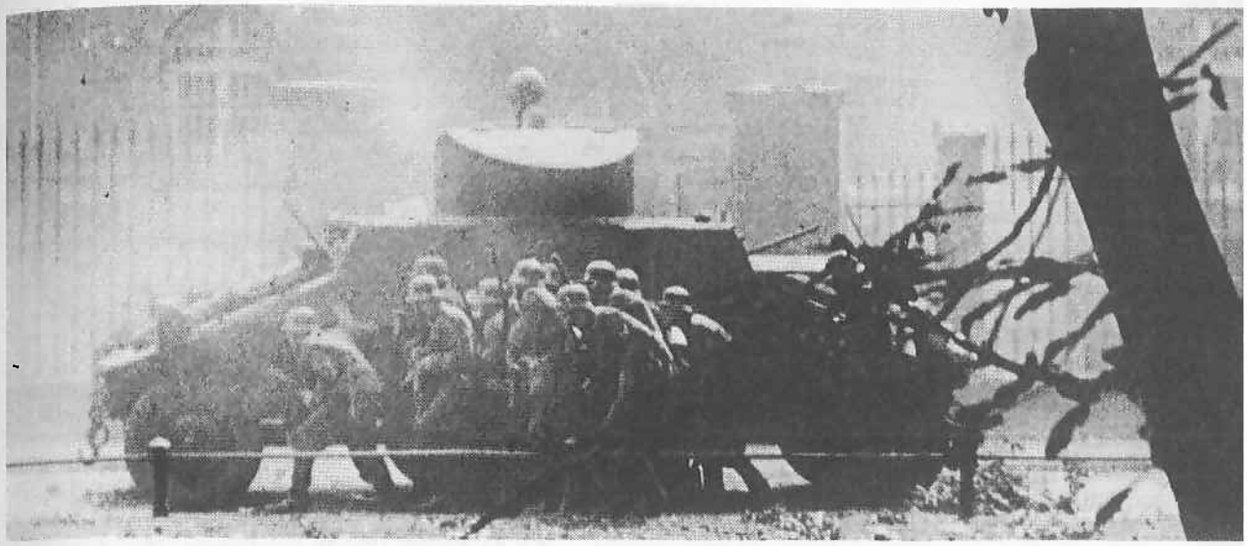
It really is a strange feeling to know that now we have left Germany and are standing on Polish soil... We cross the Liswarta. The bow waves crash around the tanks, spraying a cool shower over many a driver who crosses the river too fast. To our left is a blown-up rail bridge, at the edge of the road is a dead Polish soldier; far away we hear the weak barking of a machine gun; somewhere there is the hollow thunder of cannon: the first signs of war. Ahead of us lies a village; according to the map it must be Mokra III. The name means nothing to us yet, it's just a village like any other; but what would we have done if we had known? There! Arriving at the last houses in the village we hear rifle and machine gun fire, then comes the order: "Get ready for combat!" The shooting steps up... The attack is on. We roll forward swiftly. Infantry projectiles strike the tank with a bright clang. Trenches crisscross our attack zone, marshy meadows impair our progress; yet we roll on relentlessly... Slowly we reach the edge of the wood and push into a forest lane; my company leader is ahead of me. All hell has broken loose here. Ahead of us is an embankment with an underbridge. Bullets are cracking and roaring like mad... A lot of vehicles from 2nd Company and our company are now standing in the forest lane. Suddenly a tank that had already pushed through the underbridge, goes up in flames. Damn that lot! It's an antitank force!... Many a dear comrade was missing when we assembled. Their tanks turned into iron graves. Our company too has suffered its first deaths... A short time later our company too marched back to the resting area... The burning villages plunged the horizon in a red glow. A sudden cry: "Polish cavalry approaching on the left!" and we seized our weapons again. But it was only a false alarm. Herds of riderless horses were searching for human beings.

2 September 1939, London
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:



Opposite page: Danzig (Poland), 1 September 1939. Germans are fighting for the Polish post office building with the support of an eight-wheeled Austro-Daimler armored scout car.

Left: 31 August 1939. A German armored division rolls into its assembly zone near the Polish border.



Polish sources in London say that German troops have been unable to break through the defensive emplacements of the Polish army at any point.

Sunday 3 September 1939
The French *Havas News Agency* announced:

At 11:00 A.M. Prime Minister Chamberlain stated in a radio address that as no reply has been received from the German government, a state of war now exists between Great Britain and Germany.

The British fleet went into action immediately.

The French ambassador in Berlin has informed the German government that as of 5:00 P.M. on Sunday, France considers itself to be in a state of war with Germany.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
3 September 1939:

During the next few days we [i.e. the German Press] should continue to use the term war very cautiously. One can indeed now speak of a state of war, but no declarations of war have yet been issued by any side. For the time being, the hostilities in the East [Poland] can more suitably be designated the "military clashes."

Monday 4 September 1939
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Strong German forces advancing out of southern Silesia and the area southward, are pursuing the enemy north of the High Tatra mountains [Carpathians] and south of the Polish industrial zone where he is retreating toward Krakow. They have seized the Vistula bridge crossing east of Pless [Polish *Pszczyna*]. North of the industrial zone [central Poland west of the Vistula], our troops are pursuing the retreating enemy across the Koniecpol-Kamiensk line and across the Warta river northeast of Wielun. Advancing at a hard pace they have approached to within 12 miles of Sieradz. Strong (German) Pomeranian forces have reached the Vistula at Kulm [Polish *Chelmno*], thereby completing cutting off Polish forces in the Northern Corridor [connecting the main body of Poland to the Baltic port of Danzig].

The German attack on the Polish fortress of Graudenz [Polish *Grudziadz*] in the northeast has penetrated the line of Polish defensive forts.

German forces advancing from East Prussia have taken Przasnysz. Polish cavalry who tried to penetrate German territory north of Treuberg [Polish *Olecko*] have been repulsed.

4 September 1939, Paris
French Army Report Number One:

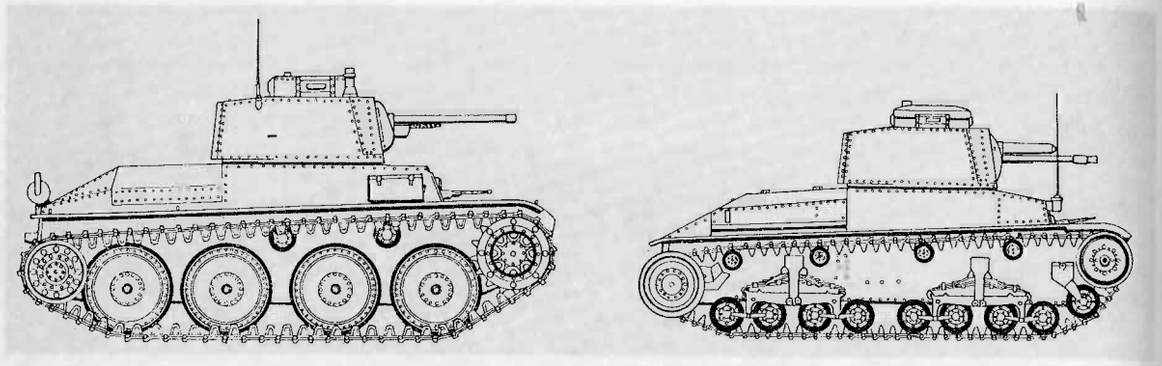
War operations by French land, sea and air forces have commenced.

Waiting Game on the Western Front
4 September 1939, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

As of 10:00 P.M., not one shot has so far been fired along the Western Front. German troops have received orders that in case the French open fire, they are to return fire only locally. No general mobilization order has yet been issued to German forces in the West.

Tuesday 5 September 1939, Warsaw
The *Central Headquarters of the Polish Army* reported:

Land operations: Dogged fighting is going on in the southwest. Last night we made a successful



Above: After the German occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, the Wehrmacht seized the entire supply of Czech light tanks, enabling it to outfit three panzer divisions. The tanks came in two models, the LT-35 and the LT-38, which the Germans changed to PzKpfw 35(t) and 38(t).

Opposite page: The 9th September edition of the Nazi Party newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, reports the rapid advance of German tanks into Poland. The "Czech tanks" played an important role in the victories.

attack on an enemy armored division. We have had to abandon Bydgoszcz and Grudziadz [German *Bromberg* and *Graudenz*].

Battle is continuing along the Przasnysz-Ciechanow front.

5 September 1939, Warsaw
The Polish *PAT News Agency* announced:

Fighting is continuing in southern Poland and in Poznan province. The rapid movement of Polish troops who advanced against the German border disorganized German troop divisions and forced them into a defensive posture. Polish troops pursued them and captured large numbers of German prisoners. A successful Polish counterattack has been reported against German motorized divisions advancing toward Bieradz in southern Poland. The enemy abandoned considerable numbers of assault vehicles and motor cars whose occupants were taken prisoner. There are many captives.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
5 September 1939:

The German Press must not attack France at any time. Likewise, we should not allude to the remarkable fact that no shots have been fired along the German-French front even though the French Army Report states that water, land and air hostilities have already commenced. On no account must anything be reported about the deployment of loudspeakers etc. on the Western Front [which have been used to communicate to the enemy lines the intention not to fire].

How German Tanks Fight

The German propaganda publication *Die Wehrmacht*, September 1939:

The extent to which the Poles underestimated the combat strength of our modern arms, was apparent in the first days of the fighting. Irresponsible propaganda had persuaded Polish soldiers that our tanks were not much more than tin mock-ups. This led to an almost grotesque attack on some of our tanks by a Polish lancer [i.e. cavalry] regiment, with what annihilating consequences one can easily imagine. Even the antitank guns which the Poles believed could easily halt the advance of our tanks, were soon revealed as too weak. In one battle a single German heavy tank annihilated two gun crews with a single shot and then crushed the guns themselves under its heavy track chains. Incidentally, the tank driver, a very young second lieutenant, shortly afterward stopped a railroad train loaded with Polish reservists, forced them to climb out and herded them along—400 men in all—in the van of his tank.

Extract form the *Diary of the Commander-in-Chief of German Army Group C* on the Western Front, Colonel-General Ritter von Leeb, dated 6 September 1939:

German propaganda in the Upper Rhineland is proving very sucessful. Officers are even signalling across the lines [of the Western Front]. Placards on the French side say things like: "Please don't shoot. We're not shooting." And we are replying: "If you don't shoot, we won't either."

I can envisage only a few possible developments on the Western Front, namely the following:

1. The French will complete their assembly and then attack.
2. They will wait for the bulk of the British forces to arrive so that not only French but British blood will be spilled.
3. They will not launch any serious attack and are still hoping for a diplomatic solution.
4. They will wage delaying action, leaving it to us to attack. They may wait until Poland is finished off and German forces have been transferred to the Western Front and then allow Germany to attack, violating the neutrality of Belgium, at which point the situation must be resolved by diplomatic means.

Nothing Halts the Advance of German Tanks

The German propaganda publication *Die Wehrmacht*, September 1939:

Our spearhead rapidly reached the hills on this side of the river. The enemy artillery fired but our tanks rolled undeterred toward their targets along roundabout routes, under cover of farmsteads and underbrush. As the sun sank toward the west, our tanks had penetrated the city and under their protective fire, German combat engineers crossed the river so as to get behind and destroy the enemy still resisting in the city. While the armored spearhead was still securing the river crossing, the second wave of our tanks was already rolling up. It was led by a general travelling in a command tank studded with antiaircraft machine guns. Reinforcement panzer units and mobile divisions rolled up in an irresistible train over 12 miles long.

The Battle of Warsaw

Saturday 9 September 1939
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Yesterday the beaten Polish army continued its retreat on almost all fronts. German mobile spearheads reached the Vistula river at various points between Sandomierz and Warsaw, frequently pushing through the enemy rearguard, and in the afternoon penetrated the Polish capital from the southwest.

9 September 1939, Berlin
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The German Army High Command reports that German troops have penetrated the interior of Warsaw from the south, but Warsaw has not yet been occupied and thus cannot be said to have fallen.

A remarkable episode in modern warfare unfolded along the air waves during the fight for Warsaw on Friday night-Saturday morning. At 10:00 P.M. the voice of a German radio announcer speaking from the German radio station in Breslau, was heard broadcasting over the number-one Polish radio station in Warsaw. He said: "This is German Radio Breslau speaking on Radio One Warsaw, Poznan and Lvov." After a brief announcement that German panzer troops had entered Warsaw, Breslau Radio broadcasting over Polish radio in Warsaw, Poznan and Lvov, issued German news reports in Polish and later in English and French. The incident was explained by a message from the Polish embassy in Berne saying that Radio Breslau had taken advantage of an interruption in Radio Warsaw transmissions to circulate false reports on the same wavelength, with the aim of causing a panic.

South Warsaw under Siege

Monday 11 September 1939, Warsaw
The Polish PAT *News Agency* reported:


Norddeutsche Ausgabe
252. Ausg. / 52. Jahrg. / Einzelpreis 20 Pf.
Norddeutsche Ausgabe
Berlin, Sonnabend, 9. September 1939
VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER
Kampfblatt der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung Großdeutschlands
Mszczonow genommen
Deutsche Truppen in raschem Vordringen auf Warschau
Rückzug der polnischen Armee an allen Fronten
Viertes feindliches U-Boot versenkt

Counterattacking Polish troops have repulsed German panzer formations operating in the south of Warsaw and smashed some 18 tanks. All the southern suburbs and outlying districts of Warsaw are once again completely in Polish hands. The arrival of Polish troops withdrawn from around Poznan, has considerably stiffened the resistance of the Polish forces.

Tuesday 12 September 1939
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

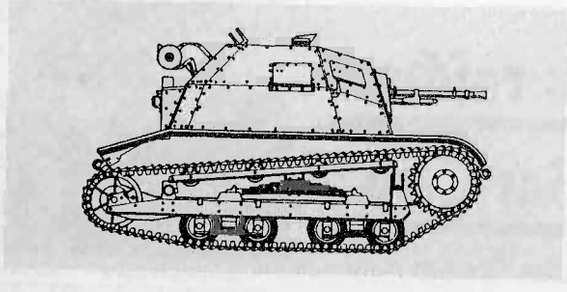
The great battle west of the Vistula in Poland is nearing its end. Our southern troops are advancing in forced marches toward and across the San river. Mountain troops on the extreme southern flank have reached Khyrov south of Przemysl. The enemy is laying down his arms in the area between Zwolen, Radom and the Lysa Gora mountains. We are about to capture cannon and war matériel of at least four Polish divisions. The toll of prisoners cannot be estimated.

On the eastern bank of the Vistula south of Warsaw, panzer troops have seized a quantity of heavy guns including four 21-cm mortars. Desperate attempts by the strong enemy forces encircled at Kutno to break out toward the south, have been frustrated. The ring has closed completely around these enemy groups. North of the Vistula, German troops are approaching the fortress of Modlin. After hard fighting the enemy has also been overcome northeast of Warsaw. During their pursuit the mass of the German troops crossed the rail line connecting Bialystok and Warsaw, and advanced units reached the Warsaw-Siedlec rail line.

French Army Report
12 September 1939, Paris
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:

The communiqué issued by the French Army this morning says that last night passed quietly on the whole of the Western Front.

The TK-3 tankette, a small Polish tank with a two-man crew and a 9.92-mm machine gun, had virtually no chance against the German tanks.



The Defense of Warsaw
Thursday 14 September 1939, Warsaw
The *Warsaw Defense Command* issued this communiqué:

Patrols have been involved in skirmishes near Warsaw. Major German attacks on the suburb of Wola have been unsuccessful. One German tank was set on fire, several armored cars and antitank guns were captured. The enemy suffered substantial losses.

Charred German Tanks in the Ochota District of Warsaw
14 September 1939
The Polish newspaper *Express Poranny* reported:

Charred German tanks litter the streets of Ochota. German panzer spearheads are rolling across Narutowicz Square, supported by artillery. The gun projectiles have left their marks on the dwellings and the wall of St. Jacob's church. Several projectiles broke through the church roof and damaged the organ. A number of wooden crosses have already been set up next to the church; the names of the dead have been inscribed on them in pencil. Farther along is a grave without a cross. Behind Narutowicz Square is Grojecka Street, an image of devastation: One row of houses has been completely torn apart by shells. In Radomska Street we encounter the first German armored car, only slightly damaged, and farther along the second car, its 12-mm steel plates covered with soot; inside are the charred remains of the crew. A few yards farther on are two bullet-battered armored cars. In Opaczewska Street the houses are riddled with shell holes. The sounds of a piano can be heard form a half-destroyed house. In the surrounding fields people are digging for potatoes, paying no attention to the gunfire; when the gun salvos swell, they press themselves down into the furrows for a while. There were almost no fires in Ochota. The Academics' House was somewhat damaged by the artillery bombardment. The Staszic settlement and the entire neighborhood survived the bombardment without major damage. People throughout the district were actually unaware that the Germans were already in nearby Narutowicz Square.

Polish Front Line Report
Saturday 16 September 1939, Warsaw
The Polish *PAT News Agency* reported:

The Polish air force has successfully bombed German military targets. An energetic defense is continuing in the Warsaw sector. Enemy attacks in the northeast of the city have been repulsed. The German thrust toward Bialystok and Brest Litovsk has encountered determined resistance from Polish troops. The situation in this sector has held steady for two days. Polish troops in Gdynia and Hela too



The Warsaw suburb of Ochota on 9 September 1939, where the Polish defenders have put a German Panzer II light training tank (PzKpfw II) out of action.

are continuing to put up a dogged resistance. Violent battles are taking place around Lowicz-Skierniewice, where Polish troops have inflicted heavy losses on the enemy.

The Soviets Invade Poland

Sunday, 17 September 1939, Moscow
Red Army Report No. 1 on the operations in eastern Poland:

This morning Soviet troops crossed the Polish border along its entire length from the Dvina river in the north to the Dniester in the south. After overwhelming the weak resistance of Polish outposts, we occupied the villages of Glebokkie, Moledeczno and others. Heading toward Baranow, we crossed the Nemen river and occupied the villages of Mir and Snow. In the western Ukraine the cities of Rovno, Dubno, Tarnopol and Kolomyia are already in Russian hands. With the thrust at Kolomyia our troops have already cut off most of the border between Poland and Rumania. In addition, 7 Polish fighter planes and 3 Polish bombers have been shot down by the Soviet Air Force. Red Army troops were greeted with cheers by the local White Russian and Ukrainian populations.

Polish Resistance to the Red Army
17 September 1939, London
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Official Polish sources in London say that fighting has already begun between Polish units and Soviet troops moving into Poland. Polish troops have been resisting in the area around Moledeczno, an important rail junction along the rail line between Minsk and Vilna.

Monday 18 September 1939
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The campaign in Poland is nearing its end. After completely surrounding Lvov and capturing Lublin, part of the German Eastern Army has reached the line Lvov-Wlodzimierz-Brest-Bialystok and thus has now occupied most of Poland. The annihilation and capture of scattered remnants of the former Polish army is going forward at various points. The most powerful of the encircled Polish groups—approximately one quarter of the Polish Army—has been compressed into a narrow pocket southwest of Wyszogrod between the Bzura and the Vistula and has been disintegrating since yesterday.

On September 17 the Polish radio transmitter in the encircled city of Warsaw broadcast a petition to the German Wehrmacht High Command, asking us to receive a Polish truce delegate. We declared our willingness to do so. As of midnight on

September 17, no truce delegate has visited our troops.

German Losses
18 September 1939, Lvov
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:

The 2nd Vienna Panzer Division and the 45th Linz Infantry Division have been wiped out completely in the fighting around Grodek near Lvov. The commander of the German 134th Infantry Regiment, Colonel Göritz, was captured. General Prittwitz-Gaffron was killed in the battle.

Rendezvous at Brest-Litovsk
18 September 1939, Moscow
The *German News Bureau* reported:

On Monday, German and Soviet troop detachments rendezvoused at Brest-Litovsk; the officers exchanged greetings.

Tuesday 19 September 1939
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The disintegration and surrender of the scattered or encircled remnants of the Polish army, is proceeding rapidly. The Battle of the Bzura is over. So far 50,000 prisoners and incalculable amounts of matériel have been seized. It is not yet possible to assess the final results. A smaller enemy group has been annihilated northwest of Lvov and 10,000 prisoners taken. Lvov has been called on to surrender. Hostilities have resumed outside Warsaw after the Polish truce delegate failed to turn up. The Poles are defending the city without thought of the population of over one million.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
19 September 1939:

We would not do justice to the achievements of German troops if our newspapers were to emphasize the military activity of the Soviets over and above what the Soviet Army report has already said. The Red armies are now meeting no substantial obstacles to their advance because our troops have already broken the spine of enemy resistance.

Tough Resistance in Warsaw
Thursday 21 September 1939, Warsaw
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:

At 8:30 P.M. on Thursday, Warsaw's No. 2 Radio Transmitter announced that the German Luftwaffe has bombed the Red Cross hospital even though it was clearly marked as such.

Pigs Are Used to Clear Mines
Saturday 23 September 1939, Schengen (on the Luxembourg border)
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The newest "combat weapon" of French troops on the Western Front is thousands of pigs which in the last four days have been herded into a 2-mile-deep zone along the Luxembourg border. The Germans have sown the area with mines and the pigs have been brought in to explode them without loss of human life. This operation, carried out by French divisions at the "three-nation pocket" in the Moselle valley, has proved successful. The pigs set off numerous explosions as they were driven across the mine fields. Minutes later the troops followed in their wake, occupied the cleared land and dug into new positions from which they then continued to pursue this new mine clearance tactic. More and more herds of pigs are being brought to the area to enable the troops to occupy more ground.

The Last Battles

Wednesday 27 September 1939, Warsaw
The *Warsaw Defense Command* announced:

Warsaw and Modlin are continuing to defend themselves doggedly against their German assailants. Warsaw has experienced an extremely violent three-hour attack on the left bank of the Vistula. Thirteen German aircraft have been shot down, raising the total of German planes shot down around Warsaw to 106.

The entire city is riddled with gunfire and is still under fire. The water supply system has been damaged for several days. The incessant bombing makes it difficult to assist the civilian population. Also nine packed hospitals have been destroyed and historical monuments and churches have been reduced to rubble. Clouds of smoke and dust cover the city, making it hard to breathe.

The hopeless position of the civilian population, the enormous damage, the lack of water and the danger of epidemics have moved the Warsaw defenders to offer the besieging German troops a 24-hour truce. So far they have not replied.

Thursday 28 September 1939
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

In the East the bulk of our troops have reached the demarcation line [between the agreed-upon German and Soviet slices of Poland] as scheduled. A total of 500 Polish officers and 6,000 men were captured in yesterday's fighting on our southern flank east of the San river. A Polish army leader, the leader of a border guard corps and the commanders of the Polish 7th and 39th Divisions fell into our hands along with their staffs, in addition to the Polish 41st Division as already reported.

The city of Warsaw surrendered unconditionally yesterday; presumably it will be occupied on 29 September after completion of necessary preparations. This morning the commandant of Modlin also offered to surrender his fortress.

Recognition for the Tank Force
28 September 1939, Stockholm
The *German News Bureau* reported:

Lt. Gen. Sylvan, the commander of the Swedish army, has written to the Swedish government asking it to approve a 34-million kroner grant with which to build a Swedish tank force. He specifically cited the German success with tanks in the Polish Campaign.

28 September 1939, Moscow
The Soviet *Red Army Report:*

On September 27 the Red Army continued its advance toward the demarcation line [between the German and Soviet zones of Poland] and occupied the cities of Grabowo 9 miles west of Augustow; Masowesk, Drogichin, Krasnostow, Zawada rail station 6 miles west of Zamosc; Krakowetz, Mosciska and the Sianki rail station at the sources of the San river. Soviet troops continued their mopping-up action in the regions of White Russia and the Western Ukraine.

Sunday 1 October 1939
Winston Churchill said in a worldwide radio broadcast:

Poland has been again overrun by two of the great Powers which held her in bondage for 150 years, but were unable to quench the spirit of the Polish nation. The heroic defense of Warsaw shows that the soul of Poland is indestructible, and that she will rise again like a rock which may for a spell be submerged by a tidal wave, but which remains a rock.

Russia has pursued a cold policy of self-interest. We could have wished that the Russian armies should be standing on their present line as the friends and allies of Poland instead of as invaders.

New Tanks
Wednesday 4 October 1939, Washington
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

It is believed that the US War Department has commissioned the American Car and Foundry Company to build 329 new tanks at a cost of six million dollars. It is said that these ultra-modern twelve-ton tanks are capable of a very high speed. This order will double the present strength of the US tank force.

Hitler in Warsaw
Friday 6 October 1939
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

On Thursday the Führer visited the troops of the German Eighth Army outside Warsaw and ordered to parade past him men who took part in the capture of the fortress. The last remnants of the Polish army, approximately 8,000 men under Polish general Kleber, surrendered at Kock east of Deblin on Friday morning. Yesterday east of the Vistula German troops began to move in to occupy our zone, up to the border with the Russian zone.

Weak artillery activity in the West. Otherwise the day went off peacefully.

Monday 23 October 1939, London
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is among the books which Major-General J. H. Beith, head of the propaganda section of the British War Office, has officially recommended should be sent to troops at the Front.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Wednesday 8 November 1939:

Naturally, we [the German Press] must not allude in any way to the Comintern's [Communist International's] announcements of the anniversary of the Bolshevist Revolution in Russia [even though the Soviets are at the moment our allies].

German tanks in the market square of Sochaczew about 36 miles west of Warsaw



Friday 10 November 1939, Moscow
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The Soviet government has expressed to the German ambassador in Moscow its sympathy and indignation at the attempt on the Führer's life in Munich [= a bombing on November 8 after Hitler had left], as well as its joy at the Führer's fortunate rescue from mortal danger, and its condolences for the victims of the assassination attempt.

OKH (German Army High Command) Order of 13 November 1939:
Re: Informing family members of casualties:

We have cause to point out that the process of informing people of casualties to their families (deaths, missing-in-action cases or severe woundings) must be carried out in a fitting manner. A few personal words, and an acknowledgement of the achievements of the deceased, missing or wounded person, are particularly comforting.

Bombs Dropped on Helsinki

Thursday 30 November 1939, Stockholm
The Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* reported:

Shortly after 9:00 A.M. this morning, approximately ten Soviet bombers appeared over Helsinki, and the air raid sirens were sounded again at 12:15 P.M. During their second bombing run the Soviets mainly dropped leaflets over the worker's district of the capital, calling on the people to rebel against the government of Finland.

Von Brauchitsch on the Upper Rhine
Friday 1 December 1939, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

Colonel-General von Brauchitsch, the commander-in-chief of the German army, has gone to the Western Front in the Upper Rhineland to inspect German troops there.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Sunday 3 December 1939:

In our treatment of the Russo-Finnish conflict we must take as our starting point the knowledge that today we cannot afford to practice a politics of emotion. Experience has given us sufficient proof that political work and sentimentality don't mix... Naturally in our news policy we will give preference to the Russian reports. We will benefit neither the Finns nor ourselves by expressing our emotional bias when drawing up headlines, etc.

King George VI. Is in France
Monday 4 December 1939, London
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

On Monday afternoon George VI., the king of England, arrived in France on board a British destroyer to visit the troops. The king was accompanied by his brother the Duke of Gloucester, who was spending a few days on leave in Britain.

Antiquated Soviet Tanks

Saturday 9 December 1939, Viipuri (Finland)
A special correspondent of the British *Reuters News Agency* on the Karelian Front, interviewed the Finnish commander of the military district of Viipuri, Colonel Alexander Mellblom, and reported:

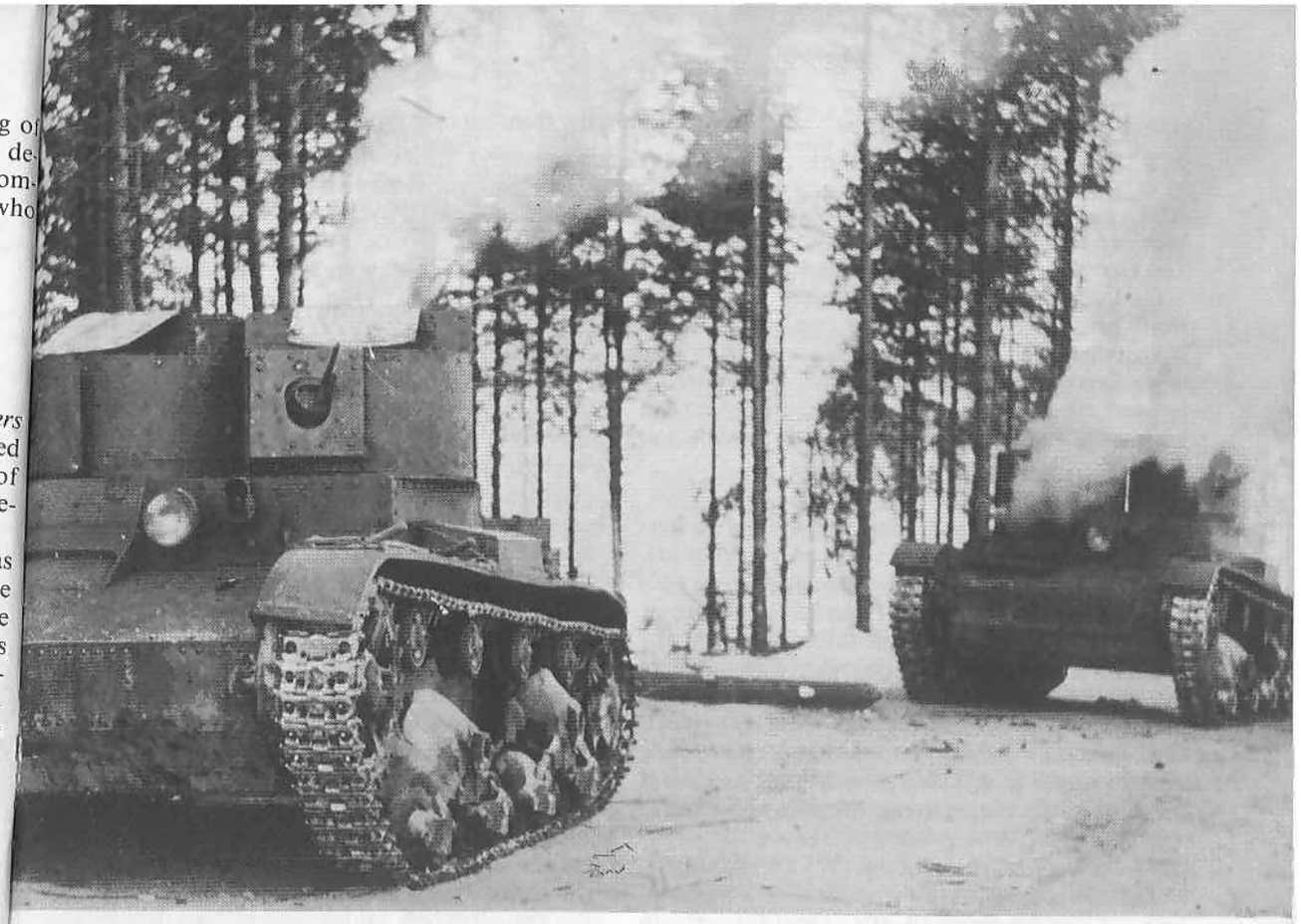
Colonel Mellblom estimates that the USSR has lost 100 tanks in the past few days. He said that the Soviet tanks have thin, out-of-date armor and the tank crews are somewhat undisciplined. The tanks fell victim to Finnish tank hurdles and to the anti-tank guns which Finland bought in Sweden. Mellblom said that Soviet troops are now standing at the outermost Finnish defensive line, and that Finnish casualties in this sector will amount to only one per cent of troops deployed.

Finnish Combat Tactics
10 December 1939, Helsinki
The Finnish news agency *Suomen Tietotoimisto (SST)* reported:

The giant forests and the many rocky areas of Finland afford Finnish troops the best cover they could wish for against enemy tanks. The tanks are unable to cross over the rocks; and effective tank traps have been laid using felled trees and stones at points not blocked by rocks, to prevent tanks from passing through. In the absence of other means of obstruction, the Finnish soldiers have driven giant boulders into the ground to hold back the tanks. They have also been digging deep narrow holes in the ground, just large enough to hold a man. Soldiers hide in these holes, and when a tank appears they toss hand grenades under its gears to put it out of action.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Monday 11 December 1939:

Numerous reports from German army units in the West indicate that the troops are not satisfied with German Press reports about their operations. Personal accounts of battle are being turned out by the propaganda units, but other publications frequently give the impression that the troops in the West really have nothing to do and are leading comfortable lives in feudal bunkers, listening to musical request programs and watching Party propaganda films.



Finland in December 1939. Soviet light T-26 tanks have fallen victim to rapid surprise attacks by well-trained Finnish guerrilla ski troops, armed with Molotov cocktails, who lay in wait for Soviet motorized columns to come along the forest paths.

The Allied System of Fortifications
Monday 18 December 1939, Paris
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:

British prime minister Neville Chamberlain inspected French fortifications on his recent visit to the Western Front. These fortifications include the reinforced Maginot Line defenses which have already been reported, and the extensions of the Line to the Ardennes, the North Sea, and the Jura mountains in the south parallel to the Swiss border. Thus an Allied fortification system has been developed that offers far greater security against invasion than existed in September, and the British and French armies are now free for future operations.

Military experts believe that such large quantities of war matériel and trained troops can be assembled here by spring, that the Germans will find it impossible to break through and the Battle of the Rhine will have been settled automatically.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Wednesday 20 December 1939:

The German Press must not publish reports about life within the Soviet Union, or print any reports from foreign sources.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Thursday 21 December 1939:

Today the Führer sent a telegram to Stalin congratulating him on the occasion of his 60th birthday. You may publish the German News Bureau report about this in a single column on Page One, but by no means may it be treated sensationally. It should receive about a 30-line commentary which must be written in a cautious and restrained way and be concerned less with Stalin as a personality than with his foreign policy.

French Plans for War in the Near East?

Friday 22 December 1939, Damascus
The Italian newspaper *La Stampa* reported:

French General Weygand claims that the Allies can win the war both in the West and the East. Weygand's plans include occupation of the Soviet oil production zone in the Caucasus to make it impossible for the Germans and Soviets to obtain fuel to continue the war. One requirement of this

plan is that Turkey declare war on the USSR, which the British still think may be unlikely.

Hitler Visits German Troops in the West
Monday 25 December 1939, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

On December 24 the Führer visited the German front line close to the border, on the Spichern Heights between Forbach and Saarbrücken where he ordered gifts distributed to the men. A truce reigned even though no special agreement had been made with the enemy; scarcely a shot was fired.

Wartime Christmas
25 December 1939, Paris
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:

Thanks to the continuous combat readiness of the French and British armies, Paris was able to celebrate a wartime Christmas that differed little from Christmas in peacetime.

In contrast to other belligerent nations, France's Christmas fare was sumptuous, and champagne was not spared in drinking a toast to the successful outcome of the war, in honor of those at the front.

Hold Out and Win!
25 December 1939
French Commander-in-Chief *General Gamelin*, in his orders to the army, congratulated soldiers at the front on their operations and achievements:

On the battlefield or in a waiting posture—whatever maneuvers the enemy may undertake in the military sphere or in that of morale—we shall hold out and win.

Soviet Casualties
Friday 29 December 1939, Helsinki
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:

The Finns say that since war with Finland broke out, the Red Army has suffered the following casualties: 25,000 dead; 5,000 prisoners; 271 tanks destroyed.

Strategy and Tactics

SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 1939

At 4:45 A.M. on Friday 1 September 1939, the German naval training ship *Schleswig Holstein* opened fire on the Westerplatte [a land tongue along the western mouth of the Vistula], which was defended by a company of Polish soldiers. The German attack on Poland had begun. The German forces included two army groups: Army Group North under General von Bock had two armies, the Third Army under General von Küchler and the Fourth Army under General von Kluge; and Army Group South under General von Rundstedt had three armies, the Eighth Army under General Blaskowitz, the Tenth Army under General von Reichenau and the Fourteenth Army under General List. These forces included 6 panzer divisions, 4 light divisions, 4 motorized divisions, 3 mountain divisions and 37 infantry divisions, with a total of 3,195 armored tanks of which 98 were Panzer IIIs and 211 Panzer IVs ("medium" tanks developed after the light Panzer Is and IIs). German forces also included the 1st and 4th Air Fleets (Luftflotte 1 under General Kesselring and Luftflotte 4 under General Löhr) with 1,538 combat-ready aircraft. On the Polish side there were a number of individual armies and combat groups adding up to 38 infantry divisions, one motorized brigade, 11 cavalry brigades, 745 largely out-of-date aircraft, and 1,134 small and light armored vehicles of an outmoded design.



August 1939. A French armored unit armed with Hotchkiss H-39 light tanks. The main disadvantage of this tank was that its commanding officer was also its gunner and loader.

As soon as the attack was launched, German Luftwaffe planes took off to carry out massive bombing raids on Polish airfields; but they missed their targets because the Polish wings had already been transferred to forward airfields the day before. The German bombers had complete command of the air; they supported the German armored and infantry units and raided strategically and tactically important targets in the Polish hinterland.

A Polish cavalry brigade, the Wolynska Brygada Kawalerii under Colonel Filipowicz, lay between the small town of Klobuck and the Liswarta river. It was ordered to secure the southern flank of the Polish Army of Lodz under General Rómmel and the territory northeast of Czestochowa.

At 8:00 A.M. several dozen fighting tanks of the German 4th Panzer Division under General Reinhardt abruptly rolled up in front of the positions of the Wolynska Brygada Kawalerii at the edge of the village of Rebielice. They came under fire from an antitank gun, several machine guns and an antitank rifle firing from Hill 268 and retreated to the village of Wilkowiecko. Lt. Berezowski's Polish cavalry troop at once dismounted and reinforced the defense. Now a number of German Stuka dive bombers began to bombard the position of the Polish 21st Lancers along the western border of Mokra Wood. Soldiers and horses were hit. Some of the horses stampeded and galloped across the forest clearing. The Stukas attacked again, but the Polish brigade could do nothing because they had no antiaircraft guns. A swarm of German fighting tanks left Wilkowiecko and approached the positions of the 21st Lancer Regiment but retreated again after a violent exchange of fire, leaving three burning tanks behind them; then flame suddenly shot out of a fourth that had been hit by an antitank rifle from Hill 268.

At 9:00 A.M. German armored scout cars and motorcycle riflemen rolled over the streets of Krzepice toward Dankow. After a short exchange of fire the Polish lancers and a bicycle squadron were forced to retreat. Meanwhile more than 30 German armored scout cars reached Opatow.

At 10:00 A.M. German Stukas attacked again. German artillery fire intensified against the field positions of the Polish 3rd Troop on Hill 268, and along the western edge of the wood near the village of Mokra III. The villages of Mokra I, II and III were in flames. The Polish brigade had suffered heavy losses in men, horses and matériel. Two of their field guns had been destroyed by square hits. For an hour Polish cavalry captain Deszert and his troop had been pinned down on the exposed Hill 268 by a hail of enemy bullets, and when large numbers of German tanks were observed rolling forward from Opatow, the Poles retreated with heavy losses to Hill 236 on the northern flank of the 21st Lancer Regiment. Lt. Ostrowski and part of his 1st Troop—hard-pressed by a German panzer and motorcycle rifle platoon advancing from Krzepice—had to evacuate Hill 258 and move to Hill 229 on the northern fringe of the woods. The Germans took Rebielce but were halted there by fire from the 19th Lancers in the Kamien-Szczyzna-Leszczyna area. Large numbers of German tanks, supported by artillery and Stuka dive bombers, tried to attack the positions of the 21st Lancers near Wilkowiecko. They were met by intense fire from Polish antitank guns, antitank rifles and machine guns. Despite non-stop Stuka attacks, the 2nd Battery of the horse-drawn artillery supported the Polish lancers. Several tanks were hit and stood in flames, while the German crews got out and were captured by the lancers.

At 11:00 A.M. the Germans aimed their main thrust at a forest lane defended by the 4th Troop of the 21st Lancers. Shortly before the tanks reached the lancers' positions, the Polish 53rd Armored Platoon under Captain S. Malinowski arrived and opened fire on the enemy tanks from an embankment 1½ miles away, east of the village of Mokra III, with his 10-cm howitzers and 7.5-cm field guns. The surprised Germans retreated behind the village of Wilkowiecko. Crews of the German 4th Panzer Division were left behind on the battlefield inside their wrecked tanks, and were captured by the Poles.

At 11:30 A.M. came a pause in the firing. German reconnaissance planes circled the sky investigating the brigade's positions. The Polish lancers and gunners used the time to reinforce their positions, gather more ammunition, repair broken telephone connections and look after the dead and wounded.

Thus the Wolynska Cavalry Brigade succeeded



1 September 1939, a German panzer division after initial fighting along the Polish border. In the lead is a Panzer I light training tank. Following a German army decree on 13 July 1939, German tanks were marked with a white cross during the Polish Campaign. From 30 October 1939, all German tanks carried a black cross with a white border.

for a whole day in halting the advance of the German 4th Panzer Division. The battle of Mokra was one of the few battles of World War II in which a cavalry unit successfully blocked an armored division.

As soon as war broke out, combat-ready Polish tanks and armored scout cars were assembled to supplement the 10th Motorized Cavalry Brigade commanded by General Maczek. They were formed into 15 independent armored companies distributed among 15 infantry divisions; and 11 armored troops and 11 armored scout car troops were distributed among 11 cavalry brigades. Three armored detachments, two light-tank companies and 3 companies of infantry tanks were formed too. This fragmentation of the Polish armored force, and the attachment of its units to tactical infantry and cavalry units, ruled out from the outset any meaningful deployment of the weakly armed and weakly armored vehicles.

Most of the German mobile troops were combined into two assault groups whose mission was to carry out a pincer movement surrounding the bulk of the Polish forces west of the Vistula-Narev line. [Reference to the map of the Polish Campaign on p. 40 will make it easier to follow the geographical indications in the following account of the battle.—Trans.] Almost half of Germany's mobile troops were massed in the Tenth Army of Army Group South, whose two motorized infantry divisions, three light and six infantry divisions attacked from Upper Silesia in the direction of Warsaw. Army Group North deployed an even larger mass of mobile troops, which attacked from Eastern Pomerania and East Prussia. Three out of four mobile forces were concentrated in the XIX Panzer (Armored) Corps under General Guderian. The plan was for them to thrust southward out of East Prussia to the east of the Bug river, forming the northern pincer of a second ring of encirclement that would block and smash any Polish troops trying to retreat and escape over the Vistula.

The right flank of the Polish Army of Pomorze (= Pomerelia, i.e. Eastern or Polish Pomerania)—the East Group under Brigadier General Boltuc—was beaten after a two-day battle along the Ursa river and Melno Lake, and driven south. The Polish defense on the western bank of the Vistula, along the Brahe, was broken on the first day by an armored thrust from Guderian's XIX Panzer Corps, part of von Kluge's Fourth Army. The German armored spearheads reached the Vistula and in the southern Tuchel Heath, were able to cut off two Polish infantry divisions and one cavalry brigade from their retreat route through the Corridor to Chelmno and Grudziadz. The Polish Army of Pomorze, having now lost almost half its units, was forced to retreat to Torun and Bydgoszcz, and the German troops now had unobstructed access to East Prussia across the Polish Corridor.

On the other hand, in the sector of the Polish Army of Poznan under General Kutrzeba, little serious contact with the enemy occurred during the first few days of border fighting. The Polish Army of Lodz under General Rómmel defended itself for two days against the attacking armored units of the German Eighth Army under General Blaskowitz and against the left flank of the German



A battalion of Polish light 7 TP tanks. Each 11-ton tank had a 3-man crew, a 3.7-cm Bofors gun, a 110-horsepower Saurer diesel engine and a road speed of over 19 mph. When war broke out the Polish army had 169 of these tanks.

Fourteenth Army under General List.

By Saturday 2 September, the position of the Polish Army of Krakow under General Szylling was already becoming critical, and the threat posed from north and south forced it to retreat along the Vistula behind the Dunajec and Nida rivers. Now that the border fights were over the German armored units pressed forward rapidly, and the Polish armies were everywhere in retreat—in north, west and south. A threatening gap developed in the middle sector that spread from Czestochowa to Pietrkow, Kielce and Sandomierz.

On the evening of September 2, after its left flank had been encircled by advancing German armor, the Polish Army of Lodz was ordered to withdraw to defensive positions along the Warta and Widawka rivers. The retreat was carried out under intense pressure from German motorized units, and the Polish army came under increasing threat from the south when the XV Panzer Corps under General Hoth and the XVI Panzer Corps under General Hoepner—both part of the German Tenth Army—pressed into the gap between the Polish armies of Lodz and Krakow and smashed the Polish 7th Infantry Division under Brigadier General Gasiorowski (part of the Army of Krakow) at Czestochowa. This opened the way for the Tenth Army to move toward Pietrkov and Kielce and put the Army of Krakow under threat of encirclement from the north. Meanwhile, unexpectedly strong forces—the 17th Army Corps under General Kienitz and the 22nd Army Corps under General von Kleist—moved out of German-held Slovakia and appeared in the Beskid mountains on the left flank of the Army of Krakow.

The Polish antitank forces lacked the guns and appropriate transport to wage a mobile defense. Despite their numerical superiority the German tanks generally tried to detour around strong Polish field emplacements or to attack them in a flanking movement, to avoid unnecessary casualties.

If the Poles could neither be run down nor outflanked, the German tanks usually stopped and waited until the infantry caught up and could attack the enemy with artillery support. Then the tanks were free to move on.

Despite the critical position of the armies, Marshal Rydz-Smigly, the Polish commander-in-chief, did not grasp the full extent of the threat posed by the German armored units. He believed that once the Polish armies had retreated to their genuine defensive line, they would be able to hold there.

Army Group South had charge of one of the main German armored thrusts, along the direct route to Warsaw.

On Sunday 3 September 1939, Polish war minister General Kasprzycki received orders to organize the defense of Warsaw. That same day Great Britain and France declared war on Germany.

North of Warsaw the Polish Army of Modlin under General Przedrzymirski-Krukowiecki successfully defended the Mlawa fortifications against the German 1st Army Corps under Lt. Gen. Petzel; but it was forced to withdraw on the night of 3–4 September due to the threat of encirclement.

On Monday 4 September 1939, General Piskor took command of the Polish forces along the mid-

dle course of the Vistula and formed them into the Army of Lublin. To block the Polish armies from retreating behind the Vistula, German Army Group South under von Rundstedt ordered the Fourteenth Army under General List to head for the San river. Meanwhile the right flank of the Tenth Army was to bar the retreat of Polish troops from the Kielce-Radom zone, while its left flank would smash the Polish forces in the Pietrkow-Tomaszow Maz area and advance to Warsaw to cut off the retreat of Polish troops from around Lodz and Poznan.

That same day the retreating Army of Modlin was thrown into disarray by German aircraft flying relay bombing raids, and it crossed the Vistula leaving Warsaw unprotected on the north. The German Third Army under von Küchler meanwhile marched from Ciechanow to the Narev and formed a bridgehead on the left bank of the river. The Polish Army of Pomorze under General Bortnowski successfully reached its defensive line without incurring enemy pursuit, but now it was threatened from the south.

On Wednesday 6 September 1939, the German XVI Panzer Corps under General Hoepner and the XV Panzer Corps under General Hoth, beat the Polish Army of Prusy at Tomaszow and fought their way to Warsaw. That same day the 22nd Army Corps under General von Kleist reached Tarnow. The Polish defensive line had now been broken between Czestochowa and Warsaw.

On that same September 6, France, which was under treaty obligation with Poland to lead an attack, began a symbolic offensive around Saarbrücken with weak, scattered units of the French Fourth Army under General Réquin. The offensive deteriorated into a temporary occupation of the skirts of German West Wall of fortifications (the Siegfried Line), now evacuated by the Germans. France and Britain deliberately renounced the opportunity to attack the Reich at this favorable moment and looked on while Poland went to its doom.

On Thursday 7 September, the Polish commander-in-chief Marshal Rydz-Smigly abandoned his headquarters in Warsaw and moved to Brest-Litovsk.

The German commanders were now convinced that the Poles would not try to defend the western bank of the Vistula but instead would resist behind the Narev, the Vistula and the San while gathering strong forces—seven to ten divisions—in the area of Lublin.

The OKH (the German Army High Command) now ordered German Army Group North under General von Bock to move. The Third Army under General von Küchler attacked across the Narev in the direction Siedlce-Warsaw while the Fourth Army under General von Kluge advanced along the Vistula. Meanwhile Army Group South under General von Rundstedt was ordered to encircle the Army of Lodz to prevent it from occupying the Polish defensive line at the Vistula, and thus make it possible for General List's Fourteenth Army to attack Lublin from the south. This operation initiated the encirclement of the Polish army east of the Vistula.

The next three days were a race to the Vistula in which the German armored forces frustrated the attempt by Polish troops to escape east over the river. They succeeded in splitting up the Polish combat groups and cut deep into the Polish defensive lines.

On Friday 8 September 1939, the German armored spearheads reached the middle course of the Vistula, penetrated the southwestern suburbs of Warsaw, and cut off the retreats of the Armies of Pomorze, Poznan, Lodz, Krakow, and the north and south groups of the Army of Prusy. The main forces of the German Tenth Army encircled the southern group of the Army of Prusy at Radom and reached the Vistula, while the spearheads of the 4th Panzer Division under General Reinhardt now stood before Warsaw.

On Saturday 9 September the German Eighth Army under General Blaskowitz was ordered to accelerate its advance to Warsaw in order to cut off the Polish armies of Pomorze and Poznan, which were retreating before von Kluge's Fourth Army. In southern Poland the Polish Army of the Carpathians under General Fabrycy could not hold the line at the Dunajec river and was forced back toward Przemysl.

That day a large part of the Polish troops were still stranded west of the Vistula. They had lost considerable manpower and some of their heavy weapons; they were receiving no supplies and their communications with the commander-in-chief were repeatedly cut. The bulk of the troops pressed toward Warsaw, where a German attempt to take the city with mobile armored units was defeated. The German 4th Panzer Division met dogged resistance in the suburbs of Warsaw and within three hours lost 57 of its 120 attacking tanks.

At this time the largest Polish units were the Army of Pomorze under General Bortnowski, which had survived its defeats in Pomerelia (Eastern or Polish Pomerania), and the Army of Poznan under General Kutrzeba, which was still almost intact. Both armies now retreated to the lower Bzura river. General Kutrzeba planned a forward thrust from the Bzura to thrash the enemy who had cut him off on his march to Warsaw. On September 9 the German OKH, ignorant of the location of the Armies of Pomorze and Poznan, were convinced that no powerful Polish forces remained on the western side of the Vistula, and ordered the German army groups to continue their operations to encircle Polish forces around Lublin [east of the Vistula].

Meanwhile Marshal Rydz-Smigly, from his headquarters in Brest-Litovsk, ordered all available Polish forces to be concentrated in southern Poland and to resist along a much shorter front.

On the evening of 9 September 1939, the Army of Poznan advanced from the lower Bzura toward Struga and ran into the extended left flank of General Blaskowitz's Eighth Army. General Kutrzeba repulsed the attacks of the Eighth Army, inflicting heavy losses on the German 30th Infantry Division under Major-General von Briesen. German General Blaskowitz now decided that instead of proceeding to Warsaw he would return the attacks of the Army of Poznan.

The next day, September 10, brought the Army of Poznan further victories. It reached the favorable positions for launching a counterattack, before the German divisions could get there. While the Eighth Army struggled to defend its extended front line and concentrated its attention on the Bzura, the Polish Army of Lodz under General Rómmel fought through to the Vistula and arrived west of Warsaw.

On September 10 the Polish C-in-C realized that the German advance was so swift that it would be impossible for the Polish armies to retreat and regroup in the southeast.

That same day, September 10, the left flank of German Army Group North under General von Bock led an attack from the middle course of the Narev river toward the south and southeast, encircling the bulk of the Polish Narev Operational Group under General Mlot-Fijalkowski at Zambrowo. Meanwhile the fighting at Radom in the bend of the Vistula reached its climax.

On the same day, General List's Fourteenth Army crossed the San river on either side of Przemysl. Meanwhile the German XIX Panzer Corps under General Guderian cut its way through the Narev Operational Group and annihilated the Polish 18th Infantry (under Brig. Gen. Podhorski) at Lomza. The arrival of XIX Panzer Corps at Brest [behind the Bug river], dashed Polish hopes of shifting the front behind the Bug: for at this time the main Polish forces still lay [west of the Bug], at the middle reaches of the Vistula.

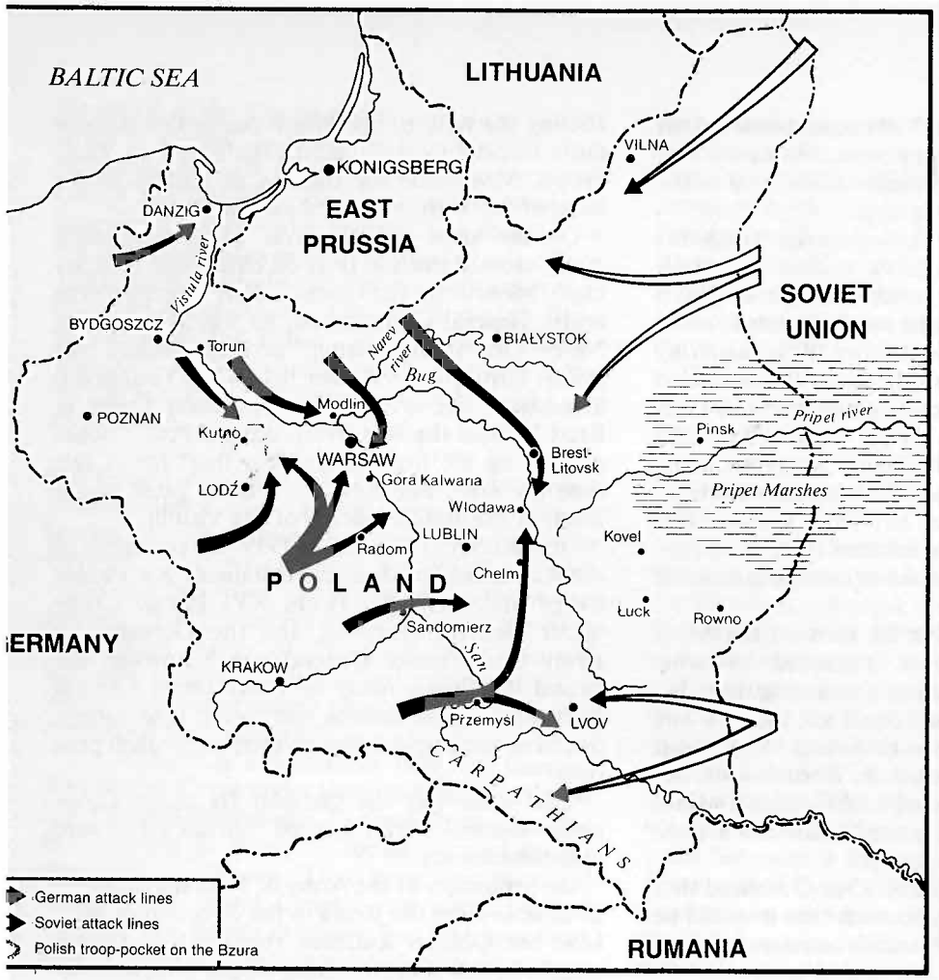
On Monday 11 September 1939, the resistance of the individual Polish forces collapsed. XV Panzer Corps under General Hoth, XVI Panzer Corps under General Hoepner, and the German 4th Army Corps under General von Schwedler, encircled the Polish Army of Prusy under General Dab-Biernacki at Radom and forced it to surrender. Sixty thousand Polish soldiers were taken prisoner.

That same day the German 1st Army Corps under General Petzel severed Warsaw's eastward communications.

On September 11 the Army of Poznan continued its attacks from the Bzura in the direction of Strykow, but General Kutrzeba realized that further attacks in this same direction would achieve nothing, and shifting his army to the lower Bzura under cover from the Army of Pomorze, he then thrust eastward to open a path to Warsaw. He believed that by changing his direction of attack he could surprise his enemy whose attention was concentrated on Lodz. General von Rundstedt did not want to postpone his planned attack on Lublin so

Polish 7 TP tanks in march formation shortly before deployment





Left: Diagram of the Polish Campaign, September 1939

Opposite page: Brest-Litovsk, 19 September 1939. Soviet Ba-10 heavy tanks in Eastern Poland being viewed by German soldiers during a friendly German-Soviet meeting.

despite the threatened position of the Eighth Army, he ordered only a few regiments from various German divisions to relieve the Eighth Army at the Bzura. German victories north of Lodz, which came when Polish units were busy regrouping, were prematurely interpreted as a collapse of the Polish offensive capability in the area.

On Thursday 14 September 1939, after initial victories by German tanks and motorized infantry in individual sectors, the Army of Pomorze launched a surprise attack from around Lowicz. The Battle of the Bzura began, the greatest self-contained battle of the Polish Campaign. Now General von Rundstedt himself took command and ordered reinforcements to be drawn from around Kielce and Warsaw and sent to the Bzura immediately. In five days of stubborn fighting, General Kutrzeba's forces succeeded in tying up German forces at the Bzura, but in the long run this had little effect because it merely postponed the day when Warsaw must be exposed to attack from two sides. Colonel-General von Brauchitsch, the commander-in-chief of the German army, did not expect major resistance at Warsaw and ordered the German Third Army to attack the Polish capital.

On Thursday 14 September 1939, the German 4th Army Corps under General von Schwedler formed a bridgehead at Annapol and Solec on the eastern bank of the Vistula. The improvised Army of Lublin was no longer capable of dealing with even these relatively weak German forces. But the greatest threat to the Poles came in the south, where the right flank of General List's Fourteenth Army crossed the San river and reached Lvov cutting off the retreat of Polish General Fabrycy's Army of the Carpathians. And when the German 22nd Army Corps under von Kleist reached Hrubieszow, it not only encircled the Army of Krakow from the south but simultaneously threatened the Polish forces retreating from the hills around Lublin. Now, at the end of the second week of the campaign, Poland had lost the capability to carry out an ordered retreat by at least some of its forces toward southeastern Poland. Moreover, by now the Polish C-in-C Rydz-Smigly had completely lost contact with his fighting forces.

Early on the morning of 15 September 1939, the German Fourteenth Army was ordered to advance its mobile troops to Tarnopol and Stanislawow to cut off the Polish troops from retreat to Rumania.

On Saturday 16 September, von Rundstedt started the final encirclement of the armies of Poznan and Pomorze. The decimated divisions of the Army of Poznan managed to cut a path to the lower Bzura, but the Army of Pomorze was cut off and pressed into the fork of the Vistula and Bzura rivers.

On Sunday 17 September 1939, General Guderian's XIX Panzer Corps, proceeding along the right bank of the Vistula, seized Wlodawa and formed a bridgehead on the left bank of the Bug. His armored spearheads reached the Lublin-Kovel rail line and cut off Polish forces on the northern front from retreat behind the Bug. Meanwhile 4th Army Corps advanced from the Annapol area via Krasnik to Krasnystaw and Lublin, cutting the Polish Army of Lublin in half and severing all communication between its two parts, while the Fourteenth Army blocked the way south.

Fourteenth Army now formed a west-facing front along the line Zamosc-Tomaszow-Lubelski. The center of Fourteenth Army advanced to Lvov where it encountered violent resistance. It was attacked from the rear by the remains of the Army of the Carpathians which had been encircled after evacuating Przemysl and was now trying to break through the encircling German lines in the direction of Lvov.

On the morning of the same day, Sunday 17 September, two Soviet army groups marched into eastern Poland: the White Russian Front (front = army group) under General Kovalev, made up of the Third, Fourth, Tenth and Eleventh Armies; and the Ukrainian Front under General Timoshenko, made up of the Fifth, Sixth and Twelfth Armies. The Soviets were planning to share Hitler's spoils as provided in the German-Soviet non-aggression treaty of 23 August 1939. That same evening the Polish government and army command moved to Rumanian territory where they were interned.

On 18 and 19 September the resistance of General Kutrzeba's Army of Pomorze ended inside the pocket on the Bzura. The remains of the Army of Poznan under General Bortnowski fought their way through to Warsaw. There were now 180,000 Polish soldiers in the capital but few units were adequately armed. As soon as the fighting on the Bzura ended, the German forces there were transferred to Warsaw. Massed air raids and heavy artillery bombardment were to be used to soften up the capital before the assault.

On Tuesday 19 September, after further attempts to break out of the pocket had failed, the Polish armies of Poznan and Pomorze—totalling 170,000 men—surrendered by Kutno.

That same day the only existing Polish armored unit, the 10th Motorized Cavalry Brigade under General Maczek, crossed the border into Hungary where they were interned. The 10th Motorized,



part of the Army of Krakow under General Szylling, had scarcely any contact with the enemy during the Polish campaign. General Maczek managed to reach France with his soldiers and later led another armored brigade.

On Wednesday 20 September 1939, units of von Reichenau's Tenth Army and List's Fourteenth Army surrounded the 60,000-man Polish Army of Lublin under General Piskor, which surrendered on the same day.

On 22 September 1939 General Langner, commander of the Polish forces in Lvov, surrendered to the Soviet Red Army.

On Sunday 24 September 1939 the Luftwaffe began its raids on the Polish capital, which had been encircled since September 19, to prepare the assault by von Küchler's Third Army and von Reichenau's Tenth Army, planned for September 25.

On the afternoon of September 27, Hitler ordered the OKH, the German army command chiefs, to work out a plan of operations against France. The staff of General von Rundstedt, who had devised the successful attack plan against Poland, were not brought into the consultation.

On Thursday 28 September, after running out of ammunition and rations, the 120,00 Polish defenders of Warsaw under General Rómmel surrendered.

On the day the Polish capital surrendered, a German-Soviet friendship treaty partitioning Poland was signed in Moscow by von Ribbentrop and Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov.

Next day, September 29, the Modlin Garrison under General Thomée laid down their arms. Parts of the Armies of Krakow and Lublin were still fighting at Tomaszow Lubelski; scattered Polish forces fought on along the northern front, and the Polesie Group under General Kleeberg was still effectively resisting at Kock.

On Sunday 1 October, 4,000 men of the Polish navy under Rear-Admiral Unrug surrendered on the Hel peninsula on the Baltic.

On Friday 6 October the last Polish field troops – 16,800 men under General Kleeberg – laid down their arms at Kock and Lublin. Some 120,000 Polish soldiers had managed to escape across the Rumanian and Hungarian borders and later served with the Allies. Over 700,000 Polish troops had become German prisoners-of-war, while the USSR reported capturing 217,000. German losses in the Polish campaign were 10,570 dead, 3,404 missing and 30,322 wounded; 217 tanks and 282 planes were also lost. The USSR lost 737 dead and 1,859 wounded.

Armored troops had proved crucially significant in the Polish Campaign, and the German system of "command from forward" [i.e. speeding up the advance by keeping all armored unit commanders as far forward as possible and allowing them to issue radio commands to troops following] had proved its worth. Yet panzer general Heinz Guderian believed that the armored divisions were still far too often governed by the interests of the slower infantry. The infantry forces retorted that for them the real fighting began only when the tanks had moved on, and they suffered heavy losses attacking the remaining fortifications and nests of resistance. The rifle units of the armored divisions also had their grievances: The trucks that carried the rifle regiments could not operate cross-country like the tanks and, as non-armored vehicles, were very susceptible even to infantry fire.

The great material superiority of the German forces over the Poles and, above all, the German command of the air, had made it relatively easy for the German armored units to carry out their missions. The Polish Campaign also confirmed the importance of massed surprise thrusts by instant assemblies of armored units, and proved the great operational and strategic potential of strong armored and motorized troops supported by the air force. Moreover, surprise armored attacks were now a basic element in the new tactical warfare.

After the Polish Campaign, each German panzer division was assigned its own Luftwaffe unit whose signals officers would maintain unbroken radio contact with the advancing tanks.

German armor proved its worth in Poland in technical as in other respects, for as a rule no more than 25% of German vehicles were out of action at any one time due to technical breakdowns. But by the end of the campaign, almost all the tanks were in need of overhaul. The light divisons had stood up least well. They were too weakly equipped with tanks and could assume neither the duties of an infantry division nor of a fully motorized rifle division.

In any case, the use of mobile warfare had resulted in lower casualties on both sides than would have been suffered in a trench war. The Germans lost 44,000 including 10,000 dead. Polish losses could not be accurately determined. They are estimated as 200,000 – that is 25% of the participating forces – including 66,000 dead.

Among the legends that resulted from the September Campaign are tales of Polish cavalry charging German tanks with sabres and lances. These tales, started by Nazi propagandists, even today haunt histories of the September 1939 war between Germany and Poland. In reality the Polish lancers were not of a suicidal disposition, and no case is known of Polish cavalry deliberately attacking



Autumn 1939, French tanks on the skirts of the Maginot Line

tanks. Naturally a number of cavalry charges were led against German infantry which was then assisted by armored vehicles, and there were also instances of German tank attacks on Polish cavalry, in which the Poles' only chance of survival lay in breakneck maneuvers to try to get past the tanks.

On October 19 the German OKH completed its first plan of operations for the attack in the West.

In October 1939 German code experts succeeded in deciphering the French military codes. French radio traffic confirmed the presence of a weak seam between second-ranking divisions at Sedan. This vulnerable boundary zone between French units now became the planned target sector for von Rundstedt's Army Group A, including Kleist's and Guderian's panzer groups and Reinhardt's panzer corps – five panzer divisions in all.

On 7 November 1939 the attack date for the Western offensive was postponed for the first time, to November 15. A total of 29 more postponements took place before the German attack finally went forward on 10 May 1940.

France appeared oblivious to the experiences of the Polish Campaign and altered neither organization nor management of its existing motorized units. One of the few military men in France who understood the Polish example was Colonel Charles de Gaulle. In November 1939 he submitted a memorandum to the highest military authorities, pointing out the significance of what had happened in Poland, the fallacies of a policy of passive defense, the possibility of a German breakthrough of the Maginot Line, and the need to form strong armored and motorized units. All his warnings went unheeded.

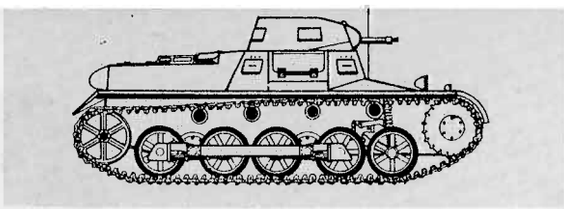
After occupying eastern Poland, the Soviet Union demanded bases in the Baltic States for its Baltic Sea fleet. The Baltic States were coerced into forming mutual assistance pacts with the USSR, which then used the pacts as a pretext for invasion. The Red Army invaded Estonia (population 1 million) on 18 October 1939; at the end of October it moved into Latvia (population 2 million), and in early November into Lithuania (population 2.7 million). Despite Soviet promises of territorial compensation and Soviet demonstrations of military strength, Finland with its 4 million inhabitants rejected the USSR's demands that it accede to a similar arrangement.

On Sunday 26 November 1939 Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov claimed that Finnish troops had fired on Soviet territory, demanded that all Finnish troops withdraw to 15 miles behind the border, and revoked a non-aggression pact which had existed between the two nations since 1932.

On Wednesday 29 November 1939 the Soviets attacked Finland around Petsamo, and on November 30 attacked on all other fronts, without any previous declaration of war. Soviet warships fired on the coast of southern Finland, and Helsinki was bombed by the Soviet air force.

Finland had a peacetime army of barely 30,000 men, only 9 divisions of 3 infantry regiments each, with which to meet the initial Soviet onslaught. In addition Finland had 60 largely obsolete tanks, 150 planes and 22 antiaircraft guns. It had virtually no antitank weapons, and its ammunition supplies would last for a month at most.

On the opposing side, the Soviets had almost 30 divisions with powerful armored forces and 800 aircraft. Each of the Soviet divisions outnumbered each Finnish division by 3,500 men and had twice the number of automatic weapons and trench mor-



The German Panzer I light training tank (official designation PzKpfw I, Model B) first produced in 1934

tars, and three times the artillery. Moreover, each Soviet division had 40 to 50 tanks and unlimited supplies of ammunition. The Soviets were so certain of their victory that they straightaway formed a Communist people's democracy under the Finnish Communist leader J. Kusinen in the border town of Teriyoki. The focal point of the Finnish defense was the fortified Mannerheim Line on the Karelian peninsula. The Soviet Seventh Army under General Meretskov and the Thirteenth Army under General Grendal prepared to invade the Karelian peninsula, and the Eighth, Ninth, and Fourteenth Armies lay north of Lake Ladoga.

On Thursday 30 November 1939 two Soviet infantry divisions, reinforced with tanks, crossed the Finnish border at Lonkha and Raate and advanced toward Oulu on the Gulf of Bothnia (arm of the Baltic Sea). The weak and inadequately armed Finnish border troops had to retreat to a defensive position on the western bank of the Niskanselkä. The Soviets were not outfitted for winter but had strong artillery forces and large numbers of tanks. The Finnish troops had no antitank guns and almost no antiaircraft guns with which to fight off the powerful Soviet air force. Nevertheless they forced the Soviet troops to retreat. Finnish ski troops pursued their enemy where he was bogged down in deep snow and inflicted heavy losses.

On Christmas Day five more Finnish battalions arrived on the field, attacked the encircled Soviet 163rd Rifle Division from all directions on December 27, and annihilated them in a period of three days, thereby acquiring 27 cannon, 11 tanks, 150 trucks and large numbers of infantry weapons plus ammunition. They then used this captured matériel against the Soviet 44th Mechanized Division which was grounded on a 5-mile-long forest path and could not deploy its heavy weapons and tanks due to the deep snow.

On Thursday 28 December the Finnish 9th Division under Colonel Siilasuo finished off the 163rd Rifle Division (part of the Soviet Ninth Army) at Suomussalmi, using guerrilla ski troops.

The basic flaw in Soviet management was that they failed to synchronize the attacks by their two divisions. As a result the Finns were able to fight them one at a time, split them up into smaller groups, sever their supply lines and prevent reinforcements. The Soviets with their heavy weapons, were forced to use the few available roads in the heavily forested zones and could not spread out laterally, so their vulnerable flanks were exposed to the enemy.

The Finnish commander-in-chief, Field Marshal Baron von Mannerheim, believed that the only way to fend off enemy attack was by a mobile defense and a swift alternation of fighting methods. When the Soviet 44th Mechanized Division brought up reinforcements, they were halted in the forest lane of Juivasjärvi by a mere two Finnish gun batteries and two antitank guns.

Meanwhile, a *drôle de guerre*, a "funny kind of war" (called the "twilight" or "phoney war" by the British and Americans), was being waged on the Rhine along the Maginot and Siegfried Lines. During the time that Poland was bleeding to death, the French army lost a mere 50 men. France had two million men under arms but the soldiers of the tricolore behaved as if they were on leave. The *drôle de guerre* involved nothing more than an occasional patrol of the German West Wall, from which not a shot was fired because in reality the German forces were in the East and Germany did not have a Western Front. For French soldiers the only battle of the winter of 1939/40 was a battle against tedium, and the busiest section of the general staff was the one in charge of arranging theatrical productions along the front.

The French secret service, the Deuxième Bureau, had produced a study clearly revealing that the German victory in Poland was solely attributable to the collaboration between tanks and the Luftwaffe, but it was mid-May 1940 before French military staffs received this information, and by that time many of them were already German prisoners-of-war. The French had hoped, by their betrayal of Poland, to buy themselves a reprieve from Hitler that they could use to reinforce their troops, but just the opposite happened.

When it was remarked to French General Huntziger that the Meuse river could pose no barrier to tanks that had crossed the Bug and the Vistula with ease, he replied "Poland is Poland! We are in France!"

1940

January—June

Belgians Lodge Protest in Berlin
Thursday 11 January 1940, Brussels
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

The Belgian government has protested to the German government about the violation of Belgian neutrality by a German military aircraft that made an emergency landing near Mechelen (Mechlin).

Soviet Deserters
Saturday 13 January 1940, Moscow
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:

In an order of the day, the Soviet high command of the military district of Leningrad pointed out that some members of the Soviet Army on the Finnish Front, prefer captivity to fighting the Finns. Such behavior is alien to Soviet Army tradition. The unit commanders are being held responsible for the desertions. Among the commanders are some who, despite their avowed devotion to socialism, are in reality reactionaries and counter-revolutionaries.

Soviet Army Equipment

Monday 15 January 1940, Kajaani (Finland)
The Finnish news agency *Suomen Tietotoimisto (SST)* reported:

Among the Soviet war matériel seized on Lake Kjanta by Finnish troops, were thousands of ski instruction manuals still packed inside crates. Nevertheless, some very good skiers have been seen fighting on the Soviet side—namely Soviet Karelians [Finland's neighbors between Finland and the White Sea] serving in the Red Army. Otherwise, the absence of Soviet winter equipment indicates that Stalin expected the Finnish Campaign to be concluded successfully before the onset of winter. Soviet military equipment is only now undergoing winter camouflaging. Not until after the battle of Raate did Soviet tanks begin to be painted with a white camouflage coating, and antitank guns to be draped in white covers.

Finnish patrols report that the Soviets are now taking measures to protect their supply route from the Soviet base at Kandalaksha on the White Sea to the Finnish border—a route which is easily traversable as long as the temperature is below freezing. Thousands of trees have been felled along both sides of the 60-mile-long road to keep Finnish patrols at bay. The tree-felling operation is mostly being carried out by Polish prisoners-of-war.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief [Otto Dietrich]
15 January 1940:

A German News Bureau report is being issued today which will call on Germans sojourning in Belgium and Holland to return home. This report must simply be quoted [by the German Press]; no comment is to be made on it.

German General Staff Officer Loses His Way

Thursday 18 January 1940, London
The British *Exchange News Agency* announced:

A *Daily Telegraph* special correspondent in Liège has told how a plan of German military operations against Belgium allegedly fell into the hands of the Belgian authorities. A German general staff officer had been ordered to carry important documents from the high command in Berlin to Cologne, and it was planned that he should travel by rail for greater safety. But the officer had only recently married a woman from Cologne, and

when he heard that a friend of his in the German Luftwaffe was just about to fly to Cologne, he decided to fly along so as to reach the city faster and spend the evening with his wife. But the pilot lost his way and on Wednesday last week landed in Mechelen, Belgium. The first thing the staff officer did upon landing was to ask a peasant for matches and try to burn his documents. Belgian soldiers rushed up and forcibly prevented him. During his interrogation at the nearest Belgian military post, the German officer contrived to grab the documents and throw them into the fireplace; but a Belgian officer succeeded in rescuing them before they caught fire. The *Daily Telegraph* claims that the documents relate to the transfer of 22 newly formed German divisions from the Berlin area to the left bank of the Rhine. The transfer is said to be already in progress, and most of the divisions have been assigned to the Belgian border. The Belgian secret service quickly verified that the troop movements described are in fact taking place.

Bids to Buy Soviet Tanks
18 January 1940, Stockholm
The Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* reported:

The Finnish government has received inquiries from a number of foreign nations asking to buy captured Soviet tanks from Finland. Offers have been made for usable specimens of every type of Soviet tank.

The Mannerheim Line
18 January 1940, Brussels
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:

Belgian General Badoux, architect of the Mannerheim Line [of Finnish fortifications on the Karelian isthmus], has compiled detailed data on the Finnish defensive system. He believes that the Karelian isthmus will be the main theater of the Finnish-Russian war. The Finns have built tank hurdles in this area using giant boulders called "kivi." Even heavy tanks cannot overcome these rocks and so become easy prey for the antitank guns. The Finns' abundant supply of wood has enabled them to develop a special process whereby they can mix concrete even at a temperature of 20 degrees below zero Centigrade (–4 degrees F.). As a result they have been able to double or triple the strength of the Mannerheim Line at various points since the outbreak of hostilities.

Badoux is convinced that the Finnish Army will hold the Mannerheim Line.

Tension in Belgium
Saturday 20 January 1940, Brussels
The Belgian *Belga News Agency* reported:

Calm has returned to the country after the alarming reports of the weekend; but the security measures taken in response are still in force. No doubt the Government has good reason to maintain them. However, the ban on soldiers' taking leave is due to be lifted shortly.



Opposite page: Colonel Charles de Gaulle talking with French president Lebrun in the winter of 1939/40, when de Gaulle once again vainly implored French leaders to take a more modern view of tanks

Finland, February 1940. An armored Soviet STZ-Komsomolet prime mover (tractor) that has just been captured by Finnish soldiers. The vehicle had been covered by an awning and used for personnel transport.

Dutch Defensive Installations
Wednesday 24 January 1940, Amsterdam
The Dutch news agency *Algemeen Nederlandsch Persbureau (ANP)* announced:

Dutch defensive installations are of modern design and strongly fortified. Thus during an attack the army would not have to fight in the open field, but could hold defensive lines capable of intercepting the enemy. Both fronts are protected by watercourses and floodplains. Ditches up to 1,500 feet wide have been dug and filled with water as tank obstacles. In addition, the terrain has been studded with countless minefields, machine gun nests, etc. Especially important is the fact that the defenses are not visible from the outside.

The Age of Mechanized Armed Forces

Friday 26 January 1940
Memorandum submitted by *Colonel Charles de Gaulle:*

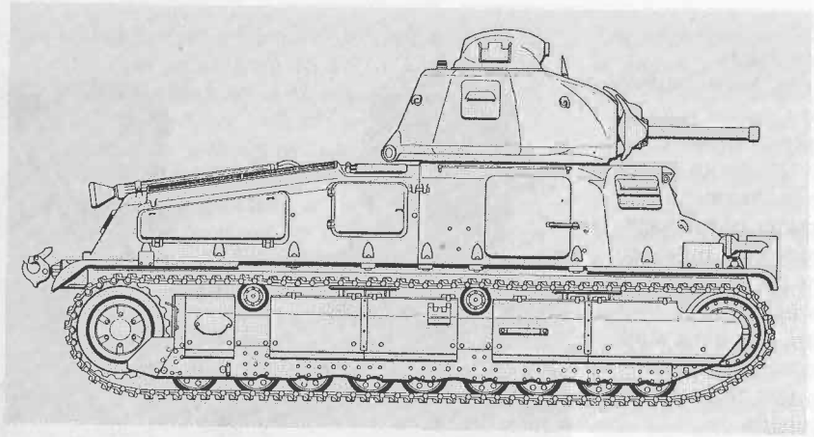
In today's warfare no active design is possible without the deployment of motorized forces... We began the war with 5 million soldiers, yet our aerial forces are only now being equipped and our armored vehicles are too weak and too few in number... The tank arm consists of virtually nothing but modern light tanks, and our basic principle is that they be deployed only in small groups to support the infantry...

The amazing victories achieved by the motorized forces in Poland, may encourage the Germans to send their panzer units on new and even grander missions. Regarding this we must know that despite all the fortifications that the Maginot Line now has or will acquire, and regardless of the strength of the infantry or artillery that occupy or support it, it *can* be crossed—which moreover is the same fate that awaits all fortifications in the long run... Technology and industry are at present capable of building tanks which, deployed in mass, can run over our fortifications without difficulty, regardless of whether these are active or passive... The only way to fight motorized units successfully is with tank formations! Massed assaults by aerial and tank forces against an enemy who will be more or less disorganized after breaching our defensive line, are the absolutely necessary means to a modern defense... In the present conflict, as in all those that preceded it, the operative law is: He who does not act will be beaten. Enforced inactivity is having a dangerous influence on the morale of the army and the nation. Five million young and active Frenchmen have been under arms for many months—and for how many more?—without having been deployed against any military target. The vague feeling of impotence



that can be observed to emanate from the commanders as the result of the present system, and that is not leading them to action on either side of the front, is beginning to spread through the nation and among the troops... We will achieve no decisive result so long as our armored units are not deployed in mass... To be sure we have, or could command, a quantity of motorized divisions, but only so-called "light" divisions, whereas our other heavier armored divisions are set up exclusively to support the old type of local military units. But the point is: The armored divisions not only need to be strengthened but also reorganized so as to give them the capability to act independently, to free them from the old style of deployment from the limitations of range and all the handicaps that necessarily arise out of dependent operations....

The armored units must be equipped with everything they need in order to advance and to overcome obstacles—including special vehicles that can secure supplies and reinforcements independently of road conditions or terrain... The French people must on no account accept that the immobility of our military in the present war is the right course. The opposite is the case. Mechanization confers greater destructive power and range, so sooner or later the most important factor in the present war will be movement, surprise, penetration, and speed surpassing all lightning operations of the past... Let us not deceive ourselves. The present hostilities are liable to expand considerably and to surpass all past devastation. The crisis in the political, economic, social and moral spheres, of which the present conflict is the consequence,



Left: The Char Somua S-35 French medium fighting tank (first produced in 1936)

Below center: German panzer-troop insignia

Below left: French A. M. D. Panhard and Levassor Type 178 French armored reconnaissance car (first produced in 1935)

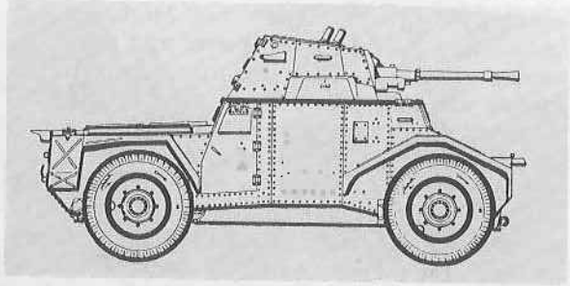
has opened an omnipresent abyss. It is leading inevitably to a complete reversal in the situation of our nation and the structure of our state... It is high time that France should draw the appropriate conclusions!

No Fear for the Future
Monday 29 January 1940, Paris
The French *Havas News Agency* reported that on Monday evening French Premier Daladier addressed the French people, saying:

Under the protection of its army France has preserved all those goods that other peoples have already lost or for which other nations tremble. Like our ally Great Britain, France feels no fear when it thinks of the future. It is certain of victory. The great fear that is tormenting Europe, makes pause at our borders, outside our entanglements of barbed wire and the casemates where our young men watch and fight. Total war still hesitates to break out—due to our soldiers, who ward off violence with the wall of our strength; who every day in heavy outpost battles before our defensive lines, dictate to enemy patrols how they must act...

It is good for France to be serene; it is only right and fitting for her to have absolute confidence in her fate.

The Expansion of the Maginot Line
Monday 5 February 1940, Paris
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:



Thanks to the work on the trenches which our armies have carried out daily for the past four months, the northeast coast of France offers every security against surprise attack. We are remaining on the alert, but the increasing sense of security in Paris is apparent not least in the fact that the nightlife has now returned to normal.



Penetration of the Mannerheim Line
Thursday 8 February 1940
Finnish Headquarters reported:

Soviet assault divisions attacking the Finnish Mannerheim Line have always been replaced by fresh divisions after midnight—a tactic that the sparse Finnish forces cannot imitate. So far the Soviets have not broken through, but they have succeeded in penetrating our forward lines to a depth of about 2 miles and driven a wedge into our positions at Summa. The fighting is taking place in temperatures of about 30 degrees below zero Centigrade, which helps to explain the heavy Soviet losses and the insignificant numbers of prisoners being taken. Wounded men not immediately transferred to military hospitals, are mercilessly exposed to die in the snow, and again and again we have seen our assailant simply abandon his wounded comrades to their fate.

Early this morning the fighting resumed with undiminished bitterness. Evidently the Soviets have deployed a Siberian division today. Matériel losses seem to be playing less of a role.

Soviet Tanks

Tuesday 13 February 1940, Rovaniemi (Finland)
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

To those who were able to observe how quickly the Finnish troops got over the first daunting impression made by the Soviet tanks and how rapidly they devised new methods of defense against them, it comes as no surprise to read in this week's Finnish communiqués that the Finns claim to have destroyed large numbers of these armored monsters. Thanks to their victories at Kemijärvi, Kjanta, and Raate, the Finns now have a far higher number of antitank guns than at the start of the war; mines also play an important role in the antitank defense. An effective substitute for mines is six or seven hand grenades fastened together with wire. The Finns hurl these "bunches of grapes" at the side or rear wall of a tank at close range; at the same time they often throw bottles of gasoline which are set alight by the explosion of the hand grenades so that the tank is flooded with burning gasoline and the crew must surrender if they do not want to be burned alive. Another method of defeating a tank is to climb up onto it from behind, pry open the entrance hatch with a crowbar and toss in a hand grenade. Great courage is required for this, and also for the extremely simple expedient of forcing a tree branch or a stake between the tracks and the drive gear. Even the heaviest tanks can be brought to a halt in this way and then fired on until the crew surrender. The difficulty of this method lies in getting close enough without being shot by the tank machine guns.

On the Battlefield in Finland
Saturday 24 February 1940
A correspondent of the American *United Press News Agency* reported after a stay with the Finnish troops northeast of Lake Ladoga:

I was told that the first detachment of a Soviet division had run into a Finnish trap at Syskyjärvi and was wiped out to the last man. I did not see many traces of the fighting but only a large number of still usable tanks and a few trucks loaded

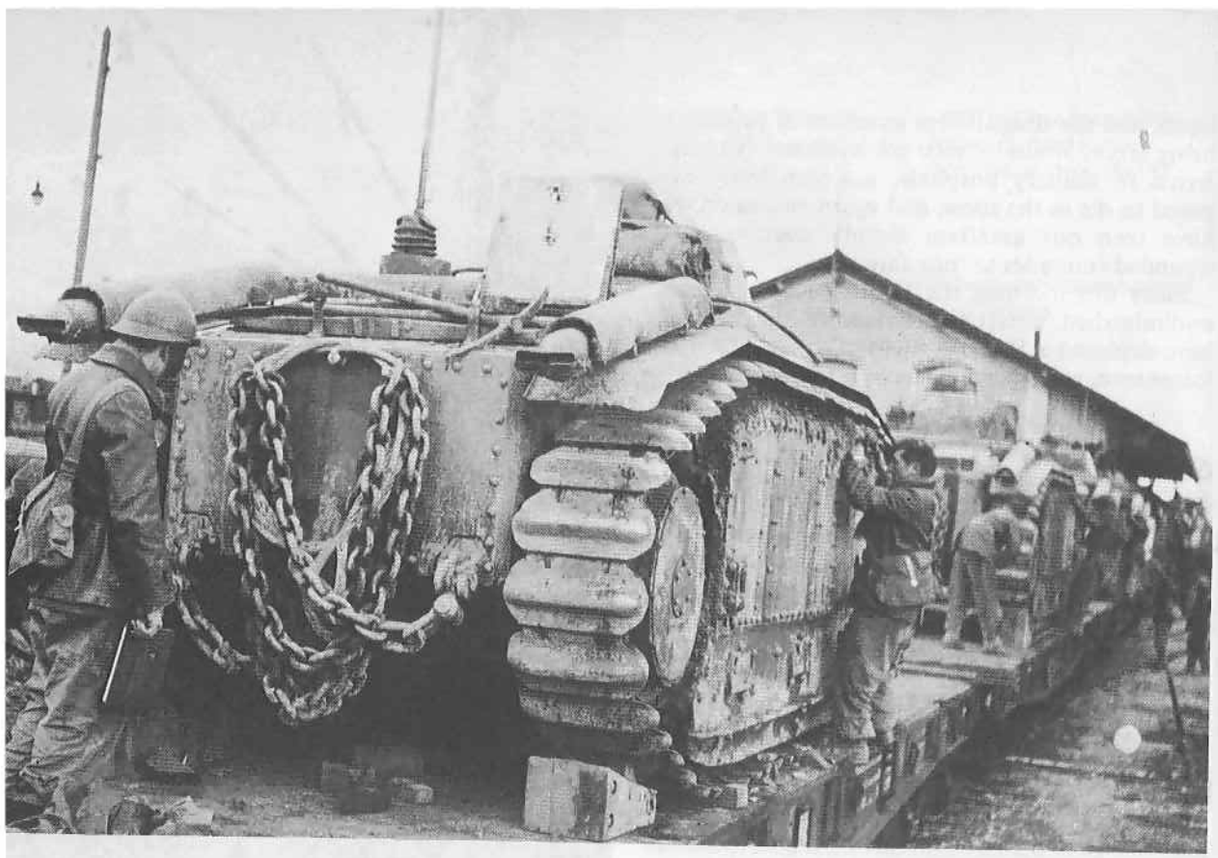


French Renault FT-17 light infantry tanks at Le Havre, 1940. The FT-17, which was first deployed in 1918, became so popular after World War I that the French had to stop its export. Its greatest advantage was its small size which allowed it to be transported by truck.

with war matériel. As we travelled farther along the road, we met a transport train of captured equipment. The Finns were bringing back a great quantity of tractor vehicles and cannon. Part of this matériel is ready to be used again at once, the rest has first to be taken to repair workshops. The Soviet 18th Division was one of the most powerful motorized units to fight in the Finnish-Soviet war; so naturally the equipment captured here by the Finns, is of a higher quality than anything they seized in the past.

War Equipment Losses
Sunday 3 March 1940, Paris
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:

Saturday's Soviet Army report on the quantities of Finnish matériel seized by the Soviets, caused great merriment among the Finnish general staff because they had not been aware that Finland even had that much equipment to lose.



April 1940. Char B1 heavy combat tanks being loaded for shipment. These most powerful of French tanks were impervious to all German guns except 8.8-cm flak.

The Final Battles
Wednesday 13 March 1940
Finnish Headquarters reported:

The defenders of [the Finnish city of] Viipuri [Russian *Vyborg*] fought on to the last hour [before the ceasefire]. Despite an overwhelming deployment of infantry and artillery the Soviets were unable to envelop the city, or to break down resistance in the city center near the main rail station and in two of the western suburbs. Another violent assault ensued at 5:00 A.M. after a two-hour bombardment of barricades and fortified positions by Soviet minethrowers and gun tanks. The Soviets did not succeed in achieving a victory before the ceasefire came into force.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
13 March 1940:

The German Press is to treat the conclusion of peace between Finland and Russia in the following way. The first thing to emphasize is that Britain failed to find in Finland a dupe like Poland which it could make pass through the fire for its sake without in the least making good on its promises to lend assistance. It must also be emphasized that throughout this conflict Germany has maintained strict neutrality. As yesterday's developments show, Germany's strictly neutral posture has turned out to be the right one.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
13 March 1940:

For the rest, the crucially important thing is that the German people's will to fight is not impaired. We must avoid creating any premature mood of peace, in view of the battle that the German people now have to wage.

Confiscation of Bronze Bells
Tuesday 19 March 1940, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

In a German law decree issued by Hermann Göring, deputy for the Four-Year Plan [which gave him wide powers to direct the German economy], we read: "To create the necessary metal reserves for waging a long-term war, all bells made of bronze are to be reported and handed in. For the time being, copper building materials need only be reported, and the date on which they are to be handed in will be announced later. The Reich will bear the costs of dismantling and picking up the bells."

German Invasion of Scandinavia

Tuesday 9 April 1940
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

(Special Report) The German Wehrmacht has undertaken the armed protection of Denmark and Norway in order to defend their neutrality against the British attack which is under way.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
9 April 1940:

You are to treat as follows the German News Bureau's reports on German [military] measures in the North [i.e. Norway and Denmark]: a) the Wehrmacht report should be preceded by a personal commentary from you, based on the preamble circulated by the German News Bureau; b) following the Wehrmacht report, you should print the memorandum verbatim. Make a large display of the headlines; you can even bring out special editions. The tenor of the headlines should be as follows: Lightning-swift German reply to British attempts to turn Scandinavia into the theater of war against Germany.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Friday 12 April 1940:

The view expressed by Soviet Russia concerning the German operation to occupy the North, is an excellent representation of the German viewpoint. So far insufficient attention has been paid to Soviet opinion, so the German News Bureau will present a compiled report about it which should then be presented in the German press.

Thursday 9 May 1940, Amsterdam
The Dutch *ANP News Agency* reported:

The Hague regards our situation abroad as unchanged; at the moment there are no particular signs of a threat to Dutch neutrality.

9 May 1940, Paris
The *French Army Report* stated:

In the area east of the Moselle, a number of enemy patrols have been repulsed by French artillery and infantry fire.

9 May 1940
The German *Wehrmacht High Command (the OKW)* announced:

The day passed quietly on the Western Front.

Attack in the West!

Friday 10 May 1940
The German *Wehrmacht High Command (the OKW)* announced:

At 5:30 A.M. today, German troops crossed the borders of Holland, Luxembourg and Belgium. Enemy resistance near the border was broken everywhere by vigorous action, often with the closest cooperation of the Luftwaffe.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
10 May 1940:

The following conclusions should be drawn from the present military situation when making your reports: a) you must absolutely avoid exaggerating our initial victories in the enemy's foreground; b) you must not speak of our operations as decisive until the German assault troops engage the bulk of the Franco-British Allied army; c) any seizure of territory we achieve in Holland and Belgium means that our Luftwaffe acquires bases closer to our principal foe, Britain, and expands the outskirts of the western German industrial district and thus improves the foundation for its aerial defense.

Below: The strategically important Moerdijk road bridge (Holland) was seized in a surprise airborne assault by the 2nd Battalion of the German 1st Parachute Regiment (under Captain Prager) early on the morning of 10 May 1940. At ca. 5,100 feet the Moerdijk road and rail bridges were the two longest in Europe. After paratroops captured the road bridge, the German 9th Panzer Division advanced across it to Rotterdam.

German Troops outside Rotterdam
10 May 1940
The *German News Bureau (DNB)* reported:

While in northeastern Holland life is returning to normal after German troops rapidly occupied the territory up to the Zuider See [IJsselmeer], advancing German columns are exerting pressure on other Dutch positions which have not yet been taken. A particularly significant indication for future developments, is the fact that powerful German mobile troops travelling by the land route, have now made contact with German airborne troops who landed near Rotterdam on the first day of the hostilities; thus the so-called Fortress Holland [i.e. the part of Holland which could be isolated behind strong defensive lines] has now been outflanked. Moreover, the German airborne troops dropped near Rotterdam have made further


neutres — ceux qui
— comprendront ils,
ois ?

Paris-soir

GRAND QUOTIDIEN D'INFORMATIONS ILLUSTRÉES

6e ÉDITION

50 cent

es ALLEMANDS ont ENVAHI

ce matin à l'aube

HOLLANDE, LA BELGIQUE ET LE LUXEMBOURG

UXELLES bombardée

irande bataille aérienne

dessus d'AMSTERDAM

Les troupes allemandes ont franchi la frontière hollandaise ce matin à 3 heures

LE ROI DES BELGES a pris le commandement de l'armée

MER DU NORD

HOLLANDE

ALLEMAGNE

territorial gains on their own. The area around Moerdijk and The Hague is thus now under control of German arms.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Saturday 11 May 1940:

There must be no sensation mongering about our apparent military progress. For the rest, reports you offer about the points and places reached by German troops, and about military occurrences, must differ in no way from their official description by the OKW.

Tuesday 14 May 1940, Paris
The *French Army Report* stated:

The German assault is increasing in violence. There is nothing important to report from Central Belgium. The enemy has reached the Meuse both in the area between Liège and Namur, and around Sedan. The latter city has been evacuated. Particularly bitter fighting has taken place right around and to the north of Dinant.

Fighting is continuing in the area south of Longwy as far as the Moselle. Enemy assaults around Weissenburg have been repulsed.

Our troops and those of our allies are fighting bravely against the enemy, who is using everything he has and deploying his armored and aerial forces.

14 May 1940
The German *OKW* announced:

In Holland we have succeeded in extending our penetration of the Grebbe Line southeast of Amersfoort and gained ground in the direction of Utrecht. Additional forces from the south are being led into Fortress Holland where our troops have forced their way to Rotterdam after destroying an enemy group at Dordrecht. Farther south, our troops have advanced via Breda to the mouth of the Scheldt river. Roosendaal has been taken. Also, in Belgium on Monday we crossed the Turnhout Canal southeast of the city of that name, and south of there we have reached the Grote Nete river. North of Namur our armored forces pursued enemy tanks retreating to the fortified Dyle river, after we had badly rattled them by earlier air and ground attacks.

The Belgian city of Liège is in German hands. In the sector south of the Namur-Liège line, our troops have left the Ardennes behind them and are beginning to reach the Meuse between Namur and Givet. Our movements in southern Belgium are also proceeding swiftly and according to plan.

First Great Armored Battle

14 May 1940
The *German News Bureau* reported:

We have learned from authoritative sources that for the first time in the war, a major armored battle has taken place northeast of Namur. French armored troops were deployed against German panzer forces to prevent them from advancing farther toward the Dyle river fortified line. The German tanks lost no time in accepting battle, cooperating closely with Luftwaffe bombing aircraft. The French were beaten and retreated in droves.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
14 May 1940:

Our penetration of Fortress Holland represents a major victory. We must particularly emphasize the threat to England that this implies. We must express the fact that we are now, so to speak, pressing England harder at this point, just as we are pressing it harder by having occupied southern Norway.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
14 May 1940:

With all respect for the victories we have already achieved, no confrontation has yet taken place with the mass of the British and French army. As soon as large-scale hostilities of this kind occur, the tempo of the German advance will naturally slow down; this is to be expected in the course of the next few days.

Surrender of the Dutch Army

Wednesday 15 May 1940, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* announced:

The Dutch commander-in-chief, having seen the surrender of Rotterdam and faced with the imminent capture of Utrecht and The Hague, has

Above: The 11 May 1940 issue of the Paris newspaper *Paris-Soir* announcing the German invasion of the West

Opposite page: A German panzer division advancing on the morning of 10 May 1940, in the first hours of the Western Campaign

ordered the whole of the Dutch army to lay down their arms.

15 May 1940, Paris
The *French Army Report* stated:

Violent enemy assaults using tank support, have taken place against Belgian, British and French troops at various points from Antwerp to north-west of Namur. All the assaults have been repulsed. Along the Meuse between Mézières and Namur the enemy has succeeded in crossing the river at several points. Fighting is continuing. Counterattacks with tanks and bomber aircraft, are going forward around Sedan where the enemy has gained some ground.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
15 May 1940:

You [the German Press] must not speak dismissively of the soldierly conduct of the individual Briton. On the other hand, you should emphasize the failure of the British command and the resultant headlong rout of the Allied troops.

Aircraft against Tanks
Thursday 16 May 1940, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The French have attempted to penetrate the German line at several points, deploying the heaviest French tanks for the first time. Our ground troops and the Luftwaffe together have intercepted this counterattack and have beaten back the mobile French fortress vehicles. It turns out that the large French tanks make very good targets for the Luftwaffe. In fact large numbers of enemy tanks have been put out of action by squarely aimed bombs.

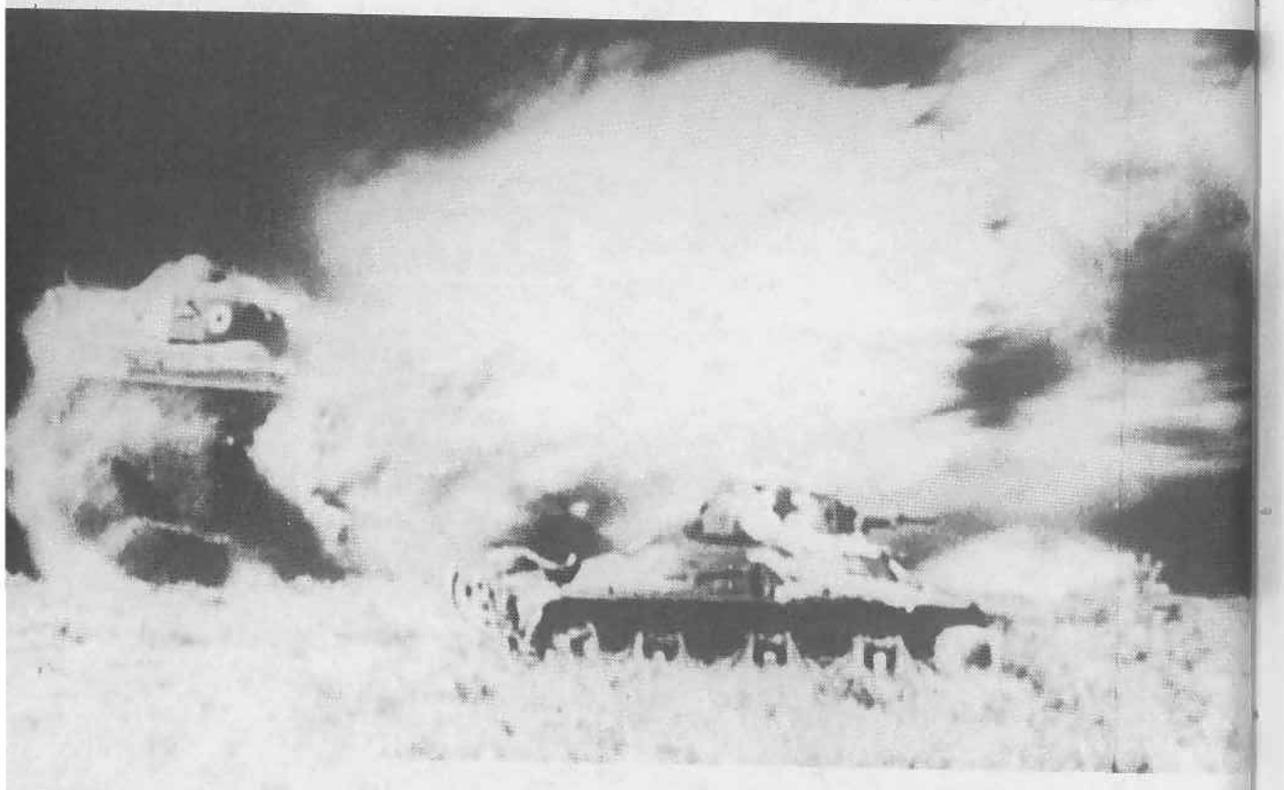
16 May 1940, Moscow
The Soviet *TASS News Agency* reported:

Britain and France intended to attack Germany across Dutch and Belgian territory. Once again Germany has forestalled them.

... For a long time the Allies had planned to draw Belgium and Holland into the war. But Germany has again taken countermeasures just as it did a few months ago [in Poland and Norway], and because superiority always rests with the side that takes the initiative, Germany has already shown it has the upper hand. The events in Norway, Holland and Belgium are a lesson to all governments willing to dance to the tune of others who pledge to protect them. The present events can hardly fail to affect the Balkan peoples, and it is now clear to everyone how much Britain and France have to answer for since they rejected Germany's peace proposals last year.

Opposite page. German panzer general Guderian in his armored command car during the French Campaign

Below: A dramatic photograph showing a German Stuka dive bomber attack on a French armored troop. One tank has been hurled into the air by the force of the blast.



The French Government Is Staying in Paris!
Friday 17 May 1940, Paris
French Premier Paul Reynaud said in an address to the French nation:

... It has been claimed that the Government intends to leave Paris. That is not true. The Government is and will remain in Paris. It has been claimed that the enemy is using new and irresistible weapons, whereas in reality our airmen are covering themselves in glory, and our heavy tanks are superior to German tanks of the same category. It has been said that the enemy is now in Rheims or even in Meaux. Yet in fact he has succeeded only in crossing the Meuse and opening a broad pocket which our brave troops are just getting ready to close....

Frenchmen have established France for thirty generations, and France's strength is founded on its glorious past.

Winston Churchill to Paul Reynaud
17 May 1940:

Many congratulations upon appointing Weygand [as C-in-C of Allied forces replacing Gamelin], in whom we have entire confidence here.

It is not possible to stop columns of tanks from piercing thin lines and penetrating deeply. All ideas of stopping holes and hemming in these intruders are vicious. Principle should be, on the contrary, to punch holes. Undue importance should not be attached to the arrival of a few tanks at any particular point. What can they do if they enter a town? Towns should be held with riflemen, and tank personnel should be fired upon should they attempt to leave vehicles. If they cannot get food or drink or petrol, they can only make a mess and depart. Where possible, buildings should be blown down upon them. Every town with valuable cross roads should be held in this fashion. Secondly, the tank columns in the open must be hunted down and attacked in the open country by numbers of small mobile columns with a few cannon. Their tracks must be wearing out, and their energy must abate. [English quoted from p. 54 of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. 2, London, 1949]

17 May 1940, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

German troops have achieved sensational victories in France. After crossing the Meuse they have broken through the Maginot Line in their relentless advance, thus breaching the defensive ring of steel and concrete with which France has lined its eastern border. Evidently the French command was surprised by the direction of attack pursued by the German army as it advanced through the Ardennes. Hostilities west of the Meuse very quickly turned into a hot pursuit. Southeast of Sedan too, German forces have crossed the Rhine in the teeth of French resistance. Strong German forces have beaten back French relief attacks on their southern flank. Advancing French armored forces have been beaten with the support of German bomber aircraft, and the victories expanded into a large-scale counterassault.



Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Saturday 18 May 1940:

Take care that in all your comments on the victory reports, you point out the gravity and harshness of the battle as well as the size of the tasks that are yet to be resolved.

Monday 20 May 1940
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

In Belgium German troops are continuing their pursuit of the enemy rearguard. In the course of the pursuit we have crossed the Lendre and reached the upper Scheldt. British troops are making forced marches to reach the Channel ports; while at Maubeuge and south of Valenciennes, we have repulsed attacks by a Franco-Belgian army seeking a way out toward the south. The enemy has suffered extremely heavy losses, especially in tanks, in the course of this fighting, and after a vain attempt

to break out, is now heading back west with greatly weakened forces. South of there, our armored and motorized troops have seized the battlefield of the 1916 Battle of the Somme, along the road from Cambrai to Péronne.

French Marshal Pétain
20 May 1940, Madrid
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:

The Madrid public learned that the French ambassador to Spain, Marshal Pétain, had been recalled to France, only when it was announced that he has been appointed vice-premier of the French Cabinet. Strict secrecy was maintained about his journey to Paris.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
20 May 1940:

Messages cabled from Spain indicate that Marshal Pétain has stated that any further military operations by France would result in meaningless bloodshed. No reference must be made [by the German Press] to this report.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
20 May 1940:

The Press must clearly express that by all reports, the Belgians have fought well during the pursuit battles in western Belgium. The French too have operated strongly both in defense and counterattack, especially in their desperate breakout attempt south of Valenciennes and Maubeuge. On the other hand it should be emphasized that the British have retired from the scene in the last two days. Aerial reconnaissance reveals that their march columns are making hastily for the Channel ports. The assembly of transport vessels in the Channel ports indicates that the British plan a sea evacuation, if they have not begun it already.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Tuesday 21 May 1940:

May 10 marked the beginning of an extremely turbulent phase—perhaps the crucial phase—of the war in Europe. Events since the German assaults on Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg, are confirming the view of those who expected the great military decision to come along the Western Front... Consequently it can be said that the German grand offensive in the West came as no surprise to the Allied high command; and yet this grand offensive has achieved massive victories in the ten days since it began, and at the moment there is nothing to indicate that the Allied forces have succeeded in halting it... But above all it must be said that the rapid victories by the Germans are due to a fighting method that had never been used before the Polish Campaign of last September: complete mechanization of the attacking forces. Technology has taken over warfare. The offensive is not unfolding along one continuous front, but takes the form of countless spearhead thrusts by armored divisions.

Armored Battle at Cambrai

The following account by German Lt. Col. (Dr.) Hesse appeared in the German newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* on 22 May 1940:

The battlefield at Cambrai, Day 10 of our grand operation.

Yesterday afternoon I was witness to a military action which in this form has no precedent in history. It took place on the classic battlefield of the 1917 armored battle of Cambrai.

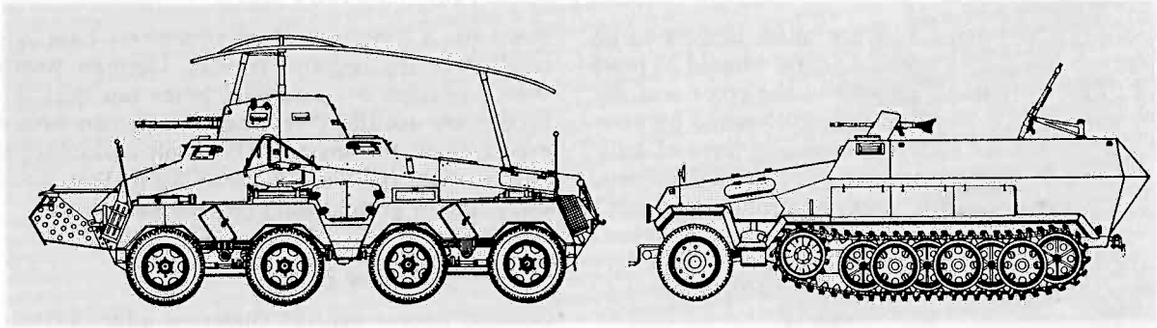
Imagine that along a 12-mile stretch of land you encounter every 10 or 20 yards a tank, an armored vehicle, a truck, a bus, or some other motor vehicle that has run into the road ditch, capsized or been gutted by fire; that in many cases these vehicles bear the impact of gun projectiles; and that dead men are scattered here and there all around them.

There must be over 1,000 vehicles here, abandoned by their crews, all testifying to the chaos that ensued on the road from Avesnes to Le Chateau and on toward Cambrai, on Day 9 of our grand operation.

A strong German armored unit under a bold commander, made a surprise thrust here, drove right in among the travelling and parking columns, fought at close range against the resisting enemy vehicles, defeated them, and with unprecedented speed and force smashed the foe it had brought to bay.

As I write these lines the battle is rolling on. Now that reconnaissance squads or aircraft have obtained the data we need to take action, hundreds of armored vehicles are rolling forward straight across the fields at speeds of 18, 24 or 30 miles an hour. At the head of this modern cavalry, or in the foremost group, rides the division general, a new Seydlitz [18th-century Prussian cavalry general] who, like the old one, must have a sharp eye to recognize with lightning speed when an opportunity to attack presents itself, and then to act. Like the divisional commander, the regimental and section commanders take part personally in the battle.

I have seen dozens of the heaviest French tanks shot to bits, charred and abandoned on this battlefield, not to mention the lighter tanks which in many cases did not even take up battle.



Above left: German heavy armored reconnaissance car, the Sd Kfz 232 (Fu), first produced in 1939

Above right: German medium armored infantry car (Sd Kfz 251/1), first produced in 1939

But it is above all the spirit of the young panzer troop which is responsible for winning an overwhelming victory.

Winston Churchill to French Premier Paul Reynaud
Thursday 23 May 1940:

Communications of Northern Armies have been cut by strong enemy armoured forces. Salvation of these armies can only be obtained by immediate execution of Weygand's plan. I demand the issue to the French commanders in north and south and Belgian G. H. Q. of the most stringent orders to carry this out and turn defeat into victory. Time is vital as supplies are short. [English quoted from p. 60 of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. 2, 1949]

Flamethrowing Tanks
Friday 24 May 1940, Paris
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

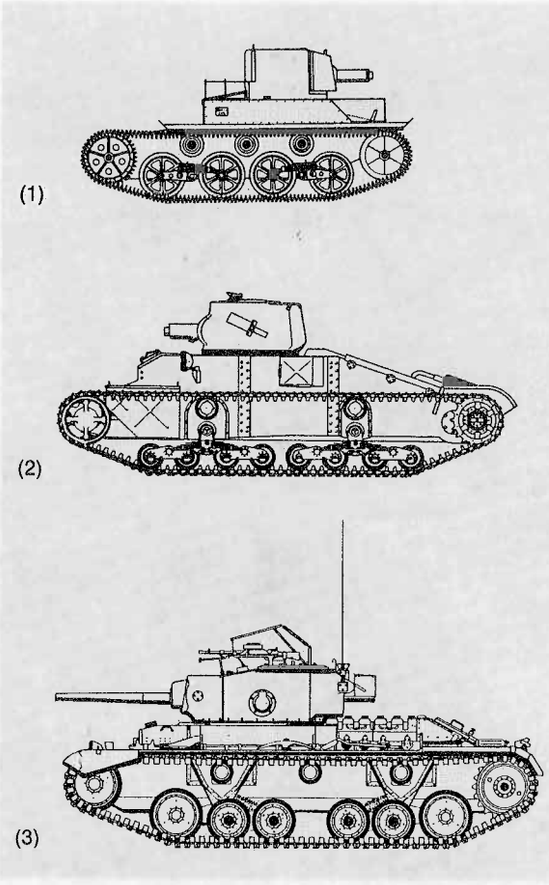
Yesterday a new German weapon was deployed for the first time: flamethrowing tanks whose crews are equipped with asbestos suits. The tanks are said to have been transported through Flanders as far as the English Channel, and assisted the German motorized units which had been halted in their push to the sea.

The French say that the Germans have lost over 1,400 tanks and other motorized vehicles in the last ten days, and that they have brought in flamethrowing tanks in an attempt to get the situation under control.

Winston Churchill to the British Chief of the Imperial General Staff [General Ironside]
Saturday 25 May 1940:

I must know at earliest why Gort [commander of British forces in France] gave up Arras, and what actually he is doing with the rest of his army. Is he still persevering in Weygand's plan, or has he become largely stationary? If the latter, what do you consider the probable course of events in the next few days, and what course do you recom-

Below:
(1): British Mark I light tank (produced 1939/40)
(2): British Mark I Matilda infantry tank (produced 1938/40)
(3): British Mark III Valentine infantry tank (first produced in May 1940)



mend? Clearly, he must not allow himself to be encircled without fighting a battle. Should he [not] do this by fighting his way to the coast and destroying the armored troops which stand between him and the sea with overwhelming force of artillery, while covering himself and the Belgian front, which would also curl back, by strong rearguards? To-morrow at latest this decision must be taken. [English quoted from p. 72 of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. 2, London, 1949]

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No. 91 dated 27 May 1940 (extract):

I. General comments: All German people are following with tireless interest and suspense the progress of the great battle of encirclement in Flanders and Artois. The overwhelming bulk of the population has accepted with complete understanding German press and radio statements saying that given the vastness of the area and the massive numbers of the encircled Allied troops, the tempo of our progress must necessarily slow down for a time; and these statements have not resulted in any negative rumors. German World War I veterans in particular, point out that the French are not the Poles and that we can hardly expect them to surrender but will undoubtedly have to fight them again [as in World War I] for every foot of ground and every emplacement.

Armed for New Deeds!

German panzer general Guderian addressed his troops [English quoted from p. 119 of the translation of Guderian's *Panzer Leader*, London, Michael Joseph, 1952.]:

Soldiers of the XIX Army Corps!

For seventeen days we have been fighting in Belgium and France. We have covered a good 400 miles since crossing the German border. We have reached the Channel Coast and the Atlantic Ocean. On the way here you have thrust through the Belgian fortifications, forced a passage of the Meuse, broken the Maginot Line extension in the memorable Battle of Sedan, captured the important heights at Stonne and then, without halt, fought your way through St. Quentin and Péronne to the lower Somme at Amiens and Abbéville. You have set the crown on your achievements by the capture of the Channel Coast and of the sea fortresses at Boulogne and Calais.

I asked you to go without sleep for 48 hours. You have gone for 17 days. I compelled you to accept risks to your flanks and rear. You never faltered.

With masterly self-confidence and believing in the fulfillment of your mission, you carried out every order with devotion.

Germany is proud of her Panzer Divisions and I am happy to be your commander.

We remember our fallen comrades with honor and respect, sure in the knowledge that their sacrifice was not in vain.

Now we shall arm ourselves for new deeds.

Signed, GUDERIAN

Tuesday 28 May 1940, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

Seeing the annihilating effect of German arms, the King of the Belgians has resolved to bring an end to further senseless resistance and to ask for a ceasefire.





Above. French Renault R-35 light tank waiting for a command to attack

Opposite page: Somewhere in France. A 38(t) Czech-designed German tank after a French bombing raid. In the background is the grave of one of its crewmen.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

28 May 1940:

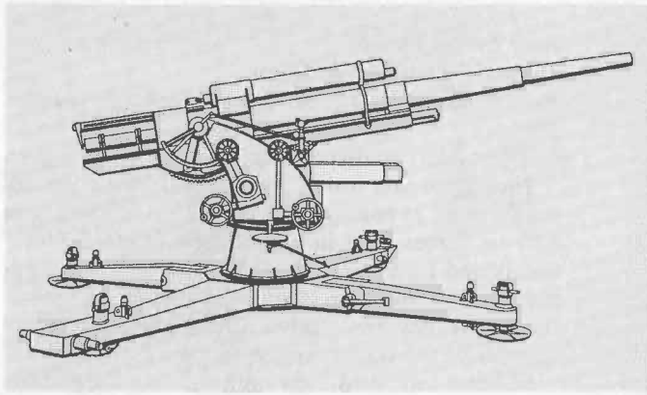
Now that the battle in Flanders and Artois appears to be turning out unfavorably for the Allies, we must try to picture what the new front will look like. On the one hand the Germans now hold a sea front opposite the British Isles, ranged along the whole of the North Sea coast from Norway down to northern France. The second German front cuts across northern France. The battle line, where only scattered and fairly small-scale fighting has occurred for the past week, starts opposite the Maginot Line and runs along west of the Aisne river, reaches the upper course of the Oise at the Chemin des Dames highway, and then comes to the Somme where it extends along both banks to the mouth of the river in the English Channel. South of this line are the French defensive emplacements north of Verdun, Rheims, Soissons and Noyon.

Security Measures in the Rumanian Oil Fields
Wednesday 29 May 1940, Bucharest
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

All permits allowing visits to or habitation of the Rumanian oil fields, refinery zones and oil export centers, have been revoked. These measures have been taken as a result of increased activity by



Left: Knocked-out French Char B heavy tank; on the right is a German 8.8-cm antiaircraft gun in firing position.



Above: German 8.8-cm flak/18 gun which, in addition to its antiaircraft role, was also the most feared antitank gun of the war (first produced in 1937)

foreign agents who recently have again been detected in the area.

Thursday 30 May 1940
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The great battle in Flanders and the Artois is nearing an end with the destruction of the British and French armies fighting there. Since yesterday the British Expeditionary Force too has been disintegrating completely, leaving behind vast stores of equipment as it flees to the sea. The enemy, swimming or in small boats, are trying to reach British vessels anchored offshore which our Luftwaffe has been attacking to devastating effect.

French Victory at Abbéville
Saturday 1 June 1940, Paris
The French *Havas News Agency* announced:

French troops at the mouth of the Somme have crossed to the northern bank and after favorable battles have occupied the area immediately surrounding the city of Abbéville. A violent confrontation ensued whose outcome was decided by the arrival of French tanks. The Germans suffered comparatively heavy losses both in personnel and equipment. Several hundred prisoners were taken. Among the captured equipment are large numbers of antitank guns.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Monday 3 June 1940:

We must continue to give detailed coverage to British efforts to minimize and conceal their severe defeat in Belgium and northern France; and we must continue to show up the absurdity, senselessness and contradictoriness of these efforts.

Germans in Dunkirk
Tuesday 4 June 1940
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The fortress of Dunkirk has been captured after heavy fighting. We have taken 40,000 prisoners and vast amounts of equipment. German troops now occupy every inch of the Belgian and French Channel Coast to the mouth of the Somme.

Monday 10 June 1940
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Operations which we have undertaken along a

Below: French R-35 light tanks assembling on the field



210-mile front in the direction of the lower Seine and the Marne and in the Champagne region, are following their planned and expected course. We have already won great victories and are about to win greater. All enemy counterthrusts, even with tanks, have failed. At several points the battle has turned into a rout and pursuit.

Italy Enters the War
Tuesday 11 June 1940, Rome
Proclamation by Italian *King Victor Emmanuel III:*

To [Italian] soldiers on land, sea and in the air!

I speak to you today, as it was 25 years ago, in my capacity as commander-in-chief of all land, sea and air forces, and in accordance with the sentiments and traditions of my House. I confer command of the front on Benito Mussolini, the leader (Duce) of Fascism, Italy's Chief Marshal, commander of the Italian armed forces.

Soldiers on land, sea and in the air! More closely bound to you than ever, we are convinced that your bravery and the patriotism of the Italian people will once again secure victory to our glorious army.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
11 June 1940:

The British attempts to goad the French into defending Paris and thereby consigning it to destruction, must be denounced [by the German Press] as typically British tactics [in that they are trying to get someone else to do the fighting for them].

Germans March into Paris

Friday 14 June 1940
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The total collapse of the entire French front between the English Channel and the Maginot Line at Malmédy, has blighted the initial plan of the French command to defend the French capital. As a result Paris has been declared an open city.

The march of the victorious German troops into Paris, is now taking place.

The War in the Mediterranean
Saturday 15 June 1940, Rome
The *Italian High Command* announced:

In Italian North Africa, the enemy [the British] have renewed their attacks with large armored forces against our border outposts along the Egyptian frontier. We have halted the assaults. Our air force has operated effectively using machine gun fire and dropping small bombs from a low altitude.

British Offensive in Libya
Sunday 16 June 1940, London
The *British War Office* announced:

On June 14 British troops, cooperating closely with the Royal Air Force, attacked the Italian forts of Capuzzo and Maddalena near the Egyptian-Libyan border. They seized Fort Capuzzo, capturing 4 Italian officers and 100 Italian soldiers. Fort Maddalena has surrendered.

Official Denial
16 June 1940, Bordeaux
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:

The French have officially denied the report circulated by an American news agency claiming that France has asked Germany to make known its terms for a ceasefire.

In London too, rumors that France intends concluding a separate peace are described as unfounded.

German Troops at Pontarlier
Sunday 17 June 1940
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

German mobile troops [which had reached the far coast of northern France and then circled back toward the east], today reached the Swiss border at Pontarlier southeast of Besançon, thus closing the ring around the French enemy forces in Alsace and Lorraine.

News of Victory Reaches Berlin

17 June 1940, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The news that France has been forced to lay down its arms as a result of the incredible German victories, spread through the German capital like wildfire this afternoon.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
17 June 1940:

Following today's report of the military collapse of France, it must be made clear to the German people in press commentaries over the next few days what this step by France really means for the course of the war. One point should be emphasized particularly: We must not speak, in commentaries or headlines, of the surrender of France, for France has not yet surrendered but merely—as the Special Announcement says—queried the German Government what conditions it would make.



German armored reconnaissance platoon advancing through France

British Operation in Libya
Monday 18 June 1940, Cairo
The British *Exchange News Agency* reported:

Major engagements have taken place on the Libyan border during the past 24 hours, since two British armored formations penetrated Libyan territory and successfully isolated enemy outposts from the hinterland.

British forces have again attacked the Italian naval and air base of Tobruk.

Resist to the End!
Tuesday 19 June 1940, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

Today Prime Minister Churchill addressed the British nation repeating what he had said to the House of Commons: that the British Empire would not give up the fight but would resist to the end. He said that there were good and reasonable grounds for hope that Germany would ultimately be defeated.

Stalin's Policies
19 June 1940, Moscow
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:

The Soviet Union is continuing to pursue its military defensive measures. Strong Soviet troop movements have been observed [in occupied Poland] in the area around Lvov, Tarnopol and Przemysl. Large Soviet aerial forces have flown into Bialystok, Lida and Luck.

German Assault Drive South to the Swiss Border

German war correspondent Kettlein reported in the 20 June 1940 edition of the Berlin newspaper *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger:*

Along the Swiss border, June 1940. For three days German tanks, artillery, flak [antiaircraft artillery] and supply columns have been rolling south. The advance continues without a halt. Even at night we grope our way along the highway. No one thinks of sleeping. A piece of chocolate substitutes for a midday meal, a swallow of wine for coffee. The advance goes forward!

Three days have passed since we started our southward march with the tanks. The stations of our march were Tagnon, Bétheniville, St. Dizier, Joinville, Chaumont. These cities lie along a line 180 miles long. What it means to drive these 180 miles in a column, sometimes crossing grain fields, meadows and ploughed fields, only those who sit behind the wheels can say. Truly, our drivers have accomplished great feats in the past days.

And we should not forget the armored gunners: for the most part it was they who broke the enemy's often very tenacious resistance. They cleared the way for us, 180 miles long. The fact speaks for itself. There is no need to speak further of courage and bravery.

We drove through the splendid Marne valley. The villages and cities were still occupied by civilians: The French did not have time enough to flee.

We have now travelled from the north of France to the south—behind the Maginot Line.

Onward we go, onward toward Switzerland.

Combat in Libya
Friday 21 June 1940, Cairo
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

Yesterday British units led by four tanks undertook a daring operation that led deep into Libyan territory. Along the road leading from Tobruk to Bardia they cornered a strong Italian military troop which they annihilated in fierce fighting.

Secret Report by the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No. 99 dated 24 June 1940 (extract):

VI. Enemies

Effects of the war on [German internal] enemies:

All reports from throughout the Reich unanimously indicate the following on this question:

Confronted by these great political events and spellbound by our military victories, the whole of the German people have developed an unprecedented internal cohesion and unity extending from the Front to the homeland. Receptiveness to enemy activity has dried up, pulling the ground out from under the groups. Everyone is looking gratefully and confidently toward the Führer and his Wehrmacht as it passes from victory to victory.

Misguided Hopes
Thursday 27 June 1940, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

French generals based their strategy, and the French people their hopes, on the supposed invincibility of the Maginot Line. But after a few weeks of real war, the fortifications of the Maginot Line have become islands of concrete in the midst of a German sea. "Maginot-mindedness" has resulted in the French preferring defense to attack. Great Britain must abandon the idea of living as comfortably as possible behind its traditional defenses.

Appeal from De Gaulle
27 June 1940, London
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

General de Gaulle sent a reply to Marshal Pétain over British radio last night in which he said: "France was not beaten by the number of the German troops or by their superior courage, but solely by the offensive power of their mechanized forces. Whose fault was it if France acquired no such mechanized forces? I ask you, Marshal—you who headed our military organization after the [First World] War, who were generalissimo until 1932 and war minister in 1935, who are the most exalted military man of our nation: Did you support and demand reform of our out-of-date military system, did you insist upon it? You believed that the efforts we are now making, and which the British Empire will make, were something that we could afford to neglect. You played the role of the loser and threw down your hand on the table. You emptied our pockets even though we still had some trumps to play."

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No. 100 of 27 June 1940 (extract):

I. General comments: Following the ceasefire negotiations [with France] and the actual enactment of the ceasefire, the tumultuous enthusiasm of the last few weeks [in Germany] has now turned to a solemn mood marked by quiet, proud joy and gratitude to the Führer and the Wehrmacht.

... The voices critical of Italy will not keep silent, and again it has been reported that much more comprehensive information must be supplied about the indirect military support which Germany has so far needed to receive from Italy. A particularly critical reaction greeted the announcement of the [Italians'] "Grand Alpine Offensive" [against the French], which was carried out, of all things, during our ceasefire negotiations with France.

Strategy and Tactics

JANUARY TO JUNE 1940

On Monday 8 January 1940, the Finnish 9th Division under Colonel Siilasvuo wiped out the 44th Rifle Division, part of the Soviet Ninth Army, east of Suomussalmi. At Suomussalmi the Soviets lost 27,500 dead and 1,300 prisoners, as well as over 50 tanks. Losses to the Finnish army were: 900 dead and 1,770 wounded.

On Wednesday 19 January 1940, a German plane driven off course by bad weather, had to make an emergency landing at Mechelen (Mechlin), Belgium. The Luftwaffe officers on board, Major Hönmanns and Major Reinberger, were carrying secret documents about the imminent German offensive in the West. They managed to destroy some of the papers, but enough fell into the hands of the Belgian authorities to make it clear that the Germans were about to attack Holland and Belgium.

On Thursday 11 January 1940, Hitler issued "Basic Order No. 1," which included the statement that "No one . . . may learn more of any secret matter than he absolutely has to know to fulfill his duty." One of the main reasons for this order was that Hitler wanted to prevent high-ranking German military commanders from getting a full picture of what was going on and thus being able to form an independent judgment.

At the start of 1940, France had the strongest armored force in the world except for that of the Soviet Union. It had more and, above all, better tanks than the German army; but French military commanders had no idea how to deploy a modern armored force effectively. Colonel Charles de Gaulle was one of the few French officers who devoted some thought to the matter. By January 1940 he was convinced that it was now too late, but "Nevertheless, on 26 January 1940 I made a last try." He drew up a memo and sent it to leading government figures, military commanders and politicians. It aroused no more interest than his previous memoranda, despite the fact that after the victories of the German tank arm in Poland, the French high command could not help but see that tanks could be used for other purposes than support of the infantry. Despite their fine armament the French tanks were awkwardly constructed so that the commander sat alone in the turret and, in addition to his tactical command role, had to serve as loader and gunner.

On Saturday 3 February 1940, the Soviets began an offensive by their Northwest Front [front = army group] under Timoshenko, against the Finnish Mannerheim Line on the Karelian isthmus. This army group included the Seventh Army under General Meretskov and the Thirteenth Army under General Grendal. The Finnish 6th Division was able to ward off the attack even though the Soviet air force flew 8,532 bomber and fighter missions in support of the offensive.



A French tank unit during a German Stuka dive bomber attack

On Tuesday 13 February 1940, the Soviet Seventh Army started a second offensive near lakes Muola and Kuolema and broke through the Finnish defensive lines at Summa, forcing the Finnish army to withdraw its southern flank east of Viipuri (Vyborg).

On Friday 23 February 1940, the Finnish Talvela Group destroyed the Soviet 18th Rifle Division north of Lake Ladoga.

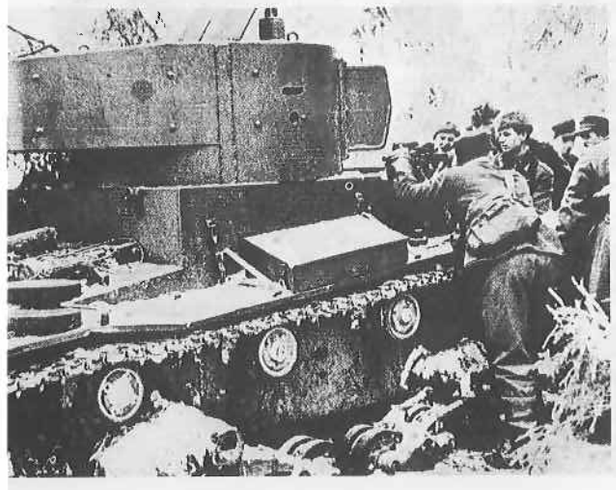
On Sunday 3 March, the Soviet Seventh Army began a new offensive against Viipuri on the Karelian isthmus. At the same time General Grendal, the commander of the Soviet Thirteenth Army, was relieved of duty because of his failure to win a victory, and replaced by General Parusinov.

On Thursday 7 March 1940, Finnish Marshal Baron von Mannerheim recommended that the Finns negotiate with the Soviets because he could no longer be responsible for leading such a hopeless struggle. Finnish losses now totalled over 60,000 dead, wounded and missing—20% of the Finnish forces.

On Tuesday 12 March, the Soviet-Finnish Winter War ended with the signing of a peace treaty in Moscow. Finland had to cede to the Soviet Union the Karelian isthmus with the city of Viipuri (Vyborg), other parts of Karelia and, in the north, a small peninsula above Murmansk called Paluostrov Rybachiy. Total Finnish losses were 24,923 dead and 43,577 wounded. Soviet sources list Red Army losses at 48,745 dead and 158,863 wounded; but the Finns estimated that Soviet casualties must actually have been far higher.

The Finnish army waged its remarkable, successful defensive campaign with the aim of postponing inevitable defeat long enough so that the government could bring about tolerable peace terms. The Soviet military failures were due to the shortage of capable commanders resulting from the Stalinist purges of the officers' corps between 1936 and 1939; clumsy and dilettantish tactics; poor leadership among the lower ranks; and the lack of suitable gear for winter and forest combat. The Finnish soldier, brought up to single combat, was able not only to adapt himself to the climate and terrain, but also to impose his own tactics on the aggressor.

Finland, January 1940. Soviet OT-130 flamethrowing tank with a flame projector tube in the turret. The tank has just been captured by Finnish troops.



The Finns conducted a skillful delaying action against the ponderous Soviet troops, who with their heavy weapons were confined to a single roadway and thus vulnerable to encirclement by Finnish ski troops. The Finns soon evolved their famous Motti tactics: surrounding the enemy, splitting up his forces, starving him out and picking him off one by one, while at the same time waging a mobile defense against Soviets outside the pocket who were making desperate efforts to relieve their troops. Despite the substantial numerical superiority of the Soviets and their better armament and equipment, the Finns went on the offensive wherever they encountered the enemy.

These continual attacks in which the Finns exploited every type of cover and camouflage offered by the terrain, damaged Soviet morale and caused increasing insecurity that led to a periodic collapse of the Soviet front. The achievements of the Finnish troops were all the more remarkable in that they were all reservists. They received outstanding training in single combat, woods and winter combat and guerrilla warfare. As a rule it was small units—companies, platoons or squads with intelligent and responsible leaders—who by their individual achievements made possible the victory as a whole. Armored forces were renowned for their devastating effect on morale, yet the Finns failed to be impressed by the Soviet tanks and destroyed large numbers with incendiary devices and explosive charges.

The Soviets succeeded in decisively reversing the course of the war and breaking through the fortified Mannerheim Line only when they deployed a number of heavy KV 1 tanks with 15.2-cm guns. These heavy tanks bombarded the Finnish bunkers and enabled Soviet combat engineers to block them or blow them up. Once the bunkers had been eliminated, the Soviet artillery shifted its fire into the depth of the Finnish lines to intercept counterattacks. The Finnish front had now been penetrated and the Red Army was able to begin its march to Viipuri.

The Soviet Union had swallowed many defeats at the hands of a nation with only one-fiftieth its population, and the Red Army commanders did



France. A Renault UE *chenillette d'infanterie*, an unarmed transport vehicle which was brought into service in February 1940.

not fail to draw some lessons from this. Their experiences in Finland led to many improvements and some fundamental changes in equipment. One result was the final version of the T-34 tank with its broad tracks designed for movement in snow and on soft ground. Intensive emphasis was placed on setting up ski troops, and on winter equipment and camouflage techniques. The Soviet army also trained in night and woods combat, of which the Finns were masters. Soviet leaders reacted with remarkable speed to overcome inadequacies and the army showed great energy in implementing changes—all of which ought to have served as a warning to the Germans.

In March 1940 a thorough review of the Winter War was held in Moscow at the general assembly of the Communist Party Central Committee and a session of the Supreme War Council. Decisions were made to set up mechanized corps again, and to start producing new types of tanks, guns and automatic infantry weapons. Revised service regulations were drawn up for the armored force. The authority of officers was strengthened by a new disciplinary ordinance and by reducing the role of political commissars.

On Friday 5 April 1940, the German Abwehr (Military Intelligence Service) foiled a British sabotage attempt near the Iron Gate [Danube river gorge between Rumania and Yugoslavia]. The British tried to sink cement-filled sailing boats in the Danube straits in order to obstruct Danube shipping and, above all, to block transport of Rumanian oil, which was of crucial strategic importance to the Germans.

At 5:00 A.M. on Tuesday 9 April 1940, the Germans launched Operation Weserübung, the occupation of Norway and Denmark by German troops. The German force in Norway was the 21st Group, comprising five infantry divisions and 2 mountain troop divisions; the commander was infantry general von Falkenhorst. In Denmark the German force was the 31st Detachment with two infantry divisions and one motorized rifle brigade equipped with I B tanks, under command of air general Kaupisch.

Operation Weserübung was carried out with strong support from the German navy and the Luftwaffe, but only a few armored units took part and there were effectively no tank battles. However, the Germans did simulate a panzer force in Oslo. They shipped to the Norwegian capital five of six Panzer V heavy tanks now standing along the French border, and then photographed and filmed them extensively in the streets of Oslo. These tanks had been built by the Krupp, Rheinmetall-Borsig and MAN (Augsburg-Nuremberg Machine Works), manufacturing firms using a civilian tractor chassis, and modelled on British, French and Soviet designs. These were in fact the only heavy tanks that Germany had at this time. They never became ready for mass production and like most prototypes were not armored but made of simple sheet steel. Shipped back home again after the Norwegian Campaign, they were scrapped in 1941.

For seven months following the Allied declaration of war, a virtually unbroken ceasefire reigned on the 250-mile-long front along the Rhine between Basle and Luxembourg.

On the morning of 9 May 1940 Hitler fixed the final launch date of the German Western offensive for Friday 10 May 1940. The planned offensive was to unfold all the way from the North Sea to the southern border of Luxembourg.

The Germans intended to violate the neutrality of the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg without a previous declaration of war. Their plan of operations provided for the main thrust to be launched through the inhospitable terrain of the Ardennes, toward the Meuse near Sedan; following this, German forces would drive in a wide arc toward the northwest, to Amiens, Boulogne and the coast.

The German forces were divided into three army groups. In the north was Army Group B under General von Bock, made up of two armies: the Eighteenth Army under General von Küchler which had 9 infantry divisions, 1 panzer division and 1 cavalry division; and the Sixth Army under General von Reichenau which had 14 infantry divisions and 2 panzer divisions.

The task of Army Group B was to contain enemy forces in the north and deprive them of their freedom of action. Army Group B was told to break through the Dutch and Belgian defensive lines, occupy Holland and Belgium, and take up battle with the Allies who—the Germans assumed—would at once come to the aid of the Bel-

gians. [Reference to the map of the French Campaign on p. 71 will make it easier to follow the coming account of the order of battle.—Trans.]

The middle sector of the German front was occupied by Army Group A under General von Rundstedt. Army Group A bore the main responsibility for the success of the campaign. It was made up of three armies, the Fourth, Twelfth and Sixteenth. The Fourth Army under General von Kluge stood on the right flank with its 12 infantry and 2 panzer divisions. After breaking through the Belgian border fortifications, the Fourth Army, shielded on its flank, was to advance in the direction of Liège to the Meuse river and the area around Dinant and Givet. Here General Hoth's XV Panzer Corps, including the 5th and 7th Panzer Divisions, would cross the Meuse.

To the south of the Fourth Army was the Twelfth Army under General List which would drive its 11 infantry divisions, 5 armored divisions (the Kleist Panzer Group) and 3 motorized divisions through to the Meuse around Givet and Sedan. After crossing the Meuse, the German panzer divisions would attack the flank and rear of the French defensive front. The southern flank of List's Twelfth Army would be exposed for the operation. Initially it would be secured by the motorized infantry divisions that followed the panzer divisions, and later by the pursuing Twelfth Army infantry divisions.

The Sixteenth Army under General Busch occupied the southernmost sector of Army Group A. Its 15 infantry divisions secured the army group in the south, along the German West Wall [Siegfried Line fortifications] from the southern border of Luxembourg to Switzerland.

Farthest to the south, facing the Maginot Line fortifications, was the third German army group, Army Group C under General Ritter von Leeb. It was made up of two armies: the First Army under General von Witzleben and the Seventh Army under General Dollmann. Army Group C had only infantry divisions with no tanks, and its task was to tie up as many enemy forces as possible.

Army Group B received aerial support from the German 2nd Air Fleet (Luftflotte 2 under General Kesselring), while Army Group A was supported by the 3rd Air Fleet (Luftflotte 3 under General Sperrle).

Army Group A had 7 panzer divisions, including the Kleist Panzer Group (5 divisions made up of Guderian's XIX Panzer Corps and Reinhardt's XXXXI Panzer Corps) and Hoth's XV Panzer Corps (2 divisions), as well as three and one third motorized infantry divisions.

Army Group B had 3 panzer divisions—the XVI Panzer Corps under General Hoepner made up of two divisions, and the 9th Panzer Division under General Ritter von Hubicki—and two and one third motorized infantry divisions. Army Groups A and B together had 10 panzer divisions comprising a total 2,574 combat-ready tanks.

The French general staff were convinced that the Germans would use a variant of the Schlieffen Plan from 1914, driving a strong right wing through Belgium to encircle the French army from north and west. The French plan provided for a passive defense and no offensive operations. They believed that the Belgian army would be able to hold its eastern border long enough for fresh defensive lines to be set up on the Meuse and Dyle rivers.

The French army, together with the British Expeditionary Force, planned to come to the aid of the Belgians only after the Germans had marched on the Low Countries. The French plan made no provision for a mobile war using tanks with air support.

The French high command concentrated their chief forces on the left flank, in the northeast sector of France. The forces included two army groups. Army Group 2 under General Prételat was assigned to defend the Maginot Line. Army Group 2 included the Eighth Army (General Garchery) which had 7 infantry divisions; the Fifth Army (General Bourret) with 9 infantry divisions; and the Third Army (General Condé) with 4 infantry divisions and two and one third cavalry brigades. There were also 13 fortress divisions ranged along the Maginot Line itself.

In the event of a German invasion of Holland





France, March 1940: Hotchkiss H-35 light combat tanks with short 3.7-cm guns

Opposite page: From light bulbs to victory: A British Daimler Mk I armored reconnaissance car is being used to advertise Osram light bulbs in England.

and Belgium, French Army Group 1 under General Billotte was to advance to the northeast, cross the border into Belgium and occupy the defensive lines along the Meuse and the Dyle. Only one army of Army Group 1—the Second Army under General Huntziger whose 5 infantry divisions and two and a half cavalry divisions lay on the group's right flank—would hold its position to defend the extension of the Maginot Line between the Moselle river and Sedan.

Second Army's neighbor on the north, the Ninth Army under General Corap with 5 infantry and two and a half cavalry divisions, planned to advance to the Meuse and defend the line Sedan-Namur. On its left stood the First Army under General Blanchard, whose 4 infantry and 2 light motorized divisions intended to move north of the Sambre to defend the line along the Lys river between Namur and Wavre (Belgium).

The British Expeditionary Force under General Lord Gort had 9 divisions which at this time were attached to the French First Army, and were supposed to occupy the Dyle river line (Belgium) in the Wavre-Louvain sector.

General Giraud's Seventh Army, on the left flank of Gort's force, had 4 infantry divisions, 2 motorized infantry and 1 light motorized infantry divisions. Its task in the event of German attack was to cross the Scheldt river near Antwerp and occupy the Tilburg-Breda line, establishing and maintaining contact with the Dutch army.

The French commander-in-chief had 14 reserve divisions around Châlons-sur-Marne and St. Quentin.

The British Expeditionary Force (the BEF) did not include a single armored division, although there were 7 mechanized cavalry regiments and one armored brigade. The BEF had 310 tanks, only 23 of which were the new Matildas. Another 174 light tanks and 156 Cruiser tanks—a British armored division—were waiting on the other side of the Channel at the start of the German offensive. The offensive began at 5:30 A.M. on Friday 10 May 1940.

The first heavy armored battles did not take place until Monday 13 May. Around Tirlemont the 3rd and 4th Panzer Divisions of General Hoepner's XVI Panzer Corps encountered strong armored units of General Blanchard's mechanized cavalry corps. The French tanks had only to secure the terrain, yet despite their stronger armor and better armament, they suffered heavy losses in their battle against the two German divisions, which were supported by Stuka dive bombers.

That day the German 9th Panzer Division under General Ritter von Hubicki reached two Dutch bridges at Moerdijk after overwhelming the Dutch border posts between Venlo and Nijmegen. These bridges—a rail and a road bridge side by side about 15 miles south of Rotterdam—were the longest in Europe and had great strategic importance because they offered the only route which German armored forces could use to reach Rotterdam and cut Holland's defenses in two. German paratroops had already moved in to seize them from the air on the morning of May 10, the first day of the offensive. The motorized units of the French Seventh Army under General Giraud advanced north and tried to recapture the two bridges to reestablish contact with the encircled Dutch; but meeting the energetic advance of the 9th Panzer Division, the French were forced to withdraw to Antwerp, put-

ting an end to the Allies' last hope of strengthening the position of Holland. On the evening of May 13 the first advance detachment of the 9th Panzer Division crossed the Moerdijk road bridge and reached Rotterdam.

On Wednesday 15 May 1940, Hoth's XV Panzer Corps crossed the Meuse at Dinant while the Kleist Panzer Group formed several bridgeheads over the Meuse at Sedan. But the French failed to realize that Sedan was the focal point of German forces and sent their armored reserves against von Reichenau's Sixth Army farther north. The French 1st Armored was deployed in mass but nevertheless was smashed by XV Panzer Corps. The French 2nd Armored Division came under heavy aerial attack and was caught up in the stream of refugees along the roads, entered battle dispersed, and suffered heavy losses.

On that same 15 May 1940—one day after General Billotte's French Army Group 1 had marched into western Belgium and completed their assembly on the Dyle line—General Winkelman, the Dutch commander-in-chief, signed the surrender of his troops.

On the night of 15/16 May 1940, 99 RAF aircraft tried to bomb German oil refineries in the Ruhr District; one plane was lost and only slight damage was inflicted. This was the start of a British "strategic bombing offensive" that was destined to last almost exactly five years.

On Friday 17 May 1940, just as the panzer units of von Rundstedt's Army Group A reached the Oise river east of St. Quentin in northern France, German troops marched unopposed into Brussels, which had been declared an open city.

That same day French tanks launched a counterattack northeast of Laon at Montcornet. The hastily assembled unit of armored vehicles, approximately three battalions under the command of Colonel Charles de Gaulle, was halted by the attacks of Stuka dive bombers even before it could give battle to the German tanks. The French armor withdrew and later tried another attack which also failed.

On Sunday 19 May the Allied command experienced a crisis. General Gamelin, the commander-in-chief of the Allied forces, was replaced by General Weygand, C-in-C of the French "Army of the Orient" in Syria.

At that same hour, the armored spearheads of von Reichenau's Sixth Army reached the Scheldt and the Kleist Panzer Group occupied Abbéville. Guderian's XIX Panzer Corps achieved its most extensive one-day thrust ever—the longest advance accomplished by any armored unit within a 24-hour period during the Western Campaign: 54 miles from the Canal du Nord to Abbéville on the Channel Coast.

On Wednesday 22 May 1940, General Weygand, the new Allied C-in-C, tried to rescue the units which had been cut off in the Pas de Calais. He ordered an attack northward across the Somme to reestablish contact with the encircled troops and free them from the pocket. A fierce battle ensued near Arras involving German, French and British armored troops. Here the German tanks encountered hard resistance for the first time. They suffered heavy losses to the British tanks, which had superior armament and powerful armor that was resistant to German antitank guns. French and British tanks held up the German tanks at Arras for two and a half days—long enough to allow four British divisions and a large part of the French First Army (under Gen. Blanchard) to retreat to the Channel Coast and reach Dunkirk.

On Friday 24 May 1940, Hitler, responding to a proposal by General von Rundstedt, the C-in-C of German Army Group A, ordered the Kleist Panzer Group to halt after it had already penetrated to the outskirts of Dunkirk. [This famous "halt order" that broke the forward thrust of the German



Opposite page: France, May 1940. A French tank driver is inspecting the tracks of a Renault R-35 tank before going into action.

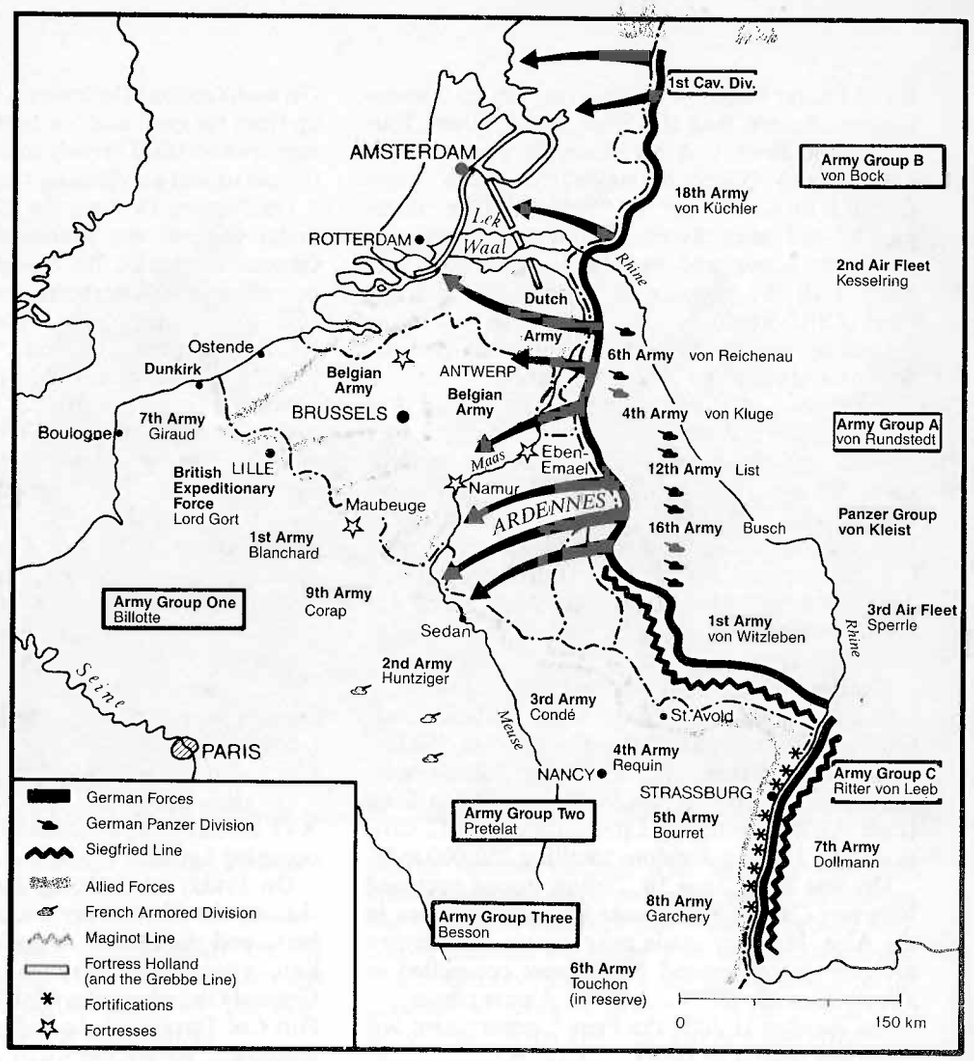


Diagram of the German attack in the West, May 1941

armored advance to capture the Channel ports, helped facilitate the Allied evacuation from Dunkirk.] Hitler said that his experience in World War I had taught him that the marshy polder land in Flanders was completely unsuitable for tank movements and that the German armor must be spared for the next phase of the campaign. General Guderian wrote: "We were utterly speechless." [quoted from p. 117 of the English translation of Guderian's *Panzer Leader*, London. Michael Joseph, 1952] This event set a precedent that was to have disastrous repercussions: Hitler had intervened directly in the conduct of military operations, bypassing the German general staff commander.

Two days later, on 26 May 1940, permission was given for the armored units of Army Group A to cross the Canal Line [= the general line Lens-Béthune-Aire-St. Omer—gravelines which Hitler had ordered should not be passed]; but they were ordered not to attack Dunkirk itself but only to place it under artillery and aerial bombardment. Inside the city and the harbor, which were jammed with British and French troops, final preparations were under way for Operation Dynamo which was to begin next day: the transport of the British Expeditionary Force back to England.

On Tuesday 28 May 1940, King Leopold III signed the surrender of the Belgian army. He refused to leave his country and was made a German prisoner-of-war.

Tuesday 4 June 1940, saw the conclusion of Operation Dynamo. A total of 338,226 Allied soldiers had been evacuated from Dunkirk, including 123,000 Frenchmen. The BEF had been forced to abandon almost the whole of its equipment.

5:00 A.M. on Wednesday 5 June 1940 marked the beginning of the German "Case Red," the Battle of France. General von Bock's Army Group B included von Kluge's Fourth Army, von Reichenau's Sixth Army, Strauss's Ninth Army, and the

Kleist Panzer Group. French Army Group 3 under General Besson had the Sixth Army (Gen. Touchon), the Seventh Army (Gen. Giraud) and the Tenth Army (Gen. Altmeyer). German Army Group B broke through the "Weygand Line" occupied by 49 French divisions along the Somme and the lower Aisne, and marched toward the lower Seine with the support of Kesselring's 2nd Air Fleet (Luftflotte 2).

Four days later, on Sunday 9 June 1940, German Army Group B had reached this target.

Meanwhile von Rundstedt's Army Group A—including von Weichs's Second Army, List's Twelfth Army, Busch's Sixteenth Army, and the Guderian Panzer Group—was standing on the upper Aisne and the Meuse. It now went on the offensive, thrusting southeast with the support of General Sperrle's 3rd Air Fleet (Luftflotte 3).

On Monday 10 June Operation Weserübung was concluded when Norwegian troops under Major General Ruge surrendered.

That same day Italy entered the war with 59 divisions on the Continent, Sicily and Sardinia, totalling around 1,200,000 men. Another 350,000 men—50% of them native colonial forces—were stationed in Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somaliland (East Africa); while in Libya, Italy had 12 divisions and 2 native divisions totalling 250,000 men.

On that same June 10, Italian troops occupied Nice and Cannes and attacked French positions in the Alps; but they made no progress, so German armored forces around Lyons were compelled to attack from the rear to open the Alpine passes.

On Tuesday 11 June the French government left Paris and moved to Tours.

On Friday 14 June, the German 87th Infantry Division under General von Studnitz, part of von Küchler's Eighteenth Army, marched into Paris after the French Seventh Army under General Frère had abandoned the capital without a fight the day before.

On Saturday 15 June, Verdun was captured by General Weissenberger's 71st Infantry Division and General Angelis's 76th Infantry Division, part of Busch's Sixteenth Army.

That same day the Soviet army occupied the cities of Kovno and Vilna. Lithuania had now fallen under the rule of the USSR.

On Sunday 16 June, the German First Army under von Witzleben crossed the Rhine at Colmar.

On Monday 17 June, General Guderian's fifty-second birthday, his 29th Motorized Infantry Division reached Pontarlier on the Swiss border. Two days earlier, two XXXIX Panzer Corps divisions had made a 90-degree turn near Pontarlier and headed northeast. Guderian's panzer group was making a broad thrust into Alsace which ended in the largest encirclement of the whole campaign. German General Dollmann's Seventh Army moved up from the east, and the combined German forces captured 400,000 French soldiers including the entire personnel garrisoning the Maginot Line.

On Tuesday 18 June, the XXXVIII Army Corps under General von Manstein took Le Mans and General Rommel's 7th Division captured the important port of Cherbourg on the Cotentin peninsula (Normandy). That same day General de Gaulle appointed himself "Leader of the Free French" and from his base in London beseeched his countrymen to continue to resist.

On Tuesday 18 June, the Allies evacuated the cities of Nantes and St. Nazaire at the mouth of the Loire, and 57,235 Allied soldiers were taken back to Great Britain.

On Wednesday 19 June, General Hoth's XV Panzer Corps occupied Brest, an Atlantic port on the northwest coast of France. At the same time the German II Army Corps under General Stülpnagel reached Nantes.

On Thursday 20 June 1940, Japan received permission from France to station Japanese border troops along the border between Indo-China and China, thus blocking supply routes into China.

On that same day, June 20, General Hoepner's XVI Panzer Corps reached the Rhône valley and occupied Lyons.

On Friday 21 June, an Italian army group including the First Army under Crown Prince Umberto and the Fourth Army under General Vercellino, attacked the French Alpine Army under General Olry along the Alpine Front. After seizing Fort Col Traversette the Italian troops advanced to Menton.

On Saturday 22 June 1940, the Germans and French signed an armistice agreement at Compiègne. It provided for the occupation of France to the line west and north of Geneva-Dôle-Tours-Mont de Marsan down to the Spanish border. Germany now had use of all French ports on the Channel and Atlantic coasts. The unoccupied part of France was allowed to maintain a small 100,000-man armed force. The bulk of the French fleet had to disarm but was not surrendered. In the occupied part of France, a government was set up under Marshal Pétain with Pierre Laval as chief minister. The remnants of General Condé's Third Army, General Réquin's Fifth Army, and General Garchery's Eighth Army—around 500,000 men—surrendered around Nancy-Belfort. Twenty-five thousand French and 13,022 Poles (under General Prugar), all serving with General Daille's 45th Army Corps, crossed the Swiss border at St. Ursanne and were interned in Switzerland.

At 1:35 A.M. on Tuesday 25 June 1940, the armistice was declared in France. Approximately 1.9 million French became German prisoners-of-



France, April 1940. Renault R-35 light tanks with a 3.7-cm gun and a 7.5-mm machine gun.

war. German losses were 27,074 dead; 111,034 wounded; 18,384 missing. The French casualty toll was 92,000 dead and 200,000 wounded. The British Expeditionary Force lost 68,111 men.

On Friday 28 June 1940, Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, which had been Rumanian since the end of World War I, were occupied by Soviet troops.

On Sunday 30 June, General Guderian bade farewell to his dispersing armored group: "I thank you for what you have done. It has been the finest fulfillment to my labors and struggles of more than a decade's duration." [English quoted from p. 135 of the translation of Guderian's *Panzer Leader*, London, Michael Joseph, 1952]

The German Army High Command had learned many valuable lessons from the armored war in the Western Campaign. Among other things, they had found how difficult it was to cross the Ardennes with tanks because the roads in this Belgian and northern French border region had been badly neglected and the craggy landscape contained many steep gradients; also there were few areas which allowed for evasive maneuvers. Moreover, Belgian troops had installed ingenious road obstructions at many points which caused delays and traffic jams and which German combat engineers were hard put to remove quickly. The Belgians had even eliminated road signs and place names to confuse the Germans, although this measure proved ineffective because the latter had dependable maps. One major obstacle to the advancing troops as the columns of refugees crowding all the roads, who often held up the armored forces more effectively than enemy resistance.

German armored operations were unexpectedly swift and successful. The armored thrusts were aimed at the weak points in the defense; armored operations in cooperation with dive bombers represented a novel type of warfare; German tanks used the element of surprise to strategic advantage; and the German air force had command of the air. All these factors contributed to the success of the German armor. In addition, the panzer forces had large numbers of aerial reconnaissance squadrons at their command, which greatly enhanced their operations.

The novel logistics and communications system evolved by General Guderian, enabled his motorized troops to operate independently for up to five days, and gave them the flexibility to respond quickly to new orders.

The German commanders gained other useful data in their armored operations in the Western Campaign. For example, at the battle of Arras General Rommel learned the importance of close cooperation between tanks and antitank guns.

British heavy tanks, which until then had been considered invincible, accidentally ran into some German 8.8-cm flak [antiaircraft] guns and suffered heavy losses. In this way the Germans learned that they could turn the battle to their advantage even against superior tanks, by using not tanks but the right kind of antitank guns. In North Africa, Rommel successfully applied this knowledge in his fight against the British.

When the Western Campaign moved into its second half—the Battle of France June 5–June 22—the German armored commanders perceived that the French commanders and their troops had been learning too: The French now concentrated their antitank weapons at the village exits and continued to hold them even after the German tanks had broken through into open country; thus the French often successfully blocked the German armored supplies following after the tanks.

Far less ammunition was consumed than had been provided and than field trials had led the Germans to believe they would need. Almost all the armored corps got along on their first batch of ammunition. At no time during the Western Campaign did the panzer forces suffer any shortage of infantry and armored ammunition, although the artillery often ran short of 10.5-cm shells.

In the second half of the campaign the von Kleist Panzer Group suffered a severe fuel crisis. Against their will, the armored forces had to turn over their supply vehicles to the Sixth Army, which then supplied them with fuel. The crisis would surely have impaired operations if the Germans had not captured a large fuel depot just at the right moment.

In the Western Campaign the core of a panzer division was a two-regiment armored brigade whose operations determined the outcome of battle. In France the German commanders learned to deploy panzer troops in mass and to allow them spontaneous movement. It became apparent that when infantry were deployed without armored support, they were often beaten back, but that as soon as tanks entered the action, German operations flowed without hindrance. As a rule the spearhead was made up of three tanks, one containing an artillery observer who radiotelephonically directed the cover fire that supported the advance. Motorcycle riflemen of the reconnaissance platoon travelled ahead to scout the area. After receiving their report the combat engineers moved forward to clear out mines while antitank guns advanced to fight enemy tanks, and flamethrowers to smoke out enemy emplacements. The advancing tanks detoured around points of enemy resistance, and when possible avoided fighting, so as to concentrate on gaining as much enemy ground as possible. They returned fire only when there was absolutely no way to avoid it.

Tank concentrations were deployed only against very strongly fortified positions. They advanced in graded echelons at approximately 50-yard intervals, taking advantage of whatever cover the terrain offered. The speed of advance increased after a breakthrough was achieved, but rarely by more than 3 mph. Victory depended on the speed of the attack, so the panzer forces usually travelled along the roads and moved cross-country only when necessary. The success of these methods presupposed that German aerial forces had command of the air: because panzer units advancing along roads jammed with vehicles offered excellent targets to low-flying enemy planes.

The airplane proved to be the best tank-support and antitank weapon of the Western Campaign, and the close cooperation between armored and aerial forces was an essential ingredient of German victory.

The Battle of France marked the supreme triumph of General Guderian's armored command tactics. The rapidity of his assault and the dramatic swings by which he encircled French forces had no parallel in the history of warfare. The German Western Campaign proved—just as the war in Poland had done in 1939—the importance of armored operations in achieving strategic objectives. In a period of barely six weeks, ten German panzer divisions, supported by the Luftwaffe, outmaneuvered a numerically superior army, prevented any organized resistance, captured masses of enemy troops and forced France to surrender.

The German victory in the West confirmed General Guderian's theory that tanks should be deployed in mass. His broad-area management of armored operations also saved bloodshed. Enemy troops were captured more often than killed, and only ½% of Guderian's 104,000-man panzer troop died in the assault.

German armor had acquired a reputation for invincibility—a surprising reputation considering that German equipment was not of the best quality. Most of the German tanks were light, antiquated pre-war models unsuitable for front line deployment. The heavier Panzer III and IV tanks had performed well; but the German commanders realized that all tank armament and armor would have to be fortified without delay. It was now even clearer than in the Polish Campaign that the rifle regiments attached to the panzer divisions needed to be given their own armored cross-country combat and transport vehicles: For in the trucks they used at present, they could not follow the tanks when they moved cross-country, and as a result they suffered serious losses.

The unexpectedly rapid fall of France shocked the whole world and fundamentally changed subsequent military strategy. The defeat of the French armored force had resulted from a lack of inspiration: Political and military leaders simply failed to recognize the revolutionary, dynamic character of the new warfare.

The superiority of the German panzer force was due to its massing of tanks, the good communications among the tanks, and the fact that the armored units were made up of all service arms. The French troops were not trained for modern armored war and, as soon as they detected German tanks along their flanks or rear, were seized by "tank panic." The French high command had neglected the tank arm to such an extent that they had not even tested their radiotelephone communications and these often broke down, making it impossible for commanders to direct their units on the battlefield.

France's armored divisions, the *divisions cuirassées de rèserve*, or DCR, were never intended for independent deployment and deep penetration strikes, but were meant to fight only as an auxil-



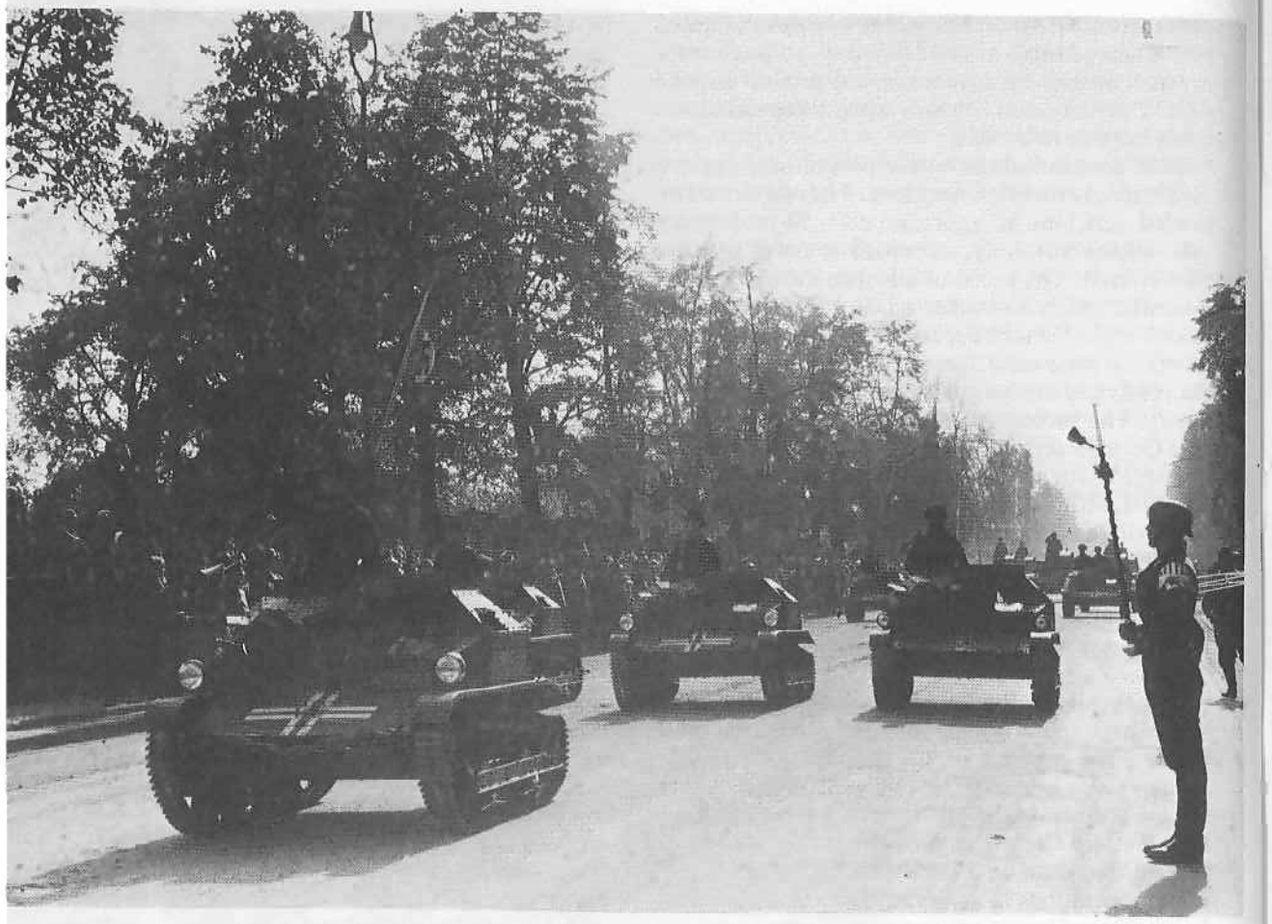
Near Le Havre, 15 May 1940. A column of French R-35 tanks on their way to the front. The vision slot in the turret has been opened out to provide a seat for the commander.

Opposite page above: German tank soldier during a lull in the battle

Opposite page below: German General Erwin Rommel about to go into action during the French Campaign







Warsaw, 1940. Polish TK-3 tankettes, captured by the Germans, are here being used in a German military parade in honor of Hans Frank, the new governor-general of the German-occupied part of Poland.

iary weapon within army corps made up of all service arms. Consequently the French motorized armored units entered battle dispersed. Again and again the armored divisions would be separated from the cavalry corps and their parts distributed among the infantry, or placed behind it. The German tactics—penetration by narrow armored spearheads that advanced relentlessly without trying to safeguard their flanks—surprised the French commanders who could not produce anything to counteract it.

Major differences existed in command tactics as well. Basically the Germans commanded their armored units "from up front." Both section and divisional commanders took part in the attacks riding inside their command tanks. This strengthened troop morale, and also enabled the commanders to make rapid decisions, taking advantage of momentary tactical opportunities. The Allies, on the other hand, used the antiquated method of issuing commands from rear-line divisional command posts. The result was mistakes and delays in transmitting commands.

Allied commanders also misjudged the strategic aims of the German OKH and failed to guess what would be the main direction of strike. Thus at the start of the German offensive, [thinking that the Germans would launch their strongest attack in the north], the Allies marched into Belgium to occupy the Dyle Line, leaving only weak forces near Sedan along the principal German thrust line. French experiences in World War I led the French High Command to believe that the Ardennes terrain was impassable and in no way suited to penetration by large armies, especially not tanks.

The German Wehrmacht suffered relatively light losses in the Western Campaign. German sources claimed a death toll of 27,074 men for the period 10 May 1940 to the ceasefire, with 18,384 missing and 111,034 wounded. These casualties were lower than the Germans suffered, in many cases, on a single day in World War I. Almost two million French, Dutch, Belgian and British troops became German prisoners-of-war.

1940

July—December

General de Gaulle Sentenced to Death
Friday 2 August 1940, Clermont-Ferrand (south-eastern France)
The French *Havas News Agency* announced:

On Friday the 13th District Military Court under Presiding General Frère, sentenced General de Gaulle to death, demotion and confiscation of property. The charges against him were treason, threatening state security, and desertion abroad in time of war.

Winston Churchill to General Ismay
2 August 1940:

. . . .

6. Let me have a report on the progress and future construction of the tank divisions. There should be five armoured divisions by March 31 [1941], and two more by the end of May. Let me know how far the present prospects of men and material allow of this. Let me know also what are the latest ideas for the structure and organization of an armoured division. [English quoted from p. 575, Appendix A of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. 2, London, 1949]

Britain Orders 4,000 Tanks

Monday 12 August 1940, Washington
The American *Associated Press* reported:

A British buying commission has just placed an initial order for approximately 4,000 tanks from a variety of manufacturing firms. The tanks are of two different types, 25 and 30 tons, and were designed to the most up-to-date specifications. They are armed with the new type of automatic guns and an antiaircraft gun, and are remarkable for their high speed.

Benito Mussolini to Adolf Hitler
Tuesday 20 August 1940, Rome

Mussolini replied as follows to a telegram from Hitler: "I thank you in the name of my troops and in my own name for the congratulations you have sent me on the occasion of our victory over the British in eastern Somaliland. With comradely greeting...."

Data Report on German Combat Experience using Tanks, by *Panzer General Guderian*, Division 1a, No. 502/40, dated 22 August 1940:

In combat against enemy armored forces, our tanks proved superior after only a brief exchange of fire. Reasons:

1. The firing accuracy of our guns
2. Their high rate of fire, which to some extent made up for their lack of penetrating power
3. Hits scored by Panzer III and IV medium tanks, even if they failed to penetrate enemy tanks, had such a shattering effect on morale that enemy crews often felt compelled to raise the white flag.
4. Our tanks were faster and more maneuverable.
5. Superior leadership, training and morale of our tank crews
6. Radio contact facilitated good command and greater maneuverability [than the enemy's].

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Monday 26 August 1940:

We [the German Press] are not to print reports about special military measures being taken by Italy against Greece.

Hard Fighting on the Libyan Coast
Tuesday 17 September 1940, Rome
The *Italian High Command (Comando Supremo)* announced:

On Monday hard fighting took place in the Sidi Barrani area (Egypt) between our advancing troops and British armored troops. The battle was waged in the midst of a desert storm. There were signs of a crisis in the enemy ranks.



Wednesday 18 September 1940, Cairo
British Middle East Headquarters reported:

We confirm that the Italians have occupied Sidi Barrani.

The Armored Service in Modern Warfare

18 September 1940, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

One British military expert takes the view that German troops cannot possibly attempt an invasion of Great Britain without the support of heavy tanks. These however are transportable only by ship, so the Germans must first capture a British port where the tanks could be landed. Only small tanks could be flown in by air, and these could readily be combatted with antitank guns. Concerning "amphibious" tanks, the expert believes that such tanks can indeed cross rivers, but not the English Channel.

The Italian Offensive in Egypt
Thursday 26 September 1940, Rome
A special correspondent of the Italian newspaper *Regime Fascista* reported from the Egyptian front:

We are fighting against British hussar regiments which have been converted from cavalry troops into motorized and armored units. Our enemies use typical cavalry tactics which the desert conditions ideally support. The enemy's aircraft are participating vigorously in his resistance.

Wednesday 9 October 1940, Cairo
British Middle East Headquarters announced:

Yesterday morning an enemy motorized column equipped with light tanks penetrated into the Bir Enba area south of Sidi Barrani, heading east. By nightfall they had retreated to their original position. Our tanks shot down an enemy bomber. There is nothing to report from the other fronts.

German Fuel Supplies
Tuesday 15 October 1940, Berlin
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

A spokesman for the economic division of the German High Command informed the foreign press yesterday that German fuel and oil reserves have increased by one million tons since war broke out. Britain's hope of forcing Germany to its knees by an oil blockade has been foiled by the collapse of France and by the fact that Germany has been tightening its hold on the Balkans.

War in the Balkans

Monday 28 October 1940, Athens
The *Greek High Command* announced:

At 5:30 A.M. today, Italian forces attacked our border outposts along the Greek-Albanian border. Our troops are defending our native soil.

Italian Attack on Greece
28 October 1940, Athens
The Athens news agency *Athinaiko Praktoreio* reported:

Premier Metaxas has addressed a proclamation to all Greeks saying: "The time has come for all

Opposite page: The British 7th Royal Dragoon Guards during field trials. On the right of the photograph are Vickers Mark VI light tanks; on the left are Scout Carrier (Bren-gun Carrier) ~~rifle tanks~~.

Right: Armored troop of the Australian 6th Cavalry Division along the Egyptian-Libyan border. In the foreground is the British Mark IIA light tank.



Greeks when they must fight to the death."

The air raid warning sirens sounded in Athens at 7.00 A.M.

28 October 1940, Rome
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Authoritative sources say that Italian troops are preparing to cross the Albanian border into Greece and that as of 6:00 A.M. they may already have crossed the border.

Greek Border Fighting
Tuesday 29 October 1940, Athens
The Athens news agency *Athinaiko Praktoreio* reported:

Greek troops are putting up hard resistance and standing up bravely to their materially superior foe. Special Greek assault troops have been deployed against the tanks. Other assault troops have been formed to destroy the Italian motorcycle columns and so far have inflicted particularly heavy losses.

Weather Conditions in the War Zone
Wednesday 30 October 1940, Budapest
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

Southern Serbia, Macedonia and outer Albania are under the sway of cold, storms, rain, fog and poor visibility. Belgrade reports snow falling in the Albanian mountains. In the Balkans it is assumed that weather conditions and the early arrival of winter will impair the military operations of Italy and Greece along the coast of southern Albania.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Thursday 31 October 1940:

The recent events in Greece show how important the Mediterranean has become in the present war. Italy accused the Greek government of a non-neutral attitude and demanded that Italian armed forces be allowed to occupy important strategic points in Greece. The Greek government's rejection of this ultimatum resulted in the opening of hostilities between Italian and Greek troops along the Albanian-Greek border. As is well known, Britain guaranteed its support to Greece over a year ago, so it immediately declared its readiness to give assistance. So fresh are these events that so far nothing can be said about the development of the military operations, nor about the political effects of the Italian-Greek conflict.

Friday 1 November 1940, Rome
A special correspondent of the Italian *Stefani News Agency* on the Greek front reported:

One of the surprises awaiting the Italian troops operating in Epirus was the complete absence of roads in this area. For troops used to travelling on the modern roads that Italy has built in Albania, it is hard to march along eroded footpaths. The Italian mountain troops have been forced to work non-stop to put up bridges and improve the roads so that the Italian motorized columns can move along them. Although our Italian tanks have had to cross water and marshes, they are now supporting the advancing infantry.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
1 November 1940:

Once again we are being asked not to give any large-scale coverage to the Italian involvement in Greece. The Italians are having to combat very bad weather and are operating in impassable terrain. If we give too grand a treatment to Italian war reports at this time, we would then have to deal with a pause [in Italy's victories] which, in propaganda terms, would be harder to bridge than if we tone down the reports to begin with.

Saturday 2 November 1940, Athens
The *Greek High Command* announced:

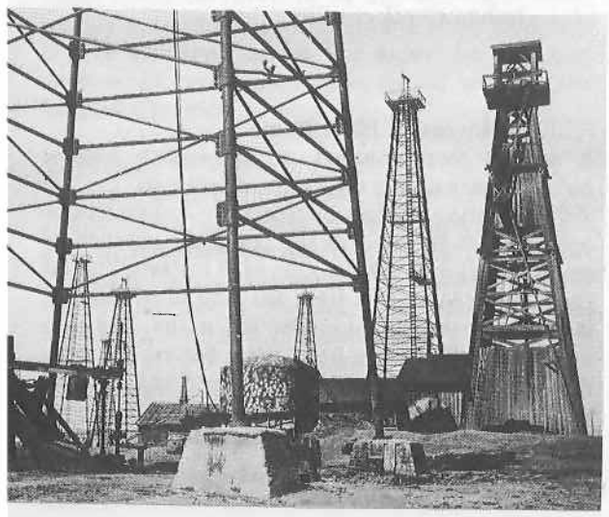
Strong artillery fire along the front in Epirus. In the Florina sector, despite powerful enemy resistance, our troops penetrated 3 miles into Albanian territory where they stormed and captured several fortified enemy bases.

2 November 1940, Rome
The *Italian High Command* announced:

In East Africa enemy patrols protected by tanks have attacked an Italian border post in the Tennenei area [Ethiopia]. Swift intervention by our troops forced them to retreat. After overcoming enemy resistance at Kassala [Sudan], an Italian column occupied the mountain heights which overlook the Sudan Plains.

Exploitation of Scrap Metal
Saturday 9 November 1940, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

The ministries of supply and production have begun to draw up an inventory of the supplies of scrap iron available in Britain in old bridges and railroads. They reckon that the yield would be half a million tons, a quantity sufficient to build 300 destroyers or 7,000 tanks.



British Brigade Lost in Desert Storm
Tuesday 12 November 1940, Milan
The Italian *Stefani News Agency* reported:

Italian war correspondents have described the end of a British brigade in the Libyan desert. The brigade of elite troops, escorted by tanks, which some time ago set out by forced march from Marsa Matruh headed for Siwa Oasis 180 miles away, is believed to have been surprised by an extraordinarily violent sandstorm. After receiving a radio SOS, British reconnaissance planes scoured the desert for days, but were unable to find a trace of the missing men. No sign has been seen of them, so there is virtually no chance left that they will be rescued.

Invasion in the Fog?

Wednesday 20 November 1940, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

The *Daily Telegraph*'s aerial affairs adviser fears that the Germans may be able to use the fog as cover for an invasion of England. During the winter, impenetrable fogs have often impaired air operations for three or fours days at a time. Our expert fears that the Germans could land enough personnel and equipment under cover of the fog to establish one or several bridgeheads at strategically important points. The raiders will of course be discovered as soon as the fog disperses, but German troops might by then have had time enough to secure themselves against even the most vigorous bombardment.

Italian Retreat
Friday 22 November 1940, Rome
The *Italian High Command* announced:

Our two divisions of back-up troops, who took up defensive positions along the Greek-Albanian border at Konitsa at the outbreak of the hostilities, have withdrawn after eleven days of fighting to a line west of the city, which has now been evacuated. We have suffered considerable losses, although we have inflicted equal or perhaps even heavier losses on the enemy. Our reinforcements are concentrated along the new line.

Rumanian Petroleum
22 November 1940, Bucharest
The Italian *Stefani News Agency* reported:

Official sources stated today that special measures are being taken to ship out large quantities of Rumanian oil—mostly destined for Germany—before the Danube freezes over.

The Battle of Sidi Barrani
Wednesday 11 December 1940, Rome
The *Italian High Command* announced:

Opposite page: The Rumanian oil fields at Ploesti, one of Germany's main fuel suppliers



Right: December 1940. British ~~rifle tanks~~ CARRIERS armed with Bren guns, outside an Italian desert fort, Fort Capuzzo, on the Libyan-Egyptian border.

At dawn on December 9, British armored divisions attacked our positions southeast of Sidi Barrani which were occupied by Libyan troops. Initially the troops resisted heroically, but after several hours they were overwhelmed and withdrew to Sidi Barrani.

In the Pogradec Sector (Albania)
11 December 1940
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

The falling snow has led Greek troops attacking the Mokra mountain peaks to wrap themselves in white camouflage cloaks. The Greeks and Italians here are both facing a common enemy—the steadily worsening weather. A great quantity of snow has fallen, and the streams lower down, where it is raining and snowing at the same time, have turned into raging rivers. Rapid military operations are impossible. The cold has already claimed many victims.

British Penetrate into Libya
Friday 13 December 1940, Cairo
The *Headquarters of General Wavell* [the British Middle East Commander] announced:

Operations in the direction of Sollum [Libya] are proceeding as planned and we are winning rapid victories. British motorized troops have encircled and disarmed sizeable Italian units in the Bukbuk area [Egypt close to Libyan border].

Winston Churchill to General Wavell
Monday 16 December 1940:

The Army of the Nile has rendered glorious service to the Empire and to our cause, and we are already reaping rewards in every quarter. We are deeply indebted to you, Wilson, and other commanders, whose fine professional skill and audacious leading have gained us the memorable victory of the Libyan desert. Your first objective now must be to maul the Italian Army and rip them off the African shore to the utmost possible extent. [English quoted from p. 542 of Churchill's *Second World War*, vol. 2]

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

16 December 1940:

... The present military situation suggests that Germany will seek a decision by moving directly against Britain; whereas the British are deploying their entire military might to deliver a decisive blow against Italy in the Mediterranean. The battle in the desert along the border between Egypt and Italian Libya, has understandably brought encouragement and hope to the British people, just as it has led to grave reflections and exhortations in Italy.

The Situation in Macedonia
Wednesday 18 December 1940
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The mud that had frozen solid over the last few weeks is now covered with a layer of snow from three to six feet deep, which is severely impairing military operations [in Macedonia].

The military doctors have reported numerous cases of frostbite among the troops.

The Greek and Italian units fighting in the mountains are suddenly confronting a common enemy: avalanches. Reports from the front indicate that the violent fire of the heavy artillery has caused the snow on the mountain slopes to shift and that soldiers, mules and guns have been swept away by the tumbling masses of snow.

Struggle for Bardia
Saturday 21 December 1940, Cairo
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

The fight for Bardia [Libya] is continuing. The British are steadily drawing the ring tighter. The Italian defenses, which have withdrawn behind the chain of forts that surround the harbor area, are putting up tough resistance; but military experts believe that the resistance must collapse if the British commander orders a decisive raid.

British Reinforcements in Singapore
Monday 23 December 1940, Singapore
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

A communiqué from Air Marshal Brooke Popham, the British commander-in-chief in the Far East, states that recently large transports of troops from every branch of service have arrived in the Malayan states. This has reinforced the already massive defenses of Singapore and also the fighting power of the other sections of Far East Command.

Rumors of German Troop Movements
Friday 27 December 1940, Berlin
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The German authorities are maintaining silence about the rumors coming from Budapest and Belgrade during the holidays, which say that German troop movements are taking place there.

Strategy and Tactics

JULY TO DECEMBER 1940

On Tuesday 16 July 1940, Hitler issued Directive 16 to the German army, navy and air force, initiating German preparations for an invasion of Great Britain (Operation Sea Lion). The target date for the invasion was specified only as "when necessary." For the panzer force this order meant that they had to devise a submersible combat tank that could be dropped off the southern coast of England by landing barge, and make its way along the sea floor in 25 feet of water until it reached the beach, where it would attack the British coastal defenses.

Four submersible tank units were created out of the forces of eight panzer regiments. At once they began top-secret water trials at Hörnum on the German island of Sylt. A special adhesive was installed between the turret and the tank hull, consisting of a kind of bicycle hose which the loader attached around the turret ring and then pumped up from inside the vehicle. A rubber cowl covering the gun mouth could be blasted off from inside the turret after the vehicle surfaced [so that it was immediately ready to fire]. A 16-foot hose attached to a buoy with suction devices, resembling the later submarine snorkel, supplied fresh air to the crew and the engine, and also carried an aerial. Both the commander and his driver were virtually blind under water, but a gyroscopic compass enabled them to hold their course. The exhaust pipes were equipped with a back-pressure valve.

Another amphibious vehicle also took part in the exercises on Sylt: An amphibious tractor, the LWS, which was supposed to tow the first 8.8-cm antiaircraft gun batteries safely to the British coast, had a 100-horsepower Maybach V-12 engine and a maximum speed of 7½ mph. Twenty-one of these tracked vehicles, which looked like a cross between a tank and a motorboat, had already been built in Boizenburg (eastern Germany) in 1939, by the Sachsenberg inland dockyard and the Alkett manufacturing firm.

On Wednesday 31 July 1940, Hitler spent almost the entire day conferring about his plans for war. First, with Admiral Raeder, the commander-in-chief of the German navy, he fixed a target date for the invasion of Britain: 15 September 1940. Then he confirmed to the German army C-in-C, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, his decision to attack and defeat the Soviet Union in a 5-month campaign beginning in spring 1941.

On Friday 2 August 1940 General Thomas, the chief of the German Wehrmacht ministry of economics and armament, was commissioned by Field Marshal Keitel to set up a new armaments program which would increase the army's strength to 180 divisions including a number of new armored divisions.

Three days later, on 5 August 1940, General Marcks, the German general staff chief attached to the German Eighteenth Army, submitted the first deployment study for the projected campaign against the Soviet Union. The Eighteenth Army, commanded by General von Küchler, already had 16 divisions in German-occupied Poland, along the border of the Soviet-occupied zone.

On Friday 9 August 1940, the OKW issued orders for the build-up of German forces in the East. The German part of Poland was to be converted into a massive base of operations for the campaign against the USSR, including airbases, military depots and a network of tank repair workshops.

On Friday 13 September 1940—3 months after the Italians went to war—Marshal Graziani opened the first Italian offensive against the British in North Africa. The Italian Tenth Army under General Berti crossed the border from Libya into western Egypt at Fort Capuzzo, with six infantry divisions and eight armored battalions. The weak British forces—3 infantry battalions, one armored battalion, 2 platoons of armored reconnaissance cars, and 3 gun batteries—were forced to retreat. At this time the British army in Egypt had only 36,000 men. General Wavell, the British C-in-C in Egypt, expected an Italian offensive, but did not plan to resist the Italians until they reached the fortified area of Marsa Matruh, which was much farther east than the Italians intended to advance in the initial phase.

Near the Egyptian-Libyan border was a defensive line of weak British armored divisions which did not offer serious battle when the Italians attacked; there were only isolated skirmishes with British patrols. The complicated encirclement and outflanking maneuvers exhausted the Italian troops; the so-called "offensive" showed that the Italian army was not prepared for desert operations and above all lacked the necessary transport.

By Monday 16 September 1940, the Italian troops had advanced 60 miles to Sidi Barrani, took the city, and dug into fortified bases to "organize supplies."

The intensified German air war against Britain (the Battle of Britain) was resulting in increasingly heavy losses to the Luftwaffe, so on Tuesday 17 September Hitler decided to postpone Operation Sea Lion, his planned invasion of Britain, "until further notice." However, he ordered preparations for the invasion to continue, and diversionary feints to disguise the preparations were actually stepped up.

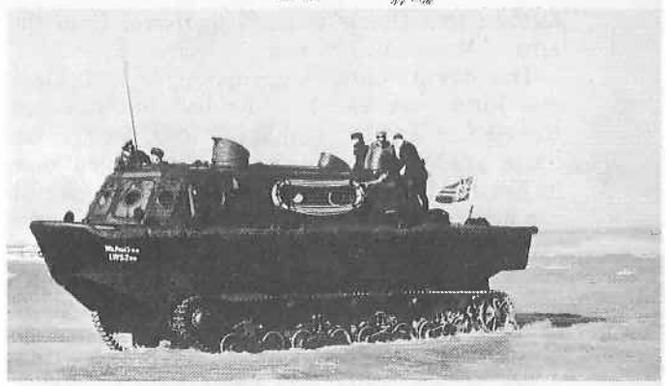
On Friday 20 September 1940, Field Marshal von Bock, the C-in-C of Army Group B, ended his post as commander of the Eighteenth Army and took over command of German troops along the Eastern border.

By the end of September 1940 there were already 30 German divisions along the German-Soviet demarcation line, inside the German sphere of Poland, and in East Prussia. Among them were 3 armored divisions, one motorized and one cavalry division.

At 5:30 A.M. on Monday 28 October 1940, the Italians attacked Greece from Albania [which they had occupied in 1939]. The Italian C-in-C, General Visconti-Prasca, commanded six infantry divisions, one mountain division and one armored division, totalling 155,000 men. One infantry division secured the border with Yugoslavia. The planned landing of a division in the Bay of Arta behind the Greek border outposts, had to be cancelled because of a storm. Five Italian divisions, reinforced with Albanian troops and volunteers, entered Epirus along a broad front, ostensibly to "liberate" the Albanians living there, and two Italian divisions advanced south of Lake Prespa toward Florina. The Greek army under command of General Papagos had 14 infantry divisions and one cavalry division at this time. After completing its mobilization it numbered about 430,000 men. [Reference to the map of the Balkans Campaign on page 107 in the next chapter will make it easier to follow the geography of the battle.—Trans.]

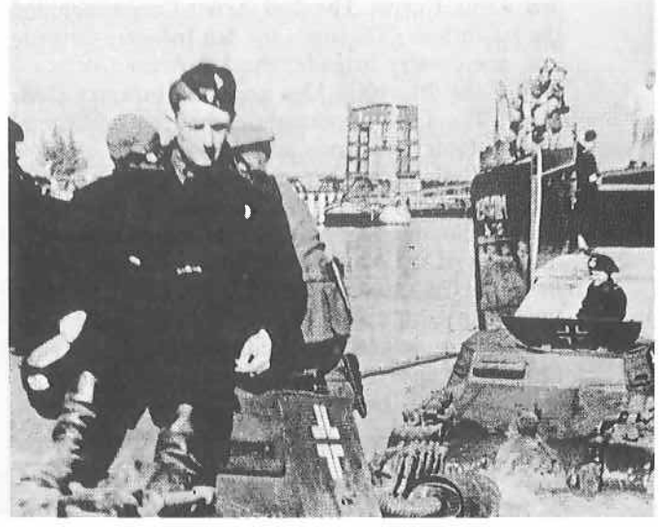
Next day, 29 October 1940, the British occupied the island of Crete and mined Greek waters. After progressing for 18 miles, the Italian forces invading Epirus were halted in the Vijosa river valley, outside Ioannina and at the Kalamas river. The attack aimed at Florina also bogged down.

On Sunday 3 November 1940, a counterattack by the Greek 2nd Corps under Colonel Papadopoulos forced the left flank of the Italian Eleventh Army under General Geloso, which had penetrated



Above: The German island of Sylt, July 1940. A German amphibious tractor vehicle on water trials, during preparations for the planned German invasion of Britain. The tractor was supposed to transport 8.8-cm flak guns onto British beaches.

Below: German tanks practicing for the invasion



farthest into Greek territory, to retreat from the area of Vovouza-Kratsovon.

That day at Führer Headquarters, German General Ritter von Thoma, who had just returned from a fact-finding mission in Libya, brought up the possibility of sending a German armored force to North Africa. Von Thoma, the commander of the army of the German Condor Legion in the Spanish Civil War, believed that four panzer divisions would be an ideal force: the minimum needed for a victory but the maximum that could be kept supplied in the desert. He said that he would not accept command of a weaker force. But for the time being Hitler refused to send any German troops to North Africa.

On Monday 4 November 1940 Hitler decided to attack Greece from Hungary, Bulgaria and Rumania, to relieve Mussolini's forces who were having trouble defeating the Greeks. Meanwhile the Greek High Command reinforced the Greek troops in Epirus and the Greek Army of Western Macedonia launched fresh operations, defeating an Italian elite division, the Iulia Mountain Division. The Greeks reconquered the border sector from the Yugoslavian border to the Pindos mountains. In Epirus the enemy was halted at the Kalamas river. Mussolini's plan to wage a German-style blitzkrieg in Greece was over.

Despite their inadequate equipment, and especially their lack of antitank and antiaircraft guns, the Greek defenses achieved their task by repulsing General Visconti-Presca's offensive and gaining the time to concentrate their main forces. The Greeks had now assembled eleven infantry divisions, one cavalry division and three infantry brigades on the Albanian front. Epirus was occupied by the 1st Army Corps under General Kosmas, which was made up of the 2nd, 3rd and 8th Infantry Divisions, the 1st Cavalry Division and one cavalry brigade. In the Macedonian sector was the Army of Western Macedonian with the 2nd and 3rd Army Corps. The 2nd Army Corps included the 1st Infantry Division, the 5th Infantry Brigade and one cavalry brigade; the 3rd Army Corps included the 9th, 10th, 13th and 15th Infantry Divisions. The Greek commander had an additional three infantry divisions and one infantry brigade.

The Italians too set about reorganizing their forces and set up the Albania Army Group under General Soddu. The group included the 4 infantry divisions of the Ninth Army which held the sector from the Yugoslav border to the Osum river, and the five divisions of the Eleventh Army which were ordered to defend the Italian-held territory in Epirus. Of course there were still vast reserves of troops back in Italy, but supply problems slowed down the transfer of troops to the Greek front.

Complete peace reigned in North Africa, and while the Italians and Greeks met in hard battle in the Balkans, the British were preparing a counteroffensive in Egypt. After receipt of reinforcements—two Australian, one Indian, and one New Zealand infantry division, plus a Polish brigade and the newly equipped British 7th Armoured Division which had been transported from Britain around Africa by sea—General Wavell planned a 5-day operation to throw Italian troops out of the Sidi Barrani area thus gaining time to concentrate stronger forces in Egypt.

On Thursday 14 November 1940, the Greek 1st, 2nd and 3rd Army Corps launched a counteroffensive against the Italians. Along their right flank the army corps and the K Group defeated the main forces of the Italian Ninth Army and drove it back to Albania.

By Thursday 21 November 1940, Greek forces had already captured the important road junction at Konitsa and the Morina Planina mountains overlooking it. In the center of the Greek-Italian front, in the Grammos and Smolikas mountains of Greece bordering Albania, the Greek 2nd Army Corps threw the Italian troops off Greek territory, then crossed the border and that same day reached the Erseka-Leskovik line (Albania). On the Greek left flank, the 1st Army Corps broke through enemy resistance on the Kalamas river and drove the Italians over the border where they were forced to retreat still further to avoid being encircled.

On the evening of 22 November 1940, the Greeks began the second phase of their counteroffensive, advancing in three groups. The right-hand assault group—the 3rd Army Corps and K Group—took Ohrida in the teeth of hard Italian resistance and so secured the area around Konitsa. The 1st Army Corps on the left flank successfully penetrated the strong Italian border defenses.

On Thursday 5 December 1940 the central Greek operational group—the 2nd Army Corps—took Permelti and Frasher (Albania) after dogged fighting.

Next day, 6 December 1940, the 1st Army Corps took the city of Saranda in Albania while following through its pursuit of the Italian troops, and two days later, on December 8, they took Argyrokastron. The Italians launched several counterattacks using armored forces and brought up a number of fresh reinforcement divisions, but without success; so the Greek High Command decided to continue the offensive in the direction of Valona.

On Monday 9 December 1940, after the collapse of Italian resistance, the Greek 2nd Army Corps and K Group, both on the Greek right flank, marched through the Devoli and Tomori valleys.

On that same December 9, General Wavell's forces—the British 7th Armoured, the 16th Motorized Infantry Brigade, the Indian 4th Infantry, and the Australian 6th Division, totalling 31,000 men, 225 tanks and 120 cannon—attacked General Gariboldi's Italian Tenth Army in Western Egypt, in its fortified positions at Sofafi, Nibeiwa, eastern Tummar, western Tummar, Maktila and Sidi Barrani. The British 7th Armoured and an Indian division made a breakthrough between Sofafi and Nibeiwa. The Royal Navy fired on Maktila, Sidi Barrani and the coastal road, and British aircraft raided airfields.

The British captured Sidi Barrani after two days of attack, on December 11. Part of the 7th Armoured turned to the south and prevented the Italians from escaping from Sofafi. Four Italian divisions were wiped out; 38,300 soldiers, including 4 generals, were captured; 400 guns and 50 tanks were seized by the British. British losses were 133 killed, 8 missing and 387 wounded. The Italians' attempt to build up a defense in the Libyan and Egyptian border zone had been foiled.

On Friday 13 December 1940, Hitler signed Directive 20, a plan for Operation Marita, the German attack on Greece. It provided for Field Marshal List's powerful Twelfth Army to attack from Bulgaria and occupy the Greek Aegean coast.

On Sunday 15 December, the British took in a surprise raid the Halfaya Pass on the Libyan-Egyptian border. British tanks now had a clear path to the interior of Cyrenaica. The remnants of the Italian Tenth Army withdrew to the fortress of Bardia. The Italians now reinforced the defenses of Tobruk and the El Mekili-Derna line, where they stationed three divisions which they had summoned from the interior.

On Tuesday 17 December, British troops captured the strongly fortified, Italian-held town of Sollum on the Egyptian border with Libya.

On Wednesday 18 December, when the Wehrmacht had completed the military build-up it began in August, Hitler signed Directive 21 ordering Operation Barbarossa, the German attack on the Soviet Union. Once again the plan was for a blitzkrieg which was expected to last for three to four months. The preparations were to be completed by 15 May 1941.

On Thursday 19 December 1940, the Italian High Command appealed to the OKW to send a German armored division to North Africa as soon as possible.

On Tuesday 24 December, the Greek 3rd Army Corps, which was advancing through the Devoli and Tomori valleys of Albania, was now 12 miles



British Bren-gun Carrier ~~rifle-tanks~~ marching through Egypt

east of Berat. The central Greek assault group, 2nd Corps, was pinned down by strong Italian resistance and had not advanced far beyond its initial positions near Kelcyre. 1st Corps on the Greek left flank reached Tepelena (Albania) where they met substantial resistance. Nevertheless part of the corps successfully advanced along the coast and took Himare. But the Greek troops could not achieve their overall operational objective because on the central front the Italians continued to hold the areas of Kelcyre and Tepelena. The Greeks were unable to carry out a broad encirclement due to the continually growing numbers of the Italian forces, who were receiving a steady stream of hastily transported reinforcements from Italy.

On Saturday 28 December, Mussolini asked Hitler for German support against the Greeks in Albania. At first Hitler was prepared to send in one of his experienced mountain divisions, but then he changed his mind and refused to become involved.

On Monday 30 December 1940 the Greek High Command decided to continue the advance with only the central Greek force, 2nd Corps, and ordered it to take Kelcyre. Bitter fighting ensued as soon as the attack was launched. The Italians threw five of their divisions into the fray against three and a half Greek divisions, and both sides suffered heavy losses. But the advancing Greeks, by extremely clever tactics, managed to capture Kelcyre and to clear away the Italian salient.

That same day General Soddu stepped down from his post as Italian C-in-C due to illness and was replaced by General Count Cavallero.

At the end of December 1940 the Greeks had 13 divisions and 3 bridges on the Albanian front. The Italians had 11 infantry divisions, 4 mountain divisions and one armored division as well as a large number of smaller units. There was a rough parity

between the two adversaries, although the Greeks were suffering increasing problems with supply and transport.

In Germany, all aspects of the tank—production and development as well as strategy and tactics—were dependent on Hitler's caprices and pseudo-expertise. Obsessed with the notion of his campaign against the Soviet Union, he demanded that tank production be increased from 125 per month to 800-1,000 per month so that he could double the number of his panzer divisions. Dr. Todt, the German minister of armament and war production, explained to Hitler that a program of this magnitude could be achieved only by reducing submarine and aircraft production. So as not to abandon his idea, Hitler ordered that the panzer divisions be doubled by halving the number of tanks in each, reducing this to 150-210 tanks.

Hitler failed to realize that the newly created, smaller panzer divisions now needed more auxiliary equipment and especially more vehicles than the previous giant divisions. He had also ordered an increase in the number of motorized infantry divisions; so the armaments industry was unable to meet the new motor vehicle quotas. To relieve the situation the army distributed captured French and British matériel to the motorized units.

The distribution of the captured tanks soon proved a disastrous mistake. There were no replacement parts, the guns were of different calibers from the German weapons, and the French tanks had relatively small fuel tanks and thus a considerably smaller range than German panzers.

In the second half of 1940, something over 1,000 new tanks were built in Germany. Antitank guns and self-propelled artillery guns were also produced and mounted on the chassis of the antiquated Panzer I light tanks and of Czech Skoda 38(t)s. Their experiences in the Western Campaign led the Germans to begin equipping Panzer IIIs with a short 5-cm antitank gun because the 3.7-cm gun had proved completely inadequate. A new development was the self-propelled assault gun, an armored full-tracked vehicle armed with (usually) a 7.5-cm gun. The gun was not mounted in a revolving turret as in a tank, but fixed directly in the front end of the vehicle, so it could not fire laterally. Strictly speaking, these assault guns were part of the artillery and were developed in response to the infantry's request for an armored heavy support weapon.

Command and development of the German panzer divisions were also adjusted in line with data gathered in the earlier part of the war. For the most part, the divisions were now to fight within the frame of a whole panzer corps. If a panzer division was assigned independent missions, it was if possible reinforced with motorized infantry and artillery. The new army service regulations described the main task of the panzer divisions and panzer corps as "bringing about the decision in battle."

The infantry would cooperate with the tanks by dismounting from their vehicles on the battlefield; only in exceptional cases would the battle be led from inside the vehicles.

At the end of 1940 the British too significantly reformed their armored divisions. Previously a division had contained two armored brigades of three battalions each, plus one auxiliary group (= an artillery battalion, an infantry battalion, a combat engineer company). Now a motorized infantry battalion (motor battalion) was assigned to each of the armored brigades. The British planned to set up ten armored divisions on this model. After the retreat from Dunkirk, Britain had only 200 combat-ready tanks left.

To increase tank production, long-term work on tank deployment was halted or greatly reduced. Only the minimum technical improvements were made and few new types were introduced. At this time one of the strongest British tanks was the Mark II "Matilda." Its high-quality 80-mm armor gave it good protection, but it was too slow, it had weak guns and it tended to mechanical breakdown.

The Soviet Union too turned the experiences of the Battle of France to account. The Soviets ceased to regard their tanks as exclusively an infantry-support weapon, and started a rapid building program to produce armored and mechanized units modelled on the German.

So far the USA had no massed-tank units. Seeing the events in Europe, the Americans hastily began to set up a modern armored service. At the time they had only about 400 antiquated tanks and they had had no experience in mass-producing tanks. By the end of 1940, when they saw the need for tank production, initial war data were already available for evaluation, and with the aid of British experts they were able to produce several standard models within a short time. The vast industrial capacity of the USA made it possible to keep driving up production almost daily.

1941

January—June

Monday 6 January 1941, Cairo
British Headquarters in Egypt announced:

British advance units are now approaching the area of Tobruk. We have already taken more than 30,000 [Italian] prisoners around Bardia [Libya]. Large quantities of tanks, guns, matériel and supplies of all kinds have fallen into the hands of British troops.

The Somali Camel Corps is Dissolved
Wednesday 8 January 1941, Nairobi (Kenya)
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

On January 7 a radical change occurred in the military history of Kenya. The Somali Camel Corps [forces of British East Africa which were fighting on the British side as part of Middle East Command] was dissolved and reorganized, now equipped with tanks from South Africa. The tanks are intended especially for operations in the desert.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Thursday 9 January 1941:

As we look at the various theaters of war this past week, we see that the British army's offensive in Libya, led by General Wavell [Commander-in-Chief, Middle East Command] has continued to develop. The fall of the fortress of Bardia on the coast of Cyrenaica has reactivated the British advance toward Tobruk against the bulk of Graziani's army. The British claim that since Wavell's offensive began one month ago, more than 90,000 Italian troops have been eliminated from the battle, the majority of whom have been captured by the victorious British. The British have likewise taken large quantities of military equipment and supplies of all kinds in Bardia. The greatest boon to the British is that they are now able to use the port of Bardia to bring in supplies, whereas in the past they had to deliver supplies laboriously by the desert roads.

The situation in the Albanian theater is static. However, the Greeks are only a day's march from the Albanian port of Valona, which it is their present strategic objective to occupy. At Tepelena [Yugoslavia], Klisura [Bulgaria] and near Lake Ochrida [Yugoslav-Albanian border], the Greeks have evidently not yet progressed to positions that would enable them to carry out a strategic expansion of the tactical positions they have won so far. This fact does not in the least diminish the extraordinary achievement of the Greek army and its commanders.

The Fight for Tobruk
Monday 13 January 1941, Cairo
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

British operations are progressing well around [the Italian-held fortress of] Tobruk. Artillery has been placed in sizeable strength and drinking water depots have been set up for the troops. The Italian garrison is now surrounded.

The Maginot Line is Dismantled
Tuesday 14 January 1941, Berlin
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Reliable sources have just informed us that the Germans have begun dismantling the Maginot Line. Once the fortifications have been removed, they then plan to parcel up the land into hereditary farms.

The War in North Africa

Tobruk Has Fallen
Wednesday 22 January 1941, Cairo
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:



THE DAILY MAIL, Saturday, January 4, 1941.

BALD! DON'T GO

HARLENE HAIR GROWER & TONIC

Daily Mail

FOR KING AND EMPIRE

NO. 13,945 SATURDAY, JANUARY 4, 1941 ONE PENNY

LATE WAR NEWS SPECIAL

NOT JUST A NAME— A GUARANTEE

Calmak

TANKS STORMING BARDIA

Australians Push On in Big Attack

MAROONED BY RAIDER

Shelter Tubes: Changed Control

THE Ministry of Health have taken over control of all air-

MANY PRISONERS ALREADY TAKEN

From ALEXANDER CLIFFORD, Daily Mail Correspondent

CAIRO, Friday.

THE BATTLE FOR BARDIA has begun in earnest. First news was received this morning when desert headquarters flashed back the laconic message that Australian troops, accompanied by tanks, had broken through in one sector.

FRENCH WARSHIPS TORPEDOED

THE French Admiralty announced last night that the submarine Bfax (1,384 tons) and the Fleet petrol tanker Rhone (7,765 tons) have been sunk after "heavy explosions" while on their way from Casablanca, French Moroccan naval base, to the West African port of Dakar. The communique added that both vessels had apparently been torpedoed on December 19 by a submarine whose nationality is not yet known, and that 74 seamen perished. The British Admiralty, when questioned, stated that no British submarine had been operating within 500 miles of the scene of the incident on the day.

3 'Dictators' Will Rule from Vichy

VICHY, Friday.

ADMIRAL DARLAN, French Navy Chief, to-night is at

The British *Daily Mail* newspaper account of the British tank attack on Italian-held Bardia in North Africa, 4 January 1941

Opposite page: (1) US T7 light tank, the last Christie-model tank built in the USA (produced 1939/40); (2) US M2A General Stuart III light combat tank (first produced 1941); (3) US T6 medium tank (first produced 1941).

Australian and British troops have stormed the inner defensive perimeter of Tobruk and entered the city. The entire fortified network is now in British hands.

The Operations in Eritrea
Thursday 23 January 1941, Cairo
The British *Exchange News Agency* reported:

British motorized troops have advanced approximately 42 miles into the interior of Eritrea in their sharp pursuit of the retreating enemy. Supplies of fuel and provisions are getting through and making it possible to continue motorized operations.

Derna Captured
Thursday 30 January 1941, Cairo
British Headquarters in Egypt announced:

The Italian occupation of Derna in Libya ended on Thursday morning.

German Formal Denial
Friday 31 January 1941, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

Yesterday a report from London claimed that in September German forces attempted a landing invasion on the British coast. German authorities state that this report is a pure fabrication and that no German attempts were made to land in Britain last year. Moreover, the rumor of the alleged failure of landing becomes no more credible from being continually repeated by the enemy, or by neutral foreign nations that do not sympathize with the Pan-German Reich.

Are German Aircraft Landing in Libya?
Sunday 2 February 1941, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

The German Luftwaffe has begun to operate on the Libyan Front. The attacking planes, which raided an advanced British position in Libya, could not be identified with certainty, but observers were convinced that they were German because of the style of the attack. Also, the planes did not appear to carry the standard Italian markings.

Tank Service Becomes a Main US Arms Target

4 February 1941
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The US Army tank arm has begun to carry out an enormous expansion program based on plans which have been developed, continuously improved and modernized since 1928. The army has always realized the striking power of rapid-moving tanks but, armored officers explain, considered it wiser to avoid spending billions of dollars for the production of tanks that would then have had to be stored in giant depots until the day they were mobilized, and that might by then have become outdated. The army trusted in the geographical position of the USA to give it time to assemble, whereas the European nations are compelled to keep their armies and arms always ready to deploy.

Wednesday 5 February 1941, Cairo
British Headquarters in Egypt announced:

Our westward advance inside Libya is continuing. On Monday, forward British units marched into Cyrene. In Eritrea, Italian troops have continued their retreat beyond Agordat. Our troops are approaching Keren. British troops have left Barentu and are pursuing the enemy toward the south. The exact number of Italian prisoners taken has not yet been determined. In Abyssinia our advance has continued east of Gallabat [Anglo-Egyptian Sudan] on the road from Metemma to Gondar. Patrol activity is continuing in Italian Somaliland.

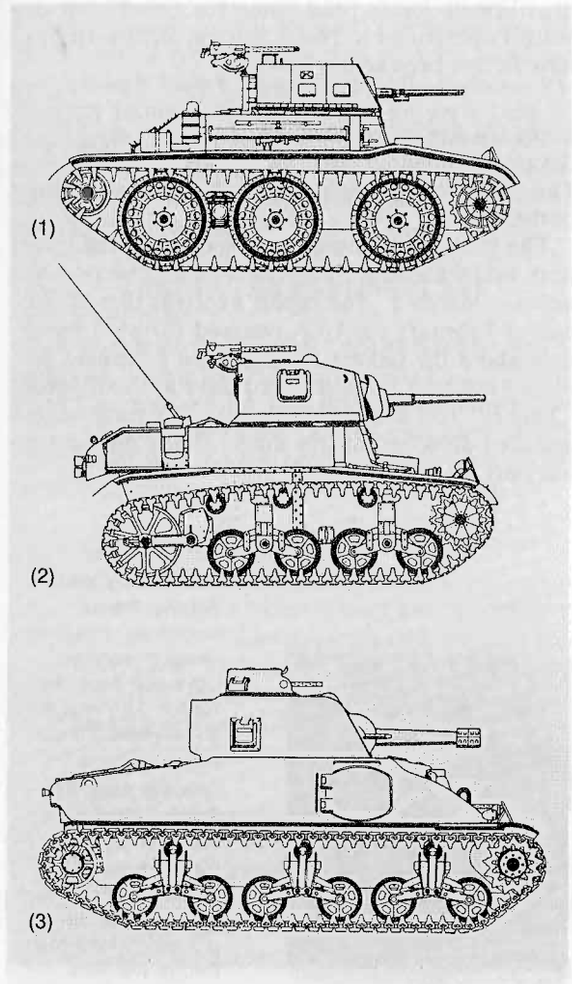
Advance against the Kufra Oases
Wednesday 12 February 1941, London
Free French Headquarters announced:

Our forces in Chad Province [French Equatorial Africa] have continued their operations in southern Libya with the support of our aircraft. A motorized column under the command of Colonel Leclerc has won ground and occupied oases around Kufra.

Almost 600 miles of desert separate Kufra from the border of Chad, and the Sahara poses many obstacles to military operations in the area.

Fresh Greek Offensive
Sunday 16 February 1941, Athens
The Athens news agency *Athinaiko Praktoreio* reported:

The Greek general staff reports that the Greek troop offensive that began on Friday is continuing with undiminished violence. Yesterday Greek forces again won important victories in which prisoners and large amounts of war matériel of every kind fell into their hands. Greek assault troops succeeded in penetrating strongly fortified Italian positions at various points on the front, which has shifted along its whole length between Lake Ochrida [on Yugoslav-Albanian border] and the coast.



(1)

(2)

(3)

Wednesday 26 February 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command (OKW)* announced:

On the morning of February 24, a German reconnaissance troop encountered a British motorized reconnaissance troop on the Libyan coast southeast of Agedabia. A number of British motor vehicles, including several tanks, were destroyed, and captives taken. There were no German losses.

Thursday 27 February 1941, Cairo
British Headquarters in Egypt announced:

In Libya our motorized vanguard encountered and repulsed west of Agheila an armored unit which to all appearances was German.

Germans Issue Warning to Greece
Sunday 2 March 1941, Sofia
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

We are reliably informed that the moment when Bulgaria joined the Tripartite Pact [Axis coalition], Germany prepared to march into Bulgaria and informed the Greeks via diplomatic communications that within two weeks they had either to make peace or to "bear the consequences."

German Troops in Africa

2 March 1941, Tripoli (Libya)
The Italian *Stefani News Agency* reported:

The fresh troops who have just arrived in Libya held a parade before high-ranking military men and civilian officials, to the applause of the people. Among those present were the commander-in-chief of the Italian North Africa troop, the chief of the general staff, and the commander of the German armored corps in North Africa.

Surrender of the Kufra Oases
Monday 3 March 1941, Cairo
Free French Headquarters to General de Gaulle:

I am happy to inform you that the garrisons of the Kufra Oases surrendered at 9:00 A.M. on March 1, after a three-week siege. The capture of these enemy positions by Free French forces, is one more step toward final victory. Vive la France!

Signed, DE LARMINAT

Prognosis for Greece
Wednesday 5 March 1941, Budapest
The British *Exchange News Agency* reported:

A telephone report from a British correspondent in Belgrade said:

It appears increasingly probable that Germany will issue an ultimatum to Greece demanding that the situation be decided immediately. Presumably this step will take place around March 15, when German forces in Bulgaria will have reached their full strength.

The Fighting in Abyssinia
Thursday 6 March 1941, Khartoum (Anglo-Egyptian Sudan)
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The East African war has turned into a race to Addis Ababa between the army of Abyssinian volunteers and the mechanized South African troops who stand in such remarkable contrast to each other. The South African troops are advancing from Mogadishu [seaport capital of Italian Somaliland] toward Harar, which lies about 30 miles from the Djibouti-to-Addis Ababa rail line.

The Italian-Greek War
Monday 10 March 1941, Athens
The *Greek War Ministry* announced:

We have continued our offensive operations and won new enemy positions. The enemy has launched violent counterattacks that have been repulsed with heavy losses.

Winston Churchill to the British Admiralty Controller
Saturday 15 March 1941:

Give me a report on the progress of the ships to carry and disgorge tanks. How many are there? What is their tonnage? How many tanks can they take in a flight? When will each one be ready? Where are they being built? What mark of tank can they carry? [English quoted from p. 663, Appendix C of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. 3, London, 1950]

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Thursday 20 March 1941:

For the past three weeks, since the German Wehrmacht occupied Bulgaria, it has been uncertain whether the Balkans as a whole will be turned into a theater of war or whether, on the contrary, the military dominance of Germany in southeastern Europe will bring about a certain stability. Where Greece is concerned, as of today diplomatic relations between Athens and Berlin have not yet been broken off, even though Athens has been at war with Germany's ally Italy for almost five months. However, for three weeks German troops have stood along the border of northern Greece, on a long front bordered by Yugoslavia in the west and by European Turkey in the East... A final question is that of the active participation of British troops in the defense of Greece. Reports of British troop landings in a southern Greek port are becoming more frequent, and the denial of these reports is growing weaker. Thus it is not impossible that since the occupation of Bulgaria by the German armed forces, and since the conclusion of British operations in North Africa, British troops have in fact been sent to Greece.

Eight US Armored Divisions
Saturday 22 March 1941, Washington
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The US Credit Commission has published a report which General Marshall read at a secret session on March 5. The report explains that at the end of February the USA received further precise data about the panzer divisions that Germany deployed last year in its armored drive to the English Channel. The US Army is going to form eight armored divisions of this kind. At the moment it has only two.



Left: January 1941, British motorized formations advancing westward through Libya after capturing Tobruk. The vehicles are ~~rifle-tanks~~ armored cars armed with Bren guns.

Opposite page: The Greek Orthodox bishop of Chania (Crete) is giving his blessing to British troops. In the foreground is a Bren-(gun) Carrier ~~rifle-tank~~.

Italian Attacks Fail
Sunday 23 March 1941, Athens
The Athens news agency *Athinaiko Praktoreio* reported:

A Greek government spokesman says that the Italians have carried out three days of armored attacks on the central front, but that lethal Greek artillery fire has forced them to retreat.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Tuesday 25 March 1941:

Your big front-page story today is Yugoslavia's decision to join the [Axis] tripartite coalition. Besides giving a factual report of the event, you should add commentaries and articles which treat this as yet another significant victory for the concept of a new European order, over the destructive forces of the Anglo-Saxon world.

Winston Churchill to General Wavell
Wednesday 26 March 1941:

We are naturally concerned at rapid German advances to Agheila. It is their habit to push on whenever they are not resisted. I presume you are only waiting for the tortoise to stick his head out far enough before chopping it off. It seems extremely important to give them an early taste of our quality. What is the state and location of 7th Armoured Division? Pray give me your appreciation. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. 3]

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
26 March 1941:

Take care how you report world reaction to Yugoslavia joining the Tripartite (Axis) Pact. Emphasize the opinions of the British and Americans who, on the one hand, do not hide their disappointment and, on the other hand, are still desirous of stirring up trouble in Yugoslavia.

Revolution in Yugoslavia
Thursday 27 March 1941, Belgrade
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

Prince Paul of Yugoslavia has fled. Former premier Cvetkovič, who signed Yugoslavia's entry into the Tripartite Pact, has been imprisoned [by his own people in a coup d'état], as have other members of the former government.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
27 March 1941:

The sensational news from Belgrade, that King Peter has been placed on the throne by a military coup, should not be reported [in Germany] until the situation is clarified.



King Peter II Sworn In
Friday 28 March 1941, Belgrade
The Italian *Stefani News Agency* reported:

This morning at 10:00 A.M., the members of Yugoslavian Premier Simovic's new government were presented to the king. Shortly after that, King Peter swore his fealty to the constitution in the presence of the Patriarch and high dignitaries of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

King Peter's motorcade from the royal palace to the cathedral, and the return trip to the palace, had the air of a genuine triumphal procession.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
28 March 1941:

Yugoslavia is not kindly disposed toward Germany. When you report recent events there, your news captions should be shaded so as to make this somewhat clearer but without taking on the form of a threat. Offer no commentary at any time.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Thursday 3 April 1941:

Yugoslavia stands at the center of political events... News of the [anti-Axis] coup d'état and the proclamation of the young king, has triggered immense enthusiasm in Belgrade and all Serbia. The demonstrations were repeated next day after Peter II swore his oath in Belgrade Cathedral, when the crowd also cheered the representatives of Britain, Greece and Soviet Russia... It would be desirable for the new Yugoslav government to



German tanks advancing through Libya

maintain peace with the outside world and independence at home, and to preserve internal calm and unity. But as of today there is no indication that Yugoslavia has consolidated its foreign and internal situation. It was doubtless a great disappointment to the new leaders in Belgrade that the Croatian leader, Vice-Premier Maček, did not turn up in the capital for the new king's swearing-in ceremony [reflecting tensions between the ruling Serbian party and the nationalist Croatians who wanted autonomy, enabling the Germans to drive a wedge between them].

The War in Africa
Friday 4 April 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

As we already reported in a special announcement, on April 2 German and Italian troops continued their pursuit of British troops whom they defeated at Mersa-el-Brega in North Africa. We have captured Agedabia and reached Zuctina. The enemy is retreating northward in haste.

4 April 1941, Cairo
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

An official British Government spokesman has said that Great Britain is allowing the enemy to penetrate farther east in Cyrenaica, until a point is reached where he can be fought with the greatest prospect of victory.

War Spreads in the Balkans

Sunday 6 April 1941, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

At 5:30 this morning the German government announced that it felt compelled to order the Wehrmacht to march into Greece and Yugoslavia last night, with the aim of driving Britain out of Europe once and for all.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
6 April 1941:

In reporting the military events, take care to say nothing that might suggest to the German people the notion that we are waging a new "blitzkrieg." In the Balkans we are fighting a very hard fight against a dogged enemy whom the British have been stirring up for years. Another thing that should be emphasized is the extraordinary difficulty posed by the terrain....

Monday 7 April 1941, Athens
The *Greek High Command* announced:

Yesterday morning, strong German forces armed with the most modern equipment, tanks, large amounts of heavy artillery, and many aircraft, suddenly attacked weakly guarded Greek positions. Throughout the day bitter fighting has ensued near the Greek-Bulgarian border, especially around the Beles mountains and in the Struma valley.

Tuesday 8 April 1941, Athens
The *Greek High Command* announced:

The Yugoslavian army in southern Serbia is retreating under enemy pressure and thereby exposing the left flank of our brave army. Nevertheless our soldiers are fighting with an incomparable spirit of sacrifice for every foot of the land of our ancestors.

Derna Reoccupied by Axis Troops
8 April 1941, Rome
The Italian *Stefani News Agency* reported:

Motorized German and Italian troops have recaptured the city of Derna (Libya) 150 miles east of Benghazi.

Wednesday 9 April 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Mobile troops and infantry divisions under the command of Field Marshal List, advancing from Bulgaria, have broken through the Yugoslavian border defenses and despite the difficult mountainous terrain, have penetrated over 60 miles into the Skopje (Ueskub) Basin [in southern Yugoslavia] and crossed the Vardar river, thereby cutting off the Yugoslav forces from their Greek and British allies.

All Attacks Repulsed
9 April 1941, Belgrade
The *Yugoslavian General Staff* announced:

All troop reports which have reached our general staff so far indicate that the situation on the fronts is progressing favorably. We have succeeded in halting all attacks and have in part repulsed them. Our troops are fighting with the greatest determination and have inflicted heavy losses on the enemy.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No. 178 of 10 April 1941 (extract):

I. General comments: Our great victories in the compaigns in Greece, Yugoslavia and North Africa, and against the British Isles and British shipping, have far surpassed expectations. The special announcements of April 9 triggered repeated waves of enthusiasm. Everywhere the [German] people have expressed gratitude and admiration for our victorious soldiers. Information supplied earlier about the difficulties of the military situation in the southeast, led the German people not to expect such victories in the first week.

Tank-Raid Warning
The *OKH (German Army High Command)* ordered on 10 April 1941:

At present the Luftwaffe drops blue or violet flares to signal a tank alert; and in keeping with this, army tank alerts will also be signalled by blue or violet flares or smoke signals.

German Troops in Florina
Saturday 12 April 1941, Athens
Communiqué from the *Greek High Command:*

Motorized German units from the Monastir (Bitoli, Yugoslavia) area, are engaging our troops near Florina [in Macedonian Greece].

Zagreb in German Hands
12 April 1941
Yugoslavian Headquarters announced:

In the northern sector, the superior enemy forces have crossed through Drvar (Yugoslavia) and reached the Save river; they have also occupied Kragujevac. German troops have marched into Zagreb unopposed by our troops.

Tuesday 15 April 1941, Cairo
General Wavell's Headquarters announced:

The Germans are carrying out an offensive in Cyrenaica using heavy and medium tanks supported by large numbers of mobile motorized batteries. The German troops bypassed Tobruk, and later Sollum, which was attacked from the east.

British Formal Denial
15 April 1941, London
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

London officials categorically deny the rumors circulating in Berlin that the British are thinking of withdrawing their troops from Greece.

Germans Occupy Sarajevo
Wednesday 16 April 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The remains of the Serbian army are disintegrating. German motorized troops have advanced to Sarajevo and occupied the city. Thousands of Serbians have laid down their arms. The toll of prisoners and captured matériel is growing by the hour.

16 April 1941, Rome
The *Italian High Command* announced:

In Yugoslavia, motorized columns of the (Italian) 2nd Army, after overcoming enemy resistance, have occupied Spalato (Split) 240 miles from their original positions.

On the Greek front our troops have advanced from the lake district to Vijosa. After violent fighting we occupied and overran Erseka (Albania).

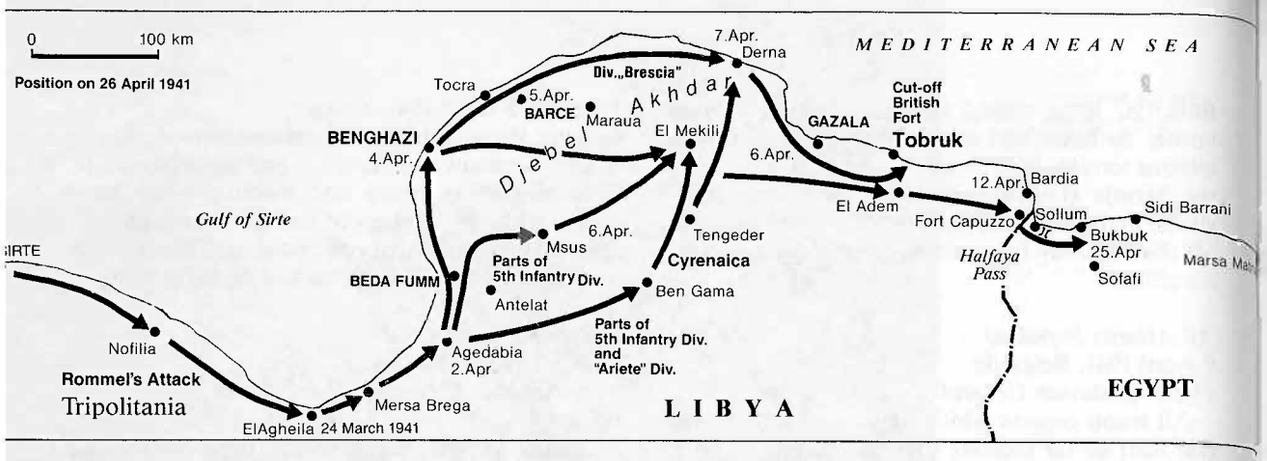
In North Africa we are continuing operations at Sollum and the encirclement of the fortress of Tobruk, where the enemy, supported by naval forces, is resisting tenaciously.

Thursday 17 April 1941, London
The *British War Office* announced:

No confirmation has been received from the Greek or British high commands in Greece of the German-spread rumor that the enemy has broken through Allied lines at the Mount Olympus sector of the front [northeastern Greece] and that German troops are already advancing into the Larisa area.

The Battle for Tobruk
17 April 1941, Tobruk (Libya)
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The Germans launched their first infantry attack on the outer defensive perimeter at Tobruk on

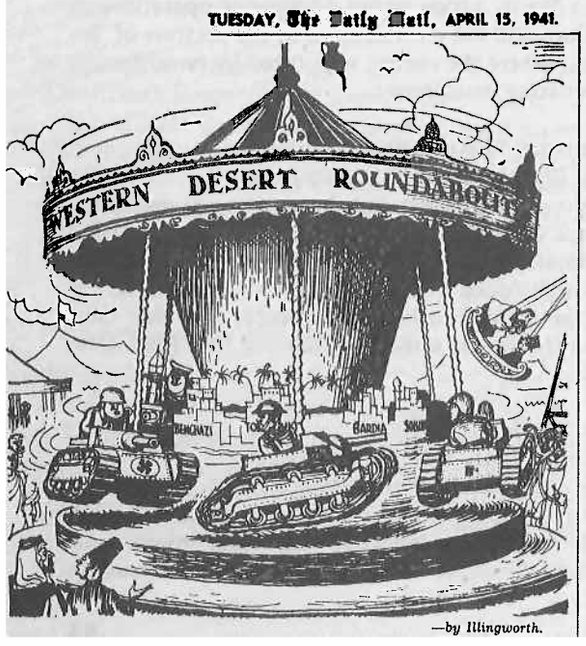


Friday afternoon under cover of a sandstorm; but the attack was repulsed by the British with heavy losses to the Germans. The storm had reached such a pitch of violence that it was hard to see farther than one yard. But at 5:00 P.M. the storm suddenly abated and approximately 800 German infantrymen sprang into view, dismounting from about 30 trucks and heading in tight formation toward the outer defensive perimeter. The British then attacked the trucks that had brought the infantry, and the accompanying tanks.

Surrender of the Yugoslav Army
Friday 18 April 1941, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

At 9:00 P.M. on April 17, all the Yugoslav forces that had not yet been disarmed surrendered unconditionally. The surrender came into force at 12:00 today, April 18.

18 April 1941, Athens
The *Greek High Command* announced:



Our position in West Macedonia has remained substantially unchanged. Our troops on the Albanian front have carried out an ordered retreat.

Retreat of the British and Greeks
18 April 1941, Cairo
British Headquarters in Egypt announced:

Under growing pressure from the German forces receiving reinforcements daily, Greek and British troops along the Greek northern front are making a gradual retreat to a shorter defensive line.

Winston Churchill to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Sir John Dill)
18 April 1941:

After the capture of Benghazi on February 6, the 7th Armoured Division, which had done so much good hard service, was ordered back to Cairo to refit. This involved a journey of over 400 miles, and must have completed the wearing out of the tracks of many of the tanks. It was an act of improvidence to send the whole division all this way back, in view of the fact that German elements were already reported in Tripoli. The whole of the tanks in this division could not have been all simultaneously in a condition of needing prolonged heavy repairs. Workshops should have been improvised at the front for lighter repairs, and servicing personnel sent forward. Thus, besides the 3rd Armoured Brigade, there would have been a considerable proportion of the Armoured in the 7th Division. General Wavell and his officers seem, however, to have thought that no trouble could arise before the end of May. This was a very serious miscalculation, from which vexatious conseous miscalculation, from which vexatious consequences have flowed. [English quoted from p. 673, Appendix C of Churchills's *The Second World War*, vol. 3]

Saturday 19 April 1941, Cairo
British Headquarters in Egypt announced:

Greece: Violent attacks by German armored formations and infantry units, aimed along the entire front, have been repulsed. The enemy has suffered heavy losses and we have taken many prisoners. Despite the heavy attacks, our lines have not been broken at any point.

Libya: Our patrols around Tobruk have launched several bold attacks.

A New US Tank
Sunday 20 April 1941, New York
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

Undersecretary-of-State Patterson of the US War Department, and other American and Canadian leaders, have seen a demonstration of the first 28-ton tanks built for the US Army. The new tanks have a 400-horsepower airplane engine, a maximum speed of 24 mph and are equipped with several heavy machine-guns and one 37-mm cannon.

The Greek Army Surrenders in Epirus
Wednesday 23 April 1941, Rome
The *Italian High Command* reported in a special announcement:

The enemy army has laid down its arms in Epirus and Macedonia.

23 April 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The movements of the German army in Greece are unfolding as scheduled. German forces have advanced through Lamia toward the south and have joined battle with British rearguard forces in the historic pass of Thermopylae.

Winston Churchill to the British Secretary of State for War
Wednesday 23 April 1941:

All the lessons of this war emphasize the necessity for good anti-tank weapons and plenty of them. The number of anti-tank guns that can be produced is necessarily limited; all the more need therefore to press forward with whatever substitutes can do the trick.

There are persistent rumours that the Germans are constructing tanks with very thick armour—figures of four to six inches are mentioned. Such armour would be impervious to any existing anti-tank gun, or indeed any mobile gun; the tracks and other vulnerable parts are very small targets.

Tests have shown that plastic explosive applied to armour plate, as, for instance, in the bombard developed by Colonel Blacker and Colonel Jefferis, has very great cutting power, and this may be a solution to the problem. In any event, we must not be caught napping. [English quoted from p. 675, Appendix C of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. 3]

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)
Thursday 24 April 1941:

The last remnants of the Yugoslav army surren-

Opposite page above: Map-diagram of Rommel's first attack on Egypt (26 April 1941)

Opposite page below: British cartoon satirizing the merry-go-round of Italian, British and German forces chasing each other back and forth across North Africa, as they won and lost the same territories over and over again

Right: German panzer division advancing near Belgrade



dered a week ago when German, Italian and Hungarian troops invaded the country from all sides. Since then no military operations have been conducted in Yugoslavia except clean-up operations and a general occupation. The members of the Yugoslavian Government and the young King Peter II escaped to safety in British territory... The German-Italian advance in Greece has continued with undiminished force. A week ago the Greek and British Allies still held their defensive positions on the mountains north of the plains of Thessaly... Meanwhile, rearguard units of the Greek-Australian army in eastern Greece have been fighting an overwhelmingly superior enemy who has swiftly stormed their new positions and penetrated the level area surrounding Lamia... Between Lamia and Athens is the famous Thermopylae Pass which Leonidas and his Spartans defended against the Persians in 480 B.C. Yesterday the Germans engaged the British rearguard in battle there... Of course it is too soon to pronounce judgments upon the Greek Campaign, but Greece is now beginning to feel the same political results as the other nations that have so far become embroiled in this war.

General Wavell to Winston Churchill
Friday 25 April 1941:

Instructions to Armoured Division were to withdraw gradually if attacked by superior strength, so as to maintain force in being until difficulties of supply weakened enemy and gave opportunity for counter-stroke. These were my instructions.

As matters turned out this was mistaken policy. Immediate counter-stroke would at least have inflicted serious losses on enemy and delayed him considerably. It might have stopped him altogether. As it was, 3rd Armoured Brigade practically melted away from mechanical and administrative breakdowns during the retreat, without much fighting, while the unpracticed headquarters of the 2nd Armoured Division seems to have lost control. This was partly due to inexperience of signal personnel....

When I visited the front after the first day's action, I felt need of a commander experienced in desert warfare, and telegraphed for O'Connor to come and assist Neame. Both these generals were captured during the withdrawal by patrol from the enemy column which penetrated to Derna.

Such is the outline of disastrous episode, for which main responsibility is mine. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 192, vol. 3]

British Troops in the Mosul Oil Fields
25 April 1941, Basra (Iraq)
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

Strong British and Imperial troops have arrived in the area of the Mosul airfields and, with the consent of Iraqi military authorities, have occupied positions of strategic importance. Precautions have been taken against possible military surprise raids, and both land and aerial forces have been considerably strengthened. British troop movements are still continuing.

Athens in German Hands

Sunday 27 April 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Following violent attack and pursuit fighting, German armored division spearheads pursued the fleeing British and marched into Athens at 9:25 A.M. on Sunday.

The [Nazi] swastika flag has been hoisted over the Acropolis.

The Leibstandarte "Adolf Hitler" [an SS elite division], in a turbulent advance, has reached the Bay of Patrai west of the Pindos mountains, forced its way across the bay and penetrated the Peloponnese.



German Panzer III medium tanks crossing the Bulgarian border into Yugoslavia in April 1941, here escorted by a Henschel 123 close-reconnaissance plane



German Panzer IV medium tank, Version D with a 7.5-cm long-barrelled L/48 gun facing the Acropolis in Athens

The Retreat of the British Expeditionary Force
Monday 28 April 1941, Cairo
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

The British Expeditionary Force and powerful contingents of the Greek army are continuing their retreat maneuvers, which are being conducted under the protection of naval forces and air squadrons, and which are now fully under way. Direct reporting from Greece must be interrupted for the duration of these strategic operations because even radio messages might provide valuable clues to the enemy. Australian and New Zealand troops have obeyed orders to defend their positions on the Greek mainland to the very last minute, and then assembled in good order at their evacuation points.

Violent Fighting around Tobruk
Thursday 1 May 1941, in the headquarters of General Wavell
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

An extremely violent battle ignited Wednesday night around Tobruk. After an extremely vigorous bombardment lasting several hours, German and Italian infantry attacked the Tobruk fortifications, deploying heavy tanks and flamethrowing tanks simultaneously. Early this morning another attack ensued by large numbers of German Stuka dive bombers which dropped heavy caliber bombs on the defense installations. Until 10:00 A.M. the British garrison succeeded in preventing any breach in the Tobruk defenses. After that, a strong panzer force successfully penetrated the outer perimeter along a 2-mile front. British and Australian troops are at this moment engaged in hand-to-hand fighting in the defensive installations outside the city.

Conflict between Great Britain and Iraq
Saturday 3 May 1941, London
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

A reliable source confirmed tonight in London that [pro-Axis Iraqi usurper] Rashid Ali al Gailani has asked Hitler for help against the British troops in Iraq, but he is believed to have initiated hostilities prematurely so that he is unlikely to play a role in future German war plans. The special military significance of Iraq lies in its oil, which supplies the British Mediterranean fleet and the Mediterranean-based units of the Royal Air Force with a large part of their fuel.

US Transports Arms to Suez
Monday 5 May 1941, Washington
The *White House* announced:

We can offer no official confirmation that 26 American merchant ships loaded with tanks, antitank guns, antiaircraft guns, and other war matériel landed in the Suez Canal. We can only say that we do not rule out the possibility.

Mexican Oil for Britain
5 May 1941, Mexico
The Mexican news agency *OFJ* reported:

A report from Tampico (Mexico) says that the National Bureau of Petroleum has bought up the entire oil production of the independent American and Mexican oil fields, and then sold it all to Britain. The oil will soon be loaded onto tankers for transport.

Churchill's Address to the House of Commons
Wednesday 7 May 1941, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* published this verbatim report:

In the last war, tanks were built to go three or four miles an hour and to stand up to rifle or machine-gun bullets. In the interval the process of mechanical science had advanced so much that it became possible to make a tank which could go 15, 20 and 25 miles an hour and stand up to cannon fire. That was a great revolution, by which Hitler has profited. That is a simple fact which was perfectly well known to the military and technical services three or four years before the war. It did not spring from German brains. It sprang from British brains, and from brains like those of General de Gaulle in France, and it has been exploited and turned to our grievous injury by the uninventive but highly competent and imitative Germans.

Unlimited German Oil Supplies
Monday 12 May 1941, New York
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The American Institute of Petroleum has concluded an investigation showing that Germany must have enough oil to supply its land and air forces for an indefinite period.

Winston Churchill to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Dill)
Friday 16 May 1941:

Your minute of May 15. You tell me that the total number of cruiser tanks in a brigade of the 7th Armoured Division is 210 (including 20 per cent. reserves), and that of the "I" [= Infantry] Tank Brigade 200 "I" tanks—say 400 heavy tanks in the 7th Armoured Division. We must try to compare like with like. I am told that the German principle is two light tanks to every heavy; thus there would be in a German armoured division about 135 heavy tanks. In other words, it would have fewer heavy tanks than one of our tank brigades. [English quoted from p. 682, Appendix C of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. 3]

The Fighting on the Egyptian-Libyan Border

Saturday 17 May 1941, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

Sollum, Capuzzo and Sidi Azeiz are once again in the hands of German and Italian troops.

Alleged German Paratroop Raid against Crete
Tuesday 20 May 1941, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

A report has been received in London but not yet confirmed, that enemy paratroops have launched an attack on the island of Crete.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Saturday 24 May 1941:

The special announcement about Crete should form your front-page story. Germany's [airborne invasion of Crete] is one of the boldest military strokes in world history and awakens the pride of the nation. It should be an occasion for emphatic political commentary. Above all, emphasize the contrast between Churchill's initial boastful remarks and the German reporting that began only when factual battle results could be truthfully reported.

British Plan New Offensive: Operation Battleaxe

General Wavell to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff [Sir John Dill]
Wednesday 28 May 1941:

. . . . .

All available armoured strength, which will be deciding factor, is being put into "Battleaxe." Various difficulties are delaying reconstitution 7th Armoured Division. Earliest date for beginning of forward move from Matruh will be June 7, and may be later.

2. I think it right to inform you that the measure of success which will attend this operation is in my opinion doubtful. I hope that it will succeed in driving enemy west of Tobruk and re-establishing land communications with Tobruk. If possible we will exploit success further. But recent operations have disclosed some disquieting features. Our armoured cars are too lightly armoured to resist the fire of enemy fighter aircraft and, having no gun, are powerless against the German eight-wheeled armoured cars, which have guns and are faster. This makes reconnaissance difficult. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 304, vol. 3]

The Situation in Iraq
Friday 30 May 1941, Jerusalem
The American *Associated Press News Agency* reported:

British and Indian troops are continuing their non-stop advance toward Baghdad and encountering no major resistance anywhere. It is now known that two motorized columns are carrying out the operation. Other British forces supported by tanks are operating against Iraqi troop positions at Ramadi about 12 miles northwest of Habbaniya.

British Evacuate Crete
Sunday 1 June 1941, London
The *British War Office* announced:

After twelve days of what has unquestionably been the hardest fighting of the war, the decision has been made to withdraw our forces from Crete.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 13 June 1941:

The last week has seen the start of the anticipated struggle for possession of [French-held] Syria. First the British declared Syria and Lebanon a war zone, and the [collaborationist] French military authorities under General Dentz, the High Commissioner in Syria, went onto heightened alert. Then British forces, supported by French Gaullist troops, marched onto Syrian territory in the early hours of last Sunday morning.

Heavy British Tank Losses at Sollum
Thursday 19 June 1941, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The most recent reports indicate that the British have lost more tanks than was earlier estimated: When we cleared up the battlefield, we found 200 British tanks destroyed or immobilized by German and Italian guns, which the British were forced to abandon when they retreated.

The French Fight the British in Syria
Friday 20 June 1941, Vichy
The *Office Français d'Information (OFI)* announced:

Yesterday the British attempted unsuccessfully to attack Damascus and Merjayoun [Lebanon]. Indian and British troops advanced in the area south and southeast of Damascus, but we succeeded in repulsing them in counterattacks by our armored units and took 400 prisoners. Yesterday afternoon our troops warded off an enemy attack in the mountainous zone of southern Lebanon. We took 80 prisoners in this operation. Along the coast, the British fleet continued to bombard our positions.

Germany at War with the Soviet Union

Sunday 22 June 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Hostilities have been occurring along the German-Soviet border since early Sunday morning. An attempt by the enemy to invade East Prussia has been repulsed with heavy Soviet losses. German fighter planes have shot down large numbers of Soviet bombers.

22 June 1941, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

Just after 5:30 this morning, a proclamation by the Führer was released in which the German Reich declared war on the USSR.

Monday 23 June 1941
The *Soviet Army High Command* announced:

Early in the morning of June 22, the troops of the German-Fascist Wehrmacht attacked our border forces along the entire line extending from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. The enemy Luftwaffe bombed a number of our airfields and villages, but everywhere it encountered energetic resistance from our fighter planes and ground defenses, which inflicted heavy losses on the enemy Hitlerite



German tanks advancing on Egypt. A main strength of the tank was psychological. The sight of the noisy, fire-spewing colossus rolling over everything in its path and the smell of the powder gases and gasoline conveyed a message of invincibility to a man crouching in a foxhole, armed comparatively lightly with a rifle, machine gun and hand grenade.

Fascists. Sixty-five German aircraft were shot down.

Thursday 26 June 1941
The *Soviet Army High Command* announced:

Yesterday enemy troops pursued an offensive in the direction of Vilna and Baranovichi [White Russia]. In the course of the day sizeable Soviet aerial forces attacked the enemy units. Nevertheless a number of enemy armored swarms succeeded in penetrating the Vilna and Oshmyany [White Russia] area. Thanks to the bitter resistance of our troops, enemy infantry units have been cut off from their armored spearheads.

Armored Battle at Minsk
Friday 27 June 1941, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* announced:

Our troops are fighting fiercely against large Fascist armored units in the Minsk area. Battle is still going on. Violent armored conflicts have been waged all day near Lutsk [western Ukraine; Polish *Luck*]. Our operations have proceeded favorably.

Winston Churchill to the British Secretary of State for War and Chief of the Imperial General Staff (C.I.G.S.)
27 June 1941:

Some time ago I formed the opinion that it would be far better to give names to the various marks of tanks. These could be kept readily in mind, and would avoid the confusing titles by marks and numbers. This idea did not find favour at the time, but it is evident that a real need for it exists, because the "I" tank, Mark II, is widely known as Matilda, and one of the other Infantry tanks is called Valentine. Moreover, the existing denominations are changed and varied. A.22 has an alias, I think. Pray therefore set out a list of the existing official titles of all the tanks by types and marks now existing or under construction or design in our service and in the American service, together with suggested names for them, in order that these may be considered and discussed. [English quoted from p. 692, Appendix C of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. 3]

Armored Battle North of Kovno
Sunday 29 June 1941
The *German Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

On June 26, after two days of fighting, the German panzer arm brought to a victorious end a massive armored battle north of Kovno in which a number of [Soviet] divisions were encircled and destroyed. We captured more than 200 Soviet armored cars, 29 of them of the heaviest type, over 150 heavy guns and hundreds of trucks.

Our armored units and motorized divisions have pressed along both sides of the [large German-encircled] Bialystok troop pocket and reached the area around Minsk. We are about to achieve another great victory.

Monday 30 June 1941, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* announced:

Fighting is continuing against strong enemy motorized forces in the Lutsk [Polish *Luck*] area. Despite his fresh armored reinforcements, all the enemy's attempts to break through our lines in the direction of Novograd Volynskiy [Ukraine] and Shepetovka have failed and been beaten back. Our armored forces and the Soviet air force even succeeded in destroying a great part of the enemy armored and motorized troops.

Winston Churchill to British Minister of Supply
30 June 1941:

In the recent session on Sir Andrew Duncan's vote, questions were asked by Mr. Shinwell and others about how we stood in "heavy tanks." We have hitherto regarded A.22 as the heaviest we should make, though a great deal of work has been done, I think by Stern, on a still larger type. I believe there is even a pilot model. Of course our problem is different from the Russian or great Continental Powers because of shipment, although that is no final bar.

However, it now appears, on the highest authority, that the Russians have produced a very large tank, said to be over 70 tons, against which the German A/T 6-pounder [Panzer IV] has proved useless. It seems to me that the question of a much heavier tank has now come sharply to the front. The whole position must be reviewed, and we must know where we are—and that soon. [English quoted from p. 694, Appendix D of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. 3]



22 June 1941, the outskirts of a German-Soviet border fight near Brest-Litovsk



Road bridge at Daugavpils (Latvia). This strategically important Soviet bridge, over which ran the Kovno-Leningrad highway, was captured on 26 June 1941 in a surprise German commando raid. The raid was carried out by the Brandenburg Squad under Lt. Col. Knaak, a special force of the German Abwehr (military intelligence) under Admiral Canaris—the same day they captured an equally important rail bridge over the Dvina river. The raiders wore Soviet uniforms. If they had failed to capture the bridges intact, the German LVI Panzer Corps would not have been able to make its rapid advance to Leningrad.

Strategy and Tactics

JANUARY TO JUNE 1941

At the start of 1941 the Italians found their position increasingly threatened. By now they had stopped thinking in terms of occupying Greece and capturing Athens, and were fighting the Greeks for sheer survival in Albania. In their fight against the British in North Africa they were on the brink of collapse. Their equipment had turned out to be totally unsuited to the desert, and the little 2-ton Italian Fiat tanks were no better than coffins to their crews.

On Sunday 4 January 1941, General Wavell ordered British forces to advance into Cyrenaica [northeastern Libya] to exploit their unexpectedly massive victory against the Italians. The British 7th Armoured Division under General Creagh detoured around Bardia and marched toward Tobruk, while the Australian 6th Infantry Division headed for Bardia where next day the Italian garrison surrendered, allowing 40,000 prisoners and 462 guns to fall into British hands. Now the Italian Libya Army Group under Marshal Graziani had only 5 divisions left in Cyrenaica.

On Thursday 9 January 1941, after receiving reports of the serious position of the Italian troops in North Africa, Hitler decided to send a German panzer force to Libya to reinforce them.

On Tuesday 21 January 1941, the Australian 6th Infantry Division—part of the British XIII Corps under Lt. Gen. O'Conner—began an assault on the important Italian-Libyan port and fortress of Tobruk. Next day Tobruk fell, allowing the British to capture 27,000 Italians along with 87 tanks. The remains of the Italian Tenth Army withdrew to the fortified El Mekili (Mechili)-Derna line. After the fall of Tobruk, the Australian 6th Infantry Division advanced along the coast toward El Mekili-Derna, and the British 7th Armoured began to circle around the Italian Tenth Army from the south, so Marshal Graziani ordered a retreat. But it was too late: The 7th Armoured was already at Beda Fumm on the coast of the Gulf of Sirte (Sidra) and cut off the retreat of the Tenth Army, which surrendered after a brief engagement, giving 20,000 prisoners to the British.

On Thursday 30 January 1941, the British Army of the Nile under General Wavell captured Derna.

On Saturday 1 February, German General von Funck, just returned from a fact-finding mission in Libya, reported back to Führer Headquarters the critical position of the Italian forces in North Africa. Several days later, on Thursday 6 February, the OKW ordered the German army and air force

to prepare an operation in North Africa, code-named "Sunflower."

On Thursday 6 February, British troops marched into Benghazi, the capital of Cyrenaica.

Next day, February 7, the British took Agedabia and advanced to El Agheila where they took a rest break. Within two months the weak British and Commonwealth troops of the British Army of the Nile had covered 540 miles of territory, cleared the enemy of Western Egypt, occupied the whole of Cyrenaica and smashed ten Italian divisions. They also captured 130,000 men and captured 1,290 cannon, around 400 armored vehicles and a large quantity of other equipment. The Nile Army's losses were only: 475 dead; 1,225 wounded; and 43 missing.

The Germans had by now set up their Afrika Corps and were ready to transport it to North Africa. It had one light division and one armored division. The Italians were sending one armored and one motorized division to Tripoli in Libya. The British chose this moment to order the best units of their Nile Army to Greece. Only the British XII Corps under General O'Connor—two divisions of only partially trained troops—remained in Cyrenaica. The British front opposite Tripoli was only thinly occupied.

On Saturday 8 February 1941, the first German troops and equipment for the German force in North Africa were loaded up in Naples.

On Tuesday 11 February, the first troops of the German 5th Light Division landed at Tripoli. Next day they were joined by their commander, General Erwin Rommel.

On Tuesday 18 February, the German forces in Libya were officially designated the German Afrika Corps (the DAK or Deutsches Afrika Korps).

On Thursday 20 February, a convoy of four Axis merchant vessels carrying supplies and a German antiaircraft unit—33rd Squadron, 1st Group—joined the Afrika Corps in Tripoli. Next day a British reconnaissance flier spotted an eight-wheeled vehicle in the desert; knowing it was not Italian, he concluded it must be German.

A short time later the British learned that a panzer unit, probably a regiment, had been unloaded in Tripoli.

That same day the Germans and British clashed for the first time when a troop of British Dragoon Guards under Lieutenant E. T. Williams exchanged ineffectual fire with troops of the German 3rd Reconnaissance Platoon.

On Monday 24 February 1941, the first real fighting broke out between the British and Germans in North Africa. After Rommel's troops had patrolled the El Agheila area for a week exchanging an occasional long-range barrage with the British, they ran into two troops of dragoon guard tanks and one unit of Australian antitank guns, and the battle raged. Tactics were determined by the special character of the African battle zone. The desert offered little cover, and the clouds of dust produced by any movement made it virtually impossible for an enemy force to approach undetected. The accuracy of fire was also impaired because the heat rising from the ground produced such a strong shimmering effect that the tank gunners rarely judged distances accurately.

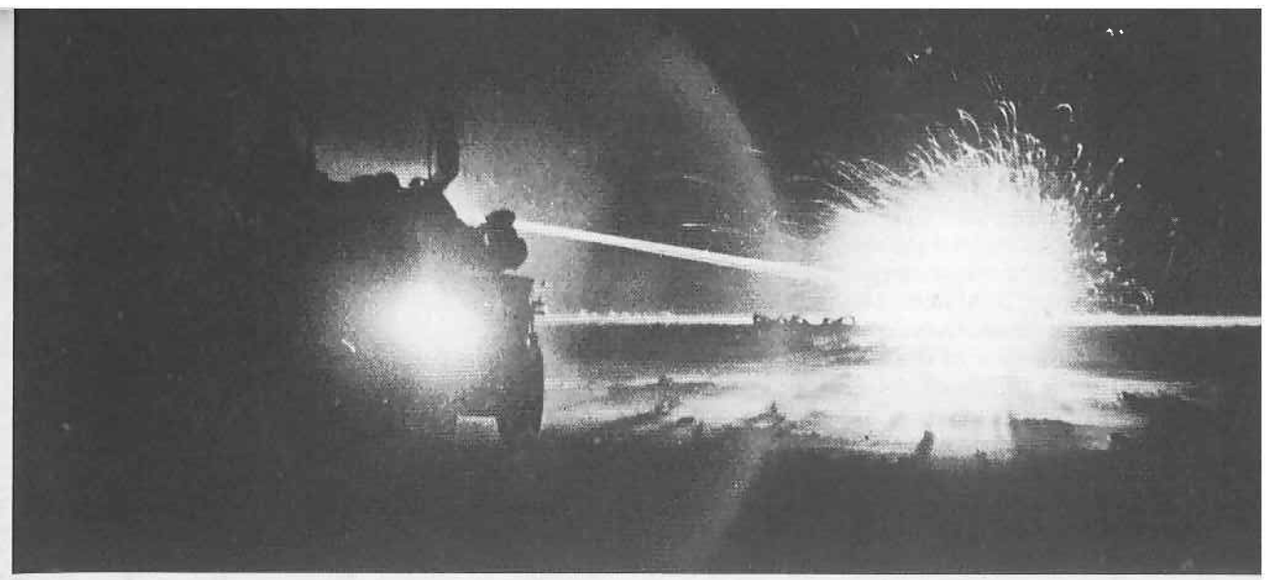
On Tuesday 4 March 1941, the first troops of the British Expeditionary Force in Greece, commanded by General Wilson, landed in the Piraeus to launch Operation Lustre.

On Sunday 9 March, the Italians launched an offensive around Bubesh on the Albanian front. Mussolini visited personally from Rome to encourage his troops. Despite the Italian superiority in numbers and equipment, the attack collapsed at once against the hard Greek defense.



Opposite page: Night battle in the desert. A reconnaissance unit of the German Afrika Corps is exchanging fire with British tanks.

Left: The General ~~Grant M3~~ light tank, a standard US Army tank, here being deployed by the British Eighth Army in North Africa.



On Sunday 16 March 1941, the Italian offensive disintegrated completely despite repeated attempts to attack. Their heavy losses forced the Italians to go on the defensive, and the battle lines stabilized for a time.

On Wednesday 19 March, the German Army High Command repeated its strict orders to General Rommel that his Afrika Corps must confine its operations to supporting the retreating Italian troops and must under no circumstances attack the British before the 15th Panzer Division was ready for deployment at the end of May. Rommel learned that even after the arrival of 15th Panzer, the OKH planned to limit deployment of the Afrika Corps to the area around Agedabia.

On Monday 24 March 1941, despite OKH orders, Rommel launched a reconnaissance thrust, and the Afrika Corps suffered its first casualties near the desert fort of El Agheila when one of the tanks ran into a mine. This scouting action confirmed that the British defenses had been substantially weakened by the withdrawal of some of their sparse forces to Greece.

On Tuesday 25 March 1941, representatives of the Yugoslav government signed papers in Vienna formally admitting Yugoslavia to the Tripartite Pact [thus making it part of the German-led Axis coalition]. News of this action triggered anti-German demonstrations and a coup d'état in Yugoslavia, so Hitler decided he must occupy the country [in order to use it as a base from which to attack Greece]. The German plan of operations provided for a concentrated three-pronged armored attack on Belgrade from Sofia, Banat [region in Hungary and Yugoslavia], and Austria. First, Field Marshal List's Twelfth Army advanced from Bulgaria, preparing to move into Yugoslavia and then march on Greece out of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Twelfth Army was to be followed a few days later by von Weichs's Second Army that had just assembled in Austria. The Italian High Command then ordered forces of General Ambrosio's Second Army to march along the Adriatic coast and strike at Greece from Istria and Ljubljana [Yugoslavia] and simultaneously to support the defense of Albania against the Greeks. A total of approximately 85 Axis divisions entered the field against Yugoslavia and Greece: 35 German, 45 Italian and 5 Hungarian. Fifty-two of them—24 German, 23 Italian and several Hungarian—were deployed against Yugoslavia, and 27 against Greece, with one division securing the border with Turkey and 5 divisions kept in reserve.

The Yugoslavian plan of operations, "R-41," provided for the defense of the entire length of the border. Almost the whole Yugoslav army—27 divisions or ⅞ of all its forces—was to be deployed in defensive operations, leaving only minimal reserves. The Yugoslavs planned only one offensive action in which they were to combine with Greek forces along the Albanian front. The dispersal of the Yugoslav forces along an extended border front limited their operational capability.

Thursday 27 March 1941 was the date of the coup d'état in Belgrade [when the people rebelled against the government's decision to make Yugoslavia join the Axis powers]. The Yugoslav regent, Prince Paul, fled to Greece and the seventeen-year-old King Peter II ascended to the throne. General Simovič, the former chief of the general staff, formed a new government and annulled Yugoslavia's membership in the Tripartite Pact, which the Germans had forced Yugoslavia to sign in Vienna only two days earlier. That same evening Hitler issued Directive No. 25 initiating a lightning campaign against Yugoslavia and Greece. The projected attack on the Soviet Union was postponed for four weeks.

Meanwhile, in Washington representatives of the British and US general staffs decided on a basic strategic concept, the so-called ABC-1 Staff Agreement. The target was "Germany first": In the event that the USA entered the war, the defeat of Germany was to be the primary objective.

On Sunday 30 March 1941, the German Afrika Corps led a reconnaissance raid against Agedabia. To the bafflement of the British, and indeed contrary to the orders of the OKH (German Army High Command), the raid turned into a German-Italian counteroffensive. The Germans captured British tanks and trucks and kept driving forward. By the following day they had already overrun the positions of the British Army of the Nile between the Mediterranean coast and the southern salt marshes. General Rommel then divided his forces into three striking groups, pursued the enemy along the coastal road and began to outflank him farther south.

On Monday 31 March 1941, the German 15th Panzer Division landed in the port of Tripoli to reinforce the German Afrika Corps. But Rommel did not wait for the new division to arrive before he attacked Mersa-el-Brega, the gateway to Cyrenaica, with his 5th Panzer Regiment.

On Wednesday 2 April 1941, the surprised British evacuated Agedabia, and two days later, rapidly advancing German and Italian armored spearheads reached Benghazi and captured the city. The four columns of the German 5th Light Division advanced through the desert headed for El Mekili [Mechili, south of Derna]. The decimated British Army of the Nile began its retreat to Egypt, suffering heavy losses along the way.

On Friday 4 April 1941, the confusion of the British rose to panic when the 2nd Armoured Division was abandoned without supplies at Msus [Egypt] because the British garrison there had prematurely blown up all the fuel store, thinking to save them from the German tanks.

On Saturday 5 April 1941, British generals Neame and O'Connor were captured by the Germans.

At 5:10 A.M. on Sunday 6 April, the German 4th Air Fleet (Luftflotte 4 under General Löhr) began to bomb Yugoslav airfields. In the course of the day the Luftwaffe, with 484 bombers and Stuka dive bombers, and 250 fighter planes, flying in five waves, carried out a terrorist air raid on Belgrade, inflicting great damage on the capital.

On the same day the Germans launched an offensive on Greece, beginning with an assault by the German XVIII Corps on the Greek left flank. This was followed by an attack by the German XXX Corps on the right flank of the Greek Army of Eastern Macedonia under General Bakopoulos.



Northwest of Sofia, Bulgaria, at 5:30 A.M. on 8 April 1941. The German Kleist Panzer Group is rolling over the Bulgarian border into Yugoslavia, headed for Belgrade.

On Monday 7 April 1941, El Mekili (Libya) was surrounded by German troops. The British garrison, reinforced by an Indian motorized brigade from Tobruk, rejected German calls for surrender. After the failure of an attempted breakout, 2,000 British were captured, including General Gambier-Parry and Brigadier Vaugham.

That same day Derna and Tmimi fell into German hands along with their vast British supply dumps. This captured food, gasoline, ammunition and weapons enabled the Germans to advance farther toward Egypt.

At 5:30 A.M. on Tuesday 8 April 1941, von Kleist's 1st Panzer Group left the area northwest of Sofia and set out for Belgrade. After brief fighting it smashed the right wing of the Yugoslav Fifth Army.

On Wednesday 9 April, 1st Panzer Group took Niš [Yugoslavia] and turned to attack Belgrade through the Morava river valley, which was being defended by the Yugoslav Sixth Army.

That same day the 2nd Panzer Division (under General Veiel) marched into Salonica, Greece.

Also on 9 April, the German XVIII Corps (commanded by General Böhme), strongly supported by dive bombers, broke through the mountain fortifications of the Greek Metaxas Line in the teeth of a hard Greek defense and cut off the Army of Eastern Macedonia from the main Greek forces, compelling it to surrender that evening.

On Thursday 10 April 1941, German forces crossed the Vardar river [in southeast Yugoslavia and northern Greece], established contact with the Italians on Lake Ochrida and occupied favorable positions from which to thrust at Greece from the north. That same day German troops marched into Zagreb.

Meanwhile on April 10 the tanks of the German Afrika Corps reached Tobruk, the important supply base they needed to enable them to attack Egypt. A division of Australian defenders succeeded in escaping over the coastal road and into the fortress while the British 2nd Armoured and an Indian brigade were wiped out or captured. General Wavell transferred troops of the 7th Armoured Division inside Tobruk to join the Australian division and small local forces in defending it against the siege.

On Friday 11 April 1941, Rommel's first attempt to storm the fortress of Tobruk failed, whereupon he ordered two mobile troops to leave for Bardia.

On Saturday 12 April, Fort Capuzzo and Sollum fell to the Germans. German advance detachments occupied the important Halfaya Pass [along the Libyan-Egyptian border] and waited in the hilly terrain opposite the British lines of defense.

That same day the German 1st Panzer Group, attacking from three sides, captured Belgrade.

On Sunday 13 April 1941 and the day after, the German attacks on Tobruk were repelled.

That same day in Moscow, Japanese foreign minister Matsuoka and Soviet foreign minister Molotov signed a Japanese-Soviet neutrality agreement.

On Tuesday 15 April 1941, General Wilson, the commander of the British Expeditionary Force in Greece, decided to retreat to Thermopylae, and from here to supervise the evacuation of his troops from the Greek mainland.

On Wednesday 16 April, German troops reached

Metsovon Pass and barred the retreat route of the Greek Army of Epirus. The two Greek armies of Epirus and Western Macedonia were now sealed inside the mountains in a box from which there was no exit, and were attacked by the Italians from the west and by the Germans from the east.

On the evening of April 16, the British destroyers *Janus, Jervis, Mohawk* and *Nubian*—part of Force K, the 14th Destroyer Flotilla under Captain Mack—intercepted an Axis convoy, including 4 steamers of the German 20th Transport Squadron and the 1,590-ton Italian freighter *Sabaudia*—near the Kerkenna Islands in the Gulf of Gabès adjoining the Gulf of Sirte—and wiped them out along with their cargo, which the Germans intended to use for their Afrika Corps. An Italian escort destroyer, the *Tarigo* under Captain Cristofaro, landed a torpedo squarely on the *Mohawk*, but as the battle raged on, the *Tarigo* and two other Italian escort destroyers were sunk or badly damaged. This was the first naval destroyer battle in the Mediterranean. Only 1,248 of the 3,000 Axis crew members survived. This defeat foreshadowed the problems that lay in store for the Germans as they tried to ferry supplies across the Mediterranean to their Afrika Corps.

At 9:00 P.M. on Thursday 17 April 1941, General Kalafatovič, acting as representative of the Yugoslav High Command, signed in Belgrade the unconditional surrender of the Yugoslav forces. The Germans took prisoner a total of 6,298 officers and 337,864 sub-officers and troops of Serbian extraction, while the Slovenian, Croatian and Macedonian soldiers of Yugoslavia were released.

On Saturday 19 April 1941, British troops took over the defense of Thermopylae after rear-action fighting in Thessaly.

On Monday 21 April, German Field Marshal List accepted the surrender of the Greek army. Some 223,000 Greek officers and soldiers became prisoners-of-war.

On Thursday 24 April 1941, the German XVIII Corps under General Böhme broke through the positions that the British Expeditionary Force was defending at Thermopylae. Operation Demon began, the sea evacuation of British troops from mainland Greece.

On Saturday 26 April the Germans occupied Corinth, and next day advance detachments of the 5th Panzer Division marched into Athens.

On Tuesday 29 April, German troops captured Kalamata on the southern coast of the Peloponnese. The Greek Campaign was over. The bulk of the British Expeditionary Force—50,672 men—had been evacuated. The British had lost about 12,000 men and all their heavy equipment. German losses: 2,559 dead; 5,820 wounded; and 3,169 missing.

During the six months that the Greek army had been fighting, it had tied up large Italian forces and inflicted heavy losses on the Italians, thus weakening Italian resistance against the British in North Africa. When Italy proved unable to defeat Greece, Hitler was forced to come to Mussolini's aid. Churchill in turn readied four British divisions with 62,000 men for the BEF in Greece, commanded by General Wilson. By the end of March three of these divisions were already in the country and had been transferred to the borders with Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Allied planning was carried out by a joint Greek-British high command. The British troop landing in Greece and the anti-German military coup in Yugoslavia at last forced Hitler to direct military intervention.

The Yugoslavian armed forces were not only inadequately equipped, but also their morale was


Norddeutsche Ausgabe

Norddeutsche Ausgabe
Berlin, Dienstag, 15. April 1941

VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER

Kampfblatt der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung Großdeutschlands

Nach einer Woche Balkan-Krieg:

Hauptmasse des Serbenheeres vernichtet

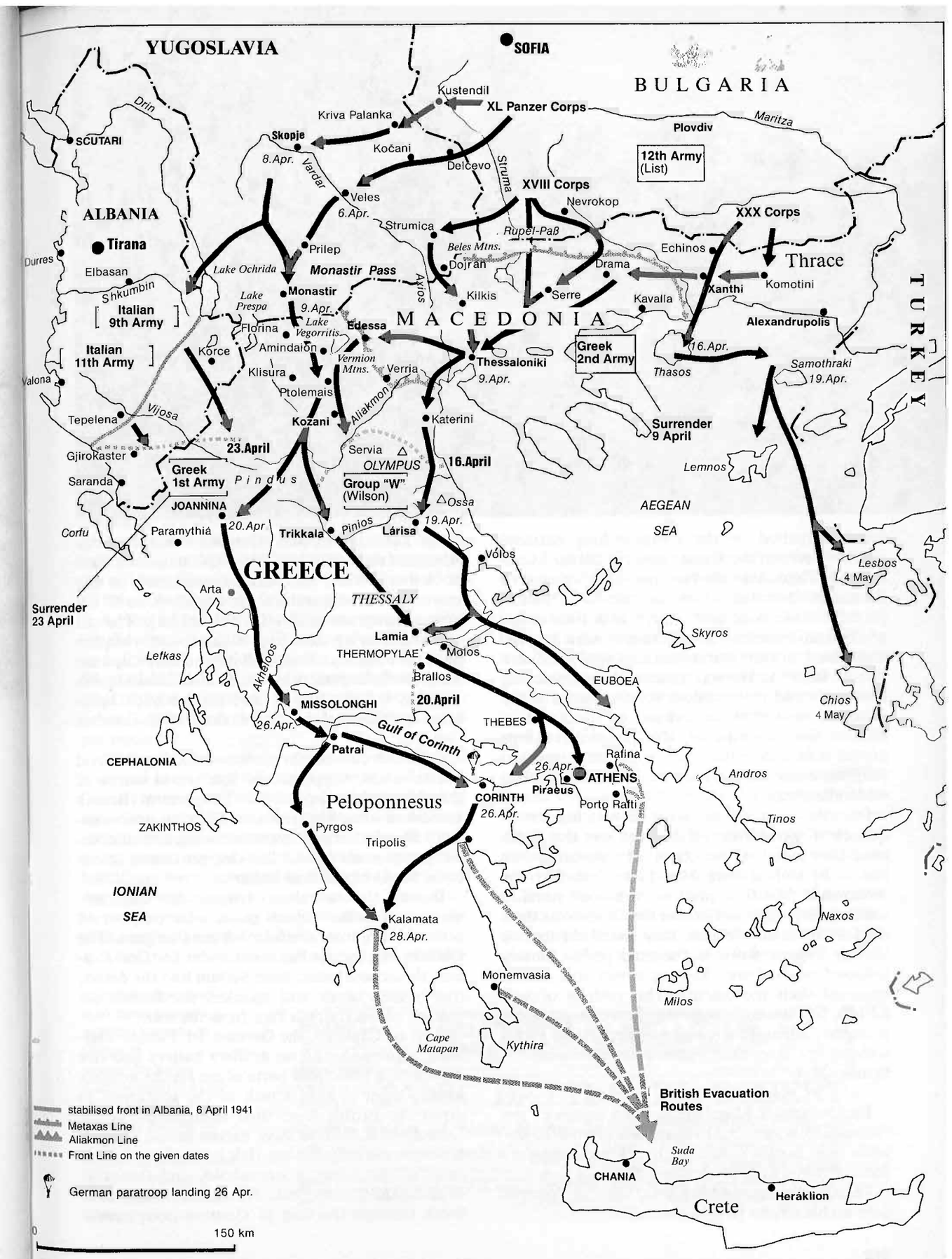
Serben leisten nur noch örtlichen Widerstand

Die serbische Niederlage

Der Bericht des OKW.

Sollum genommen

Left: German Press reports from the Balkans on 15 April 1941 claim that the Yugoslav forces are now putting up "only local resistance."



Opposite page: Map-diagram of the Balkans Campaign, April/May 1941



deeply impaired by the centuries-long national conflict between the Croats and the Serbs. Moreover, the Yugoslavs failed to take full advantage of the natural defenses offered by their country's impassable mountains and valleys with their many nooks and crannies. The Germans were surprisingly lavish in their commitment of tanks and motorized forces to the war against Yugoslavia. The bad roads and mountainous terrain placed heavy demands on the tanks and led to many breakdowns; but nevertheless the panzer divisions proved once again that they could cope successfully with any enemy, even in difficult, obstacle-ridden landscapes.

For the Germans, the most devastating consequence of their Balkans Campaign was that it delayed their attack on the USSR: The projected date had to be shifted from May 15 to June 22. The Wehrmacht lost four precious weeks of summer weather, and when in October they arrived at their crucial attack on Moscow, they found themselves already bogged down in the mud period closely followed by the harsh Russian winter that fatally impaired their movements. The vehicles of von Kleist's 1st Panzer Group were forced to go direct from the Balkans Campaign to the Eastern Front without any intervening period for overhaul and maintenance.

By Thursday 2 May 1941 the first troops of the German 15th Panzer Division had arrived at Tobruk. The British continued to resist German efforts to capture the fortress.

Two days later, on 4 May 1941, General Rommel gave up his efforts to take Tobruk.

On Thursday 15 May, General Wavell's troops advanced to break through the German front lines at Sollum. When the battle started early in the morning, the temperature was already 50 to 60 degrees Centigrade (120-140° Fahrenheit). The air was shimmering and both sides found visibility poor. The Halfaya Pass, Sollum and Fort Capuzzo were briefly captured by the British 22nd Guards Brigade, but the British were thrown back again after a counterthrust from the Herff Combat Group.

A British column thrust forward along the level coastal plain, supported by light naval forces of the Alexandria Squadron. The central British spearhead—the 7th Armoured Division—drove toward Fort Capuzzo. On the left wing a third combat group made a wide flanking movement to encircle the Germans and Italians.

During the turbulent struggle for Capuzzo, many new-model British tanks were put out of action by fire from German 8.8-cm flak guns. The German 8th Panzer Regiment under Lt. Col. Cramer, thrust southward from Sollum into the desert, then veered north and attacked the British defenders of the Halfaya Pass from the rear.

West of Capuzzo, the German 5th Panzer Regiment, equipped with an artillery battery and five 8.8-cm flak guns, and parts of an Italian artillery squad, made a feint attack to the southwest to divert the British from their main thrust at the German-held Halfaya Pass. Eleven British Mark II tanks were hit by 8.8-cm flak projectiles right in front of the German stronghold, and the other British tanks veered off. All British attempts to break through the ring of German troops encircling the Tobruk area failed due to the battering of British armor by German flak guns. The British lost about 270 tanks as the great armored battle at Sollum reached its climax.

Rommel owed his victory mainly to the operations of the German 8.8-cm antiaircraft guns, used as tank-destroyer weapons against the powerfully armored British Mark II tanks. Rommel had deployed the guns at all suitable points along the Sollum front. The extraordinary success of 8.8-cm antiaircraft weapons in an antitank role came as a shock to the British. British dispatches repeatedly emphasized the superior firepower of the "eight-eight" and sometimes even expressed the view that it was not "fair play" to deploy antiaircraft guns against ground targets.

On Tuesday 17 June, Hitler fixed the final date for the start of Operation Barbarossa, the German attack on the Soviet Union: 3:00 A.M. on 22 June 1941.

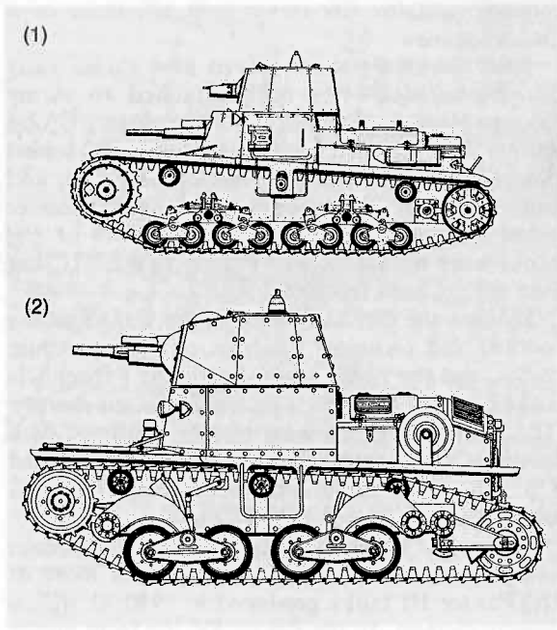
Hitler planned to deploy the German armored forces in a three-pronged strategic thrust—towards Leningrad in the north, Smolensk in the center and Kiev in the south—smashing the main Soviet forces close to the border and then marching on to the Arkhangelsk-Volga line. He planned to achieve all this in only three to four months.

A total of 153 German divisions were prepared for the attack, including 19 armored and 10 motorized divisions, 4 light divisions and one armored SS brigade: 33 armored or motorized divisions in all. Of these, 6 armored divisions had only 2 panzer battalions per regiment, while 6 divisions had 3 per regiment.

All the German panzer regiments now included a second motorized infantry regiment and consequently were equipped for more versatile fighting; also they were better able to overcome difficult terrain. Instead of a panzer brigade, the divisions had a panzer regiment of three detachments. Rifle battalions were increased to five and the artillery was reinforced by one heavy platoon. Thus artillery-supported infantry now bulked as large as the tanks within an armored division.

After their reorganization in the winter of 1940/41, 12 of the German panzer divisions were left with only 2 tank detachments each, and the newly formed divisions had only 3 panzer detachments instead of 4 as they had previously. The number of tanks in a division now ranged from 147 to 299. As a rule an "armored group" included two armored detachments, one panzer grenadier battalion riding infantry tanks, and often an infantry regimental headquarters, regimental units, and a motorized battalion. A "motorized group" had one rifle regiment, one panzer detachment, and a "rapid mobile group," plus motorcycle riflemen and armored scout cars. The panzer divisions were combined into panzer corps as before. Each panzer corps was made up of two panzer divisions and one motorized or infantry division. Two such panzer corps formed a panzer group.

The panzer groups also had under their command a significant number of so-called army troops: heavy artillery, engineers, and army antiaircraft, plus the army air forces; they greatly



Opposite page: German tanks struggling over the last hills to Belgrade

Above: (1) Italian Carro Armato M 11/39 light tank (1939–41); (2) Carro Armato L6 (1941).

Right: The British press reports the biggest tank battle in the North African war so far


VICEROY
Daily Mail
LATE WAR NEWS SPECIAL
NO. 14,085 · ONE PENNY
FOR KING AND EMPIRE
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18, 1941
BIG TANK BATTLE IN DESERT
Berlin Tells of New Drive to Retake Cyrenaica
From ALEXANDER CLIFFORD
CAIRO, Tuesday.
MASSES of British and German armoured vehicles were to-day at grips in the biggest tank battle of the African war. It had already lasted three days.
Red Army Call-up
SECRET IS HIS WORK
'RADIO-LOCATION' SECRET OUT
'Eye' Spots Ships and Planes in Dark
By NOEL MONKS, Daily Mail Air Correspondent
FACTS about Britain's amazing secret anti-invasion weapon—which can reach out

strengthened the fire power and efficiency of a panzer group.

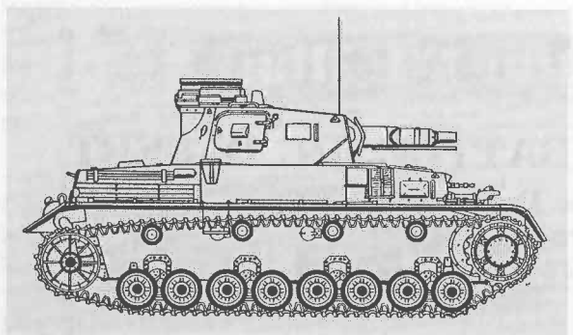
Four German panzer groups now stood ready for Barbarossa—one each attached to Army Groups North and South, and two to Army Group Center. The German army numbered 3,508 tanks, scarcely more than in the French Campaign, and only 2,176 of these were armed with heavier guns—3.7-cm or more. Moreover, 1,949 of the tanks were outdated light Panzer Is and IIs that had not yet been replaced.

By now the Germans had greatly improved the tactical and technical qualities of their medium tanks, and the percentage of efficient Panzer IIIs and IVs in the German tank arm had risen sharply. The panzer divisions were mainly equipped with medium tanks, although the already antiquated Czech Skoda P 38(t)s made up one quarter of all tanks destined for the Eastern Front.

After their experiences in the Polish and French campaigns, the Germans had equipped most of the Panzer III tanks produced in 1940/41 with a 50-mm cannon. In the Panzer IV, the front armor was strengthened to 60 mm and the side armor to 40 mm, which reduced its vulnerability but increased its weight to 22 tons.

The firepower of the German panzer troop had increased greatly since 1940, with the addition of 250 self-propelled assault guns divided into 11 battalions and 5 batteries.

The German plan was for Field Marshal von Bock's Army Group Center—made up of Field Marshal von Kluge's Fourth Army, General Strauss's Ninth Army, the 2nd Panzer Group under General Guderian and the 3rd Panzer Group under General Hoth—to destroy the Soviet armies in White Russia. Then it would join forces with Army Group North under Field Marshal Ritter von Leeb—made up of General von Küchler's Eighteenth Army, General Busch's Sixteenth Army, and General Hoepner's 4th Panzer Group—whose mission was to thrust out from East Prussia toward Leningrad, and together the two army groups would defeat the Red Army in the Baltic States. After Leningrad had been taken, an attack would be launched on Moscow.



The third German army group, Army Group South under Field Marshal von Rundstedt, was made up of the Eleventh Army under General Ritter von Schobert, the Seventeenth Army under General von Stülpnagel, the Sixth Army under Field Marshal von Reichenau, and the 1st Panzer Group under General von Kleist, would strike out of the Lublin region toward Kiev and the bend of the Dnieper river [south of Kiev].

On 20 June 1941 the German Wehrmacht had 7,234,000 men (front-line forces 3,800,000; reserves 1,200,000; Luftwaffe 1,680,000; navy 404,000; and elite SS units 150,000). Finland, [to regain its stolen territory from the USSR], acted as Germany's ally in the Russian Campaign, contributing 16 divisions and 3 brigades; Rumania contributed 13 divisions and 9 brigades; and Hungary contributed 4 brigades. In all, Germany and its allies had 181 divisions and 18 brigades. The Luftwaffe had 3,800 aircraft and the other forces contributed another 1,000.

The Soviet forces were not mobilized at the time of the German attack: Even the units along the Soviet Western Front were only reinforced peacetime forces.

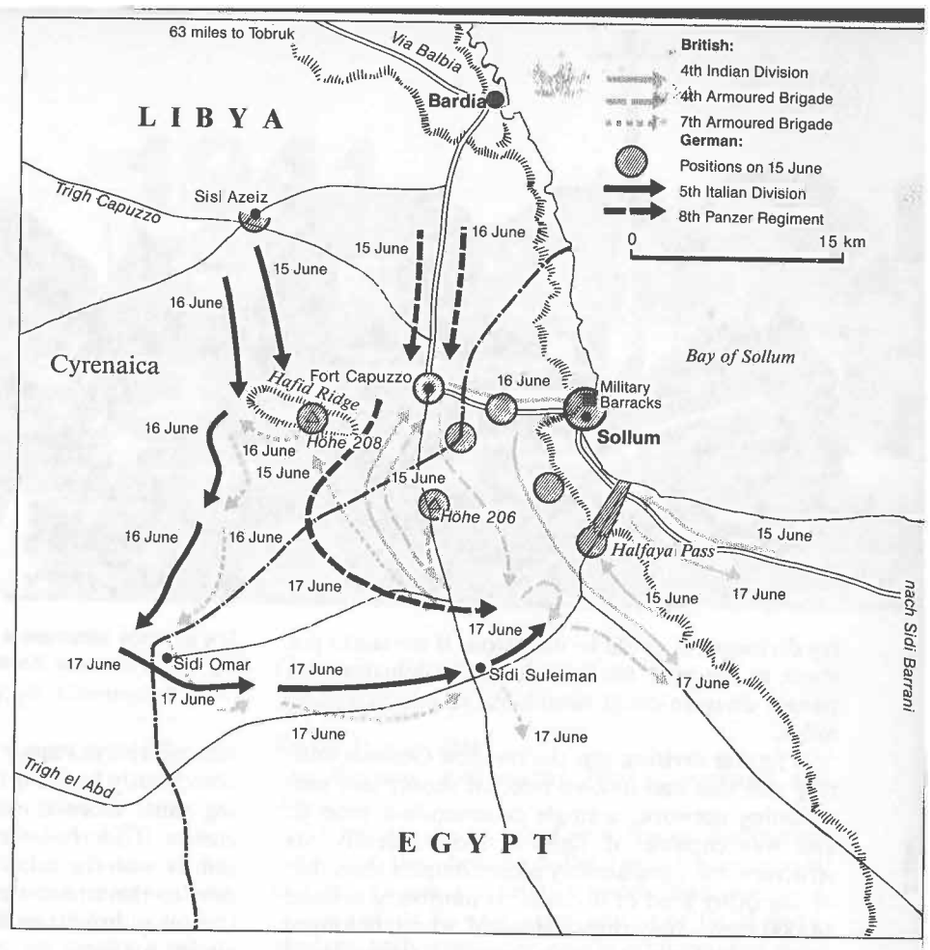
The Soviet border districts had armies on whom fell the task of border defense. The individual armies were combined to form army groups known as "fronts." A Soviet army was made up of two infantry corps with 3 infantry divisions each, plus a motorized corps containing 2 armored divisions and 1 motorized division. Approximately 2½ divisions of the Red Army equalled the strength of one German division. In all the Soviets had some 4.7 million soldiers, 20,000 tanks, and 10,000 aircraft.

Operation Barbarossa, the attack on the USSR, began at 3:15 A.M. on Sunday 22 June 1941, without a previous declaration of war. Soviet forces along the border were still in their peacetime garrisons. The commanders of the Soviet military districts received the order to mobilize just after midnight of 21/22 June 1941, and the lowest-ranking commanders did not get their orders until noon of that day.

The German panzer forces exploited the element of surprise and Germany's complete command of the air by penetrating as rapidly as they could into Soviet territory. At some points they at once drove in as deep as 40 miles. The Soviet troops put up a dogged resistance at some border sectors while at others they retreated in panic.

By Monday 23 June, the Soviet mechanized corps were already turning around to launch their first counterblow. On Tuesday 24 June, German Army Group North reported an extraordinarily efficient heavy Soviet tank that could stand up to

Opposite page: German Panzer IV (PzKpfw IV) medium tank, Version D (first produced in 1939)



Right: Map-diagram of the fighting around Sollum in June 1941

Below: Soviet KV-1 heavy tank (the Klimenti Voroshilov), first produced in 1940

hours of fire from antitank guns and could be penetrated only by 8.8-cm flak guns. This was the KV 1 tank with its new 76-mm cannon.

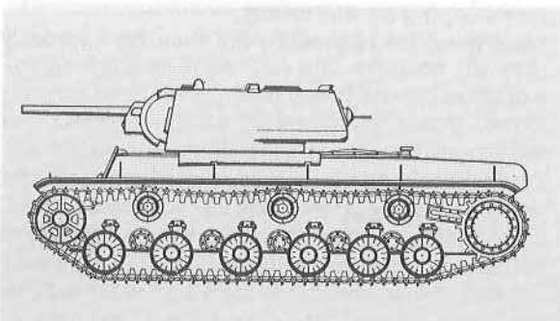
The German panzer forces overcame local resistance and made rapid progress. Hoepner's 4th Panzer Group, attached to Army Group North, covered almost 200 miles in only four days.

June 24 saw the start of an armored battle around Lutsk-Dubno which went on for several days, until June 29, and involved some 4,000 tanks. German General von Mackensen's III Panzer Corps and General Kempf's XLVIII Panzer Corps clashed with a number of Soviet mechanized units. The Germans suffered substantial losses but carried their attack in the direction of Shitomir. The Soviet Sixth Army under General Mutsichenko, the Twenty-Sixth Army under General Kostienko, and the Twelfth Army under General Poniedelin, at this time west of Lvov, were threatened with encirclement.

On Monday 30 June 1941, Winston Churchill appointed General Auchinleck to succeed General Wavell as British commander-in-chief in the Middle East; he also had command of the Commonwealth troops in North Africa.

In summer 1941 the German tank arm was at the peak of its development. In clashes between German and Soviet tanks, the superior German tactics and command system usually decided the outcome. The panzer divisions not only practiced deep thrusts by massed tanks but also collaboration between armored and motorized groups—battle-group tactics. Victory lay in the efficient deployment of the battle groups, and the agility of the German command. Also, at this time Soviet equipment was still, with some exceptions, far inferior to German.

At the start of operations, most German divisional commanders urged that their tanks should be deployed in the foremost tactical company so that the tanks would gain freedom of movement as fast as possible and not be tied down by the infan-





The advance detachment of a German panzer division during a brief halt near Brest-Litovsk on 23 June 1941

try divisions. It could be disastrous if the tanks got stuck at the rear, because the 3,500 vehicles of a panzer division could stretch out to a length of 80 miles.

A panzer division was the smallest German military unit that had its own internal supply and provisioning network, a single commanding general, and was capable of fighting independently. Its structure was considerably more complex than that of any other kind of division. It numbered around 14,000 men—only one in three of whom belonged to the fighting troop—with about 3,500 vehicles of all kinds from tanks to motorcycles. The headquarters of a panzer division resembled the administration center of an industrial firm in that it supervised transport, provisioning, maintenance, ammunition and fuel supply, medical and religious care, recreation, troop hygiene, the paymaster's office, the PX and the field postal service.

The German panzer forces bore the chief responsibility in battle against the Soviet troops, but German leaders did not all agree on how to deploy them. Generals Guderian and von Manstein recommended that the panzer troops should operate as independently as possible, and penetrate as fast and as deep as they could into the enemy's hinterland to confuse and demoralize him. The infantry would follow in their wake, encircling and completely wiping out the enemy.

But many OKH generals felt that this approach was too risky. Panzer forces that advanced too far could easily be cut off from the main forces pursuing them more slowly, and be destroyed by the enemy. They felt that the armor should attack jointly with the other army units. Also, it was evident to them that armored forces unsupported by the other arms could not keep enemy forces encircled for long.

The Luftwaffe, once it had achieved air supremacy, was to be deployed mainly along the assault paths of the panzer forces.

The Soviet armored troops lacked thorough training and experienced commanders. Moreover, the Soviet tank brigades did not cooperate but entered battle separately and, with only 90 to 100 tanks each, could not stand up to a German armored group or even an armored division. The German panzer divisions never drove alone but always in concert with a panzer corps or a panzer group. The Germans had learned in the French campaign, first, that the effectiveness of armored operations was directly proportional to the degree of concentration of the armored forces; and, second, that an individual panzer division was too weak for independent deployment and the smallest deployment unit must be the massed panzer corps.

1941

July—December

Wednesday 2 July 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Our operations against the Soviet armed forces in the East are progressing rapidly. An armored battle has occurred south of the Pripet Marshes at Zloczew [Poland] in which we destroyed 100 Soviet tanks. In the Dubno area [Ukraine], Soviet tanks were trapped between our rear-line reserve divisions and wiped out in two days of fighting. We captured 120 tanks. Yesterday we finally annihilated a large part of the Soviet armies encircled in the pocket east of Bialystok. We have captured immeasurable quantities of booty. So far we have counted approximately 100,000 prisoners, 400 tanks and 300 field guns.

The War in Syria
Thursday 3 July 1941, Vichy
The *French Information Office* (OFI) reported:

Palmyra [Syria] fell to the British on July 3 after a violent attack by British tanks. This outpost had been defended for 13 days by a French garrison of about 300 men.

Winston Churchill of Joseph Stalin
Monday 7 July 1941:

We are all very glad here that the Russian armies are making such strong and spirited resistance to the utterly unprovoked and merciless invasion of the Nazis. There is general admiration of the bravery and tenacity of the soldiers and people. We shall do everything to help you that time, geography, and our growing resources allow. The longer the war lasts the more help we can give. . . .

We welcome arrival of Russian Military Mission in order to concert future plans. [English quoted from p. 340 of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. 3]

Greatest Battle of Attrition in World History

Friday 11 July 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

As we already reported in a special announcement, the twin-headed battle [with Soviet troops trapped inside pockets] around Bialystok and Minsk [White Russia]—the greatest battle of encirclement and attrition in world history—has now ended. We have taken 323,898 prisoners, including a number of commanding generals and divisional commanders, and have captured or destroyed 3,332 armored vehicles, 1,809 field guns and large quantities of other arms, raising the total of prisoners taken on the Eastern Front to over 400,000, and that of captured or destroyed enemy matériel to 7,615 armored vehicles and 4,423 guns. The Soviet air force has lost 6,233 aircraft so far.

Armored Battle in Volhynia
[region of Ukraine]

German war correspondent Kiekheben-Schmidt reported in the 15 July 1941 issue of the official Nazi newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter*:

German and Soviet tanks were already clashing early on June 23. In the morning hours extremely violent fighting broke out and assumed the proportions of a battle, which ended around noon in a total German victory. Although the enemy fought tenaciously and stubbornly, this first armored encounter proved the unequivocal superiority of the German side. The German forces, secured by other forces on their northern and southern flanks, continued an uninterrupted drive eastward despite the unimaginably bad road conditions which reduced the speed of their advance. On the third day of the

campaign they crossed the Styr river [Ukraine], but at this point met intensified enemy resistance.

With the courage of despair, the enemy renewed his attacks over the next few days.

We have won the "armored battle of Volhynia"—actually countless individual combats each achieving the scale of a battle—after eight days of murderous struggle. The Bolshevist army has suffered a mammoth defeat in which we captured 1,210 tanks.

But our greatest victory in this armored battle is that we have thwarted the enemy's intention to halt the German advance so as to prepare his own counteroffensive.

Tough Fighting for Tobruk
Friday 18 July 1941, Milan
The Italian *Stefani News Agency* reported:

During the night the British used unscrupulous fighting methods against us in the area surrounding Tobruk, sowing it with large numbers of explosive-filled boxes, thermos flasks, toothpaste tubes, jam-jars, inkpots and other similar objects. Italian and German soliders were moved by curiosity to pick up the objects which exploded when touched, gravely or in some cases fatally wounding the men.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

18 July 1941:

On the one side, the aggressor is exploiting fully the modern armored tactic of driving his panzer divisions rapidly and vigorously forward, while on the other, the defender is skillfully and cool-headedly adapting his conduct to this new style of warfare. The Russian defense tactics are to bomb with their air force the German tank divisions which have already broken through Soviet lines, while attacking their flanks with reserve units. The Russian front-line troops do not retreat [when the tanks penetrate their lines] but linger to intercept the German infantry and combat engineer troops storming after the tanks—even at the risk of being cut off and surrounded by the Germans. Such battles often unfold long after the motorized German advance guards have passed through. These tactics are dangerous for the defenders because, if surrounded, they may be wiped out or captured along with large quantities of equipment; nevertheless their approach considerably complicates the task of the offensive army. Reports from Russia say that the dominant view in Russian army headquarters is that the most important thing is not how far the German armored spearheads advance, but how many men and how much equipment they must lose to buy their territorial gains. . . Another question concerns the Russian air force, which evidently was surprised by the German offensive at the start and suffered heavy losses of aircraft. British observers report that German claims of having defeated the Red Air Fleet units are not accurate and that during the past week the latter has deployed large forces in effective fighting.



Left: A London *Daily Mail* cartoon portrays Stalin's Russia as a hard nut to crack for the German panzer pincers.

New British Tanks
Monday 21 July 1941, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

The military censors have now released reports about the new heavy British tank, known as the "Churchill," which has gone into mass production. This new type is probably the world's most powerful tank.

Winston Churchill to F. D. Roosevelt
Friday 25 July 1941:

I am most grateful for your message about the tank programme. This addition to our tank resources in the coming critical months is splendid. As to the longer-term policy, all our experience goes to show that more heavily armed and armoured vehicles are required for modern battle, and we should therefore plan to increase the output of medium tanks at the expense of light tanks,



Opposite: Soviet tanks are under attack from German Stuka dive bombers during a tank battle in Volhynia [area of the Ukraine].

but not of course at the expense of your air programme.

2. I am much interested in your suggestion that men for our Tank Corps should be trained in the United States. We are examining it here, and will let you know our views as soon as possible. [English quoted from p. 722, Appendix G of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. 3]

Soviet Tank Losses
Sunday 27 July 1941, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

In the fighting between the Bug and Dniester rivers, a German panzer corps has destroyed 1,086 Soviet tanks while suffering only light losses. A single division of this corps mauled 502 of the tanks. Another panzer division left the main path of the advancing corps and carried out a lateral thrust more than 30 miles deep into the Soviet positions, completely wiping out two whole Soviet tank brigades. The infantry division that fought along with the above-named panzer corps eliminated 239 Soviet tanks from the battlefield during the same period using their light infantry weapons. Total Soviet losses of tanks of all sizes were so heavy that three weeks into the war, the Soviets could no longer carry out the massive armored attacks they had launched in the first week.

One Shot – Two Soviet Tanks Catch Fire

German war correspondent Siegfried M. Pistorius reported in the 27 July 1941 issue of the *Völkischer Beobachter*:

. . . This is the Ukraine.

We have been travelling now for many days and nights. Somewhere bells are ringing out into the hot summer morning. Does that mean that today is Sunday? We nap wherever we happen to be sitting, we sleep whenever a halt is ordered. We rest on armored steel plates, underneath filthy caterpillar tracks, in hammocks, on dusty blankets and tent awnings that smell of oil and gasoline.

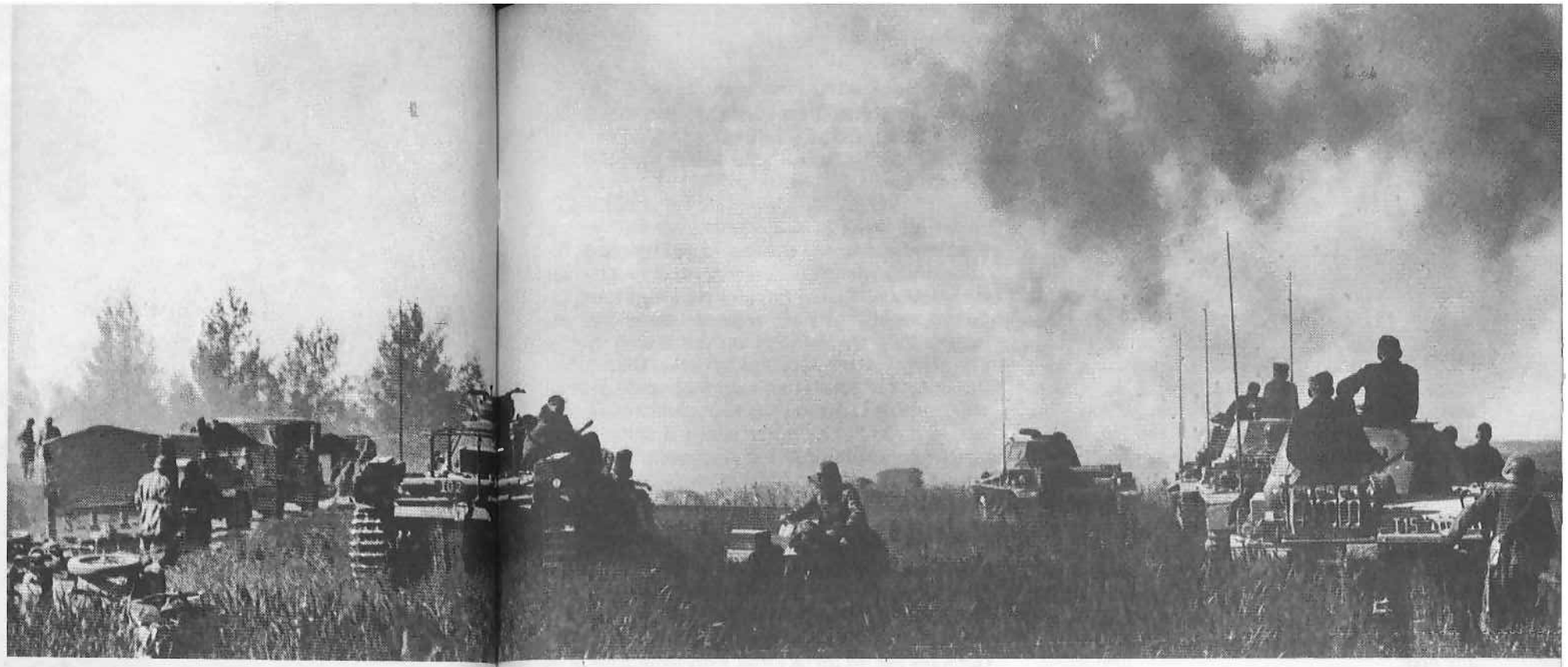
Today we are carrying out reconnaissance. We have left the division behind us. We drive a long way, where no German soldier has gone before. It is a strange feeling, riding into the unknown. Only our maps show us the way. Our compasses and the sun tell us our direction. German bombers calmly pursue their courses overhead. Ahead of us a village is burning. We have already been rattling through unknown terrain for over two hours. Then suddenly grey dots appear behind the hill ahead of us. Soviet tanks! We do not know how many there are. There are only ten of us, but we attack at once without stopping to think. We count 15 of the steel fortresses including three 52-tonners. Our hatches shut with a hollow clang. The Soviet army men are shooting with everything they've got. Grenades whistle and howl overhead and dig circular craters somewhere far to our rear. We still keep silent, keep rolling ahead.

Then comes radio command; we halt, calmly take aim and only then open fire. Our 7.5-mm flak guns whistle and roar. Clouds of smoke rise on the other side, yellow and red flames lick upward. They're no longer shooting. But a light Soviet tank is rolling right toward us only 20 or 30 yards away. Behind it rises a giant 52-ton tank. Like a huge grey bull elephant it sways in our direction. "We'll take that one," roars our gunner.

The violent thundering shakes our eardrums. I press my eyes to the vision slot. The turret has been blown off the little tank ahead of us; but our heavy grenade, instead of exploding there, is racing onward to smash the treads of the giant tank. Already the rubber wheels of the Soviet mammoth are burning. Two tanks finished off with a single shot!

Tuesday 29 July 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The enemy forces overrun after our breakthrough of the "Stalin Line" as we headed toward



July 1941 near Smolensk: A German panzer division is fighting encircled Soviet troops.

Smolensk have now been substantially wiped out. The last Soviet rocket east of Smolensk is nearly destroyed. In a few days we will be able to report the large numbers of prisoners and equipment captured in this vast battle of encirclement and attrition.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
29 July 1941:

Once again we must stress that our victory in the huge battle in the East cannot be grasped in geographical terms, simply by listing the names of the places captured: Instead its goal is the destruction of the enemy armed forces such as has occurred, for example, in the battle of encirclement near Smolensk. Drawing up headlines which imply that the Soviet capital cities of Leningrad and Moscow are now within reach of our ground operations creates false impressions in the reader, and misleads him about the true significance of the great battles now taking place.

Wednesday 30 July 1941
The *Soviet Army High Command* announced:

Last night our forces continued their tenacious fighting against the Nevel [northern Russia], Smolensk [central Russia] and Zhitomir [southern] sectors.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No. 208 of 4 August 1941 (extract):

I. General comments: The long wait for special announcements of new and greater victories on the Eastern Front – which have not been so late in coming in any previous campaign – is gradually causing [German] people's expectant mood to subside.

Everyone in all spheres of the population is primarily concerned with the rumors about the allegedly very high losses among our troops.

Rumors are also rife that the Red Army has largely succeeded in halting the German advance. The mainly negative content of the rumors now circulating, forces us to conclude that many Germans again believe that they can glean details and more accurate news from listening to foreign broadcasts.

Tuesday 5 August 1941, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

In the course of August 4 German troops broke into expanded Soviet field positions south of Kiev. Forty-three Soviet bunkers were seized in violent fighting and the Soviet garrison defeated. Thousands of Soviet prisoners were taken along with rich and varied stores of equipment. Soviet losses are very high: The number of dead is double the number of prisoners.

Italian Expeditionary Force Sent into Action
Thursday 7 August 1941, Rome
The Italian *Stefani News Agency* reported:

Since this morning Italian forces have been fighting along the Ukrainian Front.

USSR Once Sent Supplies to Germany
Friday 8 August 1941, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

The British Government now possesses documents showing that the Soviet Union supplied large quantities of strategically important goods to Germany before the war broke out. In the 18 months preceding the German-Soviet war, the USSR gave sizeable stores of major raw materials to Hitler's Germany, especially oil, grain, wood, manganese, chromium and petroleum products including high-grade lubricants and aircraft gasoline. Moreover, in the last 12 months alone over 500,000 metric tons of military goods were transported to Germany via the Siberian railway—the only link between Germany and the Far East—despite the limited capacity of this rail line.

Sandstorms in the Western Desert
Saturday 16 August 1941, with the British troops in Tobruk
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

Numbers of sandstorms have persisted in the Western Desert for several days now and are obstructing military action. Temperatures are unusually high.

Thursday 21 August 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

A battle that took place around and to the north of Gomel [White Russia] has ended in a severe defeat for the Soviet armed forces.

Parts of 17 Soviet infantry divisions, plus 1 motorized, 2 armored and 5 cavalry divisions and 2 airborne brigades, have been beaten, annihilated or captured. Seventy-eight thousand prisoners and immeasurable quantities of military equipment have fallen into German hands.

Winter Offensive in Libya?
21 August 1941
The *Headquarters of General Auchinleck* (Wavell's successor as British C-in-C, Middle East):

Careful observation leads us to believe that the German-Italian high command are at the moment making preparations to launch a large-scale winter campaign in North Africa. We have determined that new, extremely well camouflaged airfields are under construction which might make it possible for them substantially to increase the number of air squadrons they are deploying. Also noteworthy are their efforts to transport troops and heavy military equipment to Libya.

British-Soviet March into Iran

Monday 25 August 1941, London
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

We have learned from Radio Moscow that Soviet troops have marched into Iran.

This morning British units too crossed the border into Iran.

25 August 1941
The *Headquarters of General Wavell* reported:

Resistance along the border [of Iran] was swiftly overcome and Indian infantry regiments have advanced rapidly to their ordered targets and are safeguarding the invasion by the British forces. The troops are accompanied by tanks. Units of the Royal Air Force are securing the air space, and an army aircraft squadron has been maintaining contact with the Soviet forces which simultaneously marched into Iran from the Caucasus. The Soviet High Command of the Southern Caucasus Regiment have reported rapid advances and only slight resistance.

Winston Churchill to the British Minister of Supply and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff
Wednesday 27 August 1941:

We ought to try sometimes to look ahead. The Germans turned up in Libya with 6-pounder guns in their Panzer IV tanks, yet I suppose it would have been reasonable for us to have imagined they would do something to break up the ordinary "I" [= infantry] tank. This had baffled the Italians at Bardia, etc. The Germans had specimens of it in their possession taken at Dunkirk, also some cruiser tanks, so it was not difficult for them to prepare weapons which would defeat our tanks . . . .

We ought to have it in our power to place at least 100 A.22's in a desert-worthy condition in the field by January or February at latest. To do this it is necessary to get over all the minor modifications for desert warfare. Why should this not go forward at the same time as the final improvements are being made in the tank itself? The people in Egypt will never believe the tank is desert-worthy unless they have tried it on the spot. [English quoted from p. 775, Appendix L of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. 3]

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 29 August 1941:

On Monday morning, Russian troops from the north and British troops west and southwest crossed the border into Iran after the Allies' diplomatic interviews in Teheran failed to lead to any agreement with the Iranian government. The conflict was very brief and Iranian armed forces made little attempt to resist. As early as Thursday we learned that Iran had stopped resisting. A change of government had taken place in Teheran the day before in which the former uncooperative ministers were replaced by others prepared to reach an agreement. The three-day conflict never really took on the character of a war because diplomatic relations between the Allies and Iran were not broken off and the Shah remained in personal negotiation with the ambassadors of Great Britian and the Soviet Union. . . Thus the occupation of important strategic points [in Iran] by Allied troops is continuing as the Russians advance along the road leading from Tabriz to the Mosul area which is under British protection, while the British, reaching out from the Persian Gulf, are taking over control of the oil production districts and the Trans-Iranian railway.

Iranian Petroleum in British Hands
Saturday 30 August 1941
The *Headquarters of General Wavell* reported:

The advance of British and Soviet troops in Iran is continuing without problem. The whole of the oil-producing district is now in British hands.

British and Soviet Troops in Iran
Monday 1 September 1941, Teheran
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

The first meeting between British and Soviet troops in Iran took place yesterday in Qazvin. A division of British Imperial forces set out from Hamadan and came to Qazvin to celebrate this historic moment.

This morning Shah Reza Pahlevi rode through the streets of Teheran with a police escort to convince the people of his presence in the capital.

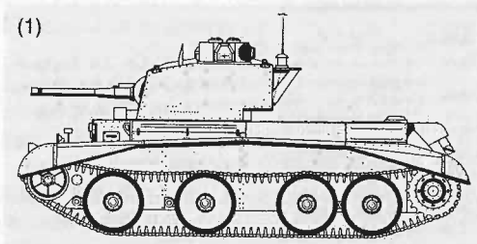
Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No 218 of 8 September 1941 (extract):

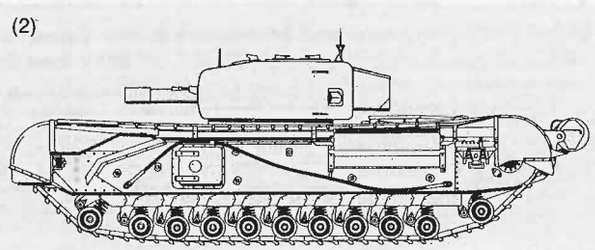
II. German affairs: Germans are paying considerable attention to the fact that in reports on the fighting in the East, the same expressions keep reappearing over and over: "In these days of furious combat. . ."; or "In hard fighting. . ."; "After strong resistance. . ."; "Fresh enemy attacks involving strong armored forces and numerous heavy weapons. . ."; etc. The people are increasingly impressed by the fact that Soviet resistance is evidently not giving way and that the enemy seems still to possess large material reserves. It is now being frequently said that we underestimated our adversary. Germans appear far less confident than in the first weeks of the war.



Above: British Eighth Army infantry tank on a trial run in North Africa

Below: (1) British Cruiser Mark III tank (produced 1930/40); (2) A-22 Churchill Mark V infantry tank (first produced 1941)





Appeal to British Arms Workers
Tuesday 16 September 1941, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

Lord Beaverbrook [the British minister of aircraft production and later minister of supply and a member of the War Cabinet] has issued an appeal to workers of all British tank-manufacturing plants, calling on them to do their utmost because from now on British tank manufacturers must supply not only the British armies but also the armies of the Soviet Union. The soldiers of the Red Army, he said, are standing with us in the common cause of liberty.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Friday 19 September 1941:

Today's grand announcement of our encirclement of several Soviet armies in the area east of

Kiev, is the main topic of all publications and commentaries. We [of the German Press] must do full justice to this great event which. . . so uniquely proves the inexorable victory march of our troops.

Battle of Encirclement East of Kiev
Sunday 21 September 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

In the course of the battle of encirclement now taking place east of Kiev, the army of Field Marshall von Reichenau and the armored armies of Generals von Kleist and Guderian have destroyed large elements of the surrounded enemy and have already captured over 150,000 prisoners along with 151 tanks, 602 field guns and immeasurable quantities of military material. We are well on the way to smashing the remaining enemy troops inside the cauldron, and we expect to seize large numbers of prisoners and equipment.

Thursday 25 September 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The last enemy forces in the cauldron east of Kiev have made desperate attempts to break out, which we repulsed inflicting heavy losses. During clean-up operations on the battlefield, we found the corpse of General Kirponos, the fallen commander-in-chief of the Soviet Southwest Front [front = army group]. His headquarters and those of the Soviet Fifth and Twenty-First Armies have been wiped out.

It's Hot as Hell inside Panzer 900

The following descriptive account by Günther Heysing appeared in the official Nazi newspaper the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 25 September 1941:

We halt behind a windmill-topped hill next to the village. The two armored escort cannon take up their position, and the tanks leave the march column and form up along a broad front. The steel colossi surge forward with a deep rumbling sound. They clamber over the windmill hill, and there before them in the valley lies the village stretching along a stream, separated from them by a broad field of stubble. . . Our tank machine guns and infantry open fire. Over yonder, riderless horses are galloping across the field. Then there is a flash at the edge of the village. The enemy artillery has started firing straight at the onrolling tanks. . . At that moment the wooden village houses, where the enemy has burrowed in, burst into flame. The gun crews collapse or flee into the valley. Others go on shooting unflinchingly. The enemy's heavy grenades whistle past our tanks.

Down below inside the tank hull, the temperature is seething. The sweat is running out of our pores and all our limbs are trembling with excitement. Nevertheless every gesture finds its mark. The swaying tank rolls forward. The machine roars deafeningly; the various gears slip into place with hard thuds and a screeching rumble. More commands, again the noise of engines, and the cannon is fired. . . The hot air in the tank is so thick you can almost touch it, and sweat pours down faster and faster. . .

Thick drops of oil drip down to the floor from the laboring weapons. . . A white flare shoots out of our turrets to show our motorcycle riflemen, who are attacking from the other side, the location of our tanks. A cry: "Hey, the gun carriage over there has blown up." The tank sways on with a thunderous noise. "The gun is jammed."—"Continue MG fire."—"Change the barrel."—"Look out, it's red hot!" The hot barrel clatters to the ground. The tank sways again; the crew of Tank No. 900 get a bit muddled. Then both machine guns start rattling again. . .

We have beaten down the enemy artillery; the Bolshevist guns are no longer firing a shot. The first part of our mission is fulfilled. Now all that's left is to break into the Soviet infantry emplacement at the front of the village.

The tanks heave themselves down into the stream valley; once again Tank No. 900 is in the lead. . .

Shaking with fear, several Russians run among the German tanks, their coats flapping, wearing their moss-green pot-helmets, their hands raised in the air. Their fingers splay out as if in this way they could grasp and ward off the disaster that has befallen them and that is still to come. Others continue to shoot from their cover, or throw hand grenades. . .

It is a gruesome drama. Machine guns that were shooting only a moment before are crushed into scrap; steel helmets are twisted into a lump of metal; rifles snap like dry branches. . .


Norddeutsche Ausgabe
267. Ausg. / 54. Jahrg. / Einzelpreis 20 Pf.

„Freiheit und Brot"

Norddeutsche Ausgabe
Berlin, Mittwoch, 24. September 1941

VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER

Kampfblatt der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung Großdeutschlands

Größte Vernichtungsschlacht aller Zeiten

Ungeheure Gefangenen- und Beutezahlen in dem Kessel ostwärts Kiew
Selbst Kutno, Flandern und Bialystok-Minsk sind schon übertroffen

Sowjetischer Oberbefehlshaber tot aufgefunden

Schwere Tages- und Nachtangriffe auf die Festung Kronstadt

Schwerste Schläge auch gegen die Sowjetflotte

Was uns Paracelsus sagt

Opposite page: Soviet KV-2 heavy tank. First deployed in the Finnish-Soviet war in 1940, the tank was discontinued due to its low maneuverability.

Left: On 24 September 1941, the German press reports the capture of more than 570 Soviet tanks near Kiev in the "greatest battle of all time."



on the 514.6-meter wave length. Then a voice said in English: "Hello England! The German Government has this message for the British Government." The succeeding message was immediately passed on to the War Office, and a short time later the British Government replied in German. Tomorrow two British hospital ships will leave the port of Newhaven at 5:30 A.M. and dock in Dieppe at 10:30.

The Battle at Kiev Ends
Saturday 27 September 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The great battle at Kiev is over. German forces surrounded a vast Soviet troop pocket in a twin-sided attack and succeeded in dislodging the Dnieper defense troops and destroying five Soviet armies. Only small numbers of Soviet troops escaped the vise.

In the course of these operations, in which the Luftwaffe cooperated very closely with the army, we captured a total of 665,000 prisoners, and seized or destroyed 884 tanks, 3,718 field guns and untold masses of other military equipment. The enemy once again suffered very heavy losses. We have won a victory unprecedented in history, and are now moving to exploit and consolidate it.

Snow Falls

[Thursday 2 October 1941, Moscow]
The Soviet *TASS New Agency* reported:

On Wednesday heavy snowfalls occurred at Leningrad and in the eastern Ukraine. Since midday the German attacks on Leningrad have markedly decreased in violence.

Exchange of Wounded
Monday 6 October 1941, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

Late this afternoon, BBC London and Berlin Radio participated in negotiations over the exchange of seriously wounded men. Early in the afternoon London picked up a continuous signal

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 10 October 1941:

Yesterday the German Press Chief, Dr. [Otto] Dietrich, issued a statement saying that the German offensive in the East has been virtually concluded with the encirclement of Soviet Marshal Timoshenko's armies. The Russians, he said, no longer have any battle-proven army forces large enough to win the victory, whereas Germany has not yet even thrown all of its available reserves into the battle. "The campaign in the East"—said the official German spokesman—"has reached a military decision; the Russian front has been broken apart and smashed at all essential points." The attack by Field Marshall von Bock's army group on the central Russian army ensued along both sides of the historic road from Smolensk to Moscow. Yesterday's Wehrmacht report indicates that three Russian armies have been encircled near Bryansk in the central sector of the Eastern Front, while other parts of Timoshenko's forces have already been surrounded around Vyazma. . . Moscow's version of these events does not conceal the gravity of the situation which has resulted from the new German offensive. . . The Moscow capital appears threatened from the west and southwest unless the Red Army succeeds in breaking the German offensive and regrouping rapidly so as to set up a new defensive front before Moscow. At present German troops are said to be 120 miles outside Moscow. The air forces of both sides are extremely active now that the snowstorms that raged near Moscow for several days have abated.

Both warring camps agree in saying that huge numbers of men and equipment have been brought into action.

The War in the East Has Reached a Decision!

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Monday 13 October 1941:

The military outcome of this war has now been decided. Our remaining tasks are primarily political at home and abroad. At some point the German armies in the East will make a halt and then we will define a border that will shield against the East Greater Europe and the German-governed European interest bloc.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No. 228 of the 13 October 1941 (extract):

II. German affairs: Reports from all parts of the Reich agree in saying that [German] press accounts and interpretations [of alleged German victory in Russia], based on the Führer's order of the day and the comments of the Reich Press Chief, have come as a great surprise to the German people and caused them to heave a sigh of relief. Headlines like "Decision in the Eastern Campaign—Bolshevism Finished Militarily" say we hear more than the German people dared to hope for. It is simply impossible for the people to grasp the fact that the war against Bolshevism has already reached a definite end.

New Tanks for Rommel
The following article appeared in the German propaganda publication *Die Wehrmacht* in October 1941:

All manner of military gear, guns, motorcycles and towing vehicles, as well as food and fuel, stand ready for loading along the dock of an Italian Mediterranean port. The walls of the transport vessel, which with the other vessels of the convoy is carrying supplies for the fighting troops in North Africa, are only now receiving the necessary camouflage coating. Cautiously a tank is heaved over the ship's wall. A row of gasoline canisters is stowed along its turret, and its tail is covered with the reserve gear like tools and track-rollers, for breakdowns in the desert must be avoided at all costs.

The Busted 52-Ton Tanks

The following descriptive account by war correspondent Benno Waske appeared in the German propaganda publication *Die Wehrmacht* for October 1941:

On the night of 22/23 October the alarm is sounded in the quarters of a forward-lying German cavalry engineer platoon. The heaviest type of enemy tanks, 52-ton monsters, are rolling forward along a road leading out of a Leningrad suburb, trying to break through the German positions. Lightning-fast intervention, concentrated fire and mine barriers enable us to bag 15 of the heavyweight enemy tanks on this night alone.

After a few hours of rest, the new day is just breaking when the alarm is sounded again along the same sector of the front. The Soviet commissars have sent more tank columns into battle.

The attacking foe has good visibility in the morning light, but our cavalry engineers and antitank gunners are up on the hill. Then engineers throw smoke candles in the path of the advancing steel monsters. At the same time we add antitank mines to the mine barriers on the road. From this point on, the events of every battle tend to be always identical. If a steel colossus escapes destruction by antiaircraft and antitank fire, then it is bound to run over a road mine. There is a sharp explosion and the tank is halted, its tracks in shreds. The [Soviet] crews cannot be moved to take on the chore of fighting, so our engineers sweep through the impenetrable haze from the smoke candles carrying package charges and hand grenades, jump onto a tank, raise the hatch, drop in a charge, jump down from the tank, take cover in the road ditch; then comes the explosion, fire, and smoke as high as the rooftops.

Dogs against Tanks
The following article by German war correspondent Fritz Lucke, reporting from German headquarters east of Bryansk, appeared in the 1 November 1941 issue of the Berlin newspaper the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger*:

Even our chief divisional officer could not believe the report. At the crack of dawn he rang up the orderly on duty, getting him out of bed to ask whether we thought this was April Fool's Day: After all, he said, he should understand a soldier's joke as well as the next man, but really, this was supposed to be a military report.

The incredible news was true word for word: Suddenly a number of dogs had come running along the narrow field path toward the foremost of our vehicles. A few yards away they veered off, ran back the way they had come, wagging their tails, then returned toward us. On their backs they were carrying jutting cases fastened on with a harness. This was a strange and suspicious business and our soldiers did not know what to make of it. The company leader made the only decision he could. The men took tommy guns, rifles and pistols and shot the animals. When the corpses were examined—the dogs were grey Shepherds and brown Dobermans—it turned out that the boxes on their backs contained two explosive charges each. But the mines had not been primed, the pins had not been pulled. . .

No doubt about it, the Soviets believed that these trained mine-dogs were actually a weapon they could use to fight German tanks. They called the commando dogs by the highfalutin name "Destroyers." Back at the end of July, Soviet soldiers [who were now our prisoners] said they had been called up to Vishnyaki 9 miles outside Moscow, where they were assigned to the 2nd Army Destroyer Detachment. There were about 235 men to a detachment, each equipped with one dog and one rifle. The detachments were combined to form a "destroyer battalion" totalling 500 men.

Training of the dogs began with towing vehicles. Meat was used to entice the dogs underneath the vehicles. In the next "class," pieces of meat were held out to make the animals crawl along under a standing tractor from one end to the other. These exercises lasted about five days. Then they were repeated using a slow-moving tractor. During the 40-day training period the tractor was replaced by a tank. Exploding firecrackers were tossed out of the tank, and blanks fired from rifles, to accustom the dogs to the noise of battle . . .

But they had failed to reckon on the honest soul of a dog, who, like any other animal, will run away from a tank in a serious battle. The behavior of the mine-dogs proved it, and our Soviet prisoners confirmed it too. Two of the three companies in their detachment were to be deployed for the first time along our sector of the river. But most of the dogs had not been properly trained and only a very few crawled under the moving tanks. On top of that, many dogs were gun-shy and ran away from the exploding firecrackers. The breeds were all mixed: Any breed that could be confiscated was used.

Three beautiful canine specimens are now lying peaceably at our feet, accepting every morsel of bread with a wag of the tail. They have no notion what fate their "dear masters" had in mind for them. We asked which of the three had been the aptest pupil. One of our prisoners pointed to the German Shepherd in the middle, a light-grey male. We are taking him along—he'll make a fine divisional mascot!

Sunday 2 November 1941
Radio Moscow reported:

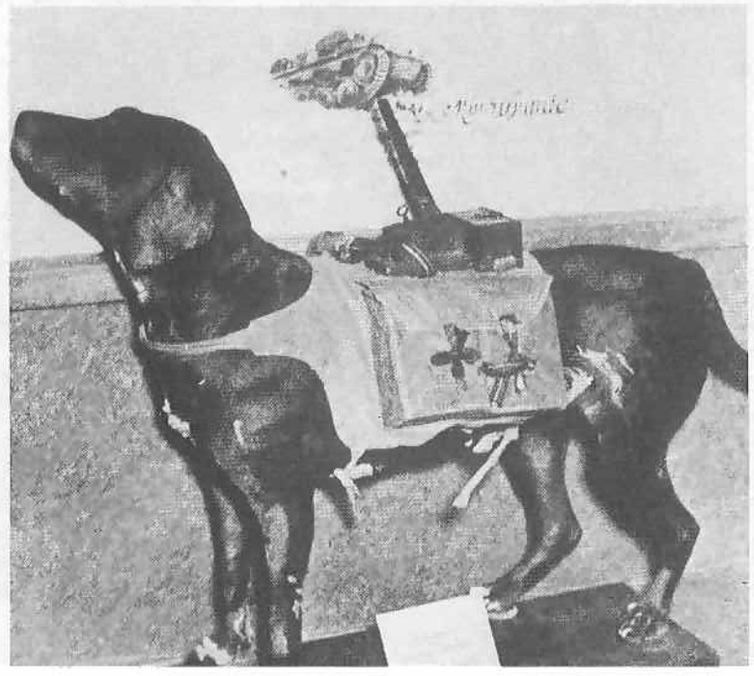
Stalin has ordered the Red Army troops fighting near Mozhaisk, Maloyaroslavets and Tula "not to retreat one step."

Outfitting German Troops Going to Africa
German Army High Command (OKH) Order dated 5 November 1941:

In Italy compulsory rationing has been introduced into almost all supply areas, including fabrics and clothing of all kinds, all types of footwear, leather and other tanned-hide products, soaps and other cleaning substances, art objects and jewelry of every kind, machine and metal products, furniture, food, etc.

It is not possible to buy these items without a ration card or special I.D. Thus it is forbidden to [German] troops or individuals to try to procure them.

All [German] troops being transported to Africa via Italy must be made clearly aware of these in-



He too must fight for Stalin: a Soviet mine-dog.

structions. Outfitting of troops destined for Africa, and special tropical equipment, must be fully completed in Germany, because there is no possibility of improving troop gear by purchases in Italy.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No. 237 dated 13 November 1941 (extract):

I. General comments: In the cities, the main focus of interest is the Führer's speech on the eve of November 9. All reports from every area of Germany agree that the fact that the speech was not broadcast over the radio caused grave disappointment; because many Germans, their hopes having been disappointed in the last few weeks by the course of the war in the East, felt a real need to hear the Führer's voice again and to derive renewed strength from his words.

The Führer's assurance, regarding our attempts to seize Leningrad, that not one German soldier will be sacrificed unnecessarily in this war and wasted to win prestige victories, echoed the heartfelt sentiments of the people and especially of the relatives of soliders serving in the East. At the same time, his words had the effect of instantaneously silencing all the remarks heard recently about the fact that we have not yet taken Leningrad or Moscow.



Near Leningrad in November 1941. The crew of a Soviet KV-1-A heavy tank are salvaging the ammunition from their shot-up vehicle.

Winter Clothing

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Tuesday 18 November 1941:

The following has been reported about supplying our troops in Russia with winter equipment: The winter clothing needed by the troops (furs, heavy coats, warm underwear, etc.) has already providently been set aside during the summer in case it was needed. It is now at the ends of the railway lines ready for distribution to the troops. Distribution is already beginning. This is made more difficult by the transport situation, so that a certain amount of delay is unavoidable. For this reason it would be inappropriate for us to begin already to speak about it [in the German Press] even though this might be desirable in order to reassure the people. The result would be that press reports would cause the soldiers to write their relatives saying that they have not yet received their winter clothing, thus shaking confidence in German news-reporting on an important point. Therefore in selecting propaganda photos, special care must be taken not to use those which allow people to think that the troops have not yet received any winter clothing.

Wednesday 19 November 1941
The *Soviet Army High Command* reported:

On Tuesday our troops were engaged on all fronts. Especially violent struggles took place in the Tver (Kalinin) and Volokolamsk areas and in one sector of the southwest front. Our troops repulsed the enemy attacks and inflicted heavy losses in men and equipment.

"No Match for the Germans"
Saturday 22 November 1941
Dispatch from British *General Auchinleck* [commanding Allied troops in North Africa]:

Next day all three armoured brigades joined in the defense of the area. But our tanks and antitank guns were no match for the German, although they fought with great gallantry, and on the evening of November 22 the XXXth Corps was compelled to retire, having lost two-thirds of its tanks and leaving the garrison of Tobruk with a huge salient to defend.

The enemy rounded off his success in spectacular fashion. In a night attack he surprised and completely disorganized the 4th Armoured Brigade, whose hundred tanks represented two-thirds of our remaining armoured strength. On the 23rd he practically annihilated the 5th South African Infantry Brigade, one of the only two infantry brigades General Norrie had under command—there was no transport for any more—and then on the 24th with his armoured divisions, he made a powerful counterstroke to the frontier. Before this it had become quite clear that the first reports had grossly exaggerated enemy tank losses and that he had at least as many tanks as we had and better, and was in a position to recover more from the battlefield, which remained in his hands. [English quoted from p. 501 of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. 3]

On the Moscow Front

The following account by German Chief Editor Schäfer appeared in the 22 November 1941 issue of the Cologne newspaper *Kölnische Zeitung*:

The battle terrain is characterized by extensive woods filled with dense underbrush and so-called broom forests. It is marshy in parts and generally very broken terrain. Given the special aptitude of the enemy soldiers and especially of the fresh Siberian divisions for nocturnal woods fighting, it is easy to imagine what mental and physical demands were imposed on our German soldiers. They were never safe from surprise attack in the pathless woods. Even during lulls in the fighting and throughout the cold nights, they had to be constantly prepared for sudden ambushes and hand-to-hand fighting. Having repelled one attack, they were often left with barely enough time to care for their wounded, repair their weapons and lay out adequate ammunition before another attack wave. Sleep, food and weariness were forgotten: The important thing was the most vigorous resistance to defend their own lives and their emplacements. You would have to have seen these front-line soldiers to understand what they achieved in this landscape and in this freezing weather. There along a narrow embankment of the kind that the enemy tanks like to use to get close to us in the forest terrain—right behind the infantry as they lay in their dugouts and little shelters of every kind—stood a number of our tanks, keeping watch as the cold night fell. Yonder a field battery had been driven into position in an open space. Little wood fires burned behind the guns, where the crews could warm themselves in the intervals of shooting.

Monday 24 November 1941, Cairo
The *Headquarters of the British Eighth Army* reported:

The great armored battle in the Western Desert has intensified further in the area between Sidi Rezegh and Tobruk.

Wednesday 26 November 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Our attacks on Tuesday brought us sizeable territorial gains in the central sector of the Eastern Front.

Thursday 27 November 1941
The *Headquarters of the British Eighth Army* reported:

The first phase of the fresh armored battle in Libya is proving to be a life-and-death struggle between the British and German armored troops.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 28 November 1941:

On November 18 the front in North Africa began to move again in the wake of the British offensive against Libya. For the last ten days, the forces of General Cunningham, famed for his victories in Abyssinia, supported by the British Mediterranean fleet under command of his brother Admiral Cunningham, have been engaged in extraordinarily violent struggles with the German and Italian forces under General Rommel, who last spring succeeded in rapidly driving the British out of Cyrenaica. The British offensive began with several large pincer movements emerging from various points along the Egyptian-Libyan border.

Saturday 29 November 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:



Daily Mail

LATE WAR NEWS SPECIAL

NO. 14,227 ONE PENNY FOR KING AND EMPIRE MONDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1941

ROMMEL FLINGS IN EVERY TANK

Japanese Fleet Near Borneo

Battle to the Death Rages South of Tobruk

Roosevelt Cuts Holiday

THE FAR EAST MENACE

Von Kleist Abandons Taganrog

Headlong Retreat Over 90 Miles

PANZER CHIEF CAPTURED

BENGHAZI ROAD CUT BY NEW FORCE

From Daily Mail Correspondent CAIRO, Sunday.

THE Battle of Libya appears to-night to have reached its turning point. Near the Tobruk-Sidi Rezegh corridor, now ten miles wide, the whole remaining Axis tank force is "fighting like mad"—to escape.

Left: A London *Daily Mail* article of 1 December 1941 reports that Rommel's troops have been forced to retreat in North Africa.

Opposite page: November 1941 near Volokolamsk. German tank spearheads are advancing on Moscow.

Further progress has been made in the attack on Moscow. At Rostov and the Donets river basin [in the south] the enemy has suffered heavy and bloody losses in his renewed, ruthless attacks by strongly massed forces. Our garrison troops at Rostov were evacuating the central city as ordered so as to carry out the required retaliatory measures against the native civilian populace, who in violation of international law took part in the fighting to the rear of the German troops.

29 November 1941, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The town of Volokolamsk [northwest of Moscow], which in recent weeks has repeatedly been mentioned in Soviet news reports as a center of Russian resistance, is now in German hands. The military significance of the town lies in the fact that it is not only the intersection point of major roads but that the rail line from Moscow to Riga also runs through it.

Monday 1 December 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Near Moscow, attacking German infantry and panzer forces are continuing their advance against the Soviet Russian capital. In North Africa the fighting is still continuing southeast of Tobruk. Our forces have successfully repulsed British counterattacks from the south.

1 December 1941, Chicago
The American *Associated Press News Agency* reported:

For the first time tanks have been successfully mass produced using metal cast all in one piece. These are not only faster to produce but also are more durable than riveted tanks. Detroit manufacturers report having patented a new welding process which takes the place of the old riveting process.

War in the Pacific

Sunday 7 December 1941, Washington
The *White House* announced:

Japanese aircraft have attacked Pearl Harbor and all the military and naval installations on the island of Oahu in the Hawaiian Islands.

Soviet Counterattacks in Fierce Cold Conditions
7 December 1941, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* (DNB) announced:

At the moment, the weather is largely determining the development of operations on the Eastern Front. In the Moscow area, the temperature has fallen to 35 degrees below zero Centigrade; there is also a snowstorm, so that in effect there is no possibility of conducting troop movements and military engagements. It seems impossible to imagine how motor vehicles could still be used, or field and machine guns continue to function, at this temperature.

The Fighting in Libya
Monday 8 December 1941, Cairo
British Headquarters announced:

A second great armored battle has now begun in the area between El Adem and El Gubi south of Tobruk, and we can assume that Generals Rommel and Cunningham have committed substantial numbers of troops and armored formations to the fighting.

Japanese Have Landed in the Philippines
Tuesday 9 December 1941, Manila
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Reliable sources inform us that the first detachment of Japanese troops has landed in the Philippines.

Wednesday 10 December 1941, Cairo
British Headquarters announced:

General Rommel is now in retreat west of Tobruk. The British armored forces have already breached the enemy's southern flank. The German Afrika Corps has suffered heavy losses and we have captured a large number of undamaged tanks and aircraft. We assume that they were abandoned due to shortage of fuel.

Turning Point at Moscow

Saturday 13 December 1941, Moscow
The *Soviet Army High Command* announced in a special communiqué signed by Marshal Timoshenko and General Zhukov:

The sixth German offensive against Moscow has now undergone decisive collapse. German assault positions and defensive lines have been penetrated along the whole Moscow front, and in many sectors Soviet forces are fighting broken-up German troop elements encircled in pockets.

British Advance in Libya
Monday 15 December 1941, Cairo
British Headquarters announced:

Despite unfavorable weather with low-hanging clouds and rain, the mass of the British troops have made further advances in the area southwest of Gazala. Aerial reconnaissance confirms that General Rommel has occupied strong fortified positions in the Jebel Akhdar region. General Rommel has succeeded in organizing an ordered retreat.

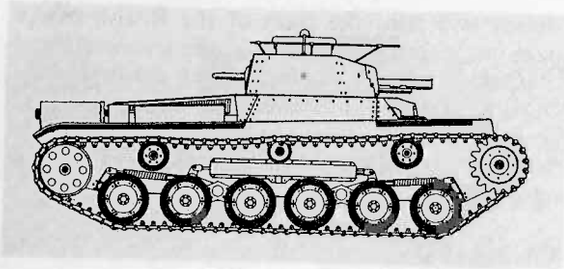
Tuesday 16 December 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The enemy suffered heavy losses again on Monday in local fighting in various sectors of the Eastern Front. In North Africa, we again waged heavy defensive fighting west of Tobruk. In a counterstroke, German and Italian troops smashed powerful enemy units.

Wednesday 17 December 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Now that a transition is being made from offensive operations to trench warfare for the winter months, the necessary corrections and curtail-





ments of our front lines are now under way according to plan.

In North Africa yesterday, the heavy fighting continued west of Tobruk. Powerful enemy attacks on Bardia were repelled with heavy losses to them.

Singapore Must Not Fall!
17 December 1941, Singapore
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

British Governor Shenton Thomas has addressed the legislative assembly of Singapore saying that the fate of Penang [northwest Malaya] depends on events in Kedah [farther northwest]. Further unpleasant surprises may still lie in store; but it is certain that Singapore will not fall to the Japanese.

Friday 19 December 1941
The *German News Bureau* reported:

On December 18, in temperatures of 15 below zero Centigrade and during a light snowfall, fairly violent battles took place in the central sector of the Eastern Front. The enemy kept up his pressure on us in many sectors and tried to breach German lines in successive waves of attack. The Soviets supported their attacks with strong artillery and armored forces. We sealed them off wherever they succeeded in achieving small local breaches. Counterstrokes by our own infantry are clearing up our positions.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

19 December 1941:

. . . The present military situation can be briefly characterized by saying that the initiative has now passed to the Allies in Russia and in Libya, while the Japanese are dictating the action in the Far East and Pacific theaters.

Tuesday 23 December 1941
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

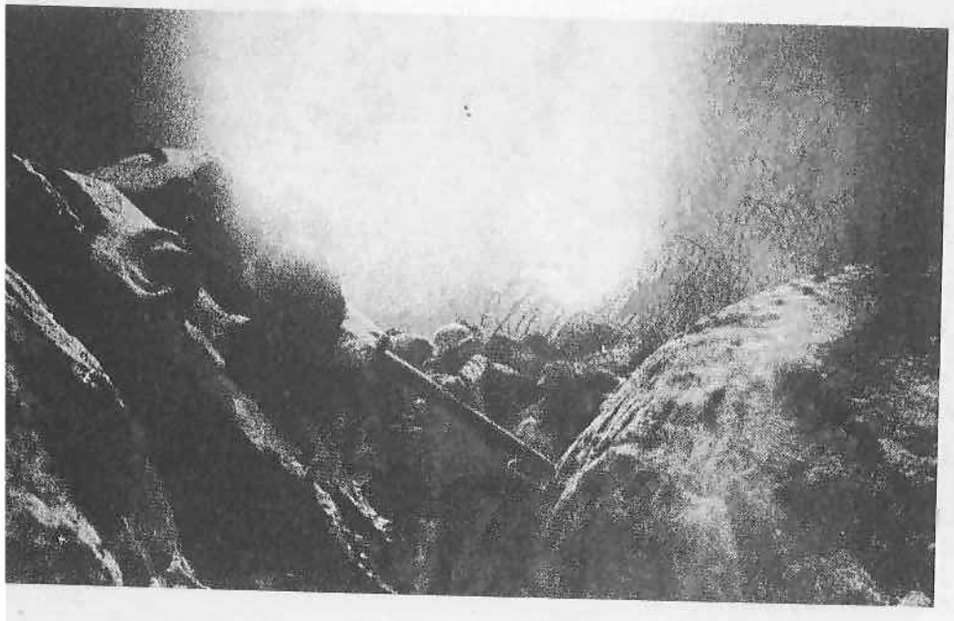
Hard battles are continuing in the central sector of the Eastern Front. At several points our troops successfully repelled strong enemy attacks, destroying 19 Russian tanks in the process.

General Auchinleck to Winston Churchill
Thursday 25 December 1941:

Regarding the tanks for the British Army in Libya.

These vehicles were stowed on forward well-deck, unsheeted and unlocked. In consequence vehicles were exposed to sea water, and when received, both tanks had water on floors and showed rust markings nine inches up the walls.

Considerable damage to electrical and wireless gear, requiring fourteen days' expert attention before tanks can run. Method of dispatch and stowage most unsatisfactory. All American tanks are dispatched with all crevices and doors pasted up with masking tape. [English quoted from p. 776 of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. III]



Above: Japanese type 97 CHI-HA medium fighting tank (first produced in 1937)

Opposite page: The burnt-out wrecks of German and Italian tanks southwest of Gazala (Libya) on 15 December 1941

Left: A German emplacement outside Moscow one night in December 1941



Saturday 27 December 1941, Cairo
British Headquarters announced:

After taking Benghazi, armored troops of General Ritchie [the successor to Cunningham as British North African commander] immediately continued their advance southward.

Monday 29 December 1941, Rome
The *Italian High Command* announced:

The enemy attempted a pincer movement around Agedabia with strong armored forces. This effort was stayed by fire from our artillery and the enemy flank was attacked and severely mauled by German and Italian motorized forces. Fifty-eight British tanks and a considerable number of armored scout cars and trucks were destroyed or captured.

29 December 1941, Singapore
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

The Japanese are launching a three-pronged attack against Singapore, along the eastern and western coasts of Malaya and towards Ipoh in the northwest central area. The Japanese troops have all received special training in jungle warfare and are operating with light tanks wherever possible.

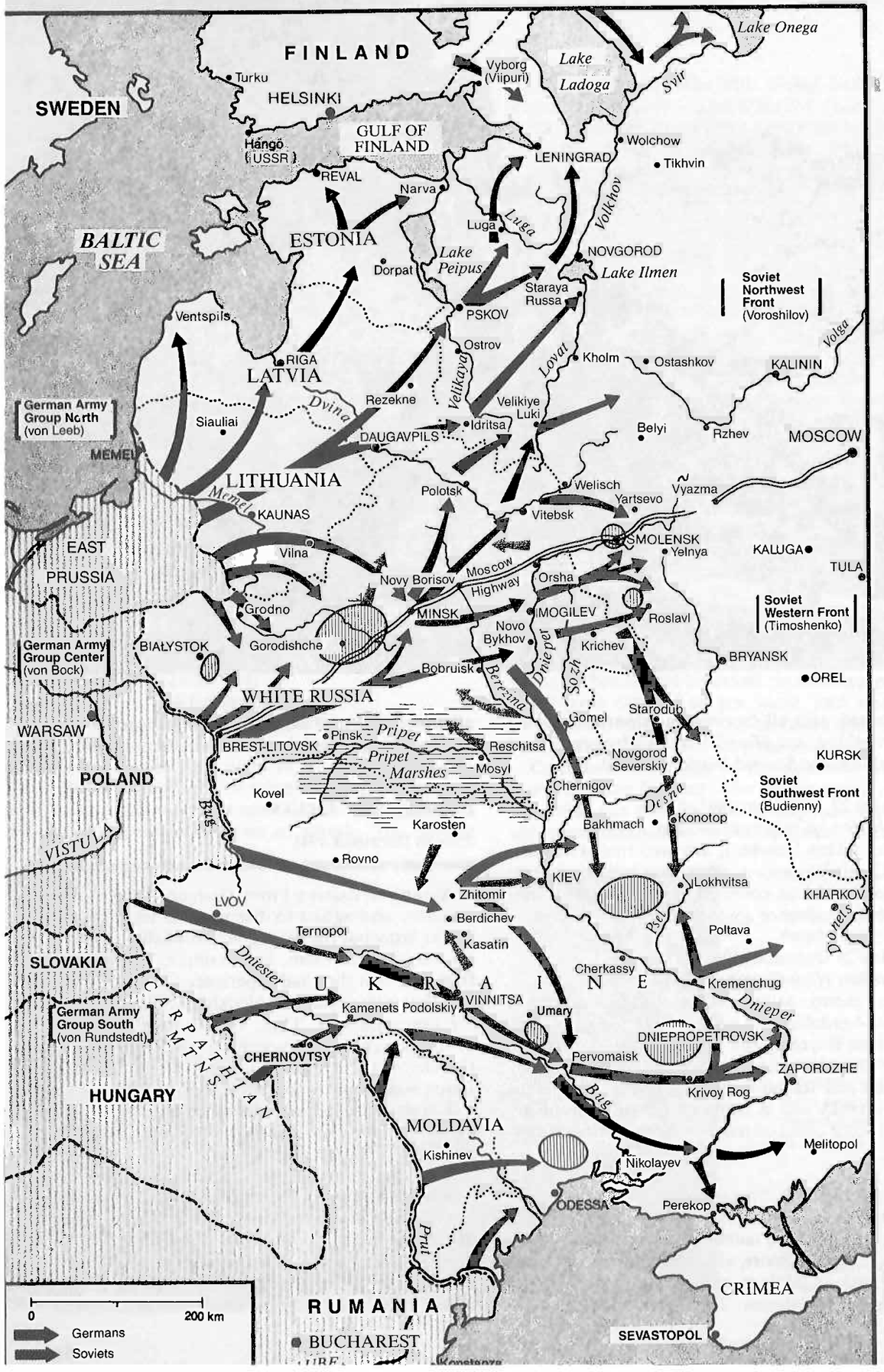
Strategy and Tactics

JULY TO DECEMBER 1941

Along the Eastern Front German panzer commanders were aghast to discover that not only the Soviet army but the very land and weather of Russia were against them. For example, this was the first time that they had experienced downpours of rain that were capable of blocking advancing tanks for hours on end. Thus, on Wednesday 2 July 1941, the armored reconnaissance detachment of the German 7th Panzer Division under General Baron von Funck reported that it had been forced to halt its drive "because the prescribed roads have been reduced to an untraffickable swamp by heavy rainfall."

Next day, on 3 July 1941, after violent fighting against Soviet tanks, General Nehring's 18th Panzer Division reported the existence of a new kind of Soviet tank, quite different in appearance from all the known types, which seemed very advanced and was indestructible by German antitank guns.

On Saturday 5 July, the northern flank of von



Operation Barbarossa

Rundstedt's Army Group South set out to breach the Stalin Line, a defensive line fortified with large numbers of bunkers, which extended about 40 to 60 miles behind the 1939 border of Poland.

On Monday 7 July 1941, the XLVIII Panzer Corps under General Kempf penetrated the Stalin Line south of Novograd Volynski.

Berdichev in the Ukraine fell on Wednesday 9 July. The German panzer forces in the south were nearing Kiev and threatening the left flank of the Soviet Southwest Front under General Kirponos. Von Kleist's 1st Panzer Group was finally halted by counterstrokes from the Soviet motorized corps, allowing Musychenko's Sixth Army, Kostienko's Twenty-Sixth Army and Poniedielin's Twelfth Army to withdraw to the line Berdichev-Khmielnik. Soviet General Vlassov's Thirty-Seventh Army took up a position outside Kiev to protect the Ukrainian capital.

When the fighting in what had formerly been eastern Poland came to an end, the Soviet forces had been driven back between 200 and 400 miles into the interior. German troops were now beginning to move into Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, White Russia, the Ukraine and Bessarabia. The panzer forces achieved substantial victories by exploiting the elements of speed and surprise. Only near Minsk did the Germans succeed in encircling large Soviet forces. [Reference to the map of the Soviet Campaign on p. 130 will make it easier to follow the course of the battle. — Trans.]

On Tuesday 8 July, Hitler, convinced that the Soviets were already beaten, decided that Field Marshal Ritter von Leeb's Army Group North should continue to advance in force and surround Leningrad. The Soviet Northern Front forces under General Popov, not beaten but definitely weakened by heavy losses and unable to expect reinforcements, were ordered to secure Leningrad and Reval (= Tallinn, the capital of Estonia and a major Baltic port). Along the Luga river they succeeded in halting General Hoepner's 4th Panzer Group which was advancing from the Pskov area toward Luga and Novgorod, and the Soviet Eighth Army under General Sobiennikov put up fierce resistance in Estonia.

On Wednesday 9 July, the dual battle at Bialystok and Minsk came to an end. In the giant Minsk-Bialystok pocket [where the Germans had surrounded several Russian armies], Hoth's 3rd Panzer Group smashed the bulk of Timoshenko's Soviet Western Front. Kuznetsov's Third Army and Golubiev's Tenth Army were completely destroyed, and only one third of Filatov's Thirteenth Army managed to escape. The Soviet army suffered incalculable numbers of dead and wounded; also, 323,898 Soviet prisoners, 1,809 cannon and 3,332 tanks were seized by the Germans.

On Thursday 10 July 1941, the German panzer forces began an advance to surround and annihilate the chief remaining forces of the Soviet Western Front. Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group crossed the Dnieper north and south of Mogilev where it encircled part of Filatov's Thirteenth Army. Then they reached the Sozh river [White Russia] and swerved north. The 3rd Panzer Group with General Schmidt's XXXIXth Panzer Corps thrust out from Vitebsk towards Yelnya, threatening General Kurochkin's Soviet Twentieth Army and General Lukin's Sixteenth Army. On the extreme right flank of the Soviet Western Front, Yerzhakov's Twenty-Second Army came under pressure from the 3rd Panzer Group and General Strauss's Ninth Army from the south, and from Busch's Sixteenth Army from the west, and was forced to retreat to Velikiye-Luki.

On Friday 11 July 1941, in the teeth of heavy resistance, Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group forced General Koniev's Soviet Nineteenth Army to retreat over the Dnieper river at Mogilev.

On Sunday 13 July, German troops were forced to evacuate Slobin and Rogachev when a Soviet cavalry group of Yefremov's Twenty-First Army crossed the Dnieper to counterattack to Bobruisk.

On Tuesday 15 July 1941, in the Orsha-Smolensk area, batteries of Soviet "Katyusha" M-8 rocket launchers were deployed for the first time, against Harpe's 12th Panzer Division. Their existence had been a closely guarded secret. The crews were elite soldiers of the NKVD, the Soviet security police, who had to swear an oath that if threatened with death or capture they would destroy the launching devices and use every possible means to escape capture, if necessary by committing suicide. The security barrier surrounding the rocket-launch batteries extended even to the highest commanders. Only the supreme army commanders and members of the war assembly were allowed to approach the batteries: a precaution that considerably impaired their efficient deployment. Even in 1944, by which time the Germans had long ago captured a number of Katyusha batteries, the Soviets did not allow the Western Allied military attachés to see them.

The widespread blanket of fire emitted by the new Katyusha rocket artillery meant that it could be ideally deployed along the focal areas of an attack. The artillery commander of the Soviet Western Front, General I. P. Kramer, reported to General Voronov, C-in-C of Soviet army artillery, after the first deployment of the M-8s: "Reports from infantry commanders and artillerymen say that this sudden burst of massive fire inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and had such an effect



Soviets counterattacking with tank support near Velikiye Luki (northern USSR) in July 1941

on morale that whole units panicked and ran away."

German troops were painfully surprised by the tactical maneuverability of the rocket launchers, due to their high road speed (9–25 mph), their rapid set-up capability once they reached their firing position, the speed with which they could be brought to fire on the march, and their high rate of fire: 320 rockets every 26 seconds.

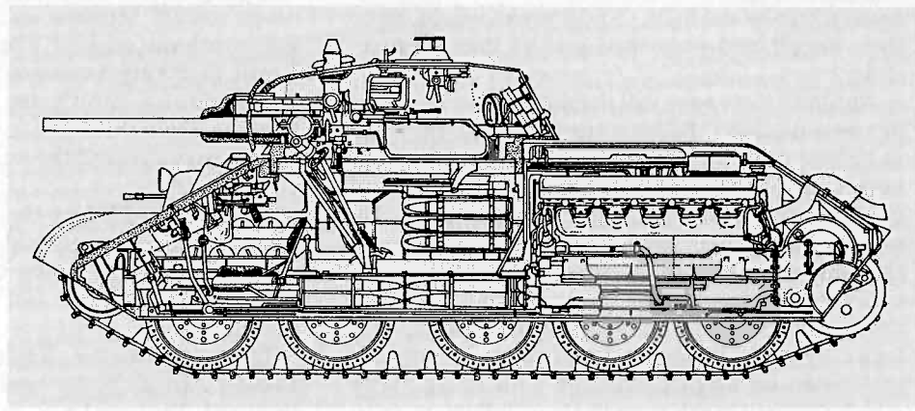
One of the first German reports describing the operations of this Soviet secret weapon against panzer units, said: "Dark cloud over the launch point, then missiles resembling those fired by our own smoke mortars, the muffled roar of the flying projectiles, 30 or 40 of them impacting simultaneously, a loud explosion, widespread flames, small craters 12 to 16 inches deep. Despite the low fragmentation effect, the troops found bombardment by these missiles extremely unpleasant, not least because of their wide dispersion. Fragments of the missiles, and the testimony of prisoners, aided our observations, and soon the captured launchers completed our information."

On the same day that the M-8s first went into action, 15 July 1941, the Soviet High Command (STAVKA) made an important decision. The Soviets had no way to replace the vast numbers of tanks they were losing, so the mechanized corps were ordered to disband. The motorized infantry divisions, which now had few tanks left, were turned into infantry divisions. The tank divisions became independent tank brigades and battalions under command of the enemy leaders. Their chief duty was to cooperate closely with the infantry, helping them to ward off enemy tanks and increasing their striking power during counterattacks.

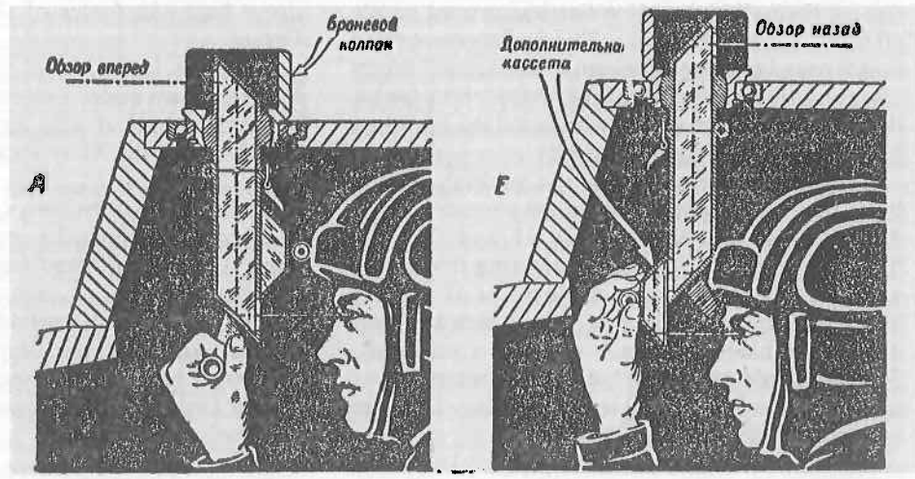
In mid-July 1941 the Soviet defenders began to employ specially devised armored tactics to repel the German armored invaders. If a German armored spearhead broke through Soviet lines, the Soviets, rather than retreating before the Germans, would close in on both flanks of the penetrating enemy tanks and try to halt their flow. Meanwhile other Soviet units would take up defensive positions deeper behind their lines in the path of the oncoming tanks. Only after completing these movements would the Soviets call on large-sized reserve armored units to attack the flanks of the advancing German spearheads. Each defensive line was reinforced by individual tanks dug into infantry emplacements that served as armed antitank positions or MG nests. Far to the rear of the defended territory, well-camouflaged tanks were posted along the expected German attack route, ready to move in at right angles to their flanks.

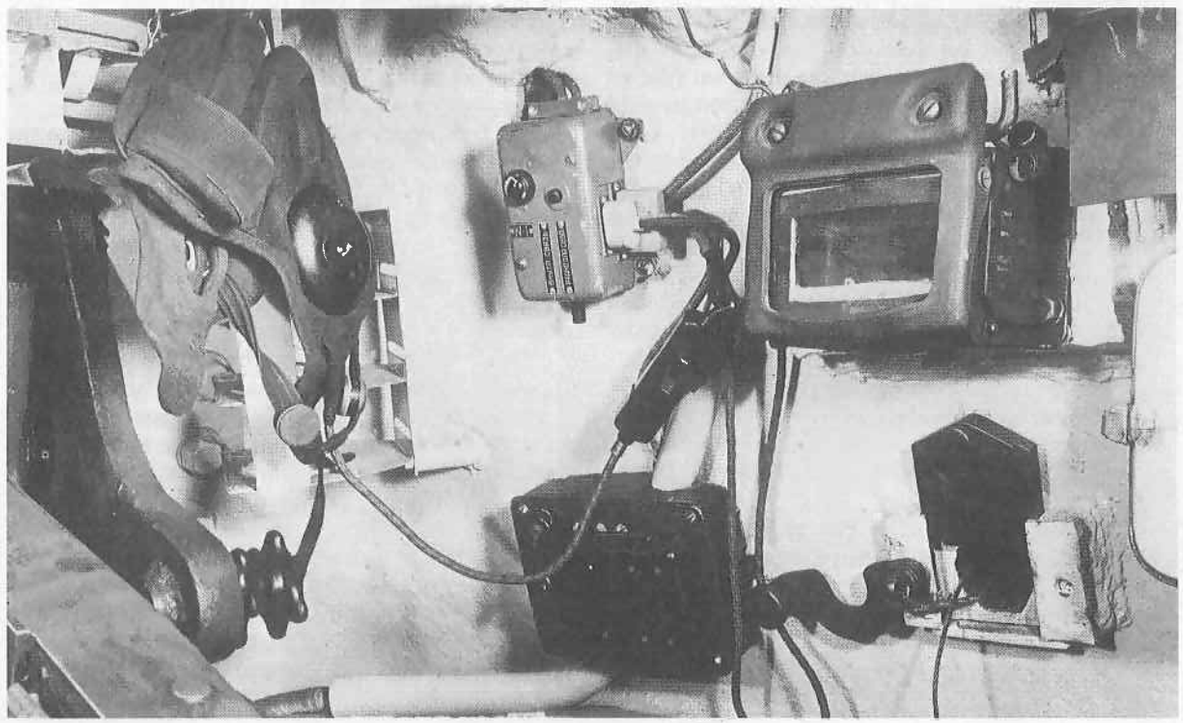
As a rule the Soviet infantry would let the attacking tanks roll past them and then engage the infantry following in order to separate them from the tanks. Then, as the German spearheads rolled on, they would run into the camouflaged Soviet reserve tanks lying in wait in their precisely defined observation and firing zones.

Above: Soviet T-34/76A medium tank. Its diesel engine reduced the risk of fire and increased its range; its Christie suspension gave it higher speed in rough terrain; and its broad tracks facilitated deployment in mud and snow.



Center and below: The new adjustable periscope of the Soviet T-34/76A. The steel turret, cast all in one piece, was highly resistant to penetration by German antitank grenades. On the right in photo below, a vision slot covered with bullet-proof glass; beside it are part of the radio signalling equipment and a crash helmet.





If the Soviet infantry had to withdraw to a defensive line by daylight, Soviet tanks would cover their retreat and only then pursue their own retreat.

Antitank guns were still the most effective weapons against tanks. Because the Soviet infantry had to defend such wide sectors of the front, the antitank guns of the various regiments, divisions and corps were assigned to infantry groups which deployed them in detachment or battery strength. At the time of the German attack, the Soviets had concentrated inadequate antitank-gun forces in those sectors which lent themselves to rapid advance by German tanks. But from mid-July on, the Soviets set up their antitank guns along routes which German tanks were likely to follow, so as to fire on them directly. Mine barriers proved highly effective against the tanks. The Soviets discovered that it was far more efficient to lay several dozen mines hastily in the path of the approaching tanks, than to sow whole fields with hundred of mines before the tanks actually arrived.

Despite all these measures, the Soviets' vulnerability to armored attacks remained a weak point in their defense. As a result, on 11 and 28 July, STAVKA issued two directives ordering front commanders to start a massed deployment of artillery and aerial forces in the area from which the Germans were likely to launch armored spearheads. They also ordered special antitank detachments set up at army and divisional level, and tank-destroyer troops stationed in the subunits.

But what put so many German tanks out of action was not the Soviet tank barriers and antitank guns but the almost uninterrupted fighting that had begun on June 22, the enormous distances the tanks had to cover, the dust that filtered into them on dry days and the immersion in mud every time it rained. Thus, on 16 July 1941, General Fischer's 10th Panzer Division reported to the XLVI Panzer Corps that over the last 60 miles, the dust which the Germans had never before experienced in such quantities, had caused the engines of 24 tanks to break down completely. The dust, which no dust filter could keep out, combined with the oil to abrade the engine so that it rapidly lost power and soon was unable to propel the vehicle.

On Wednesday 16 July 1941, the German 29th Motorized Division under General von Boltenstern captured Smolensk [on the central front].

On Friday 18 July 1941, General von Vietinghoff-Scheel's XLVI Panzer Corps took the important crossroads of Yelnya southeast of Smolensk which now formed a bulging southeastward salient along the central sector of the front.

Next day, July 19, Hitler issued his fateful Directive 33, ordering the armored and motorized forces on the central German-Soviet front to halt their thrust toward Moscow and veer off to the north and south to support von Leeb's Army Group North in taking Leningrad and von Rundstedt's Army Group South in driving through the Ukraine. Only the German infantry divisions were left to carry forward the advance on Moscow.

On Monday 21 July the British around Sollum tried to launch a general offensive involving a series of armored thrusts, but the German Afrika Corps beat them back and the situation stabilized again.

That day on the Eastern Front, the Soviet Twenty-Second Army under General Yerzhakov captured Velikiye-Luki in a counterstroke and drove back the forces of the German 3rd Panzer Group.

Two days later, on July 23, the Soviet Twenty-Fourth Army under General Rakutin carried out vigorous counterattacks around Yelnya, but failed to drive back the XLVI Panzer Corps.

By Friday 25 July 1941, German armored forces had broken through the entire length of the Stalin Line. The Soviet Army's attempt to defend itself along a fortified line, especially in the south, and to convert to trench warfare had failed.

That same day, the German Afrika Corps was combined with Italian forces to form the Afrika Panzer Group under command of armored general Rommel.

On Sunday 27 July the troops of the Soviet Western Front, after launching strong counterstrokes, made German troops northeast of Smolensk veer off to Yartsevo.

On Wednesday 30 July, Hitler, in response to the strong Soviet resistance north and south of Smolensk, issued Directive 34 ordering German Army Group Center to halt its attacks and go on the defensive [so that the German armored groups could continue their offensives in the north and south without having to return to help the central armies].

On Sunday 3 August, in a three-day battle around Roslavl, the German 2nd Panzer Group mauled several divisions of the Soviet Twenty-Eighth Army under General Kachalov. Fresh forces under Marshal Timoshenko launched violent attacks at Rogachev and Bobruisk, but 2nd Panzer Group's counterstroke smashed the relief efforts. Soviet losses included 38,000 prisoners, 300 cannon, 250 tanks.

When Guderian's panzer group then started to grope its way farther east, the Soviets around Roslavl and Smolensk responded with a series of powerful but poorly coordinated counterattacks.

On Tuesday 5 August 1941, the battle of encirclement at Smolensk came to an end when forces of German Army Group Center smashed the Soviet Sixteenth Army under Lukin, elements of the Nineteenth Army under Koniev, and the Twentieth Army under Kurochkin, along with the XXIII Mechanized Corps. The Soviets lost (apart from incalculable numbers of dead, wounded and missing) 310,000 prisoners, 3,120 field guns and 3,205 tanks.

Until Wednesday 6 August, scattered elements of the encircled Soviet forces continued to escape from their cauldron. The tempo of the German advance began to slow for the first time since the start of the campaign. For the time being, Army Group Center was incapable of waging further large-scale offensive operations, and the Germans had not yet won the decisive victory they had counted on having by August.

On Friday 8 August the battle of encirclement at Uman ended too. Von Kleist's 1st Panzer Group smashed the bulk of the Soviet Sixth Army under Musychenko and Poniedielin's Twelfth Army and captured the two commanders. Most of the Soviet Eighteenth Army under General Smirnov was also destroyed. The battle of Uman was a pincer attack which pressed Soviet divisions up against the infantry units of von Rundstedt's Army Group South. A rapid German tank advance blocked an attempt to break out of the cauldron to the southeast. No reliable records were kept of the toll of dead and wounded, but the Soviets lost 103,000 prisoners, 858 cannon, 242 antitank and antiaircraft guns and 317 tanks.

That same day part of the 2nd Panzer Group thrust from the Roslavl area southward to Klintsy and von Weichs's Second Army drove from the Bobruisk-Krichev line to Gomel. The Soviet forces could not hold off the attack and were partly encircled while the rest were forced to retreat. Filatov's Thirteenth Army withdrew to Unecha and Yefremov's Twenty-First Army headed south. The German 2nd Panzer Group reached the Desna river.

Now, after a six-week campaign, the German armored vehicles were showing increasing wear and tear, and the number of tanks lost in combat against the doggedly fighting Soviets had been unexpectedly high ever since "Barbarossa" began.

The Soviet Army was far from beaten, so the Germans went on advancing deeper into the Soviet interior. The German tanks had to be repaired and overhauled as close to the front as possible. If they were taken back to Germany for repair they would be out of action for weeks, so field repair shops had to be set up behind the front line to get the damaged tanks combat-ready again at top speed. But the Germans were now suffering increasingly from a shortage of armored vehicles, equipment and especially personnel.

In mid-August Hitler had to decide whether he would follow the urgings of Field Marshal von Brauchitsch (the German Army C-in-C) and General Halder to continue the attack on Moscow, or instead pursue his own idea, which was first to smash the strong Soviet armies holding up German



Near the Desna river (central USSR): A German StuG III mobile assault gun (also known as the Sd Kfz 142) with a short-barrelled 7.5-cm cannon. Mounted on the chassis of a Panzer III, Version F, it was one of the best of the German self-propelled artillery guns. Here a tank retriever is towing it away to the repair workshop.

Army Groups North and South so as to take Leningrad in the north and the Caucasus in the south in order to cut off the Soviet Union from its oil supplies there.

He chose the latter course and, on Thursday 21 August 1941, ordered the continuation of German offensive operations in the northern and southern sectors of the front, while Army Group Center was told to stay on the defensive. The main objective now, he insisted, was not to take Moscow but the Crimea and the Donets Basin in the south and Leningrad in the north, before winter set in. Consequently Army Group Center was ordered to commit some of its forces to Army Group South to destroy Soviet elements on the lower Dnieper. These forces included von Weichs's Second Army and Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group.

On Monday 25 August 1941, Soviet and British troops marched into Iran to thwart the Axis Powers' efforts to seize control of Iranian oil supplies. British motorized forces, supported by light tanks, thrust out of Iraq and Baluchistan towards Teheran while the Soviet Army moved into the country from Transcaucasia and the area east of the Caspian Sea. The Iranians offered little resistance to the enemy motorized columns except for scattered ambushes along the passes and mountain crossings.

That same day, 25 August, the German Second Army and 2nd Panzer Group began their advance farther south. They drove Soviet units back toward the east near Bryansk and crossed over the Desna river of Konotop. Soviet General Yeremienko's Bryansk Front, which now had command of all remaining Soviet forces on the central front, tried but failed to halt the German advance.

East of Velikiye-Luki on Tuesday 26 August 1941, the German XL Panzer Corps under General Stumme cut almost all the communications of Yerzhakov's Soviet Twenty-Second Army, Markov's LI Infantry Corps and Karmanov's LXII Infantry Corps.

That day the German Army High Command, the OKW, presented Hitler with a memorandum saying that the Soviet Campaign could not be concluded in 1941 and that the planned operation in which Germany hoped to launch forces against Britain from France would have to be postponed until 1942. After an extended consultation he regretfully consented.

On Saturday 6 September 1941, German troops were forced to evacuate the bend of the front southeast of Yelnya near Smolensk, and Soviet General Rakutin recaptured Yelnya. This was the first operational retreat by German forces since the start of the war.

That same day Hitler issued Directive 35 at Führer Headquarters: German Army Group Center was ordered to prepare for the attack on Moscow "as fast as possible." Hitler wanted the attack—codenamed Operation Typhoon—to begin by the end of September.

On Thursday 11 September 1941, a People's Commissariat for Tank Industry was formed in Moscow under the governance of V. A. Malichev.

As he thrust south, Guderian exploited the technical capabilities of his armored units. When 2nd Panzer Group got fully under way east of Kiev, Guderian ranged four of his 7½ divisions side by side to form a single front despite the fact that this meant leaving unguarded a gigantic eastern flank over 120 miles long. He was running the risk that the Soviets would penetrate this extremely weak flank and encircle 2nd Panzer Group: But he counted on the speed and mobility of his forces to avoid this.

By Sunday 14 September 1941, the spearheads of von Kleist's 1st Panzer Group had already joined von Hubicki's 9th Panzer Division and the 2nd Panzer Group at Lokhvitsa to close into a cauldron east of Kiev the forces of the Soviet Southwest Front under General Kirponos. The German OKH were convinced that the Soviet Army had been decisively weakened after the defeat at Kiev and ordered Army Group South to take the Donets Basin, Kharkov and Rostov, from which it could then occupy the Crimea and Odessa and open the way to the Caucasus.

On Wednesday 24 September 1941, the German Eleventh Army under von Manstein went on the offensive at the isthmus of Perekop, the northern land bridge to the Crimea, which was defended by the Soviet Fifty-First Army under Kuznetsov. At the same time the German 1st Panzer Group thrust out of the Novomoskovsk (Stalinogorsk) area near Dniepropetrovsk to attack the right flank of Soviet General Korotiyev's Twelfth Army, broke through its resistance and rolled onward toward Mariupol to the rear of Smirnov's Soviet Eighteenth Army and Kharitonov's Ninth Army, both part of the Southwest Front under Kirponos.

The battles of encirclement during summer and autumn 1941 represented the climax of the German's operational deployment of tanks supported by aircraft to achieve a quick decision in battle. Never again, in the later war years, would the German armored forces win comparable victories.

On Friday 26 September 1941, the battle east of Kiev was over. The German forces—von Weichs's Second Army, von Reichenau's Sixth Army, Hoth's Seventeenth Army, and the 1st and 2nd Panzer



An advanced German tank detachment on the march. On the left is an Sd Kfz 251 medium infantry tank; on the right, an Sd Kfz 250 light infantry tank.

Groups—smashed the Soviet Southwest Front under Kirponos, an army group made up of Potapov's Fifth Army, Kuznetsov's Twenty-First Army, Kostienko's Twenty-Sixth Army, Vlassov's Thirty-Seventh Army, and elements of Tsiganov's Thirty-Eighth Army. The only Soviet force to escape from the cauldron was a 4,000-man cavalry brigade under General Borisov. Apart from unrecorded numbers of dead and wounded, the Soviets lost 665,000 prisoners, 3,718 cannon and 884 tanks.

The German victory in this greatest encirclement battle of the summer of 1941 led Hitler to hope that it might after all be possible to achieve the operational objectives of "Barbarossa"—the capture of Leningrad, Moscow and the Caucasus—before winter. The Soviet Red Army seemed to have suffered decisive defeat, at least in the south.

Now German Army Group Center received substantial reinforcements in preparation for Operation Typhoon, the attack on Moscow. Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group was ordered to return from the south and Hoepner's 4th Panzer Group was withdrawn from Leningrad. These two, plus Hoth's 3rd Panzer Group combined with three infantry armies —von Weichs's Second Army, von Kluge's Fourth Army, and Strauss's Ninth Army—and, supported by Kesselring's 2nd Air Fleet and Löhr's 4th Air Fleet, formed the main striking force for Moscow. The force included 14 panzer divisions and 8½ motorized divisions, most of which were now filled up and overhauled. The infantry forces were depleted but gained a number a heavy artillery and self-propelled assault gun battalions. Facing these German forces were 62 Soviet infantry divisions, 9 cavalry divisions and 11 armored forces, with at least 17 infantry divisions in reserve.

Repairs and new supplies increased the number of tanks in the German 2nd Panzer Group to 50% of its target quota, while the other armored groups of Army Group Center reached 70–80% of their target and General von Langermann's 4th Panzer Division achieved 100%.

From the beginning of the Soviet Campaign up to 26 September 1941, the German Wehrmacht had lost 534,086 dead, wounded and missing—15% of its initial strength.

On Tuesday 30 September 1941, the first phase of the Battle of Moscow began for 2nd Panzer Group on the southern flank of Army group Center, when they thrust out from the Putivl-Glukhov area towards Orel. After a successful breakthrough the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Panzer Divisions, under Generals von Arnim and Nehring, wheeled in northward behind the Soviet forces defending Bryansk.

At 5:00 A.M. on Thursday 2 October 1941, German Army Group Center began its drive toward Moscow, moving out of the area northwest of Smolensk to west of Orel. Hoepner's 4th Panzer Group and Hoth's 3rd Panzer Group made breakthroughs on both sides of Roslavl and north of Smolensk, sealing in the Soviet Sixth Army. Simultaneously the forces of von Rundstedt's Army Group South launched an attack on the Donets, Kharkov and Kursk.

Next day, 3 October 1941, General Model's 3rd Panzer Division took Orel.

On Monday 6 October 1941, Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group was rechristened the Second Panzer Army, and Hoth's 3rd Panzer Group became the Third Panzer Army, now commanded by General Reinhardt.

On Tuesday 7 October 1941, the first snow fell on the Eastern Front. Persistent rain fell and the onset of the autumn mud period impaired the

operations of Army Group Center as it struggled to carry out the OKH's orders to pursue its path to Moscow. West of Vyazma, Army Group Center encircled the left flank of the Soviet Western Front under Marshal Timoshenko, the Soviet operational reserves, and the assault (shock) troops of Yeremienko's Bryansk Front near Bryansk.

On Friday 10 October 1941, German Army Group South, after a five-day battle near Chernigovka on the Sea of Azov, smashed the Soviet Eighteenth Army under General Smirnov, who was killed on October 6. Soviet losses were not recorded by included 100,000 prisoners, 672 cannon and 212 tanks.

At the start of October 1941, Soviet troops began to set up defenses on the Mozhaisk line. These included three main emplacements and numbers of antitank barriers: pit traps, antitank ditches, broad mine belts, electrically guided flamethrowers and antitank-gun emplacements.

On Saturday 11 October 1941, Reinhardt's Third Panzer Army reached the Volga at Pogoreloye-Gorodishche, and next day Felber's XIII Army Corps took Kaluga.

On Monday 13 October 1941, after heavy battles with General Yushkevich's Soviet Thirty-First Army, the Third Panzer Army took Kalinin. The day after, Strauss's Ninth Army occupied Rshev.

In the second half of October 1941, the days grew shorter, the autumn rains set in and transformed the Russian landscape into one single sea of mud that stifled all movement. Once again the panzer and motorized divisions were halted in their march to Moscow. Only along the southern flank did the Second Panzer Army advance as far as Tula, but failed to take it.

On Thursday 16 October 1941, the Soviet government and diplomatic corps were evacuated from Moscow and sent to Kuibyshev on the Volga.

On Sunday 19 October, Stalin ordered that a state of siege be proclaimed in Moscow.

Next day, October 20, the battle at Vyazma and Bryansk, begun on October 2 in pursuit of Operation Typhoon, came to an end when the encircled Soviet troops at Vyazma—including elements of Khomenko's Thirtieth Army, Lukin's Nineteenth Army, Yerzhakov's Twentieth Army, Rakutin's Twenty-Fourth Army, Vishnevsky's Thirty-Second Army and Akimov's Forty-Third Army—were smashed by the Germans, and Generals Lukin, Yerzhakov and Vishnevsky became prisoners-of-war. At Bryansk, Kreiser's Soviet Third Army, Gorodnyanski's Thirtieth Army and Petrov's Fiftieth Army were rubbed out.

Soviet losses, apart from unrecorded numbers of dead, wounded and missing, included 673,000 prisoners, 5,412 cannon and 1,242 tanks. Some encircled Soviet forces succeeded in freeing themselves from the cauldron and withdrew to the Mozhaisk line.

The twin battle at Vyazma and Bryansk was a perfect pincer operation. Three German infantry armies had pinned down the Soviet forces while the Second and Third Panzer Armies and the 4th Panzer Group penetrated the Soviet line and wheeled around to seal them in. German mobile forces streamed through the broad gap in the Soviet front to the line Mtsensk-Kaluga-Borodino-Kalinin. They were now about 60 miles from Moscow.

On Friday 24 October 1941, von Reichenau's Sixth Army, part of the German Army Group South, took Byelgorod and Kharkov.

At the start of November, after the failure of their mid-May attack on Axis-occupied Sollum and Fort Capuzzo, the British refurbished their forces in North Africa. General Wavell was replaced by General Auchinleck; and Cunningham's Eighth Army was reinforced to 5 divisions and 3 brigades so that it now had 1 armored division, 2 armored brigades, 3 motor infantry divisions at Sollum, and 1 armored brigade and 1 division in Tobruk.

At this time Axis forces in the area included the German 15th and 20th Panzer Divisions, the German 90th Light Division, the Italian Ariete Armored Division and 6 Italian infantry divisions.

On the Eastern Front, Army Group Center continued to wait for the end of the mud period to continue its advance on Moscow at the first frost, when the ground would freeze solid again.

On Monday 3 November 1941, Kempf's XLVIII Panzer Corps, part of German Army Group South, took Kursk [south central Russia].

At the end of the first week of November, the OKH reported having so far destroyed or captured 16,500 Soviet tanks. The Soviet Army admitted, on 6 November 1941, to the loss of 7,000 tanks.

On Saturday 15 November, the mud period ended at last after a frost had set in on November 7 and continued for a week. The temperature—minus 3° Centigrade in the daytime and down to minus 7° at night (28° F. and 20° F. respectively)—finally hardened the ground, making the roads passable for vehicles. The second phase of Operation Typhoon, the Battle of Moscow, had begun.

That day the German 4th Panzer Group on the northern flank of Army Group Center moved to attack the Soviet capital. The Second Panzer army (previously 2nd Panzer Group) was ordered to encircle Moscow on the southeast while Reinhardt's Third Panzer Army (formerly 3rd Panzer Group) would combine with 4th Panzer Group to encircle the city on the northeast. Simultaneously von Kluge's Fourth Army would make a frontal advance from the west with von Weichs's Second Army covering its southern flank and Strauss's Ninth Army its northern flank.

Soviet counterattacks halted the German Fourth Army's frontal advance almost at once. The German Second Panzer Army penetrated to Gorelovo-Mikhailov in hard fighting, and one of its divisions reached Kashira but the Soviets succeeded in holding Tula. In the Battle of Moscow, Soviet armored tactics were developed and perfected through their struggle against what at this time were still superior German armored forces. The most important Soviet defense measures were their refined tank traps. Each armored brigade, assigned to defend a sector, would first dispatch a reinforced motorized infantry battalion under solid guard to organize the defense zone. As a rule, this zone included a lightly camouflaged mock forward defense perimeter with advanced emplacements including mock antitank and machine guns. The real defense perimeters, with their authentic gun emplacements, were carefully camouflaged.

At the same time, the Soviets ranged their tank ambushes at graded intervals, flanking the lines along which the German tanks would most probably attack. Usually five or six tanks would lie in ambush, although if necessary there would be only one or two. The battalion and brigade commanders also had at their command additional tank reserves with which to counter unforeseen attacks. Probable directions of thrust were secured with mine barriers. Generally, each division and corps was assigned to defend a particular zone; brigades and regiments were assigned to a defense sector; and battalions to a defense strip. Soviet tank command tactics differed markedly from German in that all the tanks under a single defense command were really under control of the infantry and fought either in direct support of the infantry or in tactical cooperation with it, acting as an advance detachment, mobile auxiliary or even a follow-up detachment.

The density of Soviet defensive tanks supporting the infantry was quite low. Even at focal areas, it rarely exceeded six to eight tanks per kilometer (.6 mile) along the width of the front; whereas in average zones there was only one tank per kilometer. But if an infantry division moved from defense onto the attack along an important line, reinforcements usually arrived in the form of an independent tank battalion or tank brigade, which in mid-November 1941 would average 10 to 15 combat-ready tanks.

On Monday 17 November 1941, after the frost

October 1941. A German armored spearhead is closing the ring around Soviet troops in the Vyazma-Bryansk area. On the left is a German Panzer IV heavy tank.



had firmed the ground, the Second Panzer Army in the Ukraine on the southern flank of German Army Group Center, began its thrust north to carry out its role in Operation Typhoon.

That same day von Kleist's 1st Panzer Group, advancing on Rostov in the south, came under violent attack along its flanks from Kharitonov's Soviet Ninth Army and Lopatin's Thirty-Seventh Army.

The British became active again in North Africa in preparation for a fresh counteroffensive. On the night of 17/18 November, a British commando group, the Long Range Desert Group under Colonel Laycock, carried out an unsuccessful attack on Rommel's presumed headquarters in Beda Littoria. Raids on advanced airfields up to 300 miles behind the German front likewise miscarried.

On the evening of Tuesday 18 November 1941—just as Rommel was preparing an attack on Tobruk—Cunningham's British Eighth Army, with the XIII Corps, left their positions in the desert around Fort Maddalena and headed for Tobruk. This British counteroffensive, known as Operation Crusader, was an attempt to relieve the besieged fortress of Tobruk and inflict a decisive defeat on the German Afrika Panzer Group. The British forces had 724 tanks, the Germans and Italians only 558; yet their position favored the Afrika Panzer Group because, when the attack began, both German panzer divisions lay east of Tobruk and were able to intercept the British at once. At first the British succeeded in outflanking the southern German group and encircling the Axis forces at Sollum. British troops in one group were able to chose a ring around Sidi Rezegh. But the British forces had broken up and been caught in individual combats and, being so dissipated, were unable to carry out a coordinated action.

The Germans foiled breakout attempts by the Allied garrison at Tobruk. After that, two German panzer divisions attacked in the flanks and rear the two British divisions advancing toward Tobruk from the southeast and inflicted heavy losses on them. A German counterthrust to the east confused the British command to such an extent that General Cunningham was about to order the whole army to retreat when General Auchinleck appeared at his headquarters and replaced Cunningham with General Ritchie.

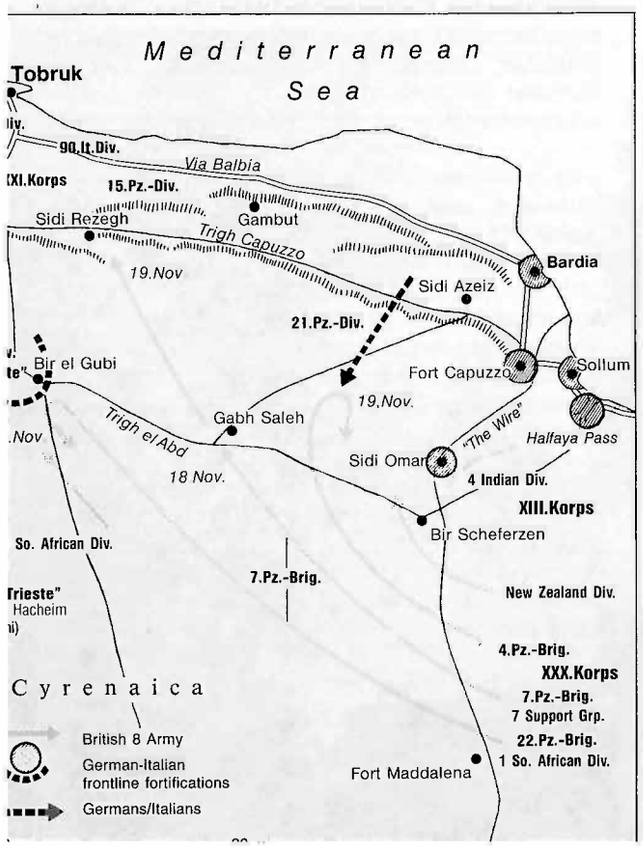
The new British infantry and heavy Cruiser tanks had arrived in North Africa at the start of November 1941 and, along with the US light Stuart tanks, at once joined in Operation Crusader, but without success. The older German tank models had proved more reliable than the new British ones, and the German crews more experienced in battle.

On Friday 21 November 1941, Reinhardt's Third Panzer Army, after bloody street fighting with elements of General Lelyushenko's Soviet Thirteenth Army, took the city of Klin on the Leningrad-Moscow rail line.

On Monday 24 November 1941, the German Afrika Panzer Group broke off its fighting against the decimated British armored brigades south of Tobruk and drove eastward toward Egypt. But Rommel made the mistake of advancing too rapidly and spreading out over too wide an area. During their rapid movements, the German panzer forces became dispersed and suffered substantial losses without materially damaging the British troops.

By dusk on Wednesday 26 November 1941, the Germans had cleared all the Soviet troops out of Stalinogorsk south of Moscow. Third Panzer Army and 4th Panzer Group, advancing north of Moscow toward Klin and Solnechnogorsk, overcame a tenacious Soviet defense and reached the Moskva-Volga Canal, Krasnaya Polyana and Kruikov. They were now only 18 miles from Moscow.

In the south the German Second Panzer Army



Right: German tanks near Tobruk during the British offensive, Operation Crusader, at the end of November 1941. On the left is a Panzer III, on the right an Sd Kfz 250 light infantry tank.



Opposite page: Map-diagram of the fighting around Tobruk in November 1941

skirted Tula from the east and reached Kashira. The Germans were now bringing powerful pincers to bear on the Moscow area, [surrounding it on the north, west and south and] encircling the armies of the Soviet Western Front group. Meanwhile express transports of elite Soviet troops, specially trained and equipped for winter warfare, were arriving daily from Siberia and the Far East to reinforce the Soviet reserves outside Moscow.

On Wednesday 26 November 1941, the British Eighth Army under General Ritchie again attacked around Tobruk, which was still under siege by Axis troops, and the British garrison succeeded in breaking out and making contact with the advancing British tanks at Sidi Rezegh. Rommel's attempt to launch a counterstroke with concentrated forces failed largely because the British held command of the air.

On Friday 28 November, von Kleist's 1st Panzer Group suffered heavy losses at Rostov and were forced to evacuate the city again when the Soviet Thirty-Seventh Army under General Lopatin threatened to cut them off.

That same day Field Marshal von Rundstedt, commander-in-chief of German Army Group South, was relieved of duty after a difference of opinion with Hitler, and replaced by the former C-in-C of the Sixth Army, Field Marshal von Reichenau.

On that same 28 November, the spearheads of the 4th Panzer Group formed a bridgehead on the eastern bank of the Moskva-Volga Canal, and the German offensive which had begun on October 2 finally reached its climax when a German force reached the outer districts of Moscow at Khimki barely 12 miles from the Kremlin, whose contours could be seen rising against the sky through the periscopes of armored scout cars in General Veiel's 2nd Panzer Division.

At the end of November 1941, temperatures in Russia fell to minus 32 degrees. The Red Army continued to bring up fresh reserves and Soviet aircraft were able to attack from their peacetime air bases, while the German planes were unable to take off from their snowbound forward airfields. The German tank engines froze up, their machine-gun lubricant froze in the locks, and their radio batteries exploded. Supplies could no longer be brought up except with small Russian one-horse carts. The Red Army had suffered staggering losses but had not been beaten finally on any front. Of its total strength of 9 million men, 4.7 million were stationed in the European theater, and in the period 22 June to the end of November 1941, one half of them—over 2.3 million—had been decimated.

On Monday 1 December 1941, Field Marshal von Bock, the commander-in-chief of German Army Group Center, reported to the OKH that his armies could achieve nothing further beyond small local successes and that "the time was very near when the strength of the troops would be completely exhausted."

Meanwhile, at Soviet command headquarters final preparations were going forward for a large-scale offensive due to begin in the next few days. Its objective was to combine the forces of the Soviet Western Front with those of the Kalinin and Southwest Fronts to smash the armies of German Army Group Center that were threatening Moscow from the northwest and the south.

By 1 December 1941 in North Africa, Panzer General Rommel had once again surrounded Tobruk, momentarily freed by the British; but Rommel could now not help but see that he had overestimated his capabilities. It would have been ridiculous for the depleted Afrika Panzer Group to

go on fighting in its present position, so Rommel contemplated an ordered retreat. The victory or defeat of Rommel's troops were increasingly dependent on supply problems. British bombers and warships were intercepting almost all the convoys sent from Italy with supplies for the Axis forces in North Africa.

For example, when six transport vessels set out with a strong naval escort for Benghazi, only one reached the African port on Tuesday 2 December 1941. Three of the ships had been sunk with their total of 15,999 tons of cargo, and two others were badly damaged and survived only by turning about straightaway and heading for home. Soon the Allied blockade of the North African coast became so dense that not only Axis transport aircraft but U-boats too had to be deployed to supply the panzer forces.

On Thursday 4 December 1941, the last attempt by Hoepner's 4th Panzer Group to reactivate the German offensive against Moscow met with failure. The German armored spearheads which had penetrated Moscow's defenses now had to be withdrawn.

That day Schmidt's German Second Army succeeded in capturing the city of Yelets almost directly east of Orel.

On Friday 5 December 1941, the Soviet Kalinin Front under General Koniev, with Vostrukhov's Twenty-Second, Zhvetsov's Twenty-Ninth and Yushkevich's Thirty-First armies, began an offensive against German Army Group Center. Field Marshal von Bock then ordered Third Panzer Army and 4th Panzer Group to halt their attack on the Moscow suburbs and retreat to the German defensive line extending from Istra to east of Klin. Operation Barbarossa had failed, with the German offensive bogged down outside Leningrad in the north, Moscow in the center and Rostov in the south.

On Saturday 6 December 1941, the Soviet Western Front under General Zhukov went on the offensive against Army Group Center. The armies of the Western Front included Yelyushenko's Thirtieth Army, Kuznetsov's First Assault (Shock) Army, Vlassov's Twentieth Army, Rokossovsky's Sixteenth Army, Govorov's Fifth Army, Yefremov's Thirty-Third Army, Golubyev's Forty-Third Army, Sakharkin's Forty-Ninth Army, Boldin's Fiftieth Army, Belov's 1st Guards Cavalry Corps and Golikov's Tenth Army, which in all totalled 15 armored brigades, 47 infantry divisions, 36 infantry brigades, 10 NKVD (Soviet Security Police) brigades and 3 cavalry divisions.

On Sunday 7 December 1941, the bombers of a Japanese aircraft carrier task force, whose vessels had left their home ports on this mission on November 10, launched a large-scale surprise raid on Pearl Harbor, the main naval base of the US Pacific fleet. Simultaneously the Japanese Fifteenth Army marched from Indochina into Thailand.





Japanese Army Group South under General Terauchi, with its headquarters in Saigon, had the task of carrying out landing operations to invade and capture southern Asia. Among its forces were 9 armored regiments.

That day Rommel decided to break off his attacks on Tobruk and withdraw his troops to the Gazala line. Despite the fact that Ritchie's British Eighth Army at once set out in hot pursuit, the Afrika Panzer Group carried out an orderly retreat and even took more than 9,000 prisoners along.

On Monday 8 December 1941, Hitler issued Directive 39 ordering his troops on the Eastern Front to go on the defensive to spare their forces, provided that they would also carry out some offensive operations during the winter of 1941/42.

That same day in North Africa, the British Eighth Army succeeded in restoring communications with the fortress of Tobruk, which had been surrounded since April 1941.

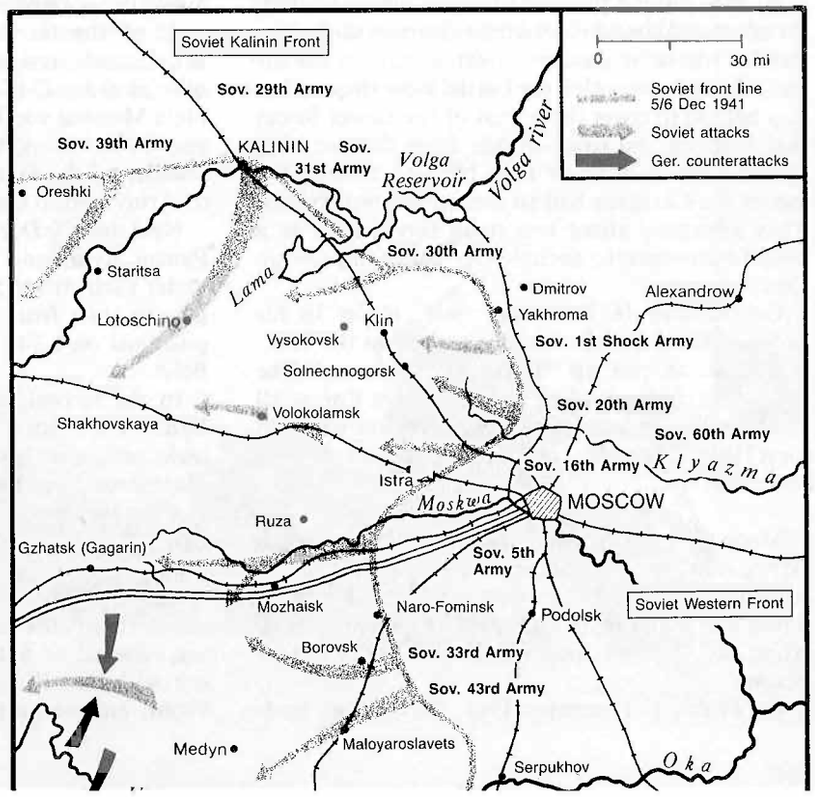
On Tuesday 9 December 1941, the German Sixteenth Army under General Busch in the northern sector of the Eastern Front was forced to evacuate Tikhvin, following violent attacks by the Soviet Fourth Army under General Ivanov, and to retreat over the Volkhov river. On the southern front, General Gorodnyanski's Soviet Thirteenth Army recaptured Yelets and Khomutovo and liquidated the German wedge threatening Moscow from the south.

On Sunday 14 December 1941, Strauss's Ninth Army came under strong pressure from the Soviet Twenty-Ninth Army under Zhvetsov and the Thirty-First Army under Yushkevich, and was forced to evacuate Kalinin.

Above. The ghostly silhouette of a knocked-out Soviet tank standing in the moonlight before German trenches at Krasnaya Polyana near Moscow

Opposite page: December 1941, Soviet infantry during an armed reconnaissance mission along the front northwest of Moscow

Right: The Battle of Moscow





As the German position changed on the Eastern Front, so did the conduct of the German tank arm. Earlier, when the panzer divisions were on the offensive, they always led the battle. Now they had to stay behind to cover the retreat of the slower forces and were the last to disengage from the pursuing enemy. The Red Army now tried to imitate the tactics the Germans had so recently demonstrated: They advanced along two main thrust lines in a pincer movement to encircle German Army Group Center.

On Tuesday 16 December 1941, Hitler in his order of the day called on his troops on the Eastern Front to put up "fanatical resistance." The OKH was determined to hold the front line at all costs; but there was no choice except retreat, and even Hitler's harshest commands could do nothing to change that.

Meanwhile, in North Africa the British Eighth Army, in a new encirclement operation at Gazala, forced the Afrika Panzer Group to retreat to Agedabia where the British pursuit was finally halted when the Germans put 100 British tanks out of action.

On Friday 19 December 1941, the German leadership crisis came to a head when the gravely ill C-in-C of the German Army, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, resigned his command. Hitler took over as army C-in-C. He also recommended that Field Marshal von Bock go on indefinite sick leave, and Field Marshal von Kluge, formerly commander of the Fourth Army, now took command of Army Group Center.

Next day, 20 December 1941, Guderian's Second Panzer Army and Schmidt's Second Army came under such strong Soviet pressure that they had to give up their front line and retreat to their winter positions on a line west of Mtsensk and south of Belev.

In the second half of December 1941, the left flank of the Soviet Western Front kept up its attacks and, after liberating Kaluga, reached the line Maloyaroslavets-Belev, while the troops of the Soviet Bryansk Front gained the line Belev-Mtsensk-Livny.

On Thursday 25 December 1941, the founder of the German tank arm, Colonel-General Guderian, was relieved of duty by Hitler after Guderian fell out with von Kluge about tactics on the Eastern Front, and was sent back to Germany [where he remained for some time without a command] Panzer General Schmidt, formerly C-in-C of the Second Army, replaced Guderian as leader of the Second Panzer Army.

That same day the right flank of the Soviet Western Front inflicted heavy losses on the German Third Panzer Army and the 4th Panzer Group around Klin-Solnechnogorsk and reached the line Ruza-Lama river. The Soviets had now straightened the German salient northwest of Moscow.

On Sunday 28 December 1941, Hitler commanded German troops in the East to defend their lines to the death, and issued a set of combat guidelines [enjoining them to fight and die where they stood].

At the end of December 1941, the Afrika Panzer Group retreated to a tactically favorable position at Mersa-el-Brega on the Gulf of Sirte (Sidra) west of El Agheila, where Rommel had started his first offensive in spring 1941. This was a grave setback; but then, territorial losses and gains meant little in the Desert War. The decisive factor was that his forces did not suffer heavy losses and the situation stabilized. Temporarily Cyrenaica, with the port of Benghazi, was back in British hands.

In North Africa the British had superior numbers of tanks, but the German tanks were of better quality. Through the African Campaign, Rommel's troops were equipped largely with captured matériel, weapons and transport vehicles, and the Afrika Panzer Group were enabled to carry out many of their operations only because they happened to seize a British fuel or provision dump at just the right moment. Rommel faced insoluble



supply problems. The wear and tear on engines were worse here even than in Russia, and the desert sand also destroyed optical systems, guns, springs and mechanical parts. If a vehicle broke down on the battlefield, it was frequently lost for good.

When the Soviets were defending Moscow in late autumn 1941, their armored operations consisted chiefly of counterattacks or rearguard actions. At that time Soviet commanders did not understand how to prepare a planned attack using massed tanks and combining the heavy weapons fire. Their attacks broke down again and again with heavy losses, so the Soviets used an infiltrating technique instead.

Many Soviet commanders still had little grasp of the specific requirements of deploying tanks in cooperation with other arms. This was especially ap-

Opposite page: Central Malaya at the end of December 1941. Japanese Type 94 Ishikawajima tankette advancing on Singapore.

Above: German infantry, supported by an StuG III assault gun, advancing on Moscow in December 1941

Right: Near Sidi Rezegh in December 1941 US M3 Honey tanks being used by the British Eighth Army during Operation Crusader.



parent when the infantry divisions were handed tank reinforcements: As a rule, they would tend to distribute the tanks equally among all the infantry units, which in effect meant breaking up their striking power.

Cooperation between tanks on the one hand, and infantry, artillery or combat engineers on the other, was usually poorly organized. Often Soviet tanks would penetrate the main German battle line only to find that the Soviet infantry had been dragging their feet, so that the tanks, lacking the needed infantry support, were forced to turn around and then repeat the attack with heavy losses. Later the Soviet High Command, to maintain the capability of direct support, ordered that tanks must not move farther than 1,300 feet away from the infantry.

If the terrain permitted deployment of tanks, they were sent into combat. After receiving their reserves in December 1941, the Soviets began to launch massed tank attacks, often with improvised, vigorous—although random—fire support from the artillery. Attacks like this posed a particular threat to the Germans if launched along the seams between German divisions.

At the end of 1941 the Soviet Army commanded 7 armored divisions, 76 independent tank brigades and 100 independent tank battalions. At this time the Soviets were still forming armored regiments. They had two companies containing 23 T-34 medium tanks and one company with 16 T-70 light tanks. Yet in December 1941 the Red Army did not yet have a single operational (= cross between strategic and tactical) armored unit.

At the end of 1941 the artillery was still the most important Soviet antitank weapon. The largely immobile antitank-gun brigades containing 120 guns were replaced by antitank regiments initially armed with 68 cannon each, but later with only 16 to 18. The Soviets suffered at all times from an acute shortage of antitank weapons.

The Soviet Army developed its own special technique of antitank warfare, whose main feature was the pioneer construction of antitank zones along the expected lines of German attack.

Before the war started, the Soviets had laid out a careful plan to evacuate their arms manufacturing plants from the west in the event of war, and [when Germany invaded] at the end of June 1941, they carried out this plan, thus frustrating Hitler's hopes to capture the plants intact. Only the industrial works around Riga and Minsk fell into German hands, while the Soviets succeeded in clearing out in time the most important factories in the Ukraine.

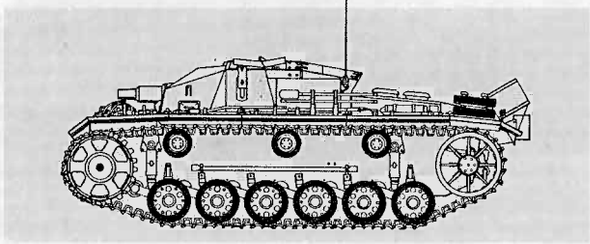
One and a half million freightloads of goods were transported east during the evacuation, and 10 million people took part. Although immense quantities of material and equipment were lost during the Soviet retreat of 1941 and the evacuated factories were often unable to produce anything for months, by the end of December industrial output had actually increased over what it had been in the first half of the year before the German invasion.

Another important feature of the industrial war was that the giant Soviet plants now lay outside the range of Luftwaffe aircraft and could continue production undeterred by German bombs, whereas German industry came under increasingly heavy bombardment.

The hopes that the OKH had staked on the German panzer forces at the start of "Barbarossa" were frustrated in the vastness of Russia. German armor rapidly lost its striking power due to heavy losses. By the end of 1941 the experiences of the preceding months had already caused the Germans to convert several of their panzer groups into panzer armies under command of the army groups.

The seemingly endless expanse of Russia, the heavy mining of the roads along which the Germans had to travel, the mud-clogged supply routes, the unprecedented obstacles of the terrain, the distance separating the tanks from the trailing German infantry, the lack of air support and the shortage of fuel defined the tactics of the German panzer forces in the second half of 1941.

In reviewing Operation Barbarossa, it is important to keep in mind that not the panzer forces but the horse-drawn vehicles set the pace of the German advance. In addition to 3,800 tanks, 750,000 horses took part in the attack on the Soviet Union, and of 153 German divisions that set out east in June 1941, 119 of them still contained horse-drawn vehicles.



German self-propelled assault gun. a 7.5-cm cannon mounted on a Panzer III, Version D (first produced in 1941)

1942

January—June

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 2 January 1942:

For the first time in the war, full-scale military operations have been carried on with undiminished violence throughout the period of Christmas and New Year's. The contrast between this and the war's two previous winters reveals more clearly than anything else the dramatic way that military events have intensified in the past few months, and indeed have stepped up even further in the past two weeks.

Purchase Ban on Cars

Saturday 3 January 1942, Washington

The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The US government has forbidden the purchase of private motor vehicles in a ban effective immediately. The purpose of the ban, which will apply for an indefinite period, is to free the US motor industry for the manufacture of arms. The automobile industry is now being converted to tank production.

Wednesday 7 January 1942

The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

In tenacious house-to-house fighting in the Crimea, our rapidly acting troops have mauled enemy forces that landed in Eupatoria [= Black Sea port in the western Crimea] under the protection of warships. A smaller enemy group which landed southwest of Feodosia [eastern Crimea] has been wiped out by Rumanian forces.

Rommel Retreats in Libya

Thursday 8 January 1942, London

The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The men in London have listened with interest to the report that German and Italian forces under General Rommel have left Agedabia and started marching southwest, overcoming resistance from a violent sandstorm. The important point, it is emphasized in London, is that Rommel has succeeded in escaping the attempt by British troops to encircle his forces.

Winston Churchill to the British Foreign Secretary

8 January 1942:

We have never recognized the 1941 frontiers of Russia except *de facto*. They were acquired by acts of aggression in shameful collusion with Hitler. The transfer of the peoples of the Baltic States to Soviet Russia against their will would be contrary to all the principles for which we are fighting this war and would dishonour our cause. [English quoted from p. 615 of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. III]

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 9 January 1942:

On the Eastern Front, the Russian Offensive is continuing. News of events in the northernmost sector of the front, where the Finns are fighting the Russians, is sparse on both sides. No details are available on the scope of these operations. In the Leningrad sector, where the Russians are confronting von Leeb's German army, they have captured Tikhvin and then initiated a movement to link up their forces coming from Tikhvin with the Soviet garrison at Leningrad; they are also trying to reach the Lake Ilmen area south of there along the Volkhov river. But far more significant than these battles in the North, which evidently are of a purely local nature, is the fighting along the central sector west of Moscow.

Turning now to the North African Front: Within a 37-day period, British Imperial troops have occupied Cyrenaica, while along the Libyan-Egyptian

border, German and Italian garrisons have continued to hold off the British at the Halfaya Pass, Sollum and Bardia. After occupying Cyrenaica, the advancing British troops have been halted at Agedabia on the Gulf of Sirte (Sidra) by the forces of General Rommel, who has occupied favorable positions there; and a lull in the fighting has ensued in which both adversaries, after the extraordinarily rapid movements that brought them to Agedabia, have begun to feel the effects of the supply problem that is so acute in the desert. Further, the army reports on both sides are in agreement that exceptionally bad weather conditions—heavy rains and sandstorms—have been impairing their operations.

In the Pacific, American and Filipino forces under General MacArthur have been continuing their fight against superior Japanese forces on the main Philippine island of Luzon after being forced to evacuate the capital, Manila... The second important war theater in the Far East is the Malay Peninsula where, since the start of the war on December 7, superior Japanese forces have landed troops on the east coast and launched an offensive from Thailand in the north against the British Imperial troops. The Japanese advance has not yet been halted anywhere, and the forward Japanese lines are at the moment around 200 miles north of Singapore. The British commander has declared Singapore under a state of siege.

Sunday 18 January 1942, Rome
The Italian *Stefani News Agency* reported:

Concerning the surrender of our positions at Sollum and the Halfaya Pass, it is explained that [nearby] Bardia was forced to surrender [to the British] on December 2, after one month of tenacious resistance.

Breakthrough by Japanese Armored Troops
Tuesday 20 January 1942, Singapore
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

The Japanese offensive has now achieved further success. The Japanese, who hold air supremacy, have broken through along the west coast of Johore [Malaya opposite Singapore], and their advanced armored units have reached positions 36 miles from Singapore.

Wednesday 21 January 1942
The *Soviet Army High Command* announced:

On January 20 our forces drove back German troops farther westward. The enemy took heavy losses. Our forces have occupied the city of Mozhaisk. We have taken prisoners.

Thursday 22 January 1942, Rome
The *Italian High Command* announced:

Since yesterday fighting has been going on in Cyrenaica between enemy troops and Italian-German armored forces who have gone on the offensive.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No. 253 of 22 January 1942 (extract):

II. German affairs: Many observations indicate that the letters and reports from German soldiers have played a great role in the events before, during and after the collection of winter and woolen clothing. Many soldiers have shown no inhibitions about reporting to people back home hair-raising tales about the hardships the troops are having to endure, the cold, bad food and clothing, etc.



Opposite page:
(1) Japanese Type 95 HA-GO light tank (first produced in 1935) and (2) Type 97 TE-EK tankette (first produced in 1938)

Japanese CHI-RO medium tanks advancing into the Philippine capital of Manila in January 1942

Friday 23 January 1942, Singapore
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Japanese reports that the Japanese are just outside Singapore and have occupied the rail line coming out of the city have proved to be false.

Winston Churchill to General Auchinleck
Sunday 25 January 1942:

I am much disturbed by the report from the Eighth Army, which speaks of evacuation of Benghazi and Derna. I had certainly never been led to suppose that such a situation could arise. . . . Has our fresh armour been unable to compete with the resuscitated German tanks? It seems to me this is a serious crisis, and one to me quite unexpected. Why should they [i.e. our tanks] all be off so quickly? [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 25, vol. IV]

Tuesday 27 January 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

In continued fighting in the East, German troops have again inflicted on the enemy heavy losses in men and material.

Rommel's Pincer Operation
Thursday 29 January 1942, Rome
The *Italian High Command* announced:

Early Thursday morning, Italian and German troops moved in to occupy Benghazi.

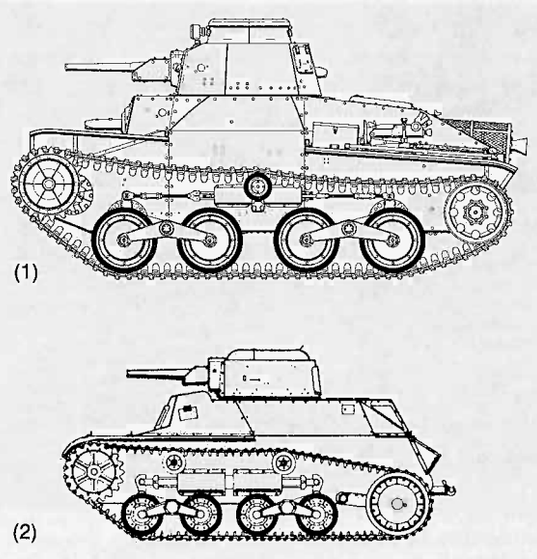
The Japanese outside Singapore
Sunday 1 February 1942, Tokyo
Imperial Japanese Headquarters announced:

On the evening of January 31 our troops, crossing the Malayan Peninsula from north to south, finally reached the bank of the Johore Strait opposite the island of Singapore. Beginning at the border of Thailand, Japanese troops have conquered a stretch almost 1,000 miles long in a period of 55 days. In the course of these extended operations, our forces seized a total of 250 tanks and armored scout cars along with huge quantities of military equipment and provisions.

The Advance of the Afrika Panzer Army
Monday 2 February 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Despite violent snowstorms, vigorous fighting has once again ensued in the southern sector of the Eastern Front.

In Cyrenaica, German troops of the Afrika Panzer Army have occupied Barce and El Abiar.



(1)

(2)

Wednesday 4 February 1941
The Soviet *Army High Command* announced:

The enemy has thrown fresh reserves into the battle. He has gone on the offensive along various sectors of the front but has been repulsed with heavy losses.

Thursday 5 February 1942, Moscow
The Soviet *TASS News Agency* announced:

The Soviet Army High Command has issued a statement commenting on German claims about a "planned and orderly retreat by German forces":

German propaganda asserts that the present German retreat represents an "orderly rearward shift of the German lines." The facts disprove this claim. No army that is carrying out a planned retreat allows such enormous supply stores to fall intact into the hands of the enemy.

36 Miles from Tobruk
Friday 6 February 1942, Cairo
British Eighth Army Headquarters in North Africa reported:

Rommel's armoured forces, which received additional reinforcements during the past 24 hours, have made further advances along the coast as they continue their vigorous attack.

Beromünster Radio

6 February 1942:

In Russia, the onset of a harsh winter with its freezing temperatures and blizzards has not managed to force a lull in the battle. On the contrary,

almost the whole of the Eastern Front is on the move—with the exception of the northern sector around Leningrad and the Finnish Front, where there appears to be little activity.

In North Africa, British troops are on the defensive while their enemy is imposing a mobile style of warfare. The powerful thrust by the German and Italian Afrika Corps, which led to the occupation of Benghazi one week ago, has meanwhile continued to make progress.

Singapore Surrenders
Sunday 15 February 1942, Tokyo
The Japanese *Domei News Agency* reported:

Japanese headquarters report the unconditional surrender of Singapore.

Fighting in Burma
Wednesday 18 February 1942, Rangoon
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

Since early this morning, powerful Japanese forces have been attacking Allied positions along the Bilin river [Burma].

Friday 20 February 1942, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The new German minister of armaments and war production, Professor Albert Speer, has ordered two heads of an armaments factory to be sent to a concentration camp because they were employing in their own households workers who had been assigned to arms manufacture.

Rich Booty
Saturday 21 February 1942, Tokyo
The Japanese *Domei News Agency* reported:

A report from Japanese Headquarters states that approximately 200 tanks and 10,000 motor vehicles were captured in the week-long campaign that ended with the Japanese occupation of Singapore on 15 February 1942.

Friday 27 February 1942, Rangoon
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

A battle of the greatest bitterness continues to be fought on the Sittang river in Burma. The Japanese have received reinforcements and are attacking recklessly with complete disregard for their heavy losses. Their tanks are now approximately 30 miles from the rail line leading to Mandalay.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
27 February 1942:

To avoid making the Russian partisans popular and giving them the appearance of heroism, the Minister [Goebbels] has ordered the German press and radio continually to vary the terms they use to designate the partisans.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No. 264 of 2 March 1942 (extracts):

I. General comments: The alleged [high] German losses in the defensive battles of winter continue to be discussed by Germans, often on the basis of letters from soldiers at the front who write of the heavy losses to their own company, which by extension are applied to the whole army. In some areas of central Germany, rumors now circulating estimate the toll of German casualties in the winter fighting at between 400,000 and 600,000 men.

Soviets Claim No Imperialist Intentions
Saturday 7 March 1942, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

Stalin's order of the day once again dissipated the doubts of those who fear that a Soviet victory would result in a new type of Soviet imperialism, and confirmed what Stalin had already said to British Foreign Minister Eden last December about the intentions of the Soviet government: "We will never go beyond areas that formed part of the Soviet Union before Hitler invaded our country last June."

Fighting in Burma
Sunday 8 March 1942, Mandalay
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The fighting in Burma is continuing with undiminished violence as the Japanese steadily receive fresh reinforcements.

In eastern Pegu [city in lower Burma], British armored units have mounted an energetic offensive and in one sector have driven the aggressors back to just around Sittang.

Tuesday 10 March 1942, Tokyo
The Japanese *Domei News Agency* reported:

Japanese Imperial Headquarters state that a total of 1,959 enemy tanks have been seized since the commencement of hostilities, as of March 7.

New Cold Invasion on the Eastern Front
Monday 16 March 1942, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* added this supplement to the German Wehrmacht Report:

While the Soviets hurtle to their death in futile massed attacks on the Kerch peninsula [eastern Crimea] in the south, the fresh cold invasion along the central and northern sectors of the Eastern Front has intensified further. Blizzards have been raging for days. The temperatures have fallen to minus 30 degrees Centigrade. Yet even here, fighting is continuing while bringing the Soviets nothing but heavy losses.



Destroyed German vehicles after an armored battle in North Africa. On the right is a Panzer III, Version H (an Sd Kfz 141).

Violent Sandstorms in Libya
Monday 13 April 1942, Cairo
British Eighth Army Headquarters in North Africa reported:

For the past 24 hours, extremely violent sandstorms have reduced visibility to only a few yards.

The Spring Mud Period

13 April 1942, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

Spring weather has set in in the Ukraine bringing with it the impassability of the roads, which we have been fearing. We can expect no large-scale operations for the next few weeks. Heavy artillery fire is continuing on both sides, but neither Soviet nor German forces can deploy tanks.

Extract from the minutes of a military talk by the *C-in-C of German Army Group North* [von Leeb] held at Führer Headquarters on 13 April 1942:

Commander-in-Chief Army Group North reports on the situation. He describes in detail the condition of his own troops, whose combat efficiency is suffering a steady decline due to heavy combat losses, frostbite and disease: It is not rare for a battalion to consist of only 40 to 50 men. The spirits and morale of the troops are good; they feel they are superior to the Russians in individual fighting ability. The success of the Russians depends on their numerical superiority, which they are managing to maintain despite their enormous losses, by bringing up immediate reinforcements; and on the superiority of their tanks, against which we have no effective defensive weapon.

The C-in-C Army Group North describes details of management and fighting technique of the Russian tanks in the bush-strewn landscape and the difficulties faced by our defense. Furthermore, he enlarges on the state of the terrain which, due to the thaw, is impairing movements more and more each day. This results in the most extreme exertions and hardships to our infantry and obstructs supplies along roads which have virtually no firm foundation; our tanks are unusable off the roads. The Russians are less vulnerable to these difficulties; in particular their tanks are able to travel off the roads.

18 April 1942, Tokyo
The Japanese *Domei News Agency* reported:

Concerning the results of military operations in Burma, Japanese Headquarters report that during the period 10 March–14 April 1942, the enemy has lost vast quantities of military equipment, including 62 tanks.

Will Rommel Mount an Offensive?
Tuesday 21 April 1942, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

Military sources in London believe that we will soon have passed the season when it is possible to carry out extensive operations in North Africa. By the middle or end of May it will, they say, be too hot to mount any large-scale offensive. Judging by previous campaigns, they estimate that the heat will force a lull in the hostilities between mid-May and the end of autumn—or perhaps even the winter.

Japanese Advance in Burma
Thursday 30 April 1942, Mandalay
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

Japanese forces have detoured around the eastern sector of the Burmese front, which is being held by the Chinese, and have been advancing rapidly north. The enemy's forward tanks have reached the area before Hsipaw [north Burma near



Spring 1942 on the Eastern Front. Soviet T-34/85 medium tanks carrying out an attack in the Ukraine. Momentum and mobility were the hallmarks of an armored attack. Durable speed, long range, and maneuverability on the battlefield were required for strategic and tactical operations.

Mandalay] and thus are close enough to pose a threat to the Lashio-Mandalay rail line.

Rising Arms Production
Sunday 3 May 1942, Washington
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

A short time ago the following details were published about US arms production:

This year our plan was to produce 45,000 tanks, but the program is proceeding more rapidly than scheduled. The General Motors Corporation is already seven months ahead in its program to build 30-ton tanks, while another plant is delivering an entire trainload of tanks per day.

Battle in the Mud and Mire

Monday 4 May 1942, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The German Wehrmacht High Command reports that on May 2, vigorous fighting ensued along the northern sector of the Eastern Front following successful German attacks and Soviet advances. The mud and mire drastically impaired military operations.

Water and mud flowed off the slopes and out of flooded ditches onto the rutted roads, changing them into a viscous mire over three feet deep which, when stones were piled up on it or corduroy roads laid down, simply swallows them up. Men and equipment have been strained to the breaking point in their struggles against these floods of mud. Step by step they have had to fight their way forward over the bottomless sea, and mountains of treetrunks have sunk and disappeared into the mire when the attempt was made to line the road with them. The countryside was no different. Often German soldiers had to work their way ahead through wooded areas; sometimes the treacherous grassy topsoil would not bear their weight so that they sank to their chests into the marsh. Under these conditions, German soldiers trying to clear up a wood had to fight simultaneously against the land and the Soviets. We carried out additional operations leading to improvements in our positions, and local German advances were carried deep into the enemy emplacements.

As already reported, while repelling local Soviet attacks on May 2/3, 28 Soviet tanks were destroyed and 8 more heavily damaged in the northern sector.

False Report
Tuesday 5 May 1942, Rome
The Italian *Stefani News Agency* reported:

The Italian public are still laboring under misapprehensions resulting from a false report about an alleged privy council meeting in which a change of government was contemplated, and claiming that the Italian people are tired of war and wish to conclude a separate peace.

Wednesday 13 May 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The breakthrough battle on the Kerch peninsula [eastern Crimea] has reached a decisive end with the destruction of the enemy forces overrun and encircled there. So far, the enemy has lost over 40,000 prisoners in the battle, along with 197 tanks, 598 cannon and 260 aircraft. Incalculable stores of other military equipment have been captured or destroyed. The beaten remains of the enemy are being pursued toward Kerch without delay.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 15 May 1942:

In the Far East, the Japanese have recently extended and consolidated their successes. Resistance in the Philippines has been smashed more or less completely, since the Philippine island fortress of Corregidor was forced to surrender ten days ago. Much the same is true for the Burmese theater. In Burma, whose geographical position adjacent to Thailand, China and India makes it important, the Japanese have worked their way northeast, up to and in some cases across the Chinese border, and northwest to very near the border of India... Now, after somewhat more than five months, the Japanese have occupied almost all the islands and other areas immediately surrounding the most important and powerful Allied positions in Asia, namely Australia and India. Japanese spokesmen have made no secret of the fact that Japan is now about to enter the most important and difficult phase of the war.

Saturday 16 May 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The enemy has continued his attacks around Kharkov. He has been effectively repulsed in hard fighting. Our own counterattacks have been successful. So far the enemy has lost 180 tanks.

The Eastern Front

The following report by German *Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels* appeared in the propaganda publication *Das Reich* on 17 May 1942:

A recent reading of literary memoirs about the collapse of Napoleon's armies during the winter campaign against Russia in 1812 calls us back once again to the recent months of the German Wehrmacht's struggle against the Soviet Union.

Every great war passes into human memory due to particularly noteworthy achievements by the troops and commanders, and such achievements are as a rule associated with the names of men or cities or landscapes: Thus when we hear the [First] World War spoken of, who among us does not think of the Champagne district or Verdun or the Somme or Flanders! In the same way, no doubt, history will one day use the term "Eastern Front" to epitomize the present war and will associate this term above all with the hard and heroic struggle made by German soldiers, from the middle of November to the end of April in the vast snow fields of Russia against the Asian flood.

Today the time has not yet come to describe the details of this almost legendary achievement by German manhood. . . .

The comparison with Napoleon's Russian Campaign, moreover, does not hold up. Our worst enemy in the Winter War in the East has been the cold. As the Führer correctly pointed out in his last address to the Reichstag, the worst temperature faced by Napoleon was around minus 25 degrees Centigrade, whereas our soldiers last winter had sometimes to fight temperatures of 50 below zero and even lower.

The Battle of Kharkov
Wednesday 20 May 1942, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The Wehrmacht High Command reports that on May 18 the fighting continued with undiminished violence around Kharkov and that the Soviets again deployed masses of men and equipment. The particular hallmark of the fighting near Kharkov is the enormous loss of Soviet tanks.



Japanese M 2595 light tanks are crossing a river in Hunan Province, China, in spring 1942. Every technical improvement that increased a tank's ability to cope with difficult terrain made it easier to surprise the enemy, and forced him to deploy defensive forces in a zone formerly regarded as tank-proof.

Friday 22 May 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

After repelling all Soviet attacks in the Battle of Kharkov with heavy losses to the enemy, we have now gained the offensive initiative.

Saturday 23 May 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The Soviet grand offensive launched at Kharkov on May 12, led by 20 infantry divisions, 3 cavalry divisions and 15 armored brigades, has now been irretrievably crushed with extremely heavy losses to the enemy both in men and equipment. The German counteroffensive began on May 17. It led into the rear of the strongest Soviet assault group and severed its supply lines. Two days ago German, Rumanian and Hungarian troops with strong Luftwaffe support stopped waging a defensive battle and have entered onto a concentrated counteroffensive along the entire front.

Tuesday 26 May 1942
The *Soviet Army High Command* announced:

On Monday night/Tuesday morning, our troops expanded their positions on the Kharkov front. Along the sector of the front between Izyum and Barvenkovo [south of Kharkov], Red Army forces have been fighting defensive battles against enemy tanks and infantry divisions.

Rommel's Offensive in North Africa
Wednesday 27 May 1942, Cairo
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

A British Headquarters communiqué has announced that General Rommel's troops began to move forward yesterday. At the moment it is still too early to determine with any certainty whether General Rommel has in fact now launched his long-awaited offensive; however, it is probable that very significant battles are beginning.

Heavy Fighting South of Tobruk
Friday 29 May 1942, Cairo
British Eighth Army Headquarters in North Africa reported:

Near Kharkov in May 1942. German mounted infantry on the way to their battle-stations near Kharkov in May 1942. The tanks are Panzer IIIs.



It is impossible to get a reliable picture of how the battle is progressing due to the thick dust enveloping the tanks and the troops and to the fact that innumerable small armored groups are fighting dispersed battles across a broad expanse of desert. General Ritchie stated yesterday evening: "There is no reason for us to be dissatisfied; but we must keep in mind that crucial battles lie ahead and that we face a skilled and courageous enemy."

"Britansky Tankograd"
Saturday 30 May 1942, Moscow
The British *Exchange News Agency* reported:

A special *Exchange* correspondent has just returned from the Soviet military camp that the Russians call "Britansky Tankograd." For British tanks this is a rallying point where, our correspondent reports, vast numbers of Matilda and Valentine tanks are housed. The Soviets have built machine halls where all the tanks are taken immediately after delivery to be cleaned and tested.

Sunday 31 May 1942, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

Yesterday the Wehrmacht Report announced the end of the Battle of Kharkov. The Soviet Sixth, Ninth and Fifty-Seventh Armies, comprising approximately 20 infantry divisions, 7 cavalry divisions and 14 armored brigades, have been severely mauled by our forces, and the captured or destroyed war equipment includes, among other things, 1,249 tanks.

Monday 1 June 1942, Cairo
British Eighth Army Headquarters in North Africa reported:

The battle in the Western Desert has reached its crisis point. General Rommel has deployed the entire German Afrika Corps, and, with the exception of a few elements of the 90th Light Armored Division, all of Rommel's elite forces are at the moment attacking under the command of General Nehring, who is himself in the front zone. The battle in the desert may well reach a decision within 24 hours. The temperature has risen substantially and the troops on both sides are performing superhuman feats in the desert heat, under an all-enveloping layer of dust. It is inconceivable that the troops could endure the conditions of this battle for longer than two days.

The significance that Rommel attaches to this offensive operation is clear from a captured order of the day in which he says: "Troops under my command! You are being sent into action to wage a crucial offensive against the British." Rommel has succeeded in driving a passage through the British minefield approximately 15 miles north of Bir Hakeim, thus shortening his supply route. He has suf-



A brigade of Soviet KV-1A heavy tanks assembling near Kharkov in May 1942. The turrets carry slogans: "For Stalin!" and "For the fatherland!"

fered enormous losses in tanks and motor vehicles of every kind. Smoke columns are rising everywhere in the desert, a sign that tanks or petrol tankers are on fire. The French have held their positions at Bir Hakeim where hundreds of wrecked cars and tanks litter the field.

The toll of prisoners is rising hourly, and they are all completely exhausted, with badly inflamed eyes and shredded or charred uniforms. German officers confirm that no one would have thought it possible to endure the conditions of this armored battle for five days.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No. 289 of 4 June 1942 (extract):

I. General comments: The wait-and-see attitude of many Germans is persisting with regard to military events in the East. Much of the population are still failing to show appropriate appreciation for the true greatness of the recently reported victories. Although the various special announcements are eagerly discussed right after their release, there are as yet no signs of any enduring improvement in the people's general morale.

In view of the fact that we are already well into the warm season, many Germans are wondering increasingly when our large-scale offensive is really going to begin and whether we will succeed

in dealing the Soviets an annihilating defeat in the remaining months of summer.

The fighting of the Axis Powers in the North African theater is attracting considerable notice. After the initial announcement about the success of our offensive operations, people expected an uninterrupted advance by German and Italian troops and the speedy publication of special victory announcements. . . After the announcement of the British capture of Panzer General Crüwell, many Germans expressed their anxiety that General Rommel, who is well known for his guts and recklessness, could end up similarly and be lost as leader of the Axis forces in North Africa.

11 June 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Late this morning, we stormed and took Bir Hakeim, the southern pillar of the British defensive system, after days of bitter resistance from the strong enemy forces encircled there.

Offensive against Rostov
Thursday 11 June 1942, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* announced:

Von Bock's army group began the German offensive with 10 to 12 divisions southeast of Kharkov. Judging by the initial operations, the main enemy thrust is directed against Rostov. The German army group led the attack with 4 panzer divisions accompanied by several hundred motorized batteries. Substantial Rumanian, Hungarian, Italian and Slovakian units are fighting alongside the German army.

Saturday 13 June 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Our attacks east of Kharkov have been successful. We took the enemy bridgehead on the west bank of the Donets river and engaged and encircled the Soviet force on the east bank.

In North Africa, our armored army has headed north after capturing Bir Hakeim. It is now successfully fighting the remains of the enemy armored forces west of El Adem.

Winston Churchill to General Auchinleck
Monday 15 June 1942:

We are glad to have your assurance that you have no intention of giving up Tobruk. War Cabinet interpret your telegram to mean that, if the need arises, General Ritchie would leave as many troops in Tobruk as are necessary to hold the place for certain. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 332, vol. IV]

Tuesday 16 June 1942, Cairo
British Eighth Army Headquarters in North Africa reported:

Our troops are engaged in bitter fighting around Acroma. Approximately 300 heavy and medium Axis tanks are attacking our positions from three directions. A panzer column has broken through, headed for Tobruk.

Tobruk and Bardia Fall to the Germans
Sunday 21 June 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

(Special announcement) German and Italian troops under the command of General Rommel yesterday stormed and captured much of the strongly fortified fortress of Tobruk. Thereupon, early this morning Britons bearing a flag of truce came to an Italian corps headquarters and offered to surrender the fortress. We have occupied the city and harbor. So far we have captured over 25,000 prisoners, including several generals, and vast quantities of weapons, equipment and supplies. A tenacious eastward pursuit of the beaten British resulted in our capture of Bardia and Bir el Gubi.

Admiral Harwood to Winston Churchill
June 1942:

Tobruk has fallen, and situation deteriorated so much that there is a possibility of heavy air attack on Alexandria in near future, and in view of approaching full moon period I am sending all Eastern Fleet units south of the Canal to await events. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 343, vol. IV]

Report from Rommel's Chief of Staff, Colonel F. Bayerlein
21 June 1942:

We have captured gigantic stores, supplies for 30,000 men for three months and over 10,000 cubic meters of gasoline. Without this prize we would not have been able to feed or clothe the panzer divisions adequately in the coming weeks. Only once—in April 1942—have the supplies reaching us by sea been sufficient to supply our army for a whole month.

21 June 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Yesterday the "Stalin" fortifications in the northern part of the besieged fortress [of Sevastopol in the Crimea] also fell to us. This means that all the forts along the north front of Sevastopol, except the coastal fortifications, are now in German hands. They include the "Stalin" and "Maxim Gorky" emplacements, the "Molotov Bastion,"

A German newspaper reports the fall of Tobruk to German forces under Rommel: "The last and most important cornerstone of the British defense in the African Desert has fallen."


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„Freiheit und Brot"
Norddeutsche Ausgabe
Berlin, Montag, 22. Juni 1942

VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER

Kampfblatt der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung Großdeutschlands

Rommels herrlicher Sieg: Tobruk!

Der Führer nahm Abschied von Adolf Hühnlein

Staatsakt für den Korpsführer des NSKK. in der Hauptstadt der Bewegung

Eigener PK-Bericht des „Völkischen Beobachter"

München, 21. Juni

Englischer Parlamentär bot die Übergabe der Festung an

Stadt und Hafen besetzt — Bisher über 25000 Gefangene

Unübersehbare Beute — Bardia und Bir el Gobi genommen

Wie Deutsche und Italiener stürmten

VB. Berlin, 21. Juni

Ein Meilenstein

Von Dr. Theodor Seibert

Berlin, 21. Juni

MITTELLÄNDISCHES MEER
Tobruk
Bardia
Sollum
Sidi Barani
Fort Capuzzo
Bir el Gobi

large numbers of old forts and a number of artillery fortifications. German troops have penetrated the coastal fort, which is still being defended tenaciously by the enemy, and are engaged in hard hand-to-hand fighting around the bunkers still held by the enemy. German and Rumanian troops have repulsed several attacks along the southern front of the stronghold and counterattacked, breaking up further the system of enemy fortresses.

Monday 22 June 1942, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

Today, on the anniversary of the German attack on the Soviet Union, Churchill addressed a message to Stalin:

"You can count on us to assist you by every means in our power. . . We have thought not only of the present but of the future, and our treaty of alliance in the war against Hitlerite Germany. . . has been welcomed by the Soviet people. That treaty is a pledge that we shall confound our enemies and, when the war is over, build a sure peace for all freedom-loving peoples." [English quoted from *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958, p. 51]

British Conduct of the War Criticized
22 June 1942, Cairo
A special correspondent of the American *United Press News Agency* reported:

"How did it happen?" observers here are asking themselves today after the fall of Tobruk. I pursued all the phases of the battle and often attended the front, and I would answer the question this way: "Too little aggressive spirit." This is not a judgment about the fighting troops themselves: No soldiers could have fought with more determination and courage. But in general the whole British war machine seemed to be acting by the principle: "Wait and see."

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
22 June 1942:

The Minister [of Propaganda, Goebbels] stated after his meeting with the Führer that in our foreign propaganda about England, we should throw all the blame for the loss of Tobruk onto Churchill. Furthermore, we could point out that Churchill always goes off on trips when situations get critical: For example, Singapore fell during his last trip to America. By the wish of the military, we are not to interpret the fact that 25,000 men were captured in the fortress [of Tobruk] as a sign that the British did not put up hard resistance. . . Inside Germany, no reference whatever is to be made to Egypt [into which German troops were then advancing], not even in quotations from the foreign press. The Minister has assigned us the slogan: "Tobruk—Revenge for Cologne," and orders us to point out that the dilettante at the head of the British Government is deploying aircraft against nonmilitary targets in Germany while Britain is losing important military battles for the lack of these same aircraft.

23 June 1942, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The Führer has promoted General Rommel, the commander-in-chief of the Panzer Army in Africa, to the rank of Field Marshal.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Wednesday 24 June 1942:

The Minister has ordered us to emphasize in our

press reports the military achievements of the Italians. If, when describing the conquest of Tobruk, we quote those Britons who emphasize the feats of the German troops, then in commentaries and lead articles we should extol the Italians. We can play up their role in good conscience because in any case the world knows who it was that won the victory.

Friday 26 June 1942, London
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

President Roosevelt has appointed General Eisenhower commander-in-chief of the American troops in the European theater. General Eisenhower is 51 years old. He fought in the 1914–18 world war as an armored corps officer. Since then, Eisenhower has been occupied chiefly with the problems of armored warfare and is considered one of the most experienced tank experts in the US Army. He served for a time as General MacArthur's chief of staff.

Monday 29 June 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* added this supplementary note on the victory of German and Italian troops near Marsa Matruh (Egypt):

The storming of the fortress was preceded by fighting in which the British took heavy losses. After repulsing British advance guards, the German-Italian panzer army broke through the main enemy emplacements southeast of Marsa Matruh and advanced to the great coastal road. The British forces suffered heavy losses in men, tanks and cannon in hard fighting. The badly beaten enemy was dispersed into a number of splinter groups, some of which were encircled and eliminated southeast of Marsa Matruh while others were thrown back there.

Strategy and Tactics

JANUARY TO JUNE 1942

The most important task now facing German troops was to halt the Soviet winter offensive. The German winter defensive positions really existed only on staff maps. The Germans had no sheltered positions unless they happened to be in the right spot to occupy Soviet fortifications. The ground was frozen solid making it impossible to dig trenches, and there was no hope that the decimated German divisions would be able to form up a continuous front.

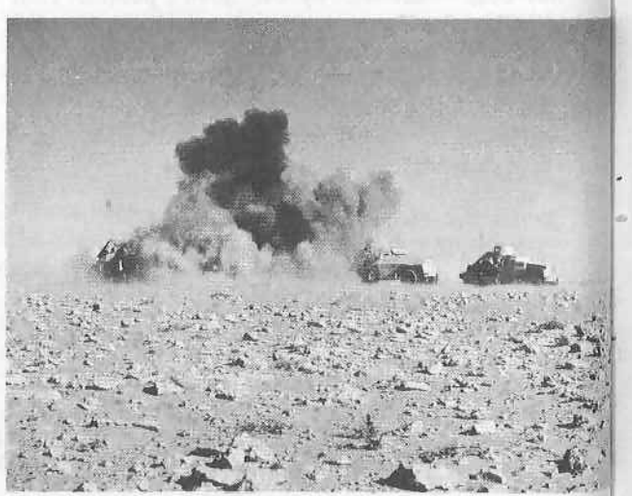
On Thursday 1 January 1942, General Hoepner's 4th Panzer Group became the Fourth Panzer Army.

On Friday 2 January, units of the Japanese 48th Division occupied the Philippine capital of Manila. Meanwhile American and Filipino troops retreated to the Bataan peninsula [western Luzon island] and the heavily fortified island of Corregidor.

That same day the Soviet Thirty-Ninth Army under General Mazlennikov succeeded in breaching the German front lines between Rzhev and Vyazma.

Simultaneously, German and Italian troops under General Schmitt, encircled at Bardia, surrendered to the British.

On Thursday 8 January 1942, the German XX Corps under General Materna was caught in a hopeless position at Borovsk northwest of Moscow, and faced total annihilation by Soviet troops. The soldiers struggled heroically to hold their positions in temperatures of minus 40 degrees Centigrade until their ammunition ran out. Then General Hoepner ordered the Fourth Panzer Army to retreat. When von Kluge, the C-in-C of German Army Group Center, learned of the retreat, he savagely upbraided Hoepner for disregarding Hitler's orders that the troops were not to back down one step. Hoepner replied: "Field Marshal, I have duties higher than my duties to you and the Führer: They are to the troops entrusted to my care." Hoepner, the veteran armored leader, was at once rewarded for this exemplary act of courage and conviction: Hitler expelled him from the armed forces.



Right: 25 June 1942, near Marsa Matruh. British tanks being destroyed by Stuka dive bombers.



German 7.5-cm Pak 40 (antitank guns) firing from a position near Toropets [northern USSR] in January 1942

On Friday 9 January 1942, the Soviet Northwest Front [army group] under Kurochkin—including Purkayev's Third Shock Army and Yeremienko's Fourth Shock Army—launched an offensive from the Ostashkov area through the lake-strewn Valdai Hills in the northwest USSR. The Soviet armored forces succeeded in penetrating the German front along the seam between Army Group North and Army Group Center, advanced to around Toropets, crossed the Lovat river and threatened Kholm.

On Sunday 10 January, Reinhardt's German Third Panzer Army was forced onto the defensive at Volokolamsk by strong attacks from armored forces of Rokossovsky's Soviet Sixteenth Army.

On Thursday 15 January, after days of entreaty from the OKH and Field Marshal von Kluge, Hitler at last allowed the Germans to pull back their front lines west of Moscow to where they could occupy winter positions. Army Group Center ordered German troops to evacuate the bulge extending from Kaluga to Volokolamsk just west of the Soviet capital, and troops along all other sectors of the front retreated to winter positions within the next ten days.

On Friday 16 January 1942, the Japanese Sixteenth Army mounted an offensive against Burma from Thailand.

On Saturday 17 January, German and Italian troops under General de Georgis, having been encircled by the British around Sollum and the Halfaya Pass in North Africa were forced to surrender.

On Sunday 18 January, the armored forces of the Soviet Northwest Front encircled German II Corps under Infantry General von Brockdorff-Ahlefeld and X Corps under General Hansen, around Demyansk south of Lake Ilmen. The resultant cauldron, covering an area the size of Greater Berlin, contained 95,000 German soldiers who were now dependent for their supplies on Luftwaffe airlifts.

On Wednesday 21 January 1942, Rommel's Afrika Panzer Group went on the offensive, counterattacking from their positions between Marada and Mersa-el-Brega. Thanks to improved supplies from the Mediterranean, the Axis troops had quickly regained their striking power. The British forces, on the other hand, were now forced to receive most of their supplies by the land route from Egypt. The objective of the German counteroffensive was to drive the British out the Cyrenaica and then advance into British-held Egypt. Elements of the British 7th Armoured Division under General Gott and the 1st South African Division under General Brink were overrun around Agedabia and Sollum.

At this time German supply routes were shorter than those of their enemy, and the Luftwaffe's massive bombing attacks on the island of Malta since December 1941 had profoundly disrupted British shipping in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean activity of the British Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force was cut down dramatically at the turn of the year, and for the first time in months the Axis supply convoys coming from Italy were able to sail virtually unobstructed into North African ports. As a result the new German offensive was successful from the start.

On Thursday 22 January, after evaluating data from the Battle of Moscow, the Soviet High Command ordered the Soviet armored brigades and battalions deployed in mass along the main directions of attack, and improved cooperation of the

armor with the infantry, artillery and air force. In future, no Soviet armored attack was to be mounted before investigation of the terrain and enemy forces.

This order of 22 January signalled the start of a massed deployment of Soviet armored troops.

Meanwhile, in North Africa the German panzer spearheads had already overrun the foremost British positions, pressed through to Agedabia, tried to block the retreat route of the armored 1st South African Division, and made a frontal advance on Benghazi.

On Wednesday 28 January, the Afrika Panzer Group took Benghazi and advanced toward Derna along the coastal road. Rommel pushed back the British troops to the Gazala Line west of Tobruk. Then hostilities ceased again for several months. The Gazala Line was a chain of well-built, interlinked field emplacements and desert forts extending from the Mediterranean coast far south to Bir Hakeim. British commanders hoped it would hold back the Germans.

On Tuesday 3 February 1942, the forces of Yefremov's Soviet Thirty-Third Army, Belov's First Guards Cavalry Corps, and the Fourth Airborne Corps were encircled southeast of Vyazma and north of Yukhnov by the armored forces of the German Fourth Army under General Kübler and the Fourth Panzer Army under General Hoth. Inadequate supplies of food and ammunition were airlifted in to the encircled Soviet troops.

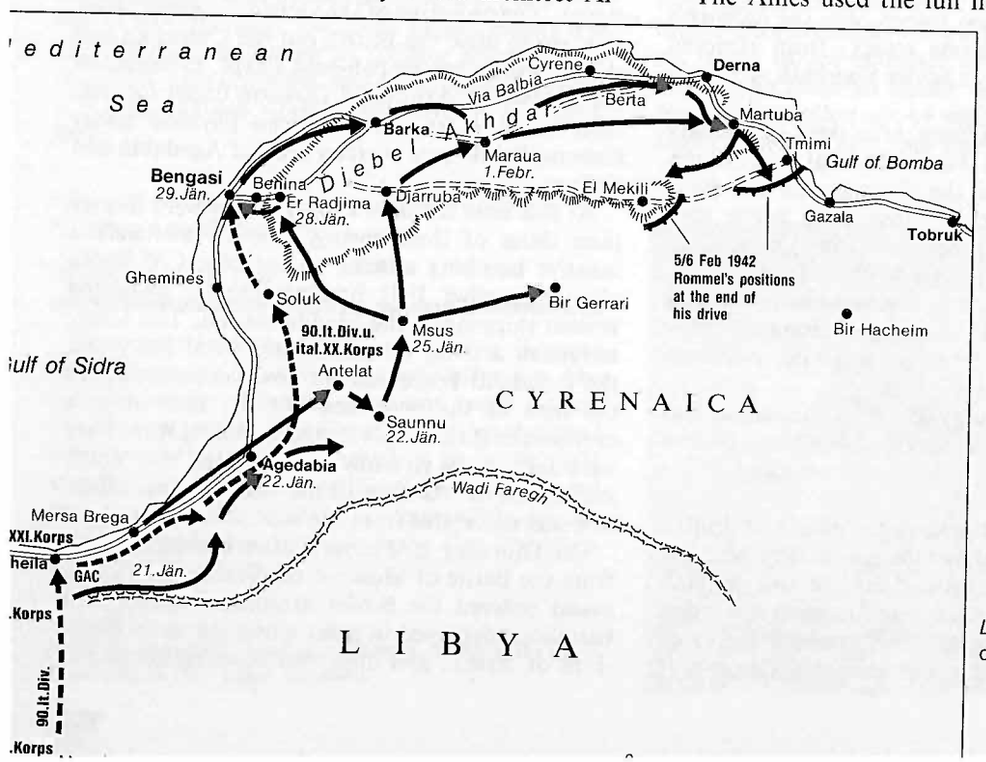
On Sunday 8 February 1942, after the sudden death in an airplane crash of German armaments minister Fritz Todt, the 37-year-old architect Albert Speer was appointed minister of armaments and war production. Speer, an intimate of Hitler and the architect he had chosen to one day rebuild the cities of Europe, cleverly expanded the range of powers that Hitler had granted Todt and transformed the German ministry of armaments into a proficiently functioning central machine for the German war industry.

Although project studies for a new medium tank and a heavier tank had been carried out in 1937 and 1939, it was not until 1942 that the Germans introduced a genuinely new tank model to their front lines. After the French Campaign the Germans had also recognized the importance of the infantry forces who formed part of the panzer division. Now that Minister Speer was in charge of tank production, work on new designs became a top priority.

On the night of 11/12 February 1942, members of a Japanese Guards division and of the 2nd Armored Regiment crossed over from continental Asia onto the island of Singapore, the most important British stronghold in southeast Asia. The final struggle for the city and fortress had begun.

On Saturday 21 February, the Afrika Panzer Group under General Rommel was rechristened the Afrika Panzer Army. Rommel now had under command 2 German panzer divisions, 1 German light division, 1 Italian armored division, 1 Italian motorized infantry division and 4 Italian infantry divisions.

The Allies used the lull in the battle of North



Opposite page: Between Tobruk and Gazala in January 1942: A soldier of the German Afrika Corps administering First Aid to the British crewman of a knocked-out Crusader tank

Left: Rommel's 1942 drive through Cyrenaica



Africa to bring up equipment that would help compensate for the now serious deficiencies in their defenses. Above all, they developed an armor-piercing warhead for their antitank guns with which to penetrate the new, more powerful German armor while still maintaining a safe distance.

The British Eighth Army, with its two armored divisions, three motorized infantry divisions and several reinforced brigades, had fewer men than the Axis forces, but outnumbered them by 50% in tanks and had almost double the artillery.

On Monday 2 March 1942, after hard fighting with heavy losses between the German Fourth Army and the Soviet Fiftieth Army under General Boldin, the Germans were forced to evacuate Yukhnov. The Soviets tried to restore links with the troops of the Soviet Thirty-Third Army, the First Guards Cavalry Corps and the Fourth Airborne Corps which the Germans had encircled February 3.

Their offensive operations of the preceding months confirmed the Soviet High Command in their belief that they could not expand in depth an operational victory without using large tactical and strategic armored forces. Now, beginning in March 1942, the Red Army began to set up armored corps made up of three armored brigades and one motorized infantry brigade.

The German Army commanders had also drawn some conclusions from the events of the last few months: German tanks seemed no longer capable of carrying out their front-line role successfully.

After a long series of victorious Soviet attacks, the situation on the Eastern Front began gradually to stabilize again, so that by around mid-March 1942 a state of deadlock had ensued.

On Sunday 15 March 1942, in a Memorial Day address, Hitler announced that the final annihilation of the Soviet Army would take place in the summer of 1942.

On Sunday 5 April, Hitler issued Directive 41 ordering a German summer offensive along the southern sector of the Eastern Front. In his view the operation should occur in four phases with the final objective of advancing into the Caucasus, capturing the oil production zone of Baku and Batum and reaching the Iranian border. Hitler seriously believed that German and Japanese troops were soon going to meet each other halfway somewhere in India.

On Wednesday 15 April, one of the few operations then taking place on the Eastern Front came to an end when Germans wiped out the remains of the Soviet Thirty-Third Army, the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps and the Fourth Airborne, which had been sealed into a cauldron southeast of Vyazma on February 3.

Soviet losses (apart from dead and wounded) included 6,000 prisoners, 170 cannon, 128 tanks. The C-in-C of the Thirty-Third Army, General Yefremov, committed suicide.

On Saturday 18 April, the winter fighting ended all along the Eastern Front. The spring mud period set in, and all movements by armored troops on both sides bogged down in the mire. Activity ceased except for artillery and patrols.

During this break, the German panzer divisions were outfitted with the new Panzer IVs (Version F2), equipped with a long, powerful 7.5-cm antitank gun with a simple muzzle brake. The armor of

Panzer IIIs and IVs had been reinforced. The assault guns that so far had been deployed mainly as an infantry-support weapon now began to perform in an antitank capacity. The maintenance and repair of tanks had by now become a major problem, so in May 1942 the production of new vehicles was reduced and more spare parts manufactured instead.

Starting in May 1942 the Soviet Army began to set up armored armies composed of both armored and infantry units. The army commanders had mounting problems in leading their unwieldy numbers of infantry divisions and reinforcement troops; so infantry forces were incorporated into armored corps resembling the type which had been abolished in the summer of 1941 before the German invasion. Soviet artillery reserves were substantially reinforced, mainly with modernized 45-mm antitank guns and 7.6-cm 1942 SIS-3 divisional antitank guns.

On Saturday 5 May, the Soviet Southwestern Front under Marshal Timoshenko mounted a grand offensive from a Donets river bridgehead at Izyum. Its objective was to take Kharkov.

The 8th of May 1942 was the start of German Operation Trappenjagd (Bustard-Hunt), an offensive by von Manstein's Eleventh Army against Kerch (eastern Crimea). Its objective was to smash the Soviet armies of the Crimean Front under Koslov, which included Chernyak's Forty-Fourth Army, Kolganov's Forty-Seventh Army, and the Fifty-First Army. The Eleventh Army was made up of five German infantry divisions, one panzer division and three Rumanian divisions, supported by General von Richtofen's VIII Air Corps.

In spring 1942 the Soviet High Command (STAVKA) planned offensives at Leningrad, Demyansk, Kharkov, the Donets Basin and the Crimea, with the aim of destroying the German troops there and preventing the enemy from starting a summer offensive. The German Army, no longer able to go on the offensive along the whole of the Eastern Front, confined itself to an operation in the southern sector.

At the start of May, the Soviets had seven front groups and two independent armies along the Western Front. Stalin, as C-in-C of the Soviet armed forces, had several additional reserve armies. The Germans and their allies on the Eastern Front had 178 infantry divisions, 14 motorized divisions, 20 panzer divisions, 4 cavalry divisions, 15 infantry brigades, 2 motorized brigades and 3 cavalry brigades. The main forces of both adversaries were now ranged in the central sector of the front, but the German forces had not yet concluded their planned regrouping.

On Friday 15 May 1942, a German frontal advance along the coast penetrated Soviet positions behind the front lines and the Germans captured Kerch. Recorded Soviet losses were: 170,000 prisoners, 3,800 motor vehicles, 1,100 cannon, 320 aircraft and 250 tanks. The remains of the Soviet Crimean Front armies were evacuated to the Taman peninsula. Now the German Eleventh Army was free to concentrate all its forces on capturing the Crimean fortress of Sevastopol. At this time the independent Soviet coastal army had seven infantry divisions and four brigades available for the defense of Sevastopol. They faced ten German divisions supported by powerful siege artillery. German naval forces were sent to sever sea communications with Sevastopol harbor.

Two days later, on May 17, von Kleist's First Panzer Army and Hoth's Seventeenth Army mounted a counterattack on Marshal Timoshenko's forces advancing toward Kharkov.

On Monday 18 May, Operation Trappenjagd, the German offensive against the Crimea, came to an end when the bulk of the Soviet Crimean Front Army Group was mauled by the forces of the German Eleventh Army. Soviet losses included 169,198 prisoners, 1,397 cannon and 284 tanks.

On Friday 22 May the panzer spearheads of the First Panzer Army advancing from the south linked up with the vanguard of General Paulus's Sixth Army around Balakleya cutting off the assault armies of the Soviet Southwest Front. The Soviet retreat order came too late, so the ring around the cauldron was closed next day on May 23. Only a few Soviet units were able to break through to their own lines.

During the lull in the fighting in North Africa, the British succeeded in moving into the Gazala fortifications a sizeable number of American M3 (Grant and Lee) medium tanks, camouflaged as trucks and thus undetected by German reconnaissance. Their long 7.5-cm antitank guns, and the new British 5.7-cm antitank guns, held a nasty surprise in store for the Germans.

Tuesday 26 May saw the beginning of a German-Italian offensive, Operation Theseus, led by Rommel's Afrika Panzer Army along the Gazala Line. Rommel's panzer army had two panzer divisions and one light division totalling 333 tanks, supplemented by the Italian XX Corps with one armored division and one motorized division totalling 228 tanks, the Italian X Corps and XXI Corps with two armored divisions and one motorized brigade, and the XIII Corps with three motorized divisions. Rommel planned to take Tobruk, so as to use its port to help supply his panzer army. He also hoped to capture rich stores in the giant British supply dumps there.

In order to pin down the British on the Gazala Line and compel them to draw in their other forces as reinforcements, Rommel ordered the Italian infantry to attack at Gazala. Tanks and trucks were sent out to raise clouds of dust and give the impression that large armored forces were being readied for an attack. Then, while the Italian infantry tied up the British with frontal attacks along the main front, panzers and motor units curved in a wide arc around the southern flank of the Gazala Line where it trailed out into the open desert.

That afternoon, armored scout cars of the British 7th Motor Brigade detected the German movements to the southeast. The British commander moved up the Indian 3rd Motor Brigade and the 4th Armoured Brigade, followed by the 7th Motor Brigade as a reserve. After completing their movement to outflank the British in the south, the Germans wheeled in on the north, where to their surprise they encountered a force of new US tanks which, with their 7.5-cm guns, were a match even for the German Panzer IVs.

The American Grant tanks inflicted heavy losses on the German panzer force attacking to the rear of the Gazala Line. Then, when the fight was over, the Afrika Panzer Army ran into a British antitank barrier. The newly introduced British 6-pound antitank guns, which were of approximately equal quality to the German 5-cm antitank guns, took a fresh toll of the German tanks. Rommel's troops did succeed in driving the British back to the El Adem area, but the British 4th Armoured Brigade held out until the British tank forces could hasten to its rescue.

On the evening of May 26, a German-Italian motorized assault group comprising some 10,000 vehicles under General Rommel drove southeast against the strongly fortified desert fort of Bir Hakeim. During the night a British reconnaissance plane discovered the German march columns, but the plane was shot down before it could complete a message.

At dawn on May 27, Bir Hakeim was encircled on the south. After a brief assembly the Germans rolled into the British hinterland. At 11:00 A.M. part of the Afrika Panzer Army encountered the British 4th Armoured Brigade and the 3rd Indian Motor Brigade, with their new Grant tanks, along the old caravan road of Trigh el Abd northeast of Bir Hakeim. An armored battle began which claimed heavy casualties on both sides.

On Thursday 28 May the battle of encirclement south of Kharkov came to an end when the Germans destroyed a large Soviet force consisting of Gorodnyanski's Sixth Army, Podlas's Fifty-Seventh Army, and most of Kharitonov's Ninth Army, which had been trying to liberate Kharkov. Soviet losses included 239,306 prisoners, 2,026 cannon and 1,249 tanks.

The Axis assault in North Africa was now reaching its crucial phase. The British, coming under mounting pressure, gathered all their available

The famous Soviet 1942 (SIS-3) divisional cannon, an ideal antitank weapon much feared by the Germans



forces to smash Rommel's army, units of which were now engaged in separate fighting at several locations.

On Saturday 30 May, the battle at the Gazala Line reached crisis point. The Germans, passing through British minefields, ran into a box fortification guarded by the British 150th Brigade, which so far had gone undetected by German reconnaissance. Rommel's forces could advance no further. The German tanks, jammed in between the minefields and the British defenses, had almost run out of food, ammunition and fuel. But next day the tide turned. On June 1, after pulverizing attacks by German Stuka dive bombers, the British box fortification fell to the Germans. The British lost 3,000 prisoners, 101 tanks and armored scout cars destroyed or captured, and 124 cannon, including some of the new 5.7-cm antitank guns. Then a German supply column carrying food, fuel and ammunition reached the German forces and their battlefield position changed abruptly. Rommel's troops, which the British had believed were on the point of collapse, set out east heading for Egypt.

On the night of 1/2 June 1942, the German 90th Light Infantry Division and the Italian Trieste Division launched a drive against Bir Hakeim, the southern cornerstone of the Allied front, and encircled the desert fort from the east. The commander of the 1st French Brigade, General König, refused the Axis demand to surrender the fort.

At noon on June 2, the Italian Trieste Division attacked Bir Hakeim from the north while the German 90th Light Infantry attacked from the south. The encircled troops, mostly French and Poles, put up a tenacious resistance. Rommel said: "At that time I often led our assault troops personally. There were few places in Africa where we encountered such hard fighting."

On Sunday 7 June, the Germans mounted Operation Störfang, a renewed attack by General von Manstein's Eleventh Army against Sevastopol, the world's strongest fortress, on the Crimean peninsula. Seven and a half German divisions and one and a half Rumanian divisions took part, supported by 24 mortar batteries, 86 light battalions, 81 heavy batteries, including some 60-cm Thor howitzers, and the largest cannon in the world, the giant 80-cm Dora, which fired missiles weighing 7.1 tons. This was Dora's first and only deployment. In all, 600 German cannon were ranged along a front 21 miles wide. Seven bomber, three Stuka, and four fighter groups of von Richtofen's VIII Air Corps bombarded the individual fortifications of the fortress.

On the afternoon of 10 June 1942, the German 115th Darmstadt Infantry Regiment, under Colonel Baade, attacked Bir Hakeim from the north and penetrated deep into the defense perimeter. But despite German precautions, part of the fort garrison, led by their commander General König, broke out on the west under cover of darkness and joined up with the British 7th Motor Brigade.

On the morning of June 11, the German 90th Light Infantry Division occupied Bir Hakeim and captured the 500 wounded French and Poles who had been left behind.

The fighting in the desert now shifted farther east to El Adem. An armored battle developed around an area the British called Knightsbridge and continued for several days. The Germans took heavy losses from American Grant tanks and British 5.7-cm antitank guns, but they in turn put large numbers of British tanks out of action with their 8.8-cm antiaircraft guns. The two British armored divisions, their men exhausted and equipment worn to shreds, were forced to vacate the battlefield on June 13.

Meanwhile, the British still held Gazala in separate fighting farther to the west. For the time being they had halted the Italian-German assault. Then on Tuesday 16 June, bitter fighting deep inside their lines resulted in such heavy losses to the British that General Ritchie ordered his Eighth Army to retreat about 20 miles as far as Tobruk, where a 30,000-man force was to occupy and defend the city and fortress.

But before the British had a chance to settle into their new positions, Rommel sprang a trick. Suddenly halting the forces which had appeared to be driving east, he hurled them back westward. The German motorized troops streaked toward Tobruk as fast as they could go. The British, exhausted by their fighting on the Gazala Line, were taken by surprise and did not have time to take measures to defend themselves.

On Sunday 21 June 1942, German and Italian troops encircled and stormed the fortress of Tobruk. The 2nd South African Division and other Commonwealth forces totalling 32,220 men, including Major Klopper the fort commander, were taken prisoner.

Next day, June 22, Hitler promoted Erwin Rommel to the rank of Field Marshal.

Meanwhile, the German 90th Light Infantry Division was pursuing the beaten British back across the Egyptian border. After the fall of Tobruk, the bulk of the German forces were free to join the 90th Light Infantry, and on Tuesday 23 June, the Afrika Panzer Army crossed the border from Libya into Egypt. Rommel set himself his next objective: Within one week – by June 30 – he planned to take Alexandria and to reach Cairo and the Nile Delta.

On Thursday 25 June, General Ritchie was relieved of duty. Due to the gravity of the situation,



Near Kursk on 28 June 1942, in the first hours of the German summer offensive. German infantrymen are clearing out Soviet tank mines. Once an attack was under way, tanks had to be brought up swiftly and deployed at a crucial point. The battle depended on their flexibility, maneuverability and ability to carry out their tasks at high speed.

the Allied C-in-C Middle East, General Auchinleck, assumed personal command of the British Eighth Army in its struggle against Rommel. Auchinleck decided that the British should retreat further to El Alamein, their last defensive position before Alexandria. The strong fortified positions at El Alamein extended some 40 miles from north to south. On their right flank was the Mediterranean, and on the left they reached to the broad Qattara Depression, which was impassable to tanks. The absence of connecting roads and the vast distances made it virtually impossible for the Germans to turn around the enemy's flank. The attackers were at another disadvantage in that British supply lines were now very short, while the German supply lines were growing longer and longer. The British had been depleted by heavy losses but were still strong enough for combat and were receiving a steady stream of reinforcements.

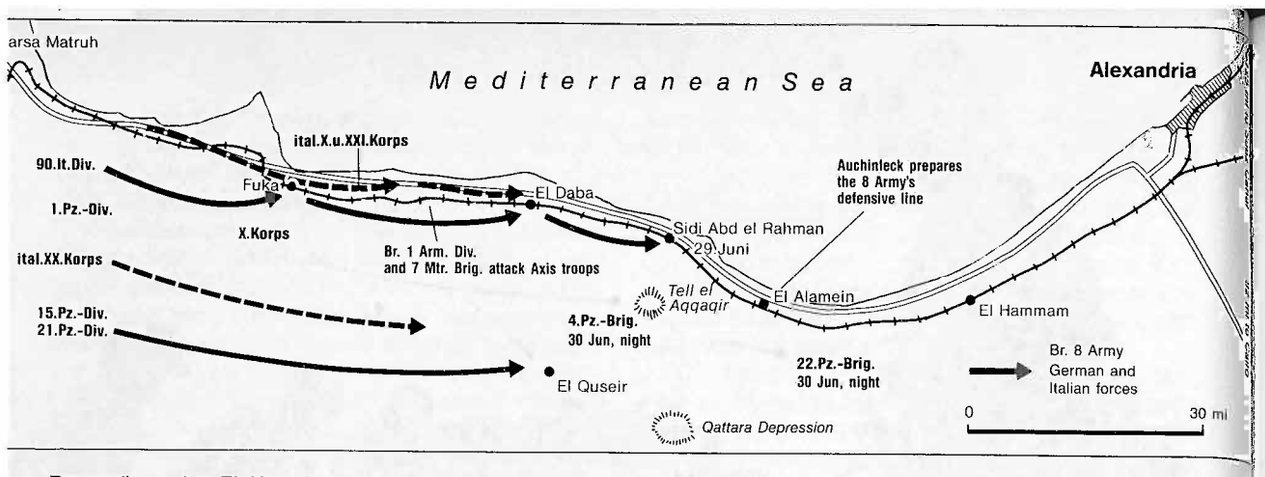
At 2:15 A.M. on Sunday 28 June, the Germans launched their summer offensive, Operation Blue, when the von Weichs Army Group pushed out of the Kursk area to attack the Soviet Bryansk Front under General Golikov. The German Army Group included von Weichs's Second Army, Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army, and Jany's Hungarian Second Army – a total of 11 infantry divisions, 3 panzer divisions, 3 motorized divisions, and 10 Hungarian divisions, supported by General Fiebig's VIII Air Corps. By afternoon the Germans had already made deep breaches in the positions of General Pukhov's Soviet Thirteenth Army and General Parsegov's Fortieth Army.

On Monday 29 June, the German 90th Light Infantry Division under General Sümmermann captured Marsa Matruh (Egypt) and took 5,000 prisoners.

On Tuesday 30 June, German Panzer General Paulus's Sixth Army, with 16 infantry divisions, 2 panzer divisions and 1 motorized division, drove out from the area southeast of Belgorod against the southern flank of Marshal Timoshenko's Southwest Front. Supported by Pflugbeil's IV Air Corps, Paulus's forces pushed back Gordov's Twenty-First Army and Ryabyshev's Twenty-Eighth Army.

That same day the Afrika Panzer Army reached El Alamein approximately 57 miles west of Alexandria. At once they tried to penetrate the enemy lines but were halted by stiffening British resistance.

After the Battle of Moscow, the German Army High Command saw that the days of the blitzkrieg



Rommel's road to El Alamein, summer 1942

were past. They made it a top priority to fill up all their mobile units and get them into fighting trim. Nine German panzer and 7 motorized infantry divisions, restored to force, were able to take part in the 1942 summer offensive. It was these forces that made possible the German advance into the Caucasus and to the bend of the Volga at Stalingrad. The 9 panzer divisions had gained additional mechanized grenadier, artillery and engineer units and were equipped with infantry tanks and self-propelled artillery and assault guns. The 7 motorized infantry divisions were reinforced with tank detachments and with self-propelled artillery and assault guns. With around 50 tanks each, these infantry divisions now had one third the tanks of a normal refurbished panzer division. That is, they had almost as many tanks as panzer divisions not assigned to take part in the 1942 summer offensive: for at this time, the non-participating divisions had been reduced to only one tank detachment each.

Hitler mistakenly believed that the Soviet Army could be beaten in a short time, and so considered it unnecessary to concern himself with new models of tank. Consequently the old models continued in use, although there was a stream of modifications to the armor and guns of Panzer IIIs and IVs. German tank manufacture suffered from the continual alteration of the production quotas as first tank and then assault-gun or spare-part manufacture was given the top priority. The panzer divisions kept up a constant demand for stronger armor and better guns, which was often thwarted by the shifting ratios of arms production. When the OKH introduced an improvement to one model of tank, the attempt was made to extend it at once to all tanks of the same type. But marked improvements in tank production took place only after Albert Speer became minister of armaments and war production in February 1942. Despite Hitler's persistent interference, Speer succeeded in driving up Germans arms production to record levels.

Notwithstanding the heavy depletion of their forces on the Eastern Front, the Germans still had the front under dense occupation. In June 1942, an average division of German Army Group Center might cover an 18- to 36-mile area. The German commanders were increasingly troubled by problems of supplying and fuelling. Hitler decided the war was lost unless Germany could procure adequate fuel and oil supplies. To secure these, the Wehrmacht was ordered during the summer offensive of 1942 to pursue an intensive march to the Soviet oil transport centers at Maikop and Batum.

In the first half of 1942, Japan had reached the zenith of its power, and after its unhappy experiences so far, the USA decided to form armored task forces, made up of varying strengths of combined arms, for wide-spectrum deployment. The standard structure of a US armored division after the summer of 1942 was 2 armored regiments, each made up of 1 light battalion and 1 medium battalion; 1 armored infantry regiment of 3 battalions; and 3 armored artillery battalions equipped with 10.5-cm antitank howitzers, plus the usual auxiliary forces.

The Red Army had successfully held its ground against the Germans when they tried to take Moscow in the winter offensive of 1941/42. In the following spring they won no large-scale victories. They continued to wage defensive battles around Kharkov until May, suffering enormous losses in manpower and material, while the German armored forces won a number of successes. During this fighting the Soviets set up 3 armored corps, each composed of 2 armored brigades and one motorized infantry brigade. The corps were relatively weak in infantry, but they were supplemented by the mechanized corps set up after September 1941, which had 1 tank brigade, 3 mechanized brigades, 1 flak regiment, and 1 antitank artillery regiment. The mechanized corps, which had more infantry troops than the armored corps, helped to balance them and so were maintained in their existing form.

1942

July—December

German Armored Infantry Designations
OKH (German Army High Command) Decree of 5 July 1942:

The infantry regiments that belong to panzer divisions are hereby ordered, effective immediately, to be redesignated: panzer grenadier regiments.

All enlisted personnel in the panzer grenadier regiments will be designated: panzer grenadiers or panzer grenadiers 1st Class.

The infantry brigades in panzer divisions will be designated: panzer grenadier brigades.

US Tanks Deployed

Tuesday 7 July 1942, Washington
The *US Department of War* announced:

On 11/12 June, US tanks manned by American crews took part in the fighting in North Africa for the first time. They belong to an advance guard of the American armored observation force which has now been in North Africa for several weeks. The operating tanks were commanded by General Stelling.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
7 July 1942:

In printing propaganda-company reports and other reports on the Eastern Campaign, we must on no account [allow to slip through] allusions to the capture of intact bridges.

Secret Report of the German *SS Security Service* on internal affairs, No. 298 of 9 July 1942 (extract):

The two special announcements of 7 July 1942 have caused the greatest joy all over Germany and focussed everyone's attention on military events. The male population especially are evincing a more relaxed and confident mood in the wake of the most recent prideful victories of German arms, a mood which had already begun to show itself after Rommel's triumphal progress through North Africa and the fall of Sevastopol, but which now has intensified. The women, on the other hand, continue to be dominated by cares and concerns of everyday life, especially the ongoing difficulties in obtaining food.

Our capture of Voronezh and our crossing of the Don have also attracted great interest and for the most part been seen as a confirmation that the German offensive [against the USSR] has now gotten underway and that the battle initiative is once again exclusively in German hands.

Meanwhile, people are following with some anxiety the course of events in the North African theater. Spoiled by Rommel's previously untrammelled victory drive, Germans yielded to the hope after the announcement of our successful penetration of the El Alamein positions, that Alexandria would fall within a few days.

New Drive by Rommel
Thursday 16 July 1942, Cairo
British Eighth Army Headquarters:

Yesterday evening Rommel began his fourth attack against British positions from the area between Tel-el-Eisa [near El Alamein] and the coast.

Friday 17 July 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

In the southern sector of the Eastern Front, German mobile forces east of the Donets river are pursuing the enemy toward the lower Don. They have crossed the rail line running from the Donets zone to Stalingrad. Numerous enemy divisions are wedged between the German rapid mobile forces on their rear and flanks, and the infantry forces advancing against them frontally. These jumbled and dispersed [Soviet] troops are trying to break out of the trap toward the east.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

17 July 1942:

The sensational interlude in the North African theater has now been interrupted by the British and Americans, under Auchinleck's command at El Alamein, who have succeeded in setting up effective resistance to the apparently unstoppable advance of Rommel's panzer troops. After Rommel's severely overtaxed troops and tanks proved incapable of penetrating the El Alamein positions, the Field Marshal ordered a pause which, however, offers no clues about his future intentions. The Allies evidently undertook to reorganize their troops and extend their positions, until Auchinleck went on the offensive with local counterstrokes against the Italian and German positions. Now another large-scale armored battle has flared up between the Axis and Allied forces in the North African Desert. . . .

But far more significant than the Mediterranean fighting are the operations on the Eastern Front. The German summer offensive, which was launched three weeks ago by the von Bock Army Group [Army Group B] along an initially narrow but subsequently broadening front between Kharkov and Kursk, is now fully under way and has resulted in extraordinarily heavy and bloody fighting.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Sunday 19 July 1942:

The Minister [of Propaganda, Goebbels] requests that we curb reporting on the Eastern Front in the German Press and radio. He refers particularly to an article in the DAZ, dated the 18th of July, which speaks of the wide-ranging effects of the Russian defeat. The Minister explains that once before, in the autumn of last year, there was talk of the collapse of the Russian armies, but it never took place.

The report of [Soviet Marshal] Timoshenko's dismissal which has been carried by a Turkish news agency, must not be picked up by us because we repeatedly carried [mistaken] reports of Timoshenko's dismissal last year. We are now to wait for an official announcement by the Russians.

Secret Weapons Loan
Thursday 23 July 1942, Washington
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The US House of Representatives has passed a bill authorizing a 974-million-dollar government loan grant and passed it on for Senate approval.

German Panzer III tanks, part of a German lead detachment east of the Donets river in July 1942



Most of the sum is earmarked for a "secret weapon" which President Binson of the House of Representatives navy commission has explained is being kept secret so that information about it will not be released even to members of the navy commission.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Saturday 25 July 1942:

A Communist rally has been held in London's Trafalgar Square demanding that the Allies set up a second front now. We should present this [in German press reports and broadcasts] as an instance of Komintern pressure on Britain.

Appeal to the Soviet Nation
25 July 1942, Moscow
The Soviet *TASS News Agency* reported:

On Friday afternoon Moscow Radio broadcast a passionate appeal: "Our homeland is in danger. The enemy has deployed all his reserves to penetrate deeper into our country. We call on all patriots to halt the enemy and form their bodies into an insurmountable wall. Men and women of the Red Army, muster all your strength to prevent the enemy from invading the northern Caucasus."

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Thursday 30 July 1942:

We are reminded once again that propaganda reports, news, etc. about enemy bridges, ammunition and fuel depots, grain and other supplies which we have captured intact, must not contain any specific data about them [that could give information to the enemy]. Editors are responsible for ensuring that such information is removed even from publications passed by the censor.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No. 304 of 30 July 1942 (extract):

I. General comments: Only some of our population are taking a keen interest in military events and carrying away a lasting impression; they are especially impressed by our successes in the southern part of the Eastern Front. . . Reports of our troops crossing the Don along a broad front, and of our capture of the cities of Novocherkassk and Bataisk, have led other Germans to conclude that the hostilities in the south are continuing to follow a favorable course as scheduled. They believe that after isolating the Caucasus, German forces will advance to the Volga, halt along its western bank, which is a particularly suitable place to establish a defense, and, after carrying out corresponding operations in the north and center of the Eastern Front, will erect an Eastern Wall extending from Astrakhan in the south to Arkhangelsk in the north. Once this goal is achieved, they think, the Eastern Campaign will be completed for the time being.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 31 July 1942:

The military events in southern Russia make clear that the German High Command is struggling to achieve its strategic targets by a vast deployment of manpower and equipment and by mounting combat strength.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Thursday 6 August 1942:

Notwithstanding a certain restraint in our reporting at the moment, the operations at present taking place in the southern sector of the Eastern Front are pursuing a very favorable course in important zones south of the Don.

Winston Churchill to the First Sea Lord
Sunday 9 August 1942:

I am deeply disappointed that Shermans [US tanks] cannot arrive before September 5. All yesterday I was inspecting four splendid brigades of armoured troops who only await these weapons to become the most formidable armoured force in Africa. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 787, vol. IV]

Allied Invasion Landing at Dieppe
Thursday 20 August 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

As we already reported in the special announcement, yesterday British, American, Canadian and French Gaullist troops attempted a landing along a 15-mile-wide stretch of the French Channel coast at Dieppe, with cover from strong naval and aerial forces; tanks were also deployed. German coastal forces beat off the invasion, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy.

20 August 1942, London
Allied Combined Operations Headquarters announced:

Notwithstanding the explanation of the surprise Dieppe raid which we broadcast to France over BBC Radio at 6:15 A.M. Wednesday, German propagandists are claiming that the raid was an attempted invasion that was foiled by German forces. In reality, most of our forces began their reembarkation only six minutes earlier than planned, and the reembarkation was completed as scheduled nine hours after the initial landings.

Friday 21 August 1942
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

Our correspondent, who was on board one of the vessels with an armoured unit, reports that the new-model landing craft are able to transport tanks, move almost silently, and are similar in construction to an armoured car. "The tank crews were sleeping peacefully in their hammocks and were awakened for the mission only 15 minutes before we reached the Dieppe area. Our boat was Number 13, which held the third wave of tanks that were to go into action in one hour.

"The actual landings on the shore of Dieppe followed a heavy preliminary bombardment by British naval units. The loading platforms were lowered only after large numbers of German fortifications had been fired on and set alight. The armoured vehicles then rolled over the beach, which a few years ago was a favorite seaside resort, toward the city. When we started our return trip, the coast was barely visible due to the smoke. . . Radio messages bore witness to the pluck of tank crews engaged in bloody combat, who knew that they would not be coming back."

Germans Reach the Volga at Stalingrad

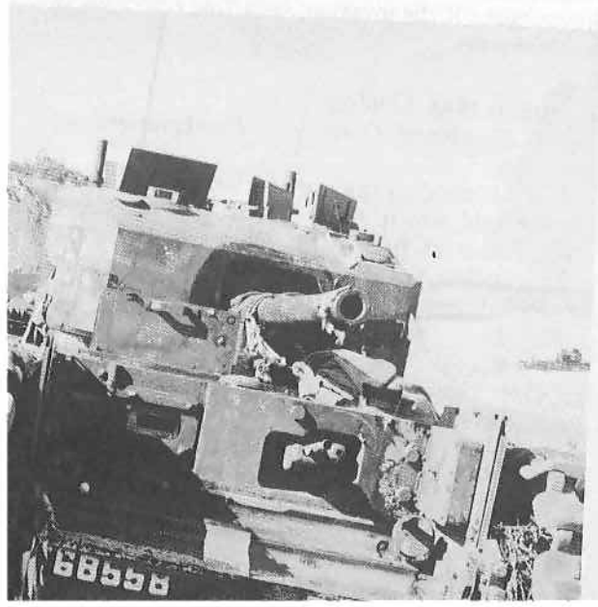
OKH (German Army High Command) Dispatch
Monday 24 August 1942:

Army Group B: The Fourth Panzer Army, advancing on Stalingrad from the south, beat off enemy attacks on its right flank, and German units thrusting to the northwest have penetrated to the rail line on either side of the Tinguta railroad station.

Sixth Army: Drove its 16th Panzer Division southwest across the Stalingrad-Prolovo rail line, crossed the Stalingrad-Dukovka road and broke through to the Volga at 5:00 P.M. on August 23.

Secret Report of the German *SS Security Service* on internal affairs, No. 311 of 24 August 1942 (extract):

I. General comments: Germans are following with increasing attention the developments in the central and northern sectors of the [Soviet] front, often due to a certain feeling of anxiety, because there are as yet (they say) no signs of a slackening in Bolshevist resistance there. Daily reports of heavy Soviet armed attacks along these sectors, and publication of the results of the defensive battle at Rzhev, especially the fact that we destroyed 1,068 Soviet tanks, have in some cases led Germans to conclude again that the Soviets still have access to large reserves of matériel.



Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Thursday 3 September 1942:

Due to the successful course of our operations against Stalingrad, it is recommended that our newspapers now keep on hand material on the enormous economic and military importance of this bastion of Communism and center of Soviet industry.

Secret Report of the German *SS Security Service* on internal affairs, No. 314 of 3 September 1942 (extract):

I. General comments: The absence of reports of major successes in the southern sector of the Eastern Front—apart from the capture of Anapa on the Black Sea, which has attracted little attention—has led to a slackening of Germans' interest in current military events. The violence of the battles around Stalingrad is already inducing comparisons between this and the hard struggle for Sevastopol; people are thinking with anxiety of the high casualties required to capture this militarily and economically strategic city.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 4 September 1942:

The German fight in southern Russia has the aim of completely isolating the Russian army of the Caucasus from the rest of the Russian front and at the same time cutting off from the front Wilson's British army, which lies south of the Caucasus in Iraq and Iran. This issue will be decided at Stalingrad and along the lower course of the Volga. Vast quantities of men and material are being poured into the bitterly fought battle of Stalingrad, which even the Germans describe as the harshest of the entire Eastern Campaign. The battle is now in its sixth week.

Wednesday 9 September 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:



Opposite page. A knocked-out British A22 Churchill infantry tank at Dieppe on the French Channel coast on 19 August 1942: the day of the ill-fated Dieppe raid

Right: A German 7.5-cm No. 40 assault gun, Model F, on the Eastern Front in 1942

In the fortress zone at Stalingrad, German panzer troops have broken through strongly defended enemy positions and captured the heights overlooking the city just west of Stalingrad in hard fighting. During the night we bombed the city zone and Soviet airfields east of the Volga.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 11 September 1942:

The focal point of the fighting is undoubtedly the relatively small front extending west of the Volga in a semicircle around the city of Stalingrad. . . The Russians call Stalingrad the "Red Verdun". . . The battle of Stalingrad is now in its seventh week; thus it has already dragged on longer than the entire German campaign two years ago in Holland, Belgium and France. This shows too that the war has taken on the characteristics of former great battles of attrition and thus does resemble the battle of Verdun [in World War I].

Winston Churchill to the British Minister of Production
Sunday 13 September 1942:

The forecast of production of tanks in this country is very poor. Even the fourth quarter of 1943 does not achieve 1,000 a month. Pray let me have the corresponding table showing what we may expect to get from the United States in the same period. [English quoted from p. 792, Appendix C of Churchill's *The Second World War,* vol. IV]

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Tuesday 15 September 1942:

The struggle for Stalingrad is nearing a successful conclusion. Today or tomorrow morning we may expect to receive important OKW announcements about the success achieved. The German Press will have to prepare an impressive tribute to celebrate the victorious outcome of this all-important battle for the city of Stalingrad—possibly by printing extra editions. Editors are to work up their filed material on the significance of the fall of Stalingrad and hold it ready for printing.

Winston Churchill to Brigadier Hollis
Friday 18 September 1942:

I shall be glad to receive a report on the Churchill tanks from the two or three divisions which have most of them.

Do not let it be known that the report is for me, as I simply want to know how the tank is viewed by the troops. [English quoted from p. 794, Appendix C of Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. IV]

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 25 September 1942:

. . . The Russians have made no secret of the terrible weight of the burden they are bearing in this campaign. Russian claims of their manpower and equipment losses are always very high, and it is probable that in the long run, matériel shortage will cause the Russians very grave problems. This explains why both warring parties attribute such significance to the question of American and Brit-

ish equipment supplies for Russia. . . However, as we all know, the Russians are asking their allies for other aid besides the delivery of war material. They have made repeated public demands for the creation of a "second front" in western Europe to relieve the burden on the Russian army.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Wednesday 14 October 1942:

The Minister [Goebbels] has barred the German Press and Radio from discussing winter clothing for German Wehrmacht troops. His intention is to avoid the mishaps that occurred last year when the press and newsreels talked about our fine winter clothing, when in reality almost nothing of the kind had been made ready.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 16 October 1942:

As for the technique of warfare, the long struggle and harsh lessons [of the war so far] have resulted in the enemy armies assimilating a certain amount of each other's technology, methods and tactics. Germany owed its lightning battlefield successes at the start of the war to a particular novel type of equipment and troop training, and the novel tactical deployment of these troops and their progressive material. It is a well-known rule of military history that the inferior force in any war always learns from its more successful adversary, given the time and energy. Another rule of military history is that new offensive weapons always result—after some delay—in the invention of new defensive weapons, and that new offensive tactics are always countered by new defensive tactics. Thus the advantage held by the possessor of modern offensive weapons and offensive methods, and of any new or surprising means of warfare, gradually wears off. The weaker adversary, if he does not lose heart and admit defeat, in time appropriates the new mode of warfare and structures his military organization and the training of his cadres and enlisted men accordingly. . .

It is moreover a long obsolete view that the war can be won by economic weapons alone. Some time ago Allied war propagandists ceased to voice the theme that the Germans would one day prove unable to carry on the war due to lack of fuel. . .

It is in any case noteworthy that certain traditional institutions must be abandoned under the impress of war. In Germany, the tradition [which is being abandoned is that of] a socially close-knit, professionally trained officers' class; this class is now being forced to absorb new elements. In Russia, the Revolutionary tradition of the political commissar, who for 25 years has exercised such an important, indeed decisive role in the civil training of troops, and doubtless an often obstructive if not pernicious influence on troop commanders, is likewise giving way.

Saturday 17 October 1942
The *Soviet Information Bureau* announced:

Faced with overwhelming pressure from the Germans, our army has been forced to carry out another retreat movement northwest of Stalingrad—the fourth such retreat within 48 hours. Nevertheless reports from the front indicate that the Fascists are paying extremely dearly for their relatively small territorial gains. Reliable sources say that the retreat movements are being conducted in a completely orderly manner and are slight in relation to the terrain. Furthermore, it is emphazised that at no point have German troops been able to achieve their objective of penetrating to the Volga.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Tuesday 20 October 1942:

Winter has already set in at several points on the Eastern Front. For the time being we are maintaining silence about the theme "winter," so long as the OKW report does not issue an official announcement on the subject.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No. 328 of 22 October 1942 (extract):

I. General comments: News of the onset of bad

The Eastern Front, 1942: an Sd Kfz 250 light infantry tank, part of a German infantry division



weather on the Eastern Front has caused many Germans to draw comparisons between the military and political situation at the start of this winter, and the situation at the same time last year.

The extremely strong, repeated Russian offensives in the central and northern sectors have confirmed the universal conviction that Russia still has vast reserves of manpower and equipment to draw on. The fighting on the Eastern Front has, Germans believe, largely bogged down into trench warfare, and Stalingrad especially has become a second Verdun. Evidently the situation on the North African front has come to a similar deadlock.

Monday 2 November 1942, Cairo
British Eighth Army Headquarters reported:

The second phase of the battle of El Alamein has begun. Near the coast we have taken up battle against the most strongly fortified Axis defensive positions. Fighting is now in progress among the dunes, which are up to a mile wide. All the dunes run parallel to the coast road and to the rail line, which runs along approximately a third of a mile north of the road. The coastal zone, of which it is hard to gain a clear overall view, contains hundreds of small, very strong stations that Axis combat engineers have linked together over the past few months to form a "Desert West Wall."

Tuesday 3 November 1942, Moscow
The Soviet *TASS News Agency* reported:

In accordance with a new order based on laws already enacted by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in 1940 and 1941, all workers who leave their workposts without authorization, fail to turn up for work on time or do negligent work will in future be regarded and sentenced as criminals.

Extract from the Journals of Field Marshal Rommel, dated 3 November 1942:

I returned to my battle station around noon. On our return journey, we narrowly escaped a carpet of bombs laid down by 18 British planes. At 1:30 P.M. an order arrived from the Führer which read as follows:

To Field Marshal Rommel:

The German people, in company with myself, are following your heroic defensive struggle in Egypt with devout trust in your personal leadership and the bravery of the German and Italian troops who serve you. In your present situation you can have no other thought than to hold out, refuse to yield a step, and commit to the battle every weapon and every soldier who can be released from other duties. Sizable aerial reinforcements are being transported [for you] to the Supreme Commander South. The Duce and the



September 1942: an improvised performance by a Russian folk-singer standing on a Soviet armored brigade tank

Comando Supremo [Italian Armed Forces High Command] will also make the most strenuous efforts to transfer to you the means to continue the struggle.

ADOLF HITLER

German-Italian Army Retreats
Thursday 5 November 1942, Cairo
British Headquarters in North Africa announced in a special communiqué:

After twelve days and nights of incessant attacks by our ground and aerial forces, Axis troops in the Western Desert are in full retreat. Their disordered columns are being attacked relentlessly day and night by our land forces and the Royal Air Force. It is known that General von Stumme, who is said to have been commanding their forces during Rommel's stay in Germany, has been killed. As of today, we have destroyed or captured more than 260 German and Italian tanks.

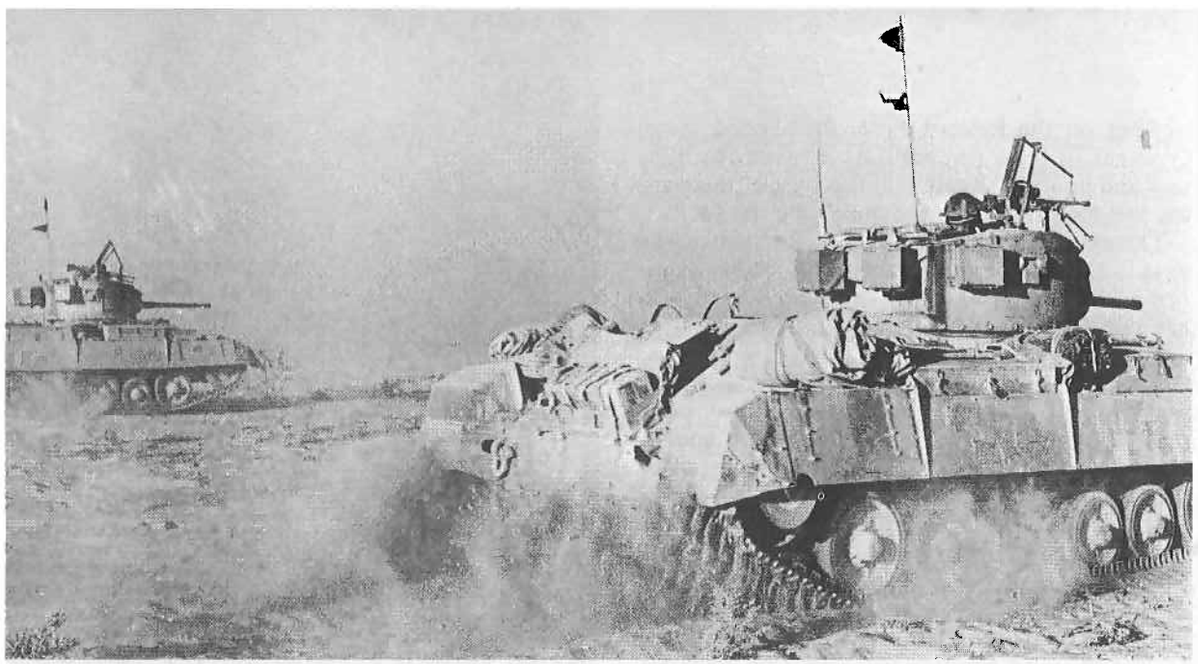
General Alexander to Winston Churchill
Friday 6 November 1942:

Ring out the bells! Prisoners estimated now 20,000, tanks 350, guns 400, M.T. [motorized transport vehicles] several thousand. Our advanced mobile forces are south of Marsa Matruh. Eighth Army is advancing. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 539, vol. IV]

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

6 November 1942:

Just as Rommel, during the first two weeks of his offensive in Libya last May, had to force his way step by step through British minefields, so



November 1942 at Gazala: British infantry tanks on the march. The desert offered almost no cover and the sand corroded weapons and equipment. In North Africa, a tank engine had only half its normal life.

Montgomery, the newly appointed British commander in North Africa, has begun his attack with a heavy artillery barrage supported by an intensive deployment of aircraft. In the first phase of this operation, the armored arm was as yet unable to play any role. As breaches were opened by the cannon fire, the first forces to begin their slow advance were engineer and infantry divisions who were kept busy clearing out mines and other obstacles to pave the way for the tanks to follow up. . . A breakthrough, and the consequent resumption of mobile warfare, took place at the start of this week along the 40-mile-wide [El Alamein] front between the seacoast and the Qattara Depression.

US Landing in French North Africa

Sunday 8 November 1942, Washington
The *US War Department* announced:

During the night our army, naval and aerial forces started landing operations at a number of points along the coast of French North Africa, to protect the region in the wake of increasing threats from the Axis powers. Steps have been taken to inform French people in the area of our plans, via radio and air leaflets. The combined operations by US forces and British naval and air force units, are unfolding under the command of the Allied commander-in-chief, General Eisenhower.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
8 November 1942:

We are to stigmatize the invasion landing in North Africa as an infamous violation of law on the part of the gangster President. An American announcement emphasizes that the Americans provided the initiative and plan for this operation and that the British consented to the seizure of European colonial possessions.

Afrika Corps Generals on the Casualty List
8 November 1942, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

A British War Office publication points out that the Afrika Corps has lost a number of its generals. So far it has been determined that nine generals have been lost, five of whom were killed and four taken prisoner. The dead are Generals von Bismarck, von Prittwitz, von Summermann, Neumann-Solkow and von Stumme; the prisoners, Generals von Crüwell, von Ravenstein, von Thoma and Schmidt.

Winston Churchill to Joseph Stalin
8 November 1942:

You have no doubt realized that when Hitler despairs of taking Baku he will try to wreck it by air attack.

Pray accept this from me. [English quoted from p. 75 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

General Alexander to Winston Churchill
Monday 9 November 1942:

On October 27 came a big armoured counter-attack in the old style. Five times they attacked with all available tanks, both German and Italian, but gained no ground and suffered heavy and, worse still, disproportionate casualties, for our tanks, fighting on the defensive, suffered but lightly. On October 28 [the enemy] came again, [after] prolonged and careful reconnaissance all the morning, to find the weak spots and locate our anti-tank guns, followed by a smashing concentrated attack in the afternoon with the setting sun behind him. . . This was the last occasion on which the enemy attempted to take the initiative. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, pp. 531 and 534, vol. IV]

Germans March into Unoccupied France
Wednesday 11 November 1942, Vichy
The French *Havas News Agency* reported:

This morning Paris Radio announced that German troops have been ordered to march into the unoccupied zone of France. The radio also broadcast a message from Hitler to Marshal Pétain.

Thursday 12 November 1942, Cannes
The Italian *Stefani News Agency* announced:

Last night Italian troops marched into Cannes.

Secret Report of the German *SS Security Service* on internal affairs, No. 334 of 12 November 1942 (extract):

I. General comments: In particular, the landing by the Americans in French North Africa has attracted enormous attention from the whole [German] population and in many cases had a shocking effect on morale. Views still vary as to the gravity of the situation. While some Germans see the Anglo-American landing venture as a threat to Rommel's panzer army and think that further operations by our enemies in this theater will present a thorny problem, others see it as the erection of the "second front," a view which they feel is substantiated by the German march into the previously unoccupied zones of France.

French Resistance Broken
Friday 13 November 1942
General Eisenhower's Headquarters reported:

Resistance by the [Vichy] French forces in French North Africa has been halted everywhere except at a few remote bases.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

13 November 1942:

While all attention was still focussed on the events in Egypt, where Rommel's army has been retreating westward ever since the British Eighth Army forced a breakthrough at El Alamein, news arrived last Sunday of a landing by American troops in French North Africa. . . In military terms it was undoubtedly a great organizational, technical and tactical feat to transport such an extensive armed force, equipped with the masses of accessories required by modern warfare, great distances over the sea undetected by the enemy, and to land them simultaneously at widely separated points along the chosen segments of the coast.

Fighting between French and German Troops
Saturday 14 November 1942
Allied Headquarters in North Africa reported:

The troops of the French garrisons in Tunisia are engaged in combat against German forces there.

Rommel in Retreat
14 November 1942, Cairo
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:



November 1942: heavy Soviet KV-1 tanks in the southern part of the Eastern Front. The Red Army almost never varied its assault tactics. After a preliminary massive artillery barrage, the Soviet tanks would attack in swarms.

After capturing Bardia and Tobruk, British motor columns are driving rapidly toward Gazala and may well already have reached it. The British have encountered only token resistance west of Tobruk.

German Armored Units Deployed
Sunday 15 November 1942, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The first German Luftwaffe and armored units have arrived in Tunisia.

Wednesday 18 November 1942
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

The heavy fighting is continuing around Stalingrad. The Fascist army is concentrating its attacks on the zone nearest to the Volga from the factory quarter. At the same time three German armored columns have been deployed in the western district to break up General Rodimtsev's guards troops. In the morning the General mobilized Stalingrad's worker battalions which have already occupied the barricades. The high-angle guns which our troops have brought into position in sizable numbers on the eastern bank of the Volga are firing incessantly on the "Krasny Oktyabr" [Red October] factory where the besieging German army now holds its strongest stations.

Secret Report of the German *SS Security Service* on internal affairs, No. 336 of 19 November 1942 (extract):

A large proportion of Germans feel that our reporting on French North Africa was not clear enough. . .

People are following anxiously the news of fighting by our Afrika Corps. Germans have found it hard to get used to the formulations "scheduled evacuation" or "successful withdrawal," and we continue to hear the comment that these are the same types of phrases that the British were using [not long ago].

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 20 November 1942:

In the eastern Mediterranean, Rommel has drawn the logical consequences from his defeat in Egypt and the threat in Algeria following the Allied invasion operation, and abandoned all of Cyrenaica to the enemy while retreating rapidly westward with the remains of his panzer army. . . Allied troops operating out of Algeria meanwhile began to march in the opposite direction. On November 13 they occupied the port of Bône along the coastal road leading from Algiers to Tunis. This set off the race for Tunisia, for on November 16 Berlin confirmed that Axis troops have occupied Tunis.

Turning Point in Stalingrad

Monday 23 November 1942
The *Red Army High Command* reported in a special announcement:

Our troops in the approaches of Stalingrad have gone on the offensive against German forces. The offensive was undertaken at two sectors in the northwest and south of Stalingrad. After penetrating the enemy defense line along an 18-mile stretch in the northwest of the Serafimovich area, our troops have advanced 35 to 40 miles in three days of intense fighting in which they overcame enemy resistance.

Our troops have captured the city of Kalach on the east bank of the Don, the Krivo Mushanskaya rail station, and the rail station and city of Abganerovo, thus severing both rail lines east of the Don which the enemy was using to supply his troops.

Secret Report of the German *SS Security Service* on internal affairs, No. 338 of 26 November 1942 (extract):

All Germans are once again eagerly following and discussing the military situation on the Eastern Front, which for a time was neglected in favor of events in Africa. Here too many people claim that our position has deteriorated. In particular, the report of the Russian incursion into our defensive front in the bend of the Don and southwest of Stalingrad has produced great alarm because people had expected uneventful progress in this sector and, besides that, had believed the Russians no longer capable of any such massive deployment. The powerful deployment of Russian tanks, whose numbers can be guessed from reports of the numbers we have knocked out, has revived in many Germans the suspicion that the enemy has apparently inexhaustible reserves.

With Christmas approaching, everyday cares, which had receded as a result of improved food supplies and announcements of special Christmas ration distributions, are again absorbing increasing attention, especially among the women.

Joseph Stalin to Winston Churchill
Friday 27 November 1942:

I have carefully read your communication saying that you and the Americans are continuing the preparations along your southeastern and southern coasts in order to keep the Germans pinned in the Pas de Calais, etc., and that you are ready to take advantage of any favourable opportunity. That, I hope, does not imply renunciation of your Moscow promise to open a second front in Western Europe in the spring of 1943. [English quoted from *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Monday 7 December 1942:

We are not to use [in our German Press publications] the term "Fortress Europe," which is said to be defensive and to have only negative connotations. A fortress can be besieged, and it is then only a question of time before it falls. The Minister [Goebbels] warns us against expressing the view that the offensive just mounted by the Russians will be their last. We must not on any account say any such thing, for no one can tell whether the Russians have in fact now deployed their last strength. They have offered many surprises in the course of the war, so that caution is recommended.

Attempt to Relieve German Troops at Stalingrad Fails

German *OKW* Dispatch dated Sunday 13 December 1942:

The East: Field Marshal von Manstein reports that he has been unable to achieve a decisive victory with his two attacking panzer divisions and that the available forces are inadequate, given his lengthening flanks. The Führer has decided that the 11th Panzer Division is to remain in its present deployment at the Chir river bridgehead because it is now under heavy enemy attack, and that instead of the 11th, the 17th Panzer Division is to be supplied to the Hoth Group [Fourth Panzer Army, the relief force sent to break through to Sixth Army at Stalingrad]. The impression of Army Group B is that the enemy opposite the Italian Eighth Army may be only feigning an intention to attack in order to pin down our forces there.

British Report Rommel in Retreat
Monday 14 December 1942, Cairo
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

It is officially reported that the forces of Field Marshal Rommel have been thrown out of their strong positions at El Agheila and are now retreating west.

German *OKW* Dispatch dated Tuesday 15 December 1942:

The East: The Hoth Panzer Group has made no further advances. It has been joined by the 15th Luftwaffe Field Division, comprising only four battalions, which is still assembling far to the rear. The expected massive Soviet attack on the Italian Eighth Army has not yet materialized, and it looks as if the enemy is trying only to keep up persistent feints to pin down our reserves. The Führer has not yet arrived at a conclusion about this. Ten times as much grain this year as last year has been delivered to the grain depots of the Ukraine: namely 8.1 million tons. The Führer has now permanently abandoned his intention to withdraw for a prolonged period to his mountain retreat.

15 December 1942, southwest of Stalingrad: The German Hoth Panzer Group is assembling for an attack. The enemy's antitank artillery fire could be dissipated only by the massed deployment of large numbers of tanks.



Thursday 17 December 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command (OKW)* announced:

In Cyrenaica the German-Italian armored army is withdrawing westward as scheduled. All attempts by the enemy to interfere with its movements have been warded off in violent fighting.

Secret Report of the German *SS Security Service* on internal affairs, No. 344 of 17 December 1942 (extract):

I. General comments: Rumors are rife all over the Reich that approximately 80,000 to 100,000 German troops have been completely encircled at Stalingrad. This has triggered revived fears that Stalingrad may now turn into a "second Verdun." However, a reassuring and calming effect is resulting from stories told by [German] soldiers on leave from the Russian front, who say that the enemy is deploying mainly very young untrained boys or old men and that the quality of his weapons has also deteriorated greatly. Following the recent concrete details offered in Wehrmacht reports, the people have been following the military situation in North Africa attentively, although in many cases they are unable to form a clear picture of what is going on.

Sunday 20 December 1942, Cairo
The British *Reuters News Agency* announced:

Most of Rommel's rearguard troops, including the panzer units, have succeeded in escaping encirclement by our troops, due to their preponderance of tanks.

Tuesday 29 December 1942
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Renewed enemy attacks between the Volga and the Don and in the large Don Bend have failed in the face of hard defensive fighting. We have annihilated an enemy force which we kept encircled for several days. Since December 24, with the support of the Luftwaffe, we have destroyed or captured 65 tanks, 30 cannon, large numbers of heavy and light infantry weapons and other equipment, and taken a great many prisoners. Enemy casualties greatly exceeded the numbers captured. The Italian Julia Division particularly distinguished itself in our defensive fighting in the large bend of the Don.

29 December 1942, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* announced:

The weather has improved considerably along the southern sector of our Western Front. The blizzards have let up and given way to freezing cold. This has eliminated the danger that the masses of snow posed to supplies needed for our offensives. The improved weather has also enabled the Fascists to resume their cargo flights to supply Hoth's 20 encircled divisions between the Volga and the Don; however, they are suffering heavy losses of aircraft and flying personnel. Now that our troops have occupied the bend of the Don, the German planes' approach route has been considerably extended, a factor that makes it easier for us to fight the aircraft. As a result, the German Junkers Ju-52 transport planes are exposed to our fighters and flak for much longer, and also are able to carry fewer needed supplies due to their increased fuel load.

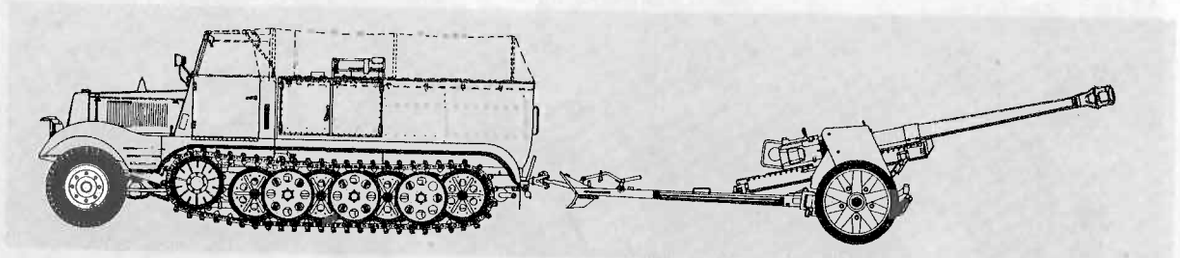
Strategy and Tactics

JULY TO DECEMBER 1942

To the amazement of virtually everyone, the German drive in North Africa was actually halted at El Alamein. The reserves the British brought up from Egypt occupied the approximately 35-mile-long defensive line in time, before the battered remnants of Auchinleck's Eighth Army arrived in Rommel's drive path.

Auchinleck was convinced that Rommel's panzer army could be stopped before its final drive through to Alexandria. Field Marshal Rommel, for his part, knew that he had to penetrate the British positions—which ran north to south from the coast of the Mediterranean to the impenetrable Qattara Depression—at high speed if he was to avoid risking the entire offensive once again. But while the British Eighth Army had access to abundant supplies from the brimming depots in Alexandria some 40 miles to its rear, Rommel's supplies had been left far behind and the Germans had to get by on captured British stores.

German 7.5-cm No. 40 antitank cannon being towed by a light 3-ton (Sd Kfz 11) tractor vehicle



On Wednesday 1 July 1942, the Afrika Panzer Army, who the day before had reached the El Alamein bottleneck with only 48 combat-ready tanks and armored cars, began a drive against British Eighth Army positions but were driven back.

That same day, the fortress of Sevastopol fell after an attack that had consumed 46,750 shells and 20,000 tons of bombs. The victorious German General von Manstein, commander of the Eleventh Army, was promoted by Hitler to field marshal's rank.

On Thursday 2 July 1942, Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army had reached the Stary Oskol-Kastornoye rail line [northwest of Stalingrad], thereby encircling the left wing of General Parsegov's Soviet Fortieth Army.

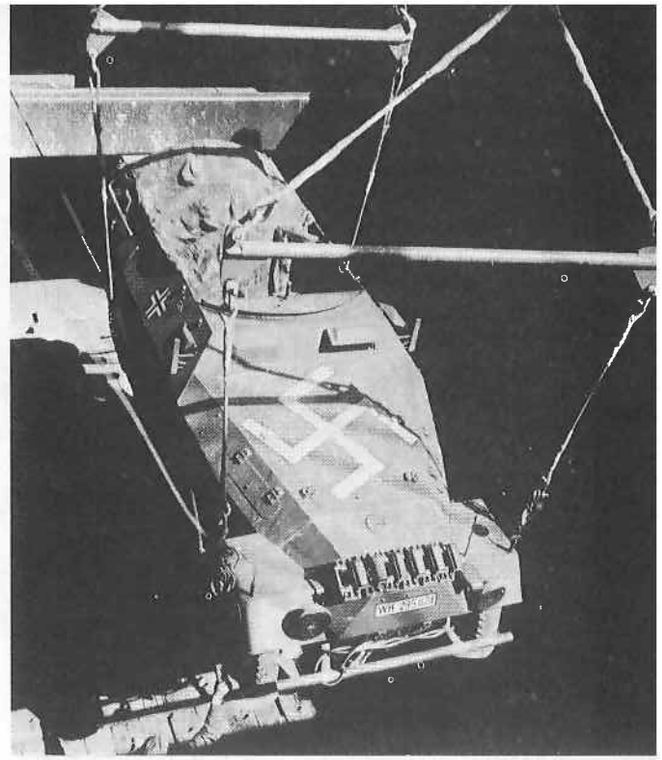
On Friday 3 July 1942, the Afrika Panzer Army had to break off the operation it had begun on July 1 to penetrate the British defense lines at El Alamein, and go on the defensive with weakened forces.

On Saturday 4 July 1942, the German Eleventh Army reported an end to its struggles in the Crimea, which had started on June 7. With the capture of Cape Kherson [beside Sevastopol] the entire Crimea was now in German hands. Recorded Soviet losses [apart from dead and wounded] were 97,000 prisoners, 631 cannon and 26 tanks.

On Monday 6 July 1942, the 24th Panzer Division, part of von Weichs's Second Army, entered Voronezh.

On Tuesday 7 July, von Bock's Army Group South was divided into two parts. One part, Army Group A under Field Marshal List, was made up of Ruoff's Seventeenth Army, Dumitrescu's Rumanian Third Army, and von Kleist's First Panzer Army. The other part became Army Group B under von Bock and included the Second Army, Paulus's Sixth Army, Jany's Hungarian Second Army and Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army.

That same day STAVKA formed part of the Bryansk Front [army group] into the Voronezh Front under Vatutin, which included the Sixth, Fortieth and Sixtieth Reserve Armies, plus the IV, XVII, XVIII and XXIV Armored Corps. The remaining part of the Bryansk Front under Chibisov was now made up of the Third, Thirteenth and Forty-Eighth Armies, the Fifth Armored Army, the I and



July 1942 in Naples harbor: A German Sd Kfz 251 medium infantry tank is being loaded for shipment to the German Afrika Panzer Army. Most of the Axis transport vessels were sunk en route.

XVI Armored Corps and the VIII Cavalry Corps.

Meanwhile, the German Sixth Army reached the Bokovskaya-Novaleksandrovsk area in the large Don Bend, thus surrounding from the north and northeast the main forces of Malinovsky's Southwest Front, which were unable to retreat east and so were forced to fight in unfavorable positions at Kantemirovka. [Reference to the map of the German march on Stalingrad, p. 182, will make it easier to follow the course of the battle.—Trans.]

On Wednesday 8 July 1942, the first phase of operations in the German offensive which began on 28 June (Operation Blue/Brunswick) was concluded. It had been only partly successful. The Germans had caved in the Soviet front line between the Don and the Donets, but most of the Soviet forces had been able to escape encirclement and carry out an ordered retreat. Soviet losses (apart from dead and wounded) included 73,000 prisoners, 1,200 cannon, 700 tanks.

Soviet forces which had broken through German lines in the winter were still operating to the rear of von Kluge's Army Group Center. These Soviet forces included some 10 infantry and 4 cavalry divisions at Sychevka, and about 20,000 men south of Vyazma and Yelnya. They were gradually wiped out in a series of protracted individual operations. Some of the Soviets around Yelnya escaped into the woods at Bryansk.

On Sunday 12 July 1942, an offensive operation by the German Ninth Army under General Model, which had been launched on July 2 against the Soviet salient west of Sychevka [in the central USSR], ended when the Germans smashed the Soviet Thirty-Ninth Army (under Maslennikov) and the XI Cavalry Corps. Soviet losses included 30,000 prisoners, 591 cannon, 218 tanks.

That same day STAVKA announced the disbanding of Malinovsky's Southwest Front, which was converted into the Stalingrad Front with Gordov in command as of July 23. The Stalingrad Front army group included Danilov's Twenty-First Army, Kolpakchi's Sixty-Second Army, Kuznetsov's Sixty-Third Army, and Chuikov's Sixty-Fourth Army. The Sixty-Second, -Third and -Fourth Armies were all drawn from STAVKA's strategic reserve troops. The Military Council member supervising the new Stalingrad Front was Nikita Khrushchev.

On that same July 12, the Germans finished mopping up the Soviet troop cauldron they had surrounded at Volkhov. After weeks of hard fighting, the resistance of units of the Soviet Fifty-Second Army under Klykov, Galinin's Fifty-Ninth Army and Vlassov's Second Shock Army had been broken and the Soviets had lost some 100,000 dead. German Cavalry General Lindemann's Eighteenth Army had cleared the last of the enemy out of the difficult marshland. Soviet losses included 32,759 prisoners, 2,150 motor vehicles, 649 cannon, 171 tanks. Among the prisoners was General Vlassov, commander of the Second Shock Army.

After Rommel's summer offensive in North Africa, the front gradually stabilized in Egypt along the 35-mile-wide passage between the marshy Qattara Depression in the south, which was impassable to tanks, and El Alamein on the Mediterranean to the north. After the arrival of Italian reinforcements, Rommel's Panzer Army consisted of four panzer divisions, of which two were German, and eight infantry divisions, of which two were German.

General Auchinleck's Eighth Army had been reinforced with two Middle East divisions and American Sherman tanks and self-propelled artillery. At this time, the Eighth army had 3 armored divisions, 7 armored brigades and 7 infantry divisions. The two forces were approximately equal in strength; but the British had command of the air.

On Monday 13 July 1942, after a swift advance, Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army on the Eastern Front reached Millerovo and Morotsovskaya, and von Kleist's First Panzer Army reached Kamiensk.

That day Hitler ordered the Fourth and Fifth Panzer Armies, which were headed toward Stalingrad, to veer off toward Rostov, because he believed it was possible to conduct a battle of encirclement in which the Soviet Southern Front armies could be surrounded and destroyed.

On Wednesday 15 July 1942, Hitler, disappointed by the results of the Eastern offensive, relieved Field Marshal von Bock of his post as commander of Army Group B and replaced him with General von Weichs, whose Second Army was now placed under command of General Salmuth.

By now, starting the second half of July, Rommel realized that any further offensive operation by his weakened forces was out of the question. Both adversaries made preparations for defense, first of all laying down minefields. Most of Afrika Panzer Army's vehicles were worn out and had to be repaired again and again, with mounting difficulty, in front-line workshops.

On Thursday 16 July 1942, units of Auchinleck's British Eighth Army launched several isolated attacks from their El Alamein positions against the Italian sector of the Axis front. The British succeeded in making deep breaches in the front lines and mauled the Italian X Corps.

On Friday 17 July, the Germans began their drive against Stalingrad by fighting Soviet troops on the Chir river. After capturing Voronezh ten days earlier, the Germans had advanced rapidly to the middle Don.

The rapidity of the German armored advance brought with it many disadvantages and risks. The vehicles became badly worn and supplies were slow to reach them along the overextended supply lines. The Soviets were beaten in several sectors, and captured unless they retreated promptly; but in other areas they stubbornly refused to give way.

On Tuesday 21 July 1942, Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army succeeded in crossing the Don east of Rostov. Hitler had at first intended both the Sixth Army and the Fourth Panzer Army to take Stalingrad. But then, overestimating the significance of German successes in the large Don Bend and believing that the Sixth Army could take the city on its own, he redirected Fourth Panzer Army southward. The Italian Eighth Army under Gariboldi was ordered to secure the Sixth Army's left flank, and advanced out of its reserve position on the middle Don to a position between Jany's Hungarian Second Army and the Sixth Army.

On Wednesday 22 July 1942, hard fighting developed along the Soviet main defensive line in the Don Bend. German army leaders planned to encircle and destroy Kolpakchi's Sixty-Second Army and Chuikov's Sixty-Fourth Army. Bitter battles ensued in which the First and Fourth Panzer Armies, which were still assembling nearby, took part; but the Soviets were able to halt Sixth Army's drive, even though it succeeded in reaching the Don at two points. Hitler was forced to alter his plans again. The Fourth Panzer Army had been regrouping to mount a drive on the Caucasus; the new plan was for it to turn once more and advance to Stalingrad from the southwest along the left bank of the Don, while Sixth Army pushed back the Soviet bridgeheads on the right bank of the Don and marched against Stalingrad from the west.



Southern Russia in the summer of 1942: a German panzer regiment on the way to the front

On Thursday 23 July, after bloody street fighting against the elite Soviet troops of the NKVD (security police), the German 125th Infantry Division, supported by General Herr's 13th Panzer Division and Colonel Rodt's 22nd Panzer Division, captured Rostov on the Don [south of Stalingrad and north of the Caucasus].

That same day, Hitler issued Directive 45 ordering Operation Brunswick, an extension of the German 1942 summer offensive, in which the Germans were to [split their forces and] mount simultaneous drives against Stalingrad and the Caucasus.

On Saturday 25 July, General Hube's XIV Panzer Corps, part of the Sixth Army, reported that it had reached the Don northwest of Kalach.

Next day, July 26, German Army Group A drove out from its Donets bridgeheads to attack the Caucasus. It included Ruoff's Seventeenth Army with four infantry and three mountain divisions, Dumitrescu's Third Rumanian Army with one mountain and three cavalry divisions, and von Kleist's First Panzer Army with three panzer, two motorized, two infantry, two rifle and one Slovakian division. They had air support from Field Marshal von Richtofen's 4th Air Fleet, with Pflugbeil's IV Air Corps and several wings of Fiebig's VIII Air Corps and Dessloch's 1st Flak Corps.

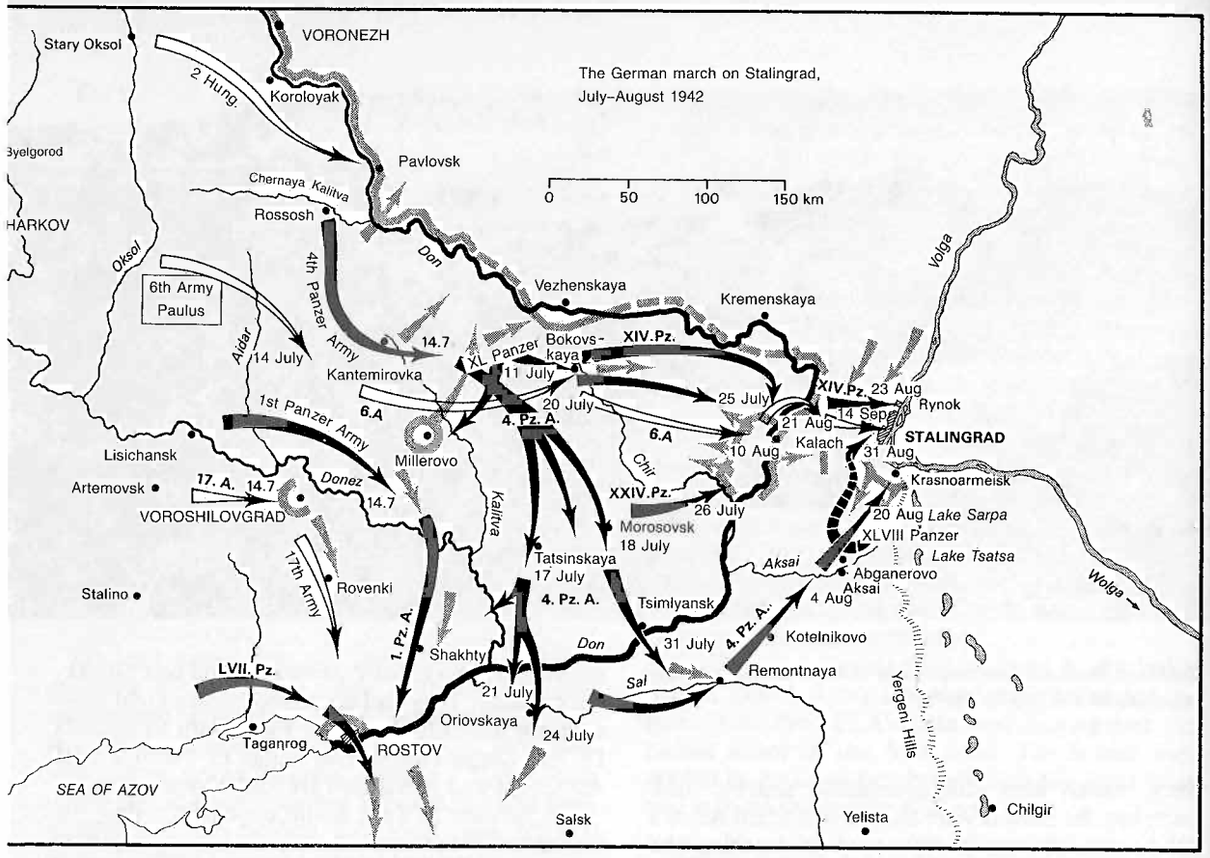
On Tuesday 28 July, Stalin ordered Gordov, the Stalingrad Front commander, to throw everything he had into the fight and "not to retreat one step."

By now the Germans in the south had penetrated the Soviet defense lines on the lower Don, the prerequisite for their drive into the Caucasus.

On Thursday 30 July, Hitler at last ordered the Fourth Panzer Army transferred from Army Group A to Army Group B. He commanded it to advance immediately south of the Don through the Kalmuck Steppes to the Volga at Stalingrad.

On Friday 31 July, the Fourth Panzer Army launched its attack south of Nikolevskaya. The weak Soviet Fifty-First Army under General Kolomniets, which had joined the Stalingrad Front that very day, could not stand up to the onslaught and retreated slowly behind the chain of lakes south of Stalingrad.

The Soviet High Command was at this point moving as rapidly as possible to set up powerful new armored forces. Earlier in July the Soviets had already tried to assemble ten armored divisions with 217 tanks each, but organizational problems and especially the lack of trained crews had forced them to abandon the attempt, and several of these new Soviet armored units were converted into infantry divisions and others into tank brigades. The already-existing types of armored units were then supplemented with tank brigades and tank battalions. Finally STAVKA, notwithstanding its earlier problems in forming large armored units, set up two new armored armies, the First and the Fourth.



Their structure: two panzer corps, one independent tank brigade, one infantry division, one light artillery regiment, one mortar regiment and one flak detachment. The task of the armored armies was independent penetration of the enemy defense and exploitation of the breakthrough in depth. But for the most part the new forces were inadequately equipped with weapons, vehicles, officers and soldiers.

On Sunday 2 August, the main forces of the German Fourth Panzer Army reached Kotelnikovo and threatened Stalingrad directly from the southwest. The commander-in-chief of the Soviet Stalingrad Front ordered the Sixty-Fourth Army to retreat to the small end of the Don Bend and take up the defense on the Mishkova river, [the last natural barrier before Stalingrad,] where the Soviet Fifty-Seventh Army was already in position. During the first days of August, these two Soviet armies succeeded in blocking the Fourth Panzer Army.

On Tuesday 4 August 1942, Hoth's German Fourth Panzer Army led an attack northeastward across the Aksai river against the violently resisting Soviet Fifty-Seventh Army under Tolbukhin and Chuikov's Sixty-Fourth Army, trying to break through to Stalingrad.

Next day, August 5, STAVKA took some of the Stalingrad Front armies and formed them into the Southwest Front under Yeremienko, made up of the Fifty-First Army under Kolomiets, the Fifty-Seventh Army under Nikishev, the Sixty-Fourth Army under Chuikov, and Moskalenko's First Guards Army drawn from STAVKA's reserves.

On Thursday 6 August, von Kleist's First Panzer Army succeeded in crossing the Kuban river at Armavir and advanced toward the Maikop oilfields at the foot of the Caucasus.

On Sunday 9 August, First Panzer Army took Maikop and the Ruoff Army Group captured Krasnodar and Yeysk on the east coast of the Sea of Azov. At the time, these two German forces, and the other parts of Field Marshal List's Army Group A, were engaged in hard fighting with Kamkov's Eighteenth Army (part of the Soviet Transcaucasus Front), Ryzhov's Fifty-Sixth Army and the XVII Cavalry Corps.

On Tuesday 11 August 1942, Field Marshal von Kluge's Army Group Center mounted Operation Whirlwind, when Schmidt's Second Panzer Army advanced to Byelev and tried to pinch off the Soviet salient at Sukhinichi.

The same day, Paulus's Sixth Army, attacking from north and south, beat Kolpakchi's Soviet Sixty-Second Army and Moskalenko's newly formed First Armored Army west of Kalach. Recorded Soviet losses (apart from dead and wounded) were: 35,650 prisoners, 567 cannon and 273 tanks.

The fighting around Kalach was of unprecedented bitterness. For instance, for two days 16 soldiers of the Soviet 40th Guards Infantry Division (part of the First Guards Army) beat off attacks at the Dubovoi Outwork. When their ammunition ran out, only four of the Soviets were still fit to fight, and these—V. D. Kutshetkov, M. P. Stepanenko, V. A. Zhirkov and M. A. Zhuktomov—hurled themselves with packet explosives among the German tanks.

On Wednesday 12 August, the armored spearheads of Fourth Panzer Army, advancing through the Kalmuck Steppes [to the Caucasus foothills], penetrated to and captured the town of Yelista. Their rapid drive was then halted; fuel had to be flown in for them to march on to Grozny, and even then some of the motorized forces were held up for days in Piatigorsk.

On Thursday 13 August 1942, General Montgomery assumed command of the British Eighth Army in Egypt; and General Alexander replaced Auchinleck as Commander-in-Chief Middle East. Montgomery received reports from British intelligence which told him the details of Rommel's planned attack, and he ordered mines laid before the British southern positions. The British generals' most important intelligence source was indeed the communications signals exchanged among the Germans themselves, which the British were able to decode thanks to their possession of an Enigma cipher machine of the type the Germans used for both army and air communications. The British specialists of Operation Ultra, [a top-secret intelligence operation,] had plumbed the secret of Enigma in the spring of 1940.

The beginnings of the Ultra operation lay far in the past. In 1932 a team of three young Polish mathematicians in Warsaw—J. Rozycki, M. Rejewski and H. Zygalski—while conducting an intensive study of the theory of revolving drums, succeeded in unravelling the German Enigma cipher machine [that the Germans would use to transmit the secret signal traffic with which they ran their war machine]. In summer 1939, only a few months before the German attack on Poland, the three scientists built copies of Enigma. On receipt of this news, Major Bertrand, a French secret service chief, travelled to the Polish capital on 24 July 1939 and was joined by two British specialists, Commander Denniston and the mathematician "Dilly" Knox. Two days later, they were given two reproduced German Enigma cipher machines. One stayed in Paris, the other went to London.

In autumn 1939, cryptographers of the British Secret Intelligence Service (the SIS) set up headquarters at Bletchley Park, an estate north of London. An early forebear of the computer had been installed here to help them decode intercepted Enigma-coded signals transmitted by the German army, navy and air force. A special grade of secrecy, Ultra Top Secret, was applied to all information deriving from or relating to the cracked German encoder. Churchill said that it would be better for the British to lose a battle than to reveal their possession of this vital intelligence source.

In mid-August 1942, German forces on the Eastern Front regrouped to allow simultaneous thrusts toward [the Soviet oil production centers of] Baku and Batum. The First Panzer Army was to drive out from Piatigorsk and Prokhladnoye toward Grozny and Makhachkala and Baku, while Ruoff's Seventeenth Army pushed out from the Krasnodar area toward Novorossisk and then



August 1942, southeast of Tobruk: British A12 Matilda II infantry tanks advancing through the desert

along the Black Sea coast to Batum and Tiflis. Meanwhile, Mountain Troop General Konrad's XLIX Mountaineer Corps would advance from Cherkessk over the ridge of the Caucasus mountains to Sukhumi.

On Saturday 15 August 1942, the German Sixth Army ran into the left flank of Romanienko's Soviet Fifth Armored Army, which was defending the bridgehead at the end of the Don Bend before Stalingrad. The Soviet army retreated behind the Don, but its right flank, reinforced by troops of the First Guards Army, held the bridgehead at nearby Kremenskaya.

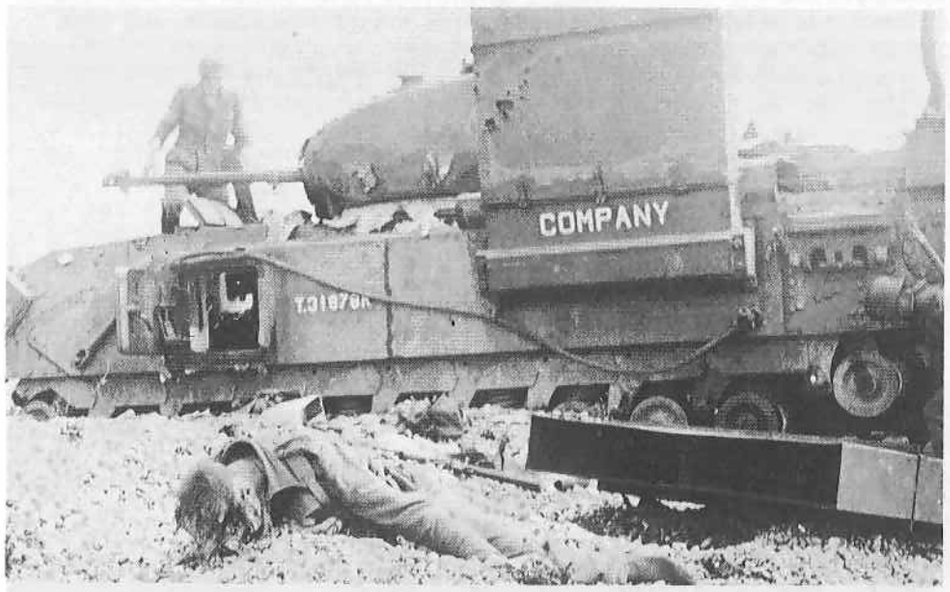
The Soviet commanders' renewed loss of the strategic initiative, and their strained position, repeatedly forced them to order newly created armored units to the front before these had received their full complement or had time to prepare adequately for battle.

The German plan to take Stalingrad in an uninterrupted drive miscarried. The Sixth Army was ordered to cross the Don at Kalach and approach Stalingrad from the northwest while parts of the Fourth Panzer Army advanced on the city from the south.

On Monday 17 August, after bloody fighting with the German Sixth Army south of Zirotinskaya, the remaining intact forces of Kriuchenkin's Soviet Fourth Armored Army and Danilov's Twenty-First Army were forced to retreat across the Don.

That same day, Field Marshal Rommel was ordered to defeat Montgomery's British Eighth Army west of the Nile Delta, occupy the cities of Alexandria and Cairo and then advance directly to the Suez Canal.

Also on August 17, Soviet General Cherevichenko's southern coastal army succeeded in halting the German advance into the western Caucasus, and the Soviet Thirty-Seventh Army stopped the Germans at Nalchik on the Baskan river.



Above: The Eastern Front in autumn 1942. A 7.5-cm German No. 40 assault gun, Version F/8 (Sd Kfz 142/1), is rolling into firing position.

Left: 19 August 1942, Dieppe. British A22 Churchill infantry tank on the beach after being knocked out of action by German antitank guns.

In the early morning hours of Wednesday 19 August 1942, Allied Operation Jubilee was mounted when the 2nd Canadian Division (the 4th and 6th Brigades under General Roberts), supported by an armored unit and commando troops, landed along both sides of the seaside resort of Dieppe on the French Channel coast. In only a short time the German antitank guns had knocked all the Allied tanks out of action. After landing they were unable to break through the shoreline fortifications and had to leave their infantry without cover. When the Canadian engineers tried to clear breaches for the tanks to pass through, they were shot to pieces, because without protective fire from the tanks the infantry were unable to silence the German machine gun nests.

The immediate intervention of the German 571st Infantry Regiment under Lt. Col. Bardel, supported by the aircraft of 2nd and 3rd Fighter Squadrons under Colonels Huth and Ibel and by German coastal artillery batteries, forced the landing troops to reembark before the morning was over. Allied losses included 3,369 men, mostly Canadians, 1,179 of whom were killed and 2,190 captured. They also lost one destroyer, 33 landing craft, 106 aircraft, and 30 Churchill tanks. German losses were 311 dead and 280 missing, one subchaser and 48 planes.

That day, Panzer General Paulus ordered his Sixth Army to attack Stalingrad.

On Sunday 23 August, the spearheads of the German 16th Panzer Division, part of Hube's XIV Panzer Corps, broke through to the Volga at Rynok north of Stalingrad. Now a 180-mile gap had opened between the two German operations against Stalingrad and the Caucasus. Units left behind to secure the flanks of the advancing Sixth Army were relieved by allied divisions so that they were free to advance on the city, and a blocking position was set up between the Don and the Volga to provide security on the north.

On Tuesday 25 August, General Hartmann's 71st Infantry Division fought its way through to the Soviet defensive belt west of Stalingrad.

That day, the Germans took Mozdok [in the Caucasus], but Soviet resistance stiffened along the Terek river. The Soviets defended the ridges of the Caucasus with skill and tenacity. German

mountain troops fought their way through virtually impassable Caucasus valleys and difficult passes, struggling to reach the Black Sea coast.

On Thursday 27 August, Govorov's Leningrad Front and Meretskov's Volkhov Front, along the northern part of the Eastern Front, went on the offensive in the sector of Lindemann's Eighteenth Army, trying to cave in the German salient at the Petrokepost bottleneck near Leningrad. The Soviets succeeded in making several breaches in the German positions.

On Saturday 29 August 1942, the German Fourth Panzer Army thrust into the sector of Zhumilov's Sixty-Fourth Army northwest of Abganerovo and cut off Kolpakchi's Sixty-Second Army.

On the night of 30/31 August 1942, Field Marshal Rommel tried again to gain the initiative at El Alamein, by circling around the British flank in the south on the edge of the Qattara Depression and attacking there with tanks and motorized forces. But this fresh German offensive got stuck in the extended British minefields, and the planned encirclement turned into a frontal battle that went on for several days.

On the upper Eastern Front, the Germans had to muster all their forces at the end of August to repel Soviet relief attacks in the areas occupied by German Army Groups Center and North at Rzhev-Gzhatsk, Demyansk and Petrokepost.

When, at the end of August, the OKH recalled von Manstein's Eleventh Army from the Crimea to attack Leningrad, the Soviet Leningrad and Volkhov Front armies marched against the German Eighteenth Army at Zienavy. The resultant fighting considerably weakened the German forces preparing to storm Leningrad.

At Stalingrad, the German Sixth Army and the Fourth Panzer Army tried to drive the remains of two Soviet armies back across the Volga. But the German infantry and horse-drawn units moved forward slowly. Hoth declared that his Fourth Panzer Army could have taken Stalingrad "on their way by" in July 1942, if he had not continually had to look out for the trailing infantry.

On Wednesday 2 September, Rommel was already forced to break off his offensive and retreat. His last attempt to regain the strategic initiative in North Africa had failed. Thanks to the Ultra team's decoding of Enigma signals, General Montgomery had been expecting Rommel to aim his attack precisely where he did, and concentrated British armored attacks drove the Germans in front of the Alam Halfa heights where they were caught under an intense artillery barrage. A German defeat was clearly on the horizon, and from now on the initiative stayed in British hands.

On Thursday 3 September, Hartmann's 71st Infantry Division (part of von Seydlitz-Kurzbach's LI Corps) penetrated to within 5 miles of the center of Stalingrad.

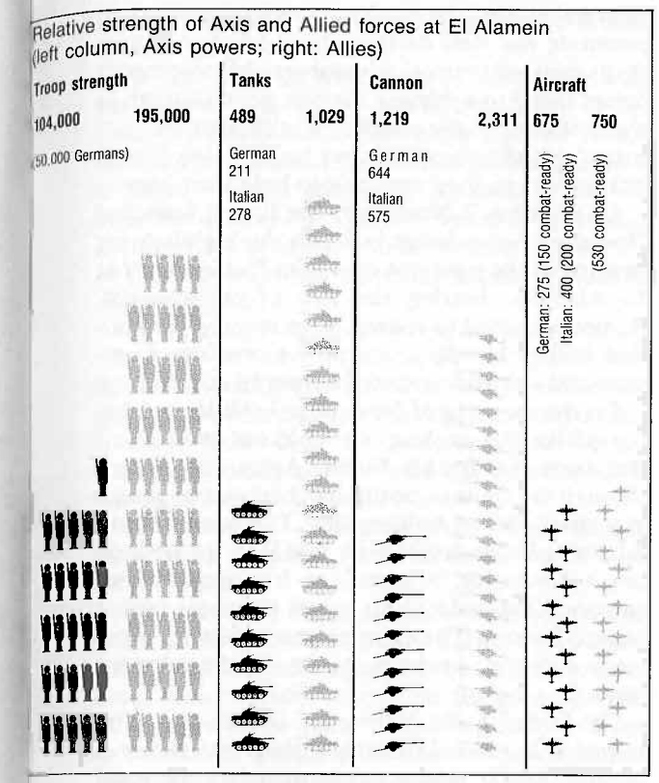
On Wednesday 9 September, Hitler, angered at the slow progress of Army Group A, removed its commander, Field Marshal List, and appointed himself to the post.

On Thursday 10 September, Kempf's XLVIII Panzer Corps (part of the Fourth Panzer Army) penetrated to the Volga on the southern outskirts of Stalingrad between Yelshanka and Kuperoznoye.

On Saturday 12 September, Stalin assigned the defense of Stalingrad to General Chuikov, commander of the Sixty-Second Army, and General Zhumilov, commander of the Sixty-Fourth Army. Next day, September 13, the Germans tried to storm the city. General Deboi's 44th Infantry Division penetrated the dense fortifications, captured the heights in front of the city [from which they could fire artillery across a wide area] and drove through to the Volga. Nikita Khrushchev, the political commissar overseeing the Stalingrad Front, ordered everyone in the city to resist to the death. The remains of Chuikov's Siberian Sixty-Second Army were reinforced by 75,000 civilians—armed workers' groups, militia units, 7,000 young men and 3,000 girls.

On Monday 14 September 1942, the Germans tried to capture the strategically important Mamai Kurgan—a hill above Stalingrad that offered an extended view of the far bank of the Volga [and would enable German artillery to fire across the river]—and launched assault groups of 10 to 15 tanks each, from the north, west and south. An unprecedented form of street fighting took place between the enemy tanks. The Soviets had developed their own special tactics in which their tanks cooperated closely with infantry and combat engineers to counterattack the Germans. The Soviet tanks would fire at walls to bring them down around the German tanks and isolate them from the German defenses and, after knocking out their targets, would retreat or stay under cover, well camouflaged. The Soviets deployed small groups of up to five tanks at a time. The important factor was the cooperation between the tanks and the infantry, usually in platoon strength.

The Soviets often used tanks to fortify their stations, and two or three tanks always formed part of an assault group. Immobilized tanks were turned into gun turrets, forming the backbone of the Soviet antitank defense. Ranged in position



200 to 300 yards behind the main battle line, dug in and carefully camouflaged, they would give covering fire to their infantry who also had dug themselves in or barricaded themselves inside buildings, when the German tanks attacked.

Meanwhile, despite their mounting losses and in violation of all normal tactical rules, the German tanks had to plunge again and again into this debilitating street fighting. The German tanks were decimated by the Soviet close combat tactics without achieving tangible success.

On Wednesday 16 September, von Hauenschild's German 24th Panzer Division broke through to the main railroad station and the Volga river in the south of Stalingrad.

On Wednesday 23 September, the new German Panzer IV, the "Tiger," had its first deployment at Leningrad. After the first Tiger tanks had left the factory, Hitler ordered that they be deployed en masse, in company strength. This was done, but in unsuitable terrain. The Tigers had to drive single file along narrow roads through forest marshlands where they became sitting ducks for the Soviet gunners and did not have a chance to give full play to their 8.8-cm guns. They were all lost to the Soviets, who thus were able to examine their structural secrets before they were even put into mass production.

On Thursday 24 September, Hitler dismissed General Halder, the chief of the German army general staff, from his post after a long-standing conflict between the two men that had begun during the Battle of Moscow in the fall of 1941. Hitler appointed as Halder's successor General Zeitzler, formerly chief of staff to Field Marshal von Rundstedt, the commander-in-chief in the West.

On Monday 28 September, Stalin ordered the army group previously known as the Stalingrad Front to be redesignated the Don Front (under General Rokossovsky), while the Southwest Front became the Stalingrad Front (under Yeremienko).

On Sunday 4 October 1942, a conference took place between representatives of STAVKA, Generals Zhukov and Vassilevsky, and the commanders of the Soviet army groups ("fronts") around Stalingrad. The main topic was an operation to encircle the German Sixth Army.

By this time, the Germans and Russians in Stalingrad were no longer fighting for a whole district or even a street, but for each and every factory hall and building. After the Germans took the downtown area and the southern part of the city, they moved into the workers' districts and industrial plants of the northern area where the fighting was the bloodiest of the war so far. Grenadiers and engineers—supported by tanks, assault guns, flamethrowers, artillery and dive bombers—and people wielding hand grenades, shovels and knives waged an agonizing house-to-house struggle and barricade war. Every position was contested. The Soviet Sixty-Second Army under Chuikov held the area north of the tractor factory, the Red Barricade Gun Factory and the northeast part of the city center, while Zhumilov's Sixty-Fourth Army wrangled for the southern parts of the city.

On Tuesday 6 October, General Herr's 13th Panzer Division, part of von Mackensen's III Panzer Corps, captured Malgobek in the bend of the Terek river in the Caucasus, while First Panzer Army broke through to the area northwest of Grozny.

On Friday 9 October, the Soviet Supreme Council, on Stalin's orders, passed over exclusive power of command to the Red Army generals. This abolished the power of the political commissars, most of whom were unqualified in military affairs, to interfere with the generals' operational and tactical decisions.

On Saturday 10 October, Dumitrescu's Rumanian Third Army, previously deployed in the western Caucasus, took over a sector of the Axis defense along the Don between Gariboldi's Italian Eighth Army and Paulus's Sixth Army. Hitler's de-

cision to transfer this relatively ineffective force to a crucial sector of the front sealed the doom of the Sixth Army.

On Friday 16 October, the Soviet defense commissar issued Order No. 325, which deeply influenced future deployment of Soviet operational tank units. From now on, during Soviet defensive operations the tank and mechanized corps were to be used mainly for strong counterstrokes launched from deep inside the Soviet lines. During offensive operations, on the other hand, the Soviet armor was to be deployed mainly in mobile groups to expand on tactical successes and achieve operational victories. The increasing importance of the Soviet tank troops was evidenced by the establishment of a special administrative bureau, headed by General Federenko, for Armored and Mechanized Troops.

At 9:40 P.M. on Friday 23 October, under cover of darkness and in the absence of Rommel who was recuperating in Germany, Montgomery's British Eighth Army mounted a surprise offensive at El Alamein. A heavy artillery barrage by approximately 1,000 cannon along a 6-mile-wide sector of the front beside the coast was followed by an attack of ten divisions and seven armored brigades containing over 1,000 tanks.

Participating on the Allied side was General Leese's XXX Corps – made up of the 9th Australian Division, the 2nd New Zealand Division, the 1st South African, the 4th Indian and 51st British Divisions and the British 9th Armoured Brigade; General Lumsdon's X Corps, including the British 1st and 10th Armoured Divisions and the 24th Armoured Brigade; General Horrocks's XIII Corps with the British 44th and 50th Divisions, the 7th Armoured Division and 4th Armoured Brigade; and the 1st French Brigade. The Allied forces totalled 150,000 men, 880 aircraft, 500 heavy tanks, 614 medium and light tanks.

The Afrika Panzer Army, which at this time was being commanded by Panzer General Stumme, totalled 372 aircraft and 530 tanks. Stumme died of heart failure during the first hours of the British offensive. General von Thoma took over command until, on the third day of the attack, Rommel at last returned from Germany to the front. Rommel's outstanding tactical skill and the operational ability of his chief of staff prevented the swift defeat of the Axis forces.

The British Eighth Army already had a large number of new American Sherman tanks with 7.5-cm antitank guns which, unlike the British tanks, fired not only armor-piercing shells but also explosive shells that were particularly dangerous to infantry and artillery crews.

It was impossible to conduct any flanking maneuvers in the terrain, so Montgomery had to penetrate the Axis defenses head-on. But despite their massively superior numbers, Montgomery's forces failed to achieve a decisive breakthrough in the first days of the attack; for, although the Germans and Italians took heavy losses in the British heavy barrage, they were able to hold their lines.

On Monday 2 November, the British launched Operation Supercharge in which the Eighth Army penetrated the positions of Afrika Panzer Army at El Alamein. Fearing the risk of encirclement, Rommel decided to retreat. That evening, he notified Führer Headquarters of the necessity of retreat and started to withdraw from El Alamein.

On the morning of November 3, Hitler ordered the Afrika Panzer Army to "hold out at all cost." But once the British Eighth Army had broken through the German positions, there was no longer any possibility of holding out: The war in North Africa had been decided. At 3:30 P.M. on Wednesday 4 November, Rommel, on his own personal responsibility, ordered his troops to retreat farther toward Sollum. The Germans and Italians, hopelessly defeated, began a steady withdrawal westward.

On Friday 6 November, the Eighth Army reported that since 23 October, they had captured around 30,000 prisoners, destroyed or captured 400 cannon and 350 tanks. Six Italian divisions had only 38 tanks left.

On the night of 7/8 November, Allied troops under General Eisenhower mounted Operation Torch, a landing in Morocco and Algeria. The Casablanca area was the landing zone for General Patton's forces: Harmon's US 2nd Armored Division, Anderson's US 3rd Division and Eddy's US 9th Division, a total of 35,000 men and 250 tanks. General Friedendall's force landed at Oran; they included Allen's US 1st Division, Ward's US 1st Armored Division and a number of small units, totalling 39,000 men and 120 tanks. General Anderson's troops landed at Algiers; with Ryder's US 34th Division, Evelegh's British 78th Division and a number of smaller units, they totalled 33,000 men and 80 tanks. The landing troops met resistance from Vichy-French troops that was mostly confined to the cities of Algiers, Oran and Casablanca.

On Tuesday 10 November 1942, French Admiral Darlan declared a ceasefire in North Africa. The US tanks which had penetrated Oran forced the French garrison to surrender.

German paratroops and airborne troops had been dropped into Tunisia where they occupied El Aouina airfield at Tunis and Sidi Ahmed airfield at Bizerta. In Libya the Afrika Panzer Army evacuated Sidi Barrani before the arrival of the British Eighth Army.

At 7:00 A.M. on Wednesday 11 November 1942, the Germans launched Operation Anton when forces of Blaskowitz's First Army and the Felber Detachment crossed the demarcation line and marched into the previously unoccupied part of France. Meanwhile, General Vercellino's Italian Fourth Army marched into the French Riviera.

That same day, Allied troops landed in Bougie, eastern Algeria.

On Thursday 12 November, the Afrika Panzer Army moved out of Sollum, Fort Capuzzo and Bardia. Allied troops landed in Bône [eastern Algeria] and pushed across the Algerian border into Tunisia. Next day, the British Eighth Army marched virtually unobstructed into the once hotly contested port of Tobruk.

On Sunday 15 November, Anderson's British First Army occupied Tabarka on the northwest coast of Tunisia.

That same day Panzer General Nehring arrived in Tunisia to lead the LXXXX Corps, which commanded all German troops in the Tunisia bridgehead. Hitler decided to counter the growing military and political threat by sending strong forces to Tunisia. A complete battalion of new German Tiger tanks was shipped to Africa.

On Tuesday 17 November 1942, the first clash between German and Allied forces in Tunisia took place about 30 miles west of Bizerta.

At 5:00 A.M. on Thursday 19 November, in fog and driving snow, the Soviets mounted Operation Uran from the Don bridgeheads at Kletskaya and Serafimovich. Uran was a grand offensive against the German and other Axis forces between the Don and the Volga. The Soviet forces included two army groups. One group, the Southwest Front under General Vatutin, included Lelyushenko's First Guards Army, Romanienko's Fifth Armored Army, Chistiakov's Twenty-First Army, and the VIII Cavalry Corps, with air support from Smirnov's 2nd Air Army and Krassovski's 17th Air Army. The second army group was the Don Front under Rokossovsky, including Galanin's Twenty-Fourth Army and Batov's Sixty-Fifth Army, with air support from Rudenko's 16th Air Army.

The Soviet forces participating in Operation Uran included, for the first time, strong operational armored units: one armored army, a mechanized corps and four armored corps totalling 894 tanks plus self-propelled artillery. The armored and mechanized corps were mobile groups belonging to the armies. The only large operational army in the Southwest Front was the Fifth Armored Army.

Only a few hours after the Soviet offensive began, Dumitrescu's Rumanian Third Army collapsed along its entire front.



Above: East of El Alamein in early October 1942. The commander of a British armored regiment (left, in a US M3 General Grant medium tank) is issuing orders. On the right is a Bren Carrier infantry tank.

On the morning of Friday 20 November, Yeremienko's Stalingrad Front armies (Trufanov's Fifty-First and Tolbukhin's Fifty-Seventh Army) mounted an offensive south of Stalingrad. Khriukin's 8th Air Army provided air support. This attack, by two Soviet armored corps and nine infantry divisions, was directed against the Rumanian Fourth Army. The Rumanian troops, equipped only with horse-drawn 3.7-cm flak guns, were hopelessly outmatched by their strong armored enemy.

Below: November 1942, US M4 Sherman medium tanks are being unloaded in Casablanca harbor.



Counterattacks by the German 22nd Panzer Division failed, as did attempts by the Hollidt Task Group—five divisions hastily assembled by the Sixth Army—to cordon off the threatened area. By evening, the left flank of the Rumanian Fourth Army had caved in.

That same day in North Africa, the British Eighth Army penetrated to Benghazi in its westward drive.

On Sunday 22 November, Soviet forces advancing from north and south met at Kalach and encircled the German Sixth Army along with the IV Corps, parts of the Fourth Panzer Army, the 20th Rumanian Division and the 1st Rumanian Cavalry Division, in the area between the Don and Stalingrad. Now enclosed inside the cauldron were approximately 260,000 troops, 50,000 horses, 10,000 vehicles, 1,800 cannon, and 100 tanks. They occupied an area of approximately 900 square miles, some 38 miles long and 24 miles wide, with a 105-mile circumference. The entire cauldron lay within range of Soviet long-range artillery.

Hitler thereupon turned over command of Army Group A, which he had assumed personally on 9 September 1942, to General von Kleist, previously C-in-C of the First Panzer Army. Panzer General von Mackensen, the former general of III Panzer Corps, replaced von Kleist as commander of First Panzer Army. In the evening, Hitler ordered the encircled Sixth Army to take up a position of all-round defense and wait for a German relief force to arrive.

On Tuesday 24 November 1942, by Hitler's orders, Stalingrad was declared a fortress and the Axis forces were forbidden to make any attempt to break out.

On Wednesday 25 November, the first transport plane of General Fiebig's VIII Air Corps landed at Gumrak airfield in Stalingrad carrying supplies for the beleaguered German and other Axis troops. This was the start of an extended German airlift operation to supply the cauldron.

On Friday 27 November, the German 7th and 10th Panzer Divisions under the overall command of II SS Panzer Corps (commander SS General Hausser) occupied the French naval base of Toulon near Marseilles, as part of Operation Lila (Mauve). Admiral de Laborde thereupon ordered his French forces to sink their own naval fleet anchored in the harbor [to prevent its use by the Germans].

That same day Field Marshal von Manstein assumed command of the newly formed German Don Army Group made up of the Sixth Army, the Fourth Panzer Army, and Third and Fourth Rumanian armies. This left von Weichs, commander of Army Group B, in command of the German Second Army, the Hungarian Second Army and the Italian Eighth Army.

On Friday 4 December, the German armored force in Tunisia won its first major success when Nehring's LXXXX Panzer Corps overcame strong resistance from the US 1st Armored Division and the British 11th Brigade to capture the city of Tebourba some 18 miles west of Tunis.

On Wednesday 9 December, the German Fifth Panzer Army was formed in Tunisia and placed under command of General von Arnim. This unit was a panzer army in name only: In reality it had only corps strength and was made up of two panzer divisions, one motorized grenadier division and five infantry divisions, of which three were Italian.

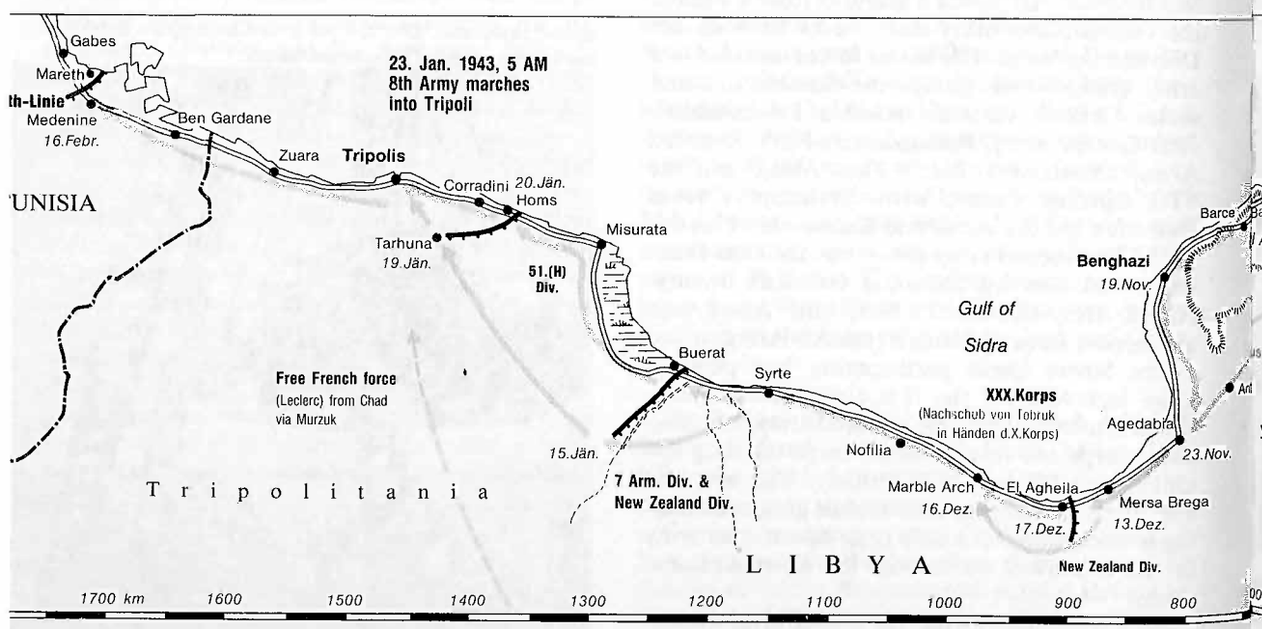
On Friday 11 December, the British Eighth Army led an attack against the Afrika Panzer Army, now occupying positions at Mersa-el-Brega. Under British pressure, Afrika Panzer was forced to retreat further west to positions at Buerat [Libyan coast].

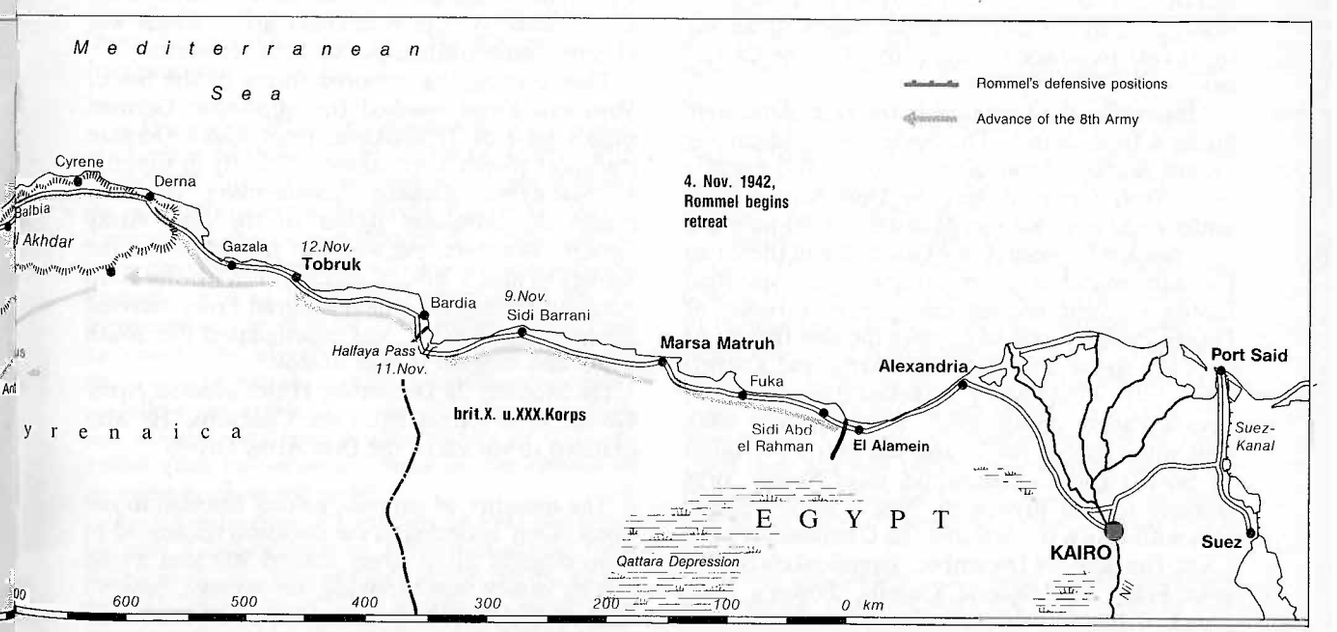
On Saturday 12 December, the Germans launched a thrust from the Kotelnikovo area to relieve the Sixth Army encircled at Stalingrad. The participating forces were parts of Hoth's Fourth



Right: Stalingrad, November 1942. Soviet armor supported by infantry, closes the ring around the German Sixth Army.

The British Eighth Army's triumphal drive through North Africa following the victory at El Alamein





Panzer Army with Rauss's 6th Panzer Division, the 23rd Panzer Division, and the 17th Panzer Division which had been transferred from German Army Group Center. The Hoth Group, with a total of 230 tanks, fought its way laboriously from Salsk toward Stalingrad some 60 miles away, delayed by the continuous Soviet counterattacks that it had to ward off along its eastern flank. The relief force put 385 Soviet tanks out of action but gained only a foot of ground at a time.

On Wednesday 16 December, Golikov's Soviet Voronezh Front (Kuznetsov's First Guards Army, Lelyushenko's Third Guards Army, and Kharitonov's Sixth Army) went on the offensive against Gariboldi's Italian Eighth Army. By that same evening the Italian units were being overrun and wiped out. After a 144-mile drive, Soviet forces were now threatening the rear of the entire southern wing of the German army at the Chir river. Within a few days they had defeated not only part of the Italian Eighth Army, but also the Hollidt Group and the Rumanian Third Army.

On Monday 21 December Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army, marching to try to relieve Stalingrad, overcame hard resistance from Trufanov's Fifty-First Army to reach the Mishkova river; it now stood less than 30 miles from Stalingrad. At this point, the German relief force was compelled to go on the defensive when the Soviets opposing it were reinforced by Malinovsky's Second Guards Army. Hitler refused to approve [the German commanders'] plan for the trapped Sixth Army to break out toward the Mishkova river in Operation Thunderbolt. Then Fourth Panzer Army was forced to break off its relief drive and veer south in heavy fighting to head off Soviet troops advancing to its rear to attack German forces in the Caucasus.

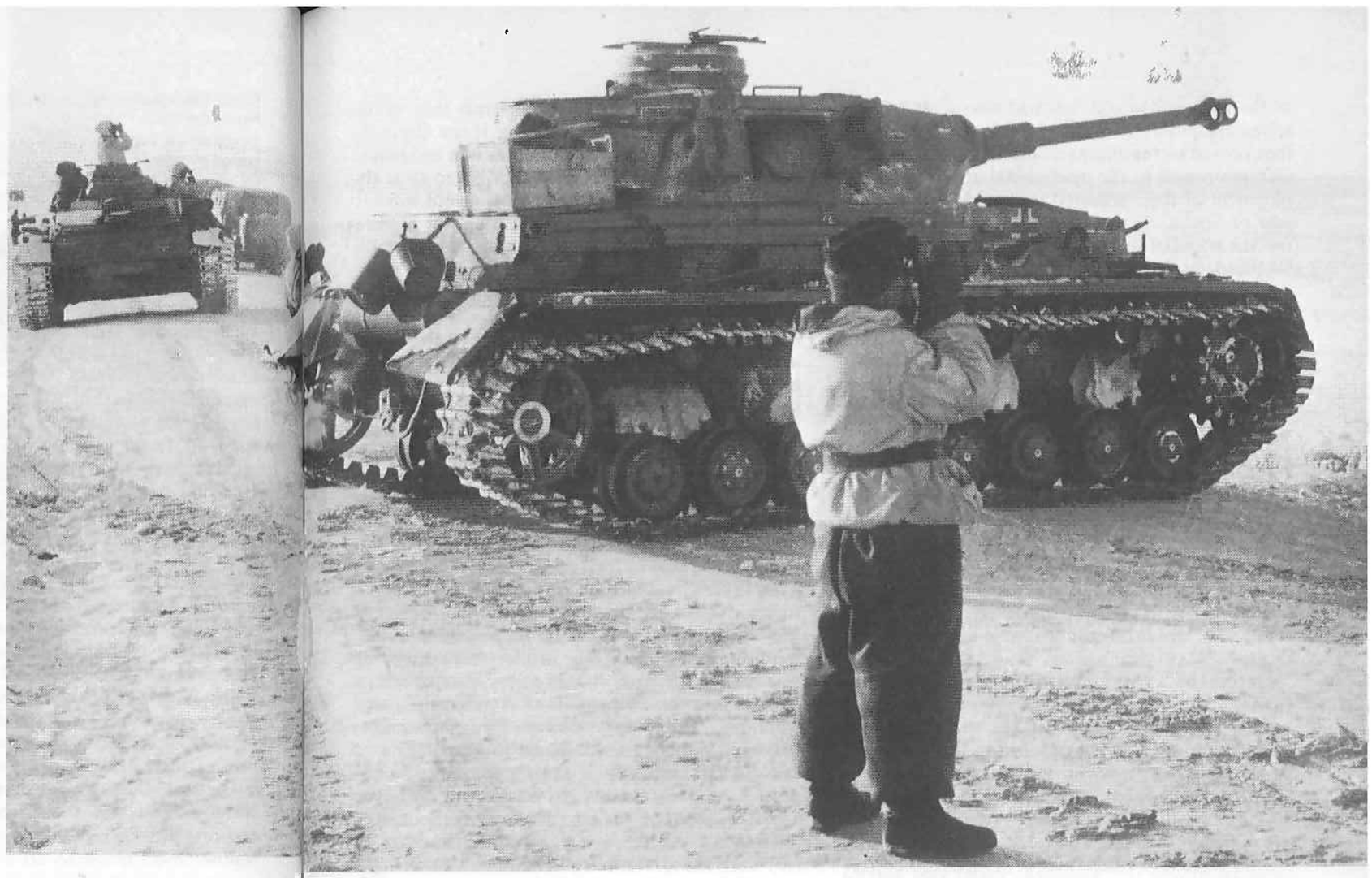
Meanwhile, the Germans in the Don Bend were hit by a fresh defeat. The Soviets were advancing toward Rostov, threatening to isolate and encircle both Army Group A and the Don Army Group under Field Marshal von Manstein. A 60-mile gap now yawned between Army Group B and these two German southern army groups. Von Manstein hastily wheeled around one panzer division of Fourth Panzer Army to counter the new threat. At once the Soviet Second Guards Army and Kuznetsov's Fifty-First Army attacked the weakened Fourth Panzer Army, which fought its way back west with exposed flanks and was partly overtaken by Soviet troops. Meanwhile, eight Soviet corps stormed toward Rostov to form a second pincer arm with which to surround the Germans.

On Thursday 24 December, Yeremienko's Stalingrad Front (the Second Guards, Popov's Fifth Shock Army and the Fifty-First Army) mounted an offensive against the Rumanian Fourth Army at Kotelnikovo. The Rumanian army, which was already disintegrating, put up little resistance.

That evening the armored forces of the Soviet Voronezh Front reached the important German supply base of Tatsinskaya, from which German transport planes were taking off to fly in supplies to Stalingrad. General Yeremienko's offensive meant the imminent defeat of the Don Army Group. Moreover, the way was now clear for the Soviets to attack Rostov and to finish off the Sixth Army in Stalingrad. The Stalingrad Front received fresh reinforcements, was redesignated the South Front and ordered to take Rostov.

On Monday 28 December, Hitler ordered Army Group A to retreat from the Caucasus. He also planned to withdraw the Don Army Group.

The quantity of supplies getting through to the Sixth Army encircled in the cauldron continued to drop steadily. Sixth Army needed 900 tons a day, but by now it was receiving, on average, only 95 tons. The Soviets had assembled a powerful anti-



Southwest of Stalingrad, the end of December 1942. German Panzer IV tank, Version G (the Sd Kfz 161/1), with a 7.5-cm No. 40 L/48 cannon. It belongs to the Fourth Panzer Army, now fighting to cover its retreat after its failure to relieve the German army in Stalingrad.

aircraft defense to impede the German airlift. In December, the Germans lost 246 planes, mostly Ju-52 cargo planes.

In December 1942, the Germans decided to stop production of their Panzer III tanks, which, with their 5-cm antitank guns, were no longer meeting the demands of battle. However, Panzer III chassis continued to be mass-produced as a base for assault guns. Assault guns, which were grouped into batteries of 7 to 15 cannon, often made up the main antitank force in German assault artillery detachments and brigades. Both Germans and Soviets, trying to give their support artillery the ability to follow the armored track vehicles across difficult terrain, produced a wide variety of self-propelled guns by mounting them on the chassis of obsolete or captured tanks.

Tank production in Germany in 1942 increased by only 1,000 tanks over 1941 production: from 3,256 to 4,278. The production of self-propelled artillery and assault guns increased more than threefold over the same period: from 540 to 1,911. In 1942, Panzer IIs and IVs were the tanks most largely produced. By the end of the year, the Germans had lost more than one third of their tanks, as well as eight entire panzer divisions, including the 10th, 16th and 21st Divisions in Africa, and the 14th, 16th and 24th Divisions at Stalingrad. It was imperative that they replace and reequip these powerful forces immediately.

Despite the unfavorable position of the Soviets at the start of the German summer offensive, and despite their heavy losses, the Red Army succeeded in halting the onslaught of the German panzers, weakening their forces and creating the necessary conditions to go on the offensive themselves. The main German forces, Army Groups A and B, were now strung out over an area thousands of miles from their starting positions and, moreover, were pulling in different directions so that the Germans lost any chance of mounting a concentrated offensive.

As for the Soviets, after one year of the direst catastrophe, they had not only succeeded, by November 1942, in building a new armored force out

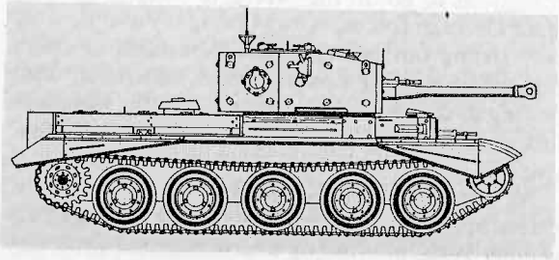
of the ruins of the old, but had also shown themselves apt pupils of the Germans: From now on, they proved increasingly successful in following the German model in the operational and tactical deployment of their armored troops. A striking feature of Soviet armored tactics at the end of 1942 was the speed of their defense after achieving small localized breaches. The Soviet soldier demonstrated extraordinary powers of defensive resistance and was unexcelled in the construction of field fortifications. The entire civilian population was recruited to this task, even women and children, so that often—as at Stalingrad—the fortified systems were several miles deep.

Soviet defensive installations, equipped with antitank guns, could be as much as 6 miles deep, and behind these lay fortified positions with a depth of 18 to 20 miles. Antitank ditches were over 6 yards across and 12 feet deep, and reinforced with dugouts thickly covered by tree trunks, earth or even armored plates. About 8 to 10 yards beyond the outermost ditch was a virtually undetectible belt of wooden case mines. As a rule, tank mines were laid in terrain favorable to tank deployment.

During the Soviet counteroffensive in the battle of Stalingrad, operational tank units first mounted a long, vigorous artillery barrage and tactical air attacks, and then launched tanks in three separate waves. The first wave rolled in as soon as the artillery fire stopped to destroy detected German antitank-gun positions, draw the fire of undetected antitank guns, and pin down enemy tanks. In the second wave, each tank had a predetermined target, a bunker or strongpoint in a particular enemy sector, to silence. The third wave would attack the enemy positions in depth to expand the success of the second wave.

In most areas the Germans were no longer able to maintain their front lines by the end of 1942. They had insufficient antitank forces and could hold back the Soviet armored packs only where they had large numbers of antitank or assault guns. By now Soviet tanks usually succeeded in breaking through the German front and rolling into the hinterland. Here the Germans would defend themselves in so-called hedgehog positions:

British A27 M Mark IV Cruiser tank (first produced 1942)



villages or individual collective farms that would be fortified for all-round defense. If the Germans had enough tanks and assault guns in a hedgehog, they could then mount counterstrokes to clear the area of the enemy. But if the Soviet armor was too strong, the German crews would pull out of their strongpoints under cover of tanks or assault guns.

Their superior training and command skills enabled German troops to overcome the crisis they faced in the southern sector of the Eastern Front at the end of 1942. The Germans allowed the Soviet armored troops to wear themselves out attacking and gaining territory, and then German tanks and grenadier divisions, ground-attack aircraft and artillery went on the offensive with a counterattack.

For German Army Groups North and Center, the whole of 1942 was characterized by non-stop small- or medium-scale defensive battles against the Soviets who were advancing everywhere along the front without achieving any definitive breakthrough.

In 1942, Great Britain restructured its armored forces. Now each armored division had only one tank regiment, supplemented by one three-battalion infantry regiment. The artillery support group was dissolved and the artillery incorporated directly into the division. Tank regiments released from the armored divisions were formed into independent tank brigades designed to support the infantry. The infantry regiment remained unarmored, and its ability to cooperate with the armored parts of the division was consequently limited. Its task was to defend newly gained territory until the arrival of the main infantry.

All British tank models built in 1942, or almost ready for production by the end of that year, were still equipped with antiquated 4-cm cannon. The delay in development of an effective British heavy fighting tank was partly due to British emphasis on the tactical [rather than strategic] deployment of tanks, and partly to the hidebound insistence of the British general staff that tanks be built no larger than could be shipped in a rail car, to meet British railroad restrictions on the size of transported goods. The position changed only when the USA started exporting suitable road transport vehicles along with its tanks.

The arrival of US tanks in the North African theater in 1942 was a major factor in the transfer of the strategic initiative into the hands of the Allies. Almost half the 1,029 tanks that the British forces used at El Alamein were American models, including 252 M4 Sherman tanks. In addition, General Montgomery had one advantage that no commander in history had before World War II: Thanks to the Ultra team's reports of the German Enigma signals, he had exact information of his enemy's plans before the start of operations.

1943

January—June

German Defensive Battles

Sunday 3 January 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* (OKW) announced:

We are continuing hard defensive fighting in the area of the Don river. The enemy has been repulsed along the entire front and has lost 38 tanks. The 6th Panzer Division particularly distinguished itself in the fighting. Hungarian troops repulsed an attack by Soviet forces supported by heavy artillery.

Situation Report, *German Army High Command* (OKH) 3 January 1943

Eastern Front: No notable engagements in Stalingrad.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Wednesday 6 January 1943:

The Minister [Goebbels] explains, concerning his statement yesterday about measures Germans must take [to mobilize] for total war, that our propaganda of course must avoid creating a basically defensive attitude in the German people. On no account are we to give large coverage to slogans, like "Life or Death" or "Fortress Europe," which have undesirable connotations. Since the war started, our propaganda has [the Minister says] taken the following erroneous development:

1st war year: We have won.
2nd war year: We shall win.
3rd war year: We must win.
4th war year: We cannot be defeated.

A development of this kind is disastrous and must on no account continue. Instead the German public must be made aware that we not only mean to win and must win, but also, especially, that we are *able* to win because we will have everything needed for victory as soon as work and production in our homeland are devoted completely to the war effort.

Saturday 9 January 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Hard fighting is continuing between the Caucasus and the Don, at Stalingrad and in the Don river area. The bitterly attacking Soviets have been repulsed everywhere. German troops immediately went on the counteroffensive at many points, inflicting very heavy casualties and destroying large quantities of equipment. We wiped out an encircled force, destroying 18 tanks. Fighter and close-combat fighter planes intervened successfully in the defensive fighting and blew up enemy cavalry and motorized columns and assemblies.

Secret Report of the German *SS Security Service* on internal affairs, No. 349 of 11 January 1943 (extract):

I. General comments: While the winter fighting in the East initially triggered nothing [in Germans] but concern for the personal fate of the participating soldiers, German people now generally regard the battle situation there with a feeling of calm security, despite the reports that we are fighting defensive battles. However, our present reports indicate that the continuation of heavy defensive fighting is leading to an increasing disquiet.

Tuesday 12 January 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Between the Caucasus and the Don, around Sta-

lingrad and in the Don river zone, the enemy has renewed his assaults with powerful forces along his previous focal attack lines. We repelled him in bitter fighting, at some points launching counteroffensives, and destroyed 63 of his tanks, 45 of them at Stalingrad. Mass deployment of infantry resulted in correspondingly heavy Soviet losses. When we moved to counterattack, we encircled and mauled an enemy infantry division.

Soviet Equipment Is Top Priority
12 January 1943, Washington
The American *Associated Press News Agency* reported:

The US Government has informed all departments dealing with arms production and shipment that the Soviet Union has the number-one claim on shipment of any military supplies it may request.

Thursday 14 January 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

After the heavy losses he sustained yesterday, the enemy has carried out only dispersed and isolated attacks in the western Caucasus. Between the Caucasus and the Don, ongoing Soviet attacks have failed, with losses of 26 tanks.

Hungarian Troops in Heavy Fighting
Friday 15 January 1943, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* announced:

No detailed accounts can as yet be supplied about the course of the Soviet offensive begun yesterday. However, it is clear that Soviet attacks are being aimed at the stretch of rail line between Svoboda and Kantemirovka, the only bit between Voronezh and Millerovo that is still occupied by the Germans. Svoboda is about 40 miles south of Voronezh. The bulk of the Hungarian forces lie at the sector of the front where heavy fighting is now raging.

Stalingrad, 1943: Soviet infantry and tanks have just made a breakthrough.



British Offensive against Tripoli
Sunday 17 January 1943, Cairo
The *British Army* in North Africa reported:

The offensive operations we began on Friday have developed successfully. On Saturday we broke through the whole of the Axis positions at Buerat and the enemy is in full retreat. By Saturday evening, our troops were attacking enemy positions at Sedada and Bir Scala.

Monday 18 January 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

In the south of the Eastern Front, the bitter winter battle which has gone on for two months is continuing with undiminished violence.

Yesterday in mobile fighting, the German-Italian panzer army in North Africa continued to ward off powerful enemy infantry and armored attacks and inflicted very heavy losses on the enemy. We knocked out 20 enemy tanks. Luftwaffe units supported our defensive fighting.

French Victories in North Africa
18 January 1943, Rabat (French Morocco)
French Headquarters reported:

Despite strong enemy resistance, we were able to improve our positions south of Fondouk. We beat off an attack against our positions in the area of Casanet 30 miles east of Gafsa [Tunisia]. There was vigorous aerial activity all along the front.

Hard Fighting in Stalingrad

Tuesday 19 January 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Our troops in the Stalingrad area are defending themselves staunchly in hard fighting against repeated enemy attacks.

The Relief of Leningrad
19 January 1943, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

Reports from Moscow about the Soviet success in breaking through the German blockade of Leningrad have made a deep impression in London. Several London newspapers have brought out special editions. The morning press published the special



January 1943: The close cooperation between Soviet tanks and cavalry units proved especially effective in pursuit fighting.

victory announcement from the Soviet High Command in headlines that cover the whole front page. This development is seen by everyone as the most significant so far in the entire offensive.

Several well-informed military specialists in direct contact with Moscow explain that the great advances made by Soviet troops around Leningrad could not be revealed to the public until now.

Joseph Stalin to Winston Churchill and F. D. Roosevelt
Saturday 30 January 1943:

As to the Soviet Union, I can assure you that the Soviet armed forces will do all in their power to continue the offensive against Germany and her allies on the Soviet-German front. We expect to finish our winter campaign, circumstances permitting, in the first half of February. Our troops are tired, they are in need of rest and they will hardly be able to carry on the offensive beyond that period. [English quoted from p. 89 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958.]

End Comes in Stalingrad
Tuesday 2 February 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

After an extremely heavy preliminary artillery barrage, an enemy force of overwhelmingly superior numbers has attacked the last bastion of the German defenders in Stalingrad, the tractor factory. During the night, after our heroically fighting troops had used up almost all their ammunition, the enemy succeeded in penetrating at several points and breaking up the defensive perimeter of XI Corps, which had been unbroken until then.

Wednesday 3 February 1943
The *Red Army High Command* reported in a special announcement:

Yesterday our Don Front troops completed the final liquidation of the Fascist troops encircled in the cauldron of Stalingrad. The Red Army has broken the resistance of the enemy surrounded north of Stalingrad and forced him to surrender. The last seat of enemy resistance in the Stalingrad area has been annihilated.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
3 February 1943:

The heroic struggle for Stalingrad has come to an end. . . In the light and spirit of the OKW special announcement expected today, the German press must issue an appreciation of this moving event, which outshines the greatest feats of arms in all of world history, and show this exalted example of supreme heroism and of the will to make the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of victory as a sacred beacon to the German people.

Secret Report of the *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No. 356 of 4 February 1943 (extract):

I. General comments: The report of the end of the struggle in Stalingrad has caused another deep emotional shock among all German people. The January 30 address and the Führer's proclamation have receded into the background in the face of this event and are playing a lesser role in conversations that a series of questions relating to what happened in Stalingrad.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 12 February 1943:

Meanwhile, the guessing game is continuing about where in Europe the Allies will try to set up their Second Front. A new factor in this debate is the fact that official American spokesmen have stated that Allied military plans definitely do include the invasion of Europe in 1943. . . The Red Army's winter offensive is rolling forward with undiminished energy. German reports speak of the Russian preponderance of equipment and manpower. . . The [Soviets'] loss of the large industrial zones in southern Russia, which were occupied by the Germans last summer, evidently has not inflicted any decisive damage on Russian production of military equipment, weapons, ammunition and outfitting. . . Finally, events on the Eastern Front seem to confirm that during the summer, despite the offensive victories the Germans were winning at that time, the Russian High Command [STAVKA] was holding in reserve, and training, large armies which were not deployed until the [Soviet] winter offensive.

Winston Churchill to Joseph Stalin
Sunday 14 February 1943

The series of prodigious victories which tonight brings us the news of the liberation of Rostov-on-the-Don leaves me without power to express to you the admiration and the gratitude which we feel to the Russian arms. My most earnest wish is to do more to aid you. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 667, vol. IV]

Winston Churchill to F. D. Roosevelt
14 February 1943:

I hope you will accept the accompanying copy of the new film *Desert Victory*, which I saw last night and thought very good. It gives a vivid and realistic picture of the battles, and I know that you will be interested in the photographs of the Sherman tanks in action. I am having the film sent to you by air so that you may see it as soon as possible. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 662, vol. IV]

Planned Retreat
Monday 15 February 1943, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

In the course of wide-ranging movements by German troops and their allies in the south of the Eastern Front, we have carried out a planned evacuation of Rostov and Voroshilovgrad after destroying all military installations there. It is due to the outstanding feats of the German and Rumanian defensive troops that not only all the wounded but all our weapons and equipment have been withdrawn in a perfectly orderly way. With admirable courage, they held out against the Russians, who were superior to them numerically and in weapons, in days of tenacious fighting until the last German soldier had reached his new position.

In heavy fighting around Kharkov, strong German panzer detachments emerged from the deeply echeloned German forces to carry out a series of wide-scale armored thrusts.

Secret Report of the German *SS Security Service* on internal affairs, No. 359 of 15 February 1943 (extract):

I. General comments: The situation on the Eastern Front and, relative to this, the question of the outcome of the war continue to preoccupy the whole German population who are trying, on the basis of Wehrmacht reports, letters from the front, rumors, slogans and other "information," to gain some clarity about the "real" situation on the Eastern Front. The last Wehrmacht reports have triggered, alternately, hopes for a stabilization of the front and new anxieties. The opinion is widespread that if we do not succeed in finishing off the Russians in the summer, people do not know how we



February 1943: German Panzer III tank (an Sd Kfz 141) during fighting near Kharkov

can win the war. Frequently they even compare our present situation with that of 1918.

Hard Fighting in Tunisia

Tuesday 16 February 1943, Algiers
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The fighting east of Sbeitla in central Tunisia lasted all day Monday, with strong armored forces, artillery and dive bombers operating on both sides. In the morning American armored units went on the counterattack east of Sbeitla to drive back the two Axis columns which advanced on Sunday, and to prevent any further enemy advance to Sbeitla. So far, nothing has been reported about the outcome of these operations.

Kharkov Falls to Russians

Wednesday 17 February 1943, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

The troops of General Golikov have captured Kharkov. On Tuesday Soviet artillery, brought from Zhopozhnikov and moved into position around Kharkov, aimed three hours of devastating fire at the German defensive positions. Then white flares shot up ordering the artillery to cease fire, and two minutes later, seven armored formations burst out of their carefully camouflaged positions and rolled against the German lines. Two German panzer divisions, the "Adolf Hitler" and the "Reich," assembled in a fan formation, tried to halt the onslaught.

They took extremely heavy losses as Russian assault artillery followed hard in the wake of Russian tanks.

While the armored attack continued, two Russian columns circled around Kharkov from the north and mounted a surprise attack on the rear of the concentrated German motorized infantry.

March on the Mareth Line
17 February 1943, Cairo
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

The lead columns of the British Eighth Army have already left Ben Gardane far behind and are advancing virtually unopposed against the [Italian-defended] Mareth Line [in Tunisia].

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 19 February 1943:

Day after day the Russian High Command has been issuing special victory communiqués marking the stages of the Soviet advance. . . At the same time, Berlin reported the evacuation of Rostov and Voroshilov by German troops. . . The recapture of Rostov means that the entire stretch of the rail line connecting Moscow with the Caucasus is now once again in Russian hands, as are the oil pipelines leading from the Caucasus oilfields to the mouth of the Don.

Guderian Becomes Inspector-General of German Armored Troops
Monday 22 February 1943, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The Führer has appointed General Guderian Inspector-General of German Armored Troops. This means that General Guderian has now joined the ranks of those empowered by the Führer to muster all the resources of their various fields to bring about the victory of our arms.

At the Kasserine Pass
25 February 1943, *General Eisenhower's Headquarters* in North Africa
The *American United Press News Agency* reported:

After three days of battle, British and American forces in central Tunisia have driven German and Italian troops out of the Thala area and back some 16 miles to the Kasserine Pass.

Reports of the battle say that British and American armored forces, supported by motorized artillery and infantry, have for the time being succeeded in halting the German armored detachments outside Thala and along the road leading from the Kasserine Pass to Tebessa [on the Algerian-Tunisian border].

General Alexander to Winston Churchill
Saturday 27 February 1943:

Have just returned from three days on the American and French front lines. . .

I am regrouping whole force into three parts, as follows: British and French under Anderson, all Americans under Friedendall, Eighth Army under Montgomery.

Hate to disappoint you, but final victory in North Africa is not just around the corner. A very great deal is required to be done both on land and in the air. General Eisenhower could not be more helpful.

Am glad to hear you are better. Best wishes. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War,* pp. 682–683, vol. IV]

The American Sherman Tank

The following descriptive account by German war correspondent Eberhard Schulz appeared in the March 1943 issue of the propaganda publication *Die Wehrmacht*:

Tunis, 1943: US M4 Sherman medium tank after an attack by German fighter bombers



Through the streets of Tunis rolls an American Sherman tank—bouncing along on its mobile tracks, its engine rumbling, with captured ammunition in its gun barrels, and on board, its crew—the German scout patrol that captured it in the hills of Sbeitla [Tunisia] on the foggy morning of February 22. Down it travels, from the hills through the sea of olive groves headed toward [the Tunisian seaport of] Sfax.

It's a journey of some 210 miles, lasting four and a half days, which testifies well to the overall march capacity of this steel colossus.

The thing weighs about 31 metric tons. It was loaded onto a ship in the harbor while German fighter planes wheeled overhead in the clear sky of Africa, and not one enemy bomber dared intrude on this deadly zone. Now, after many intermediate stops, this star of American armament has arrived at its destination, a proving ground near Berlin, in the hands of [German] arms experts who are testing its combat efficiency and durability. Preliminary investigation in Tunisia had already revealed that this rolling steelmine is not a bad product. It was captured by a German panzer regiment.

Sunday 7 March 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Drives by German panzer units have broken up Russian assemblies and led to the capture of several hundred prisoners and a large amount of equipment. In the area south of Kharkov, German Army mobile troops and Waffen-SS [elite armed forces branch of the German SS] broke strong enemy resistance and threw him back north. Surrounded units of the Soviet Third Armored Army—including parts of the 12th and 13th Armored Corps, a cavalry corps and three infantry divisions—were annihilated. Only partial estimates have been obtained of the toll of prisoners and equipment.

In the area of our own scheduled movements, after completing our evacuation, we have abandoned the city of Gzhatsk to the enemy. All attempts by the Soviets to disrupt the German removal movements were unsuccessful.

On the southern Tunisian front, German and Italian troops mounted local thrusts against the enemy. Reconnaissance aircraft penetrated deep into the enemy's territory. Close-range fighter planes attacked with visible success armored forces, motorized columns and an enemy airbase.

Rommel's Counteroffensive

7 March 1943, *General Eisenhower's Headquarters* in North Africa
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

Rommel has attacked the British Eighth Army with powerful massed infantry and tanks (parts of the 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions). The attack began at dawn on Saturday morning, with a concentrated armored attack. Hard fighting developed and stepped up at noon on Sunday. Present reports indicate that the German and Italian forces took heavy losses in the British artillery barrage; 21 German tanks were knocked out.

German Victories at Kharkov
7 March 1943, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

Yesterday our battle of annihilation against the Third Russian Armored Army south of Kharkov rounded off to a total victory. Besides major parts of two armored corps and one cavalry corps, we wiped out at least three infantry divisions to the last man. The final toll of prisoners has not yet been determined. Given the unparalleled harshness of the fighting, a high prisoner count is not to be expected.

Rommel Defeated at the Mareth Line
Monday 8 March 1943, Algiers
Allied Headquarters in North Africa announced:

Rommel's defeat at the Mareth Line is more severe than the reverses previously suffered by the enemy on other fronts. Rommel has taken substantial losses in personnel and equipment. It is doubtful whether, after the heavy blows dealt him by the British Eighth Army, Rommel will be in a position to mount any further serious operations. His defeat on the Mareth Line is undoubtedly of graver consequence than that at Kasserine, and its effects will be observable in coming operations.

It is the impression here that Rommel threw everything he had into the attack on the Mareth Line because he was convinced of the crucial nature of the operation.

Joseph Stalin to Winston Churchill
Monday 15 March 1943:

It is evident that the Anglo-American operations in North Africa have not only not been expedited, but on the contrary they have been postponed till the end of April. Even this date is not quite definite. Thus at the height of our fighting against the Hitler forces—i.e. in February/March—the weight of the Anglo-American offensive has not only not increased, but there has been no development of the offensive at all, and the time limit for the operations set by yourself was extended. Meanwhile, Germany succeeded in transferring thirty-six divisions (including six armoured divisions) from the West against the Soviet troops. It is easy to see what difficulties this created for the Soviet armies and how the position of the Germans on the Soviet-German front was alleviated. [English quoted from



German Panzer III tanks leaving the factory along corridors stacked with tank tracks

Churchill's *The Second World War*, pp. 671–672, vol. IV]
Secret Report of the German *SS Security Service* on internal affairs, No. 367 of 15 March 1943 (extract):

I. General comments: the statement in the Wehrmacht Report of 12 March 1943 that the Bolshevists' hope of regaining the Ukraine has been foiled, and the news of the fights around Kharkov culminating in its recapture [by Germany], have removed many Germans' last doubts about our ability to stabilize the [Eastern] front and regain the initiative.

Armored Car against Submarine

Descriptive account by Dr. Alfred Haussner in Issue 6, 1943, of the German propaganda publication *Das Heer:*

A German armored scout car is patrolling the coast road between Tunis and Sousse; it's raining. The car's stereotelescope swivels, checking the scene on all sides. Then—yes, off to the east, over there where the sea seems to spread out endlessly—there seems to be something fishy going on. An Italian tugboat is trundling southward. Suddenly there is an uproar and stir on board; crew members tear across the deck. The scout car's stereotelescope turns slowly to the left. A submarine is nosing out of the snow-white crests of the waves! You can't tell its nationality yet. German? Italian? Or an enemy? No doubt now! Its gun fires at the tug, and a second shot rings out over the unquiet sea. Shot follows shot, but the men of the armored scout car are joined by others, and they are quick-witted enough to grasp the situation. They take aim at the sub. Shot after shot strikes home—three square hits to the sub's bow! A total success!

Intently the armored scout car crews watch to see the effects of their lightning strike. Two of the sub's gun crew fall into the water, a smoke cloud zooms up—and the sub begins to sink! The scout car travels along the highway, keeping level with the tug. They are not letting the vessel out of sight. Then what they are expecting actually comes to pass: The damaged sub has to surface again to try to save its crew!

The right moment has come. A brief fight, and three minutes later a darting flame rises out of the sub. Slowly it keels over on its side and sinks with all hands. The tug, somewhat damaged by the gunfire from the sub, is nevertheless able to pursue its course. A trail of bubbles signals the end of a British submarine.

Hitler's Order to Reorganize the German Armored Troops

German Army Communiqué 1943, No. 295 (extract):

Assignment of Duties to the Inspector-General of Armored Troops [Heinz Guderian]

1. The Inspector-General of Armored Troops is responsible to me for the future development of armored troops along lines that will make that arm of the Service into a decisive weapon for winning the war.

The Inspector-General of Armored Troops is directly subordinated to myself. He has the command powers of an army commander and is the senior officer of armored troops.

2. The Inspector-General of Armored Troops is responsible, in consultation with the Chief of the Army General Staff, for the organization and training of armored troops and of the large mobile formations of the Army.

He is further entitled, by my orders, to direct the armored troops of the *Waffen-SS* and the *Luftwaffe* in matters of organization and training.

I reserve to myself the right of making basic decisions.

His requirements for the technical development of his weapons and for *production plans* are to be drawn up in conjunction with the Minister of Armaments and Munitions and submitted to me for approval.

3. In his capacity as senior officer of his arm of the Service, he is also in command of the training troops of his arm. It is *his responsibility* to ensure that *a constant stream of fully employable reserves both in men and in armored vehicles* be available to the field army.

4. The Inspector-General of Armored Troops will ensure that the *new units of, and replacements for, armored and mobile troops are made ready punctually as ordered and according to plan*.

5. The Inspector-General of Armored Troops will evaluate reports of combat experience in relationship to the command, armament, training and organization of armored troops.

His opinions and conclusions are also to be brought to the attention of all interested branches of the Services, as well as of the Ministry of Armaments and Munitions.

6. The Inspector-General of Armored Troops, as senior officer of his arm of the Service, is permanently in command of:

(a) All reserve and training units of mobile troops. . .

(b) All schools for mobile troops (excepting cavalry and motorcyclist schools), both of the field and of the training army, together with all instructional troops attached to such schools.

7. The Inspector-General of Armored Troops is empowered to give instructions on matters with which he is concerned to all branches of the staffs of the Army.

Supreme Headquarters, 28th February, 1943.
The Führer.
Signed: ADOLF HITLER

[English quoted from pp. 289–291 of the translation of Guderian's *Panzer Leader*, London, Michael Joseph, 1952]

Winston Churchill to Joseph Stalin
Sunday 28 March 1943

. . . . .

2. After a check the battle in Tunisia has again taken a favourable turn and I have just received news that our armoured troops after an enveloping movement are within two miles of El Hamma.

3. I saw the *Stalingrad* film last night. It is absolutely grand and will have a most moving effect on our people.

[English quoted from p. 109 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

Joseph Stalin to Winston Churchill
Monday 29 March 1943:

I congratulate the British Air Force on the new big and successful bombing of Berlin.

I hope that the British armoured units will be able to use to the full the improvement in the Tunis situation and not give any respite to the enemy.

Yesterday, together with my colleagues, I have seen the film *Desert Victory*, which you have sent me. It makes a very strong impression. The film depicts magnificently how Britain is fighting, and stigmatises those scoundrels (there are such people also in our country) who are asserting that Britain is not fighting at all, but is merely an onlooker. Impatiently I will wait a similar film on your victory in Tunis.

The film *Desert Victory* will be widely shown in all our armies at the front and among the widest masses of our population. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, pp. 674–675, vol. IV]

Rommel Retreats

Tuesday 31 March 1943, Algiers
British *Reuters* announced:

It has been disclosed here that lead units of the British Eighth Army have linked up with the American Fifth Army. Many signs indicate that the Germans are retreating to northeastern Tunisia. Large numbers of trucks are crossing the pass east of Jebel Khemzi, east of El Guetar. Allied aerial forces are inflicting heavy losses on enemy transports in the north of the road connecting El Guetar and Gabes.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, No. 373 of 5 April 1943 (extract):

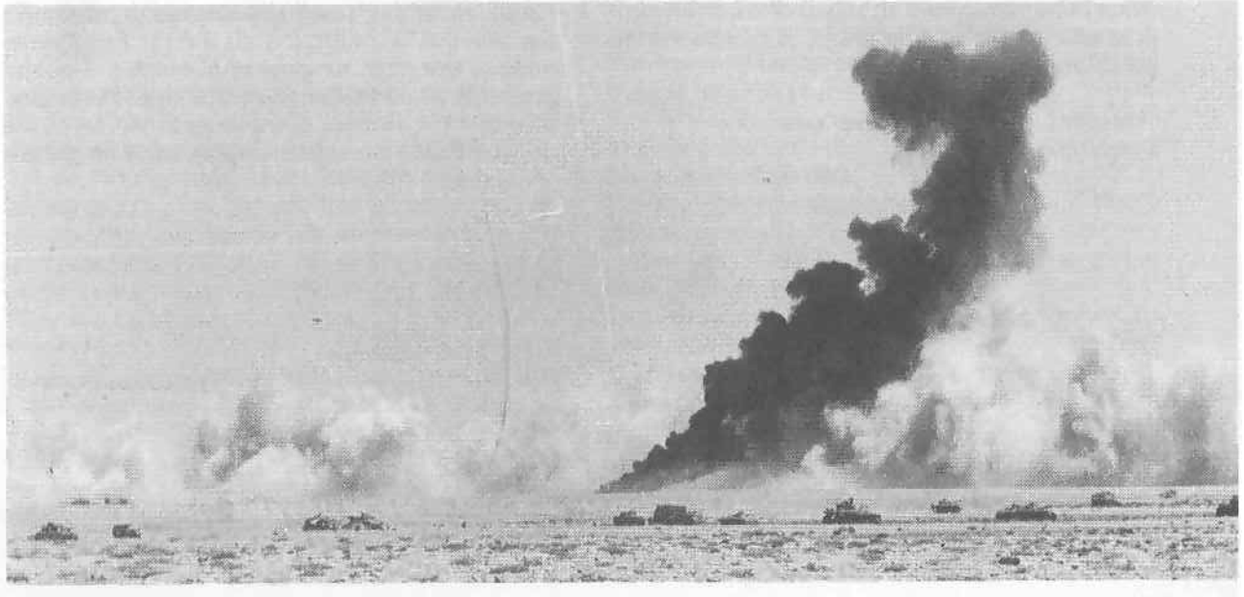
I. General comments: German people are now especially attentive to the military actions in North Africa. Although Wehrmacht reports of the past few days have listed only weak enemy attacks, many Germans express the view that we cannot hold our "bridgehead" there for long. They are already speaking of "fighting a lost cause," of the threat of a "second Stalingrad" or a "German Dunkirk." After it was reported that we have now evacuated Gabes and El Hamma, some people voiced suspicions that we have lost the Mareth Line on which we had set such hopes.

As for the war against the Soviet Union, the view that this summer it will have to be "now or never" and that we will have to "stake everything on one card" because "a third winter fighting in the East would be tantamount to losing the war," has become a downright *idée fixe* of many Germans. At the moment Germans feel completely uncertain whether it is possible to defeat the Russians by autumn or indeed at all.

Winston Churchill to Joseph Stalin
Wednesday 7 April 1943:

Enemy in full retreat northwards, hotly pursued by Montgomery's armour. Six thousand prisoners so far. [English quoted from p. 114 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

North Africa, Spring 1943: the Afrika Panzer Army fighting a retreat battle



Tanks against Partisan Bands

Descriptive account by war correspondent Hanswerner Welke in the 7 April 1943 edition of the German newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter*:

"So, till 4:00 A.M.!" The battalion commanders and the commanders of the two tank companies assigned to this regiment come up to the building. "It's no sort of job for us." The young armored lieutenant lights a cigarette morosely. "Woods, bog, swamp. A real jungle. The tracks on my tank are so covered with muck that you can't even see them any more."

Our hunt has been going on for five days now. Exhausting, wearing. And no real sleep for five days, thinks the armored lieutenant as he walks through the village searching for a billet. Next day at the crack of dawn they are ready to march again, to tighten the encirclement. First come the tanks, then the panzer grenadiers, behind them several tracked vehicles towing antitank guns, and finally a long train of armored cars.

Widely spread out, they penetrate the dense undergrowth. A Soviet machine gun barks, others join in. Shouts resound. The panzer grenadiers lie down flat, bring their MGs into position, pull the triggers. There is a hissing and whistling sound. Resistance is soon broken in the iron hail of German arms. Over there a couple of wounded Soviets are crying out. Once again the [Soviet partisan] band has retreated in time, before our groups to the left and right are able to surround the nest of resistance.

Mutely the panzer grenadiers march on, ragged and exhausted. Is this jungle endless? We have lost the sense for how many miles we have gone. We just keep trotting on. Until suddenly, after seven hours of hunt-and-pursuit, the trees thin out.

Over there is Village X, the goal of today's march. Can it be? Yes, it really is a column of brown-clad filthy figures standing on the road. Does that mean our combing of the swamp fortress was successful after all? Yes: The Soviets, struggling to evade our grenadiers, came out from the forest—bang!—in front of our tank guns. We count over 200 prisoners. Haggard, worn, they wait to be transported away.

Thursday 8 April 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

For the most part, all was quiet on the Eastern Front. Isolated enemy attacks were repulsed at the Kuban bridgehead and along the middle Donets.

On the southern Tunisian front, German and Italian troops put up tough resistance to an attacking enemy who greatly outnumbered them. Enemy armored forces that broke through our lines were halted in fierce fighting, and enemy attempts to encircle us were foiled. We occupied new positions according to plan.

Industrial Center in Siberia
8 April 1943, Moscow
British *Reuters* reported:

Details have now been revealed here concerning a newly created Soviet industrial center on the Yenisey river [Siberia]. An area four times the size of all Germany has been turned into a major arsenal for the Red Army. Recently, the industrial firms in this zone have sizably increased their war production. The area is also rich in mineral deposits of all kinds.

Winston Churchill to General Ismay
8 April 1943:

This campaign [in Burma] goes from bad to worse, and we are being completely outfought and out-maneuvred by the Japanese. Luckily, the small scale of the operations and the attraction of other events have prevented public opinion being directed upon this lamentable scene. We cannot, however, count on a continuance of this.

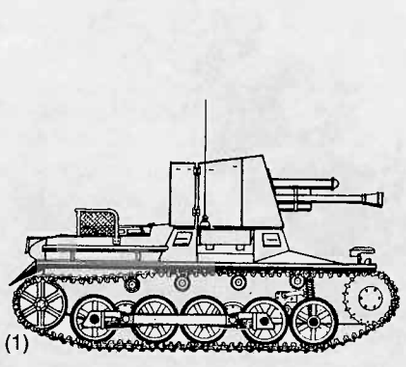
When does General Wavell reach this country? [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War,* p. 841, vol. IV]

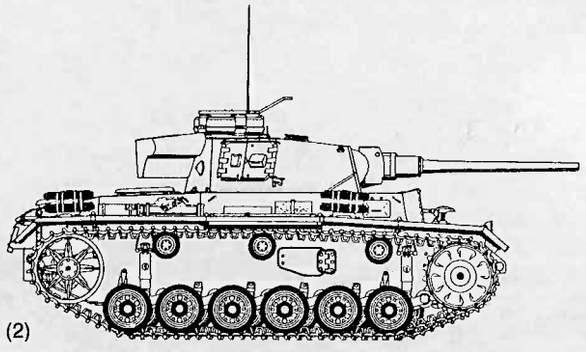
Winston Churchill to the British Foreign Secretary
Friday 9 April 1943:

I think you should see Maisky [Soviet ambassador to Britain] and tell him that if this sort of poison is to be served out by the [Soviet] Tass Agency from London to Algiers, [criticizing Allied conduct of the war], we shall have to ask their correspondents to leave these countries. The Minister of Information tells me it is within our power to close all facilities at a moment's notice. It is intolerable that the Russians should be put wrong in this way, when we are trying our best. Goebbels could not be more malicious. Would you like me to see Maisky before I leave for the country today? [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 842, vol. IV]

Winston Churchill to the British Secretary of State for War
Sunday 11 April 1943:

I am informed that the statement that the P.I.A.T. gun is "a weapon developed by Imperial Chemical Industries which incorporates points of design derived both from the Jefferis shoulder gun and from a similar weapon invented by Lieutenant-Colonel Blacker" is quite incorrect. The principle of absorbing recoil dynamically is of course not new, but Brigadier Jefferis was the first man to make a workable weapon with which a 3-pound projectile could be fired from the shoulder to anything like the distance now achieved. Moreover, the design of the ammunition, which has a far greater penetration than any previous type, was entirely due to his work. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 843, vol. IV]


(1)


(2)



Right: April 1943, the El Hamma and Gafsa area of Tunisia. A British Eighth Army column after a raid by German fighter bombers. On the right is a US M3 General Grant medium tank being carried on a transport car.

Opposite page: (1) German antitank vehicle I, with 4.7-cm antitank guns mounted on a Panzer I tank chassis (Versions B, first produced 1941); (2) German medium Panzer III, Version L (first produced June 1942)

Winston Churchill to General Ismay
Thursday 15 April 1943:

I was shown a sketch the other day of a ship with a landing bridge which Brigadier Jefferis suggested could be used for landing tanks on low cliffs apt to be weakly defended. This proposal seems very attractive, and I hope it is being followed up energetically. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 845, vol. IV]

Germans Fight Superior American Odds in Tunis

Descriptive account by German 2nd Lt. Kurt Wolff which appeared in the 18 April 1943 issue of the German propaganda periodical *Das Reich*:

I am writing this report between two battles, feeling the urge to capture our hours of blazing victory. My men beside me are working on the tank, changing rolls worn out on the long marches of the last few days and nights, and cleaning the filter and carburetor; some are even busy cleaning themselves up. Finally, after nasty days of rain, the sun is shining again at Sbeitla, and the wind that blows down to us from the hills is mild and warm.

But I have in mind to step into the midst of the battle. As we stood on the turrets of our tanks and counted the torches on the horizon, my commander, who had won the victory, was laughing beside me, and his voice, usually so quiet, was full of excitement and clamor; I could feel his heart, which as a rule beat so tranquilly, pounding when he reached over and half embraced me.

A couple of days ago, in a roaring attack, we took the town of Sidi hou Zid from the occupying Americans. We rode to the rear of their batteries, annihilated a row of tanks, and by late afternoon we had reached our prescribed target. Next day we secured the territory we had won. Our second detachment lay to the southeast; we, the first detachment, to the southwest. Our companies were widely dispersed, with a gap of several miles between us. The enemy evidently had retreated a long way: Even his usually active artillery was silent.

So we almost had a rest. The men divided and exchanged a few things we had captured the day before. Some wrote letters, the first in a long time. The stalwarts lay among the tall cactus shrubs and blinked into the sun.

The Tank Busters
Monday 19 April 1943
General Eisenhower's Headquarters in North Africa reported:

The squadrons of Hurricane tank-buster aircraft, with their large-caliber automatic cannon, took off to attack the German armored formations and their supply columns. Their work of destruction was complete in only 90 minutes. The Spitfires had already cleared the air of enemies before the Hurricanes dived to thirty feet above the ground and drove their bursts of sustained fire into the massed German troops. In that time they annihilated 30 heavy German tanks, some 60–70 medium tanks and several hundred vehicles of all types.

Winston Churchill to Joseph Stalin
19 April 1943:

We have a rumour from Spain of the intentions of the Germans to use gas on the Russian front, and I understand you also have some indications of the same kind. This occurred last year also about the same time. Let me know if you want me to renew the declaration I made last year that any attack by gas on you will be immediately retaliated by us on the largest scale over Germany. We are fully capable of making good any threat we may make. [English quoted from p. 119 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

Winston Churchill to Sir Edward Bridges, and to Brigadier Jacob for Defence Committee (Supply) and others
Friday 23 April 1943:

Tank Supply Policy

. . . . .

3. We shall, I am sure, be exposed to criticism if we are found with a great mass of thin-skinned tanks of medium size, none of which can stand up to the German guns of 1943, still less to those of 1944. The idea of having a spear-point or battering-ram of heavily armoured vehicles to break the enemy's front and make a hole through which the lighter vehicles can be pushed has a very high military significance. A certain number of such vehicles should be attached to armies, and possibly even to corps, in each theatre. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 850, vol. IV]

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 30 April 1943:

After a swift evacuation of Sousse and Kairoun, Field Marshal Rommel's troops succeeded in retreating to northern Tunisia and linking up with General von Arnim's troops. Since then the Germans have maintained a continuous semicircular front, shielding the port cities of Bizerta and Tunis and enabling the Axis troops to support themselves on mountain and hill chains, which it will be difficult for the Allied army group to conquer. . . The great disadvantage for the Axis troops is that they must fight with their backs to the sea.

German Smoke Bombs
Thursday 6 May 1943, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

We are reliably informed that the German artillery is firing smoke bombs at Soviet tanks. Armored crews have been instructed to wear gas masks. The German smoke bomb contains a glass vessel divided into two compartments, one of which is filled with a white, the other a yellow liquid. On impact the liquids combine to form a dark-brown acid which emits smoke. The smoke penetrates tanks and impairs visibility.

Defeat of Chinese Troops
Friday 7 May 1943, Tokyo
Imperial Japanese Headquarters reported:

Large numbers of Japanese forces operating in the border region of Shansi and Honan provinces [in north and north central China] are continuing their pursuit of the Chinese Twenty-Fourth Army. On May 6, they surrounded the 13,000-man Communist Chinese 18th Division and have begun to annihilate it.

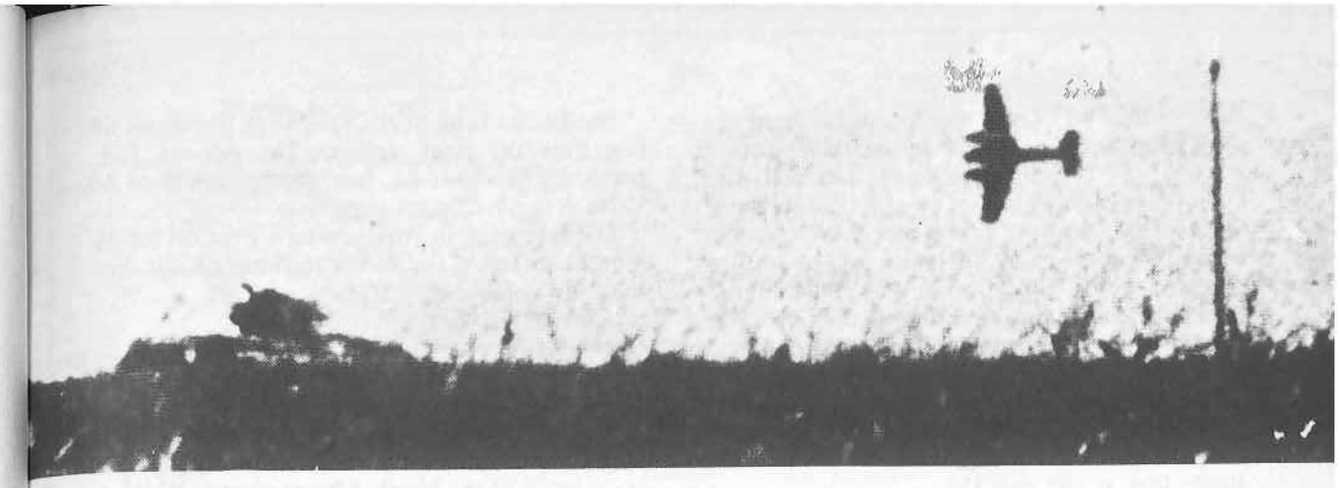
German-Italian Defensive Front on Point of Collapse
7 May 1943 at Allied Headquarters in North Africa
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Now that the British First Army has penetrated deep into the plains of Tunis and, the latest reports from the front indicate, is still advancing, we can say that the Axis defense lines in the Tunisian bridgehead have finally collapsed. The occupation of Tebourba is expected at any hour, and in view of developments in the last 24 hours, Allied headquarters assumes that von Arnim will be forced to withdraw his troops in the southern sector of the front as well.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

7 May 1943:

On May 1, Stalin published an Order of the Day to the Red Army, which has attracted worldwide attention. In this document, the Russian leader shed the reserve which he has hitherto maintained in public towards all questions of cooperation with his Anglo-Saxon allies. It is known that the Soviet government has never commented officially on the so-called "Casablanca policy," that is, Roosevelt and Churchill's agreement that their military objective is to bring about the "unconditional surrender" of the Axis powers. In the above-mentioned Order of the Day, Stalin has now for the first time used this same term. Commentaries from Berlin interpret this as a declaration of Russia's agreement to the Casablanca resolutions, and it has provoked great satisfaction in Britain and America. . . Politically, the most notable feature [of Stalin's address] was the biting tone and distinctness with which Stalin rejected peace rumors and peace drives. He said that a separate Anglo-American peace treaty with Germany was as unthinkable as a



Tunisia, May 1943: German Henschel Hs 129 fighter bomber attacking American tanks

separate Russian peace with Germany.

General Alexander to Winston Churchill
Saturday 8 May 1943:

Things have gone even better than I could have hoped. . . We had a deception plan to mislead the enemy into thinking the blow was in the south, and it worked well, as they sent the majority of their tanks and a number of their 88-mm. guns down opposite 1st British Armoured Division, weakening the [Axis] front facing IXth Corps. IXth Corps attacked with a huge weight of arms and armour, supported by practically the entire Air Force: It was a real thunderbolt. . .

The Axis front has completely collapsed and disintegrated. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 693, vol. IV]

End Is Near in Tunis

Sunday 9 May 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

Yesterday in Tunisia, the German-Italian troops put up heroic resistance against an army attacking from all sides with overwhelmingly superior forces. In the area south of Bizerta, several units are fulfilling their duty in an exemplary manner, holding out till their last bullet.

British Retreat in Burma
Monday 10 May 1943, Delhi
British *Reuters* reported:

The most recent reports from the front indicate that the Japanese are continuing to exert strong pressure on the Arakan Front [northwest Burma]. The Allied Front west and northwest of Buthidaung was threatened by encirclement as a result of the Japanese advance, so that British commanders had to withdraw all their lead units. The retreat was carried out at night to escape enemy detection.

Tuesday 11 May 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

The enemy has carried out numbers of fresh infantry and armored attacks against German and Italian troop positions southeast of Tunis. Yesterday, despite the greatest privations and weeks of uninterrupted fighting, our heroic soldiers in every arm of the service continued to put up the hardest resistance to the incessant enemy onslaught. The difficult fighting, in which both sides took heavy losses, is continuing with undiminished violence.

The 90th Light Division under General Count Sponeck and the 15th Panzer Division have especially distinguished themselves in the fighting in the African theater. Both divisions have fought outstandingly well since the start of our African campaign. A Luftwaffe flak division commanded by General Reusser used its last remaining shells to destroy 37 enemy tanks.

British Tanks at Cape Bon
Wednesday 12 May 1943, Allied Headquarters in North Africa
British *Reuters* reported:

Reports just received from the front say that at 2:00 P.M. yesterday, the vanguard of the British 6th Armoured Division occupied Cape Bon at the tip of the peninsula [in Tunisia near Tunis].

Units of the German 10th Panzer Division, which held out to the end and fought their last armored battle against the British only the day before yesterday, have now been annihilated. The French troops are delighted at this because it was 10th Panzer that broke through the Allied lines in France exactly three years ago.

The last sizable unit still resisting is made up of elements of the Italian 1st Armored Division, which have been surrounded north of Enfidaville by the Eighth Army and the French; it too will probably surrender before the day is over.

General Alexander to Winston Churchill
12 May 1943:

The end is very near. Von Arnim has been captured, and prisoners will most likely be over 150,000. All organized resistance has collapsed, and only pockets of enemy are still holding out. It appears that we have taken over 1,000 guns, of which 180 are 88-mm., 250 tanks, and many thousands of motor vehicles, many of which are serviceable. German prisoners driving their own vehicles formed a dense column on the road from Grombalia to Medjez el Bab all day today.

My next telegram, denoting the formal end of the campaign, will follow, I hope, in a few hours. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 697, vol. IV]

Thursday 13 May 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

Today the heroic struggle of the German and Italian troops in Africa came to an honorable end. The last groups resisting around Tunis, who for days have been without food and water, have been forced to stop fighting after using up all their ammunition.

By their resistance, in which during months of struggle they fought the enemy for every foot of ground, they tied up very strong enemy forces and inflicted on him the most severe losses in men and equipment. The relief which they thereby afforded to our troops on other fronts and the time they won have been of the greatest benefit to the Axis powers.

General von Arnim Captured
13 May 1943, Headquarters of the British First Army at Tunis
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The first report of the capture of von Arnim has just arrived at [British] First Army headquarters. It says that at Wednesday noon, armored patrols of the British 6th Armoured Division penetrated to von Arnim's headquarters inside bunkers dug and exploded deep into the mountains some 17 miles west of Hammamet. A British officer had himself announced to the General, who received him standing—every inch a Prussian officer.

Other captured German generals and one Italian general have also arrived at First Army headquarters. Colonel von Broich, commander of a German panzer division, immediately recognized an Allied officer with whom he had gone skiing in Davos [Switzerland] back in peacetime.

Axis Troops Surrender
13 May 1943, Rome
The *Italian Armed Forces High Command (Comando Supremo)* announced:

The Italian First Army, which had the honor of mounting the final resistance on African soil, ceased its fire Thursday morning by command of Il Duce.

The campaign in Africa, which went on for 35 months suffering the varied fortunes of war, has thus now come to an end.

General Alexander to Winston Churchill
13 May 1943, 2:15 A.M.:
Sir:

It is my duty to report that the Tunisian campaign is over. All enemy resistance has ceased. We are masters of the North African shores. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 698, vol. IV]

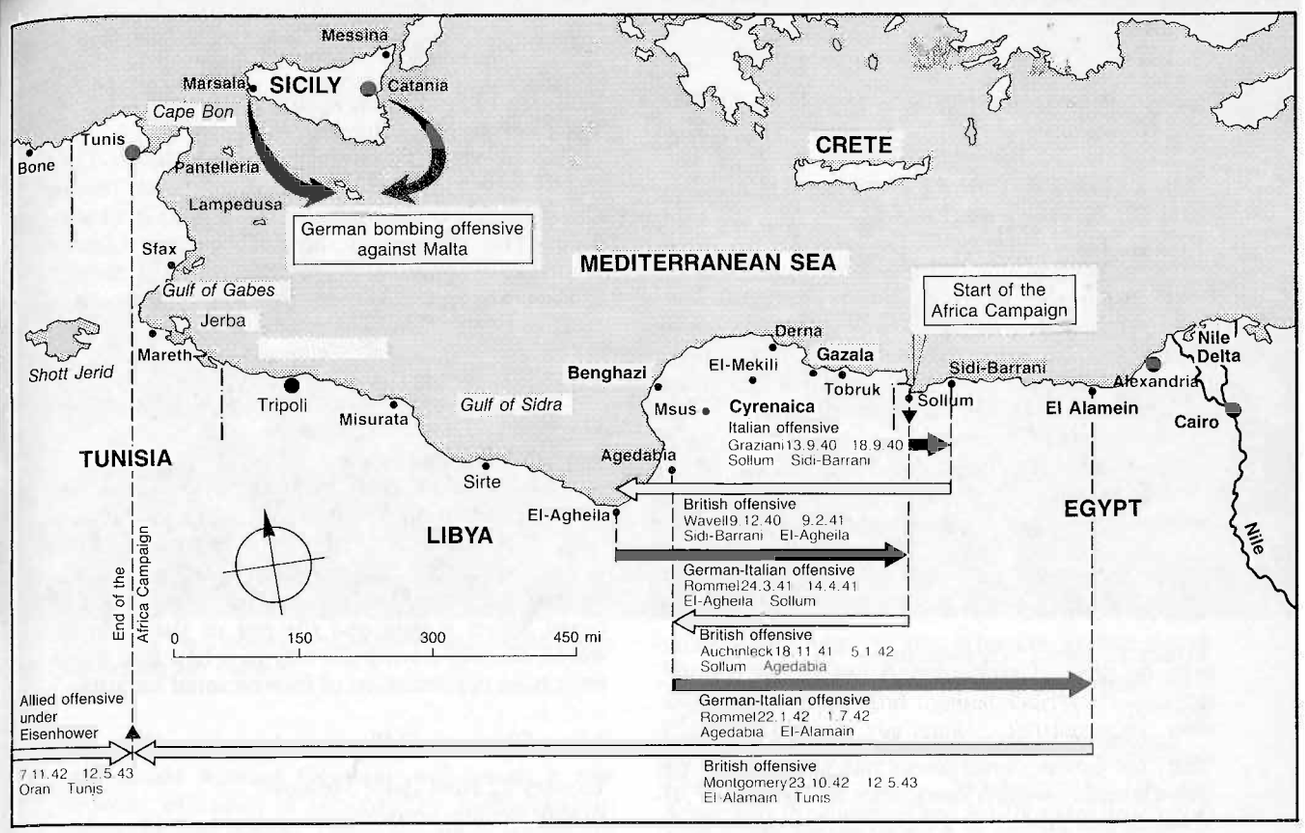
Equipment Captured in Tunisia
Friday 14 May 1943, General Eisenhower's Headquarters in North Africa
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The last remnants of the German and Italian troops surrendered at 11:45 A.M. on Thursday morning, but the prisoner count has not yet been completed. Present indications are that it will total approximately 175,000 men of whom some 45,000 are Italians. Fourteen German and three Italian generals have been taken prisoner. We are still screening the vast amounts of material on Cape Bon. Military gear of all kinds—cannon, machine guns, rifles, submachine guns, ammunition and gasoline tanks—lie in a confused heap over large expanses beside the road; but individual large supply dumps have also fallen intact into Allied hands. For example, at Hamman Lif the British captured a fuel depot containing 4.5 million liters of gasoline; large cannon and shell depots were also found perfectly intact. In Bizerta the American II Corps seized a depot of 12,000 tons of military material and large food supplies.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

14 May 1943:

. . . The Axis troops had made a good choice of defensive positions in their Tunisian bridgehead, which was shielded by mountains and held by elite troops. The surprise was therefore all the greater when the Allied army group, under the front line command of General Alexander, took northern Tunisia and forced the enemy to capitulate in an annihilating battle of only six days' duration. . . . The question that the world was hotly debating a few weeks ago: Whether the campaign in Tunisia would end in another Dunkirk or another Stalingrad had now been settled.



Retrospective view of the to-and-fro war in North Africa

The Last of Rommel's Troops
Saturday 15 May 1943, General Eisenhower's Headquarters
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

A British destroyer has captured the German chief of staff of the 15th Panzer Division, who along with several other officers was trying to escape to Sicily aboard a sailing boat.

The Bey of Tunis Deposed
Monday 17 May 1943, Tunis
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The new ruler of Tunis mounted the throne on Saturday and at a formal reception assured General Juin of his country's "unswerving loyalty to France." The deposed Bey is now on his way to Madagascar, accompanied by 25 ladies of his harem.

No Swift End in Sight
Sunday 23 May 1943, Washington
British *Reuters* reported:

In an informal talk with the staff of the British Embassy in Washington, Churchill warned against believing that Germany would undergo a rapid collapse. The Prime Minister emphasized that we have no reason to think that the war will end quickly.

Secret Report of the German *SS Security Service* on internal affairs, No. 385 of 24 May 1943 (extract):

I. General comments: The discussions still going on [among Germans] about our surrender of Tunisia mainly revolve around the number of casualties and the fate of the German prisoners. Relatives of soldiers in Africa are especially anxious, but most hope to hear a sign of life soon.

Germans are virtually ignoring current events on the Eastern Front. They note that we are now taking no action, whereas last year there was a genuinely feverish expectation of a German offensive. This year, most Germans are not asking "When will the offensive begin?" but rather "Will there be any offensive this year?"

Winston Churchill to the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of Information
Sunday 13 June 1943:

I have read the report on German morale in Tunisia. It is hardly possible to pay a higher tribute to the fighting qualities of the German soldier, and the introduction of words like "brutish" in no way detracts from the formidable impression this account gives. Their "extraordinary stupidity" certainly does not extend to the use of their arms or to their seizing of tactical opportunities. [English

quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 566, vol. V]

British Create Tactical Air Force
Monday 14 June 1943, London
British *Reuters* reported:

It has been officially announced that a Tactical Air Force has been created in the course of a reorganization of the RAF. Its task will be to ensure even closer cooperation between aircraft and the ground troops. The new air force, under command of Vice-Admiral J. H. Delbiac, the former RAF commander in Ceylon, is made up of units of all types of aircraft suitable for direct support of the ground fighting. (The *Times* says that this equals in significance any reform the RAF has carried out since war began.)

Peace Rumors

Friday 18 June 1943, Moscow
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

According to an official Moscow Radio broadcast, the Soviet Government has learned that the pro-German Swedish newspaper *Rya Daglight Allehanda* has published a report saying that a short time ago, peace negotiations took place between the Soviet Union and Germany in Stockholm. The negotiations allegedly broke down over territorial questions. The Soviet telegraph agency was empowered to deny this whole report as nonsensical and absurd.

Saturday 19 June 1943, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The Swedish newspaper *Rya Daglight Allehanda* has published a sensational faked report about alleged German-Soviet peace talks in Stockholm. This report is a sheer fabrication. Claims about peace conferences and the surmises attached to them are typical of the sort of maneuvers that enemies of the Axis powers like to use against us.

The Post-War Role of the Soviet Union

Monday 21 June 1943, London
British *Reuters* reported:

Minister [of aircraft production] Sir Stafford Cripps stated at an Anglo-Soviet conference that if history should conclude the world has anything for which to be grateful to Hitler, it is that he destroyed the mistrust which previously reigned between Soviet Russia and the rest of the civilized world, thereby paving the way to a new and more promising organization of international security.

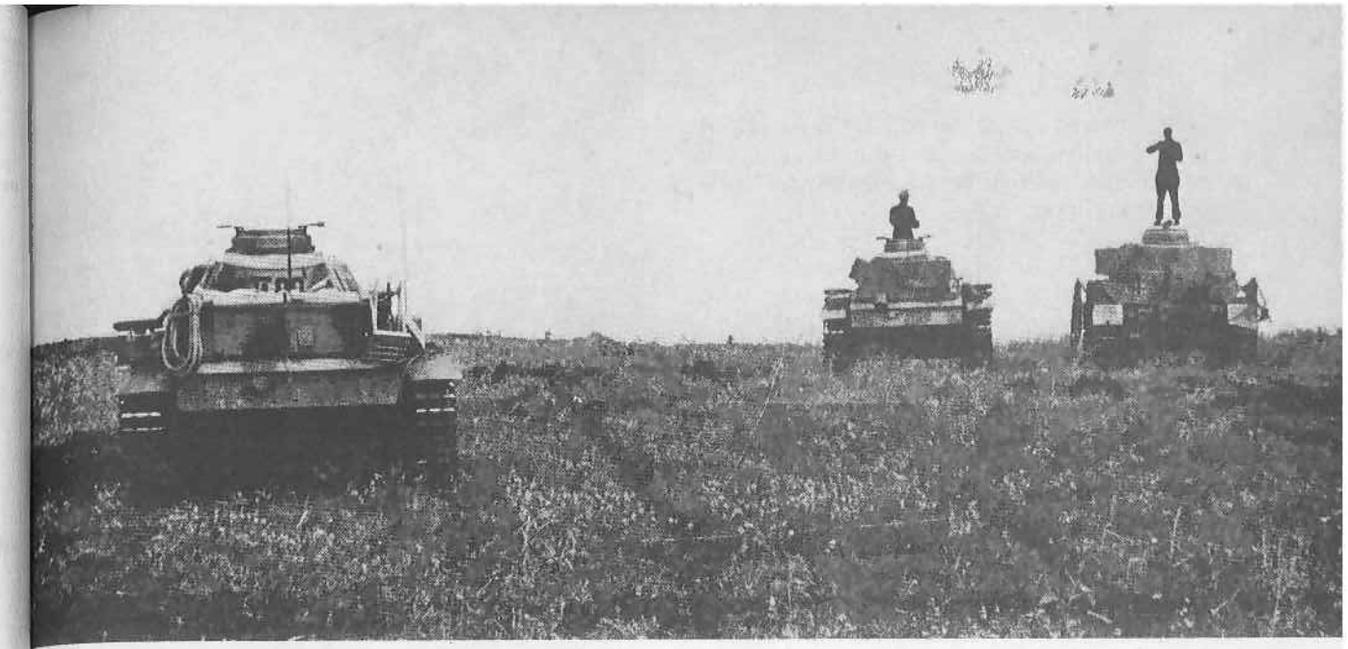
New German Offensive Imminent?

Tuesday 22 June 1943, Moscow
British *Reuters* reported:

. . . The High Command in Moscow point to German military preparations and emphasize that

Tunisia, 14 May 1943: The North Africa Campaign is over. A German Panzer VI "Tiger" tank (Sd Kfz 182) has been abandoned on Cape Bon near Tunis.





June 1943, the Ukraine on the Eastern Front. German tanks are moving into position.

this week and next week are a critical period which will decide whether Germany will mount a new summer offensive or will confine itself solely to defensive operations. There are good reasons to believe that Hitler will soon attempt a massive blow to paralyze the Soviet Union. However, STAVKA views the possibility with calm and confidence in the belief that the Soviets can deal with this offensive as they have the others.

Strategy and Tactics

JANUARY TO JUNE 1943

The scene of tragedy which had played itself out in the snowbound landscape of Russia in the winter of 1941/42 was repeated in the winter of 1942/43, but surpassed it in grimness for the Germans, because in addition to the killing cold, their strategic position had been eroded due above all to Hitler's obstinacy.

On Friday 1 January 1943, Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army evacuated Yelista in the Kalmuck Steppes. Von Mackensen's First Panzer Army began a simultaneous retreat out of the mountains of the Caucasus and from the Terek river.

On Sunday 10 January, Rokossovsky's Soviet Don Front armies (Chistiakov's Twenty-First Army, Galanin's Twenty-Fourth, Chuikov's Sixty-Second, Zhumilov's Sixty-Fourth, Batov's Sixty-Fifth and Zhadov's Sixty-Sixth) went on the offensive. Their objective was to smash the German Sixth Army inside the cauldron at Stalingrad.

On Tuesday 12 January, Soviet troops and armored units went on the offensive against Jany's Hungarian Second Army along the Don on both sides of Svoboda and against Gariboldi's Italian Eighth Army to the south. Participating were Meretskov's Voronezh Front armies (Rybalko's Third Armored Army, Moskalenko's Fortieth Army and the independent XVIII Infantry Corps) and the Southwest Front under Vatutin, including Kharitonov's Sixth Army.

The Soviet objective was to drive far to the rear of von Weichs's Army Group B and von Manstein's Don Army Group and surround both, cutting off their retreat route to the Dnieper. The Hungarian and Italian armies were surprised and mauled, and then the Soviets headed west along a broad front. While the German divisions evacuated the Caucasus and German resistance in Stalingrad gradually ebbed, the Soviets mounted an attack to relieve Leningrad [which had been suffering a starvation siege for many months].

On Thursday 14 January 1943, Roosevelt, Churchill and their senior military staffs began a conference in Casablanca. The two Allied nations agreed on further operations in the Mediterranean and published a demand for the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers, which proved fatal [because it turned the whole of Germany, instead of just the Nazis, into a target and thereby alienated powerful anti-Nazi forces within Germany which would otherwise have cooperated with the Allies]. They also decided that Anglo-American forces would fly against Germany a combined bomber offensive [in which the two nations would coordinate their attacks to maximize the destructive effect].

On Sunday 17 January 1943, forces of the Soviet Voronezh Front encircled General Eibl's XXIV

Panzer Corps and the Italian Alpini Corps west of the Don. Only one unit succeeded in breaking out of the cauldron and fighting its way through to the German front lines at Valuyki.

On Saturday 23 January 1943, Rommel's Afrika Panzer Army had to abandon Tripoli under hard pressure from Montgomery's British Eighth Army and started retreating toward the Libyan-Tunisian border.

That same day, Hitler once again forbade the surrender of Paulus's Sixth Army in Stalingrad, which had now been declared a German fortress.

On Monday 25 January, Soviet troops of Rokossovsky's Don Front split the German troops inside the cauldron at Stalingrad, leaving a northern German group under General Strecker and a southern group under Paulus. At the same time, General von Salmuth's German Second Army was forced to vacate Voronezh under pressure from the Soviet Fortieth Army (under General Moskalenko) and the Sixty-Ninth Army (under Chernyakhovsky).

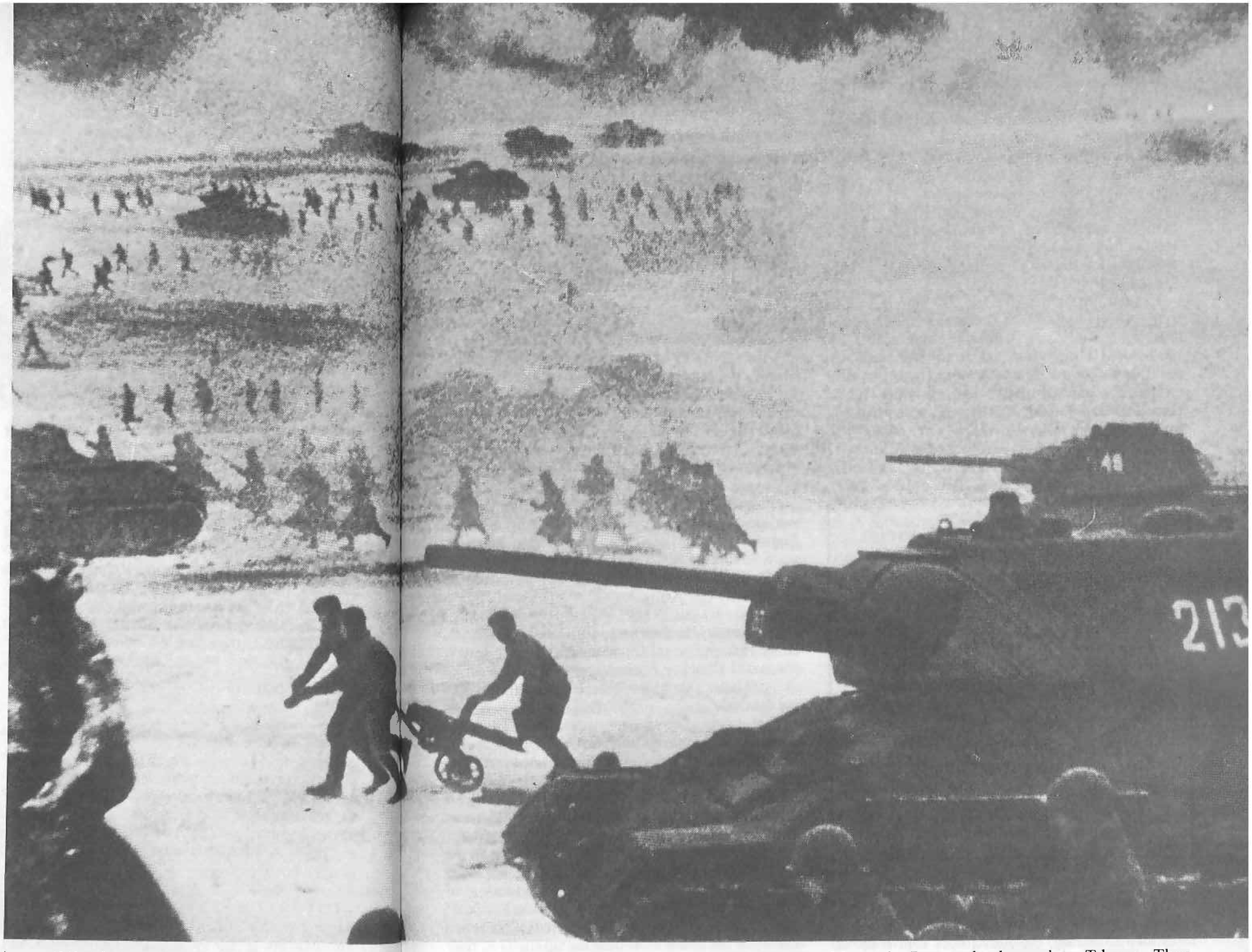
On Tuesday 26 January, Rommel overcame British efforts to cut off the retreat of his Afrika Panzer Army, rescued his troops and joined up with General von Arnim's Fifth Panzer Army in southern Tunisia. Notwithstanding this setback, the British Eighth Army had pursued its drive from El Alamein to Tripoli at tremendous speed: more than 900 miles in 80 days.

On Wednesday 27 January 1943, the German First Panzer Army in retreat from the Caucasus was placed under command of Field Marshal von Manstein's German Don Army Group and, together with Ruoff's Seventeenth Army, was transferred to the German Kuban bridgehead [south USSR]. Hitler gave permission for only four divisions of First Panzer Army to retreat back across the Don to safety.

On Thursday 28 January, after a 300-mile retreat march out of the Caucasus that had begun on 31 December 1942, the bulk of First Panzer Army reached the embattled German-Soviet bottleneck at Rostov—crossing the frozen Sea of Azov in the process—and arrived at just the right point to lend its support to the German Hollidt Group, hard-pressed between the Don and Mius rivers.

In the central area of the Eastern Front, the continuing Soviet attacks on German-held Rzhev broke down after heavy losses to both sides, despite the fact that Soviet commanders had deployed more forces in this area than on the southern front.

On Sunday 31 January 1943, Hitler promoted General Paulus to field marshal's rank, and a few



January 1943 at Stalingrad: typical massed attack by Soviet T-34 medium tanks trying to achieve a breakthrough with the support of the infantry

hours later the southern cauldron of Stalingrad, commanded by Paulus, surrendered to the Soviets.

Meanwhile, the German Seventeenth Army continued to retreat from the Caucasus, fighting delaying actions across rapidly improvised reception areas, and moved back into the Kuban bridgehead. Despite resistance from strong partisan forces south of Krasnodar, 400,000 German troops, 110,000 horses, 2,000 cannon and 26,500 motorized vehicles, including more than 1,000 tanks, reached the Kuban positions within a four-week period as scheduled.

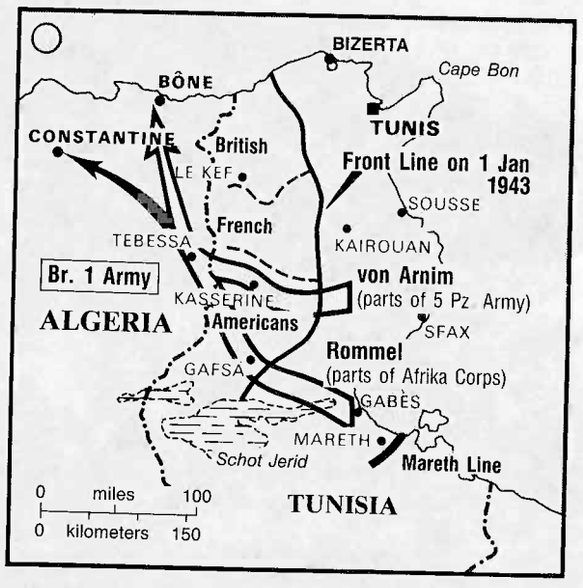
After the Afrika Panzer Army arrived in southern Tunisia, the German-Italian forces went on the offensive, attacking toward the west. They tried and failed to take Le Kef but did capture the Faid Mountain Pass and advanced to Tebessa. They took Sbeitla and Gafsa, seized the Kasserine Pass, but they were repulsed by British armor when they moved against Thala. After initial victories, they were also repulsed when they attacked Medjez el Bab.

Because of improved supplies, for the first time in months Rommel was able to bring up to their full complement his severely weakened 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions (under Generals von Vaerst

and Hildebrandt). He was also given the fully equipped 10th Panzer Division (under General von Broich), which had been transferred from Europe to Tunisia. The Tiger tanks the Germans now had in Tunisia were better than any of the Allied tanks, and Rommel hoped for success with them, especially against the Americans who tactically were no match for the Germans on the battlefield.

On the morning of Tuesday 2 February 1943, German forces under General Strecker, encircled in the northern cauldron of Stalingrad, at last surrendered. The Battle of Stalingrad was over.

Of the approximately 260,000-man German Sixth Army encircled on 22 November 1942, 34,000 men—mostly wounded and specialist forces—had been evacuated from Stalingrad by air. It is unknown exactly how many eventually entered Russian captivity, but estimates range around 90,000–95,000. All the others died in combat or perished miserably from exhaustion, cold and starvation. The Luftwaffe, in its effort to supply the troops inside the cauldron, lost 488 cargo



The fighting in Tunisia at the start of 1943

planes and some 1,000 flying personnel.

Notwithstanding, the Axis forces kept some 80 Soviet units tied up at Stalingrad, and this enabled the Germans to mount a tough defense at Rostov. On the day Stalingrad surrendered, the last units of Fourth Panzer Army successfully made their way back across the Don.

On Monday 8 February 1943, Chernyakhovsky's Soviet Sixtieth Army took Kursk. Next day, Moskalenko's Fortieth Army captured Byelgorod.

On Sunday 14 February, Hitler ordered those German forces in the area west of Kursk up to the Sea of Azov to be placed under command of the Don Army Group, now redesignated Army Group South (under Field Marshal von Manstein). Army Group B under Field Marshal von Weichs was disbanded. The newly created Army Group South was forced to evacuate Rostov and Voroshilovgrad that same day.

In Tunisia, General Ziegler's battle force mounted Operation Spring Wind. His group's 10th and 21st Panzer Divisions attacked the US II Corps under General Friedendall west of the Faid Pass.

Along the Eastern Front on Monday 15 February, the remnants of General Hell's VII Corps and Straube's XIII Corps, who had been surrounded by Soviet troops at Kasternoye on January 26, succeeded in reaching German lines after suffering extremely heavy losses in hard battle as they fought their way westward straight through the Soviet Fortieth Army.

In mid-February 1943, the situation of the Afrika Panzer Army deteriorated when the British Eighth Army took up positions between Ben Gardane, Medinine and Tatahouine and drove against the fortified Mareth Line, which was being held by the Italian First Army.

On Tuesday 16 February, SS General Hausser's II SS Panzer Corps, threatened by Soviet forces, evacuated Kharkov in the nick of time—in violation of Hitler's express orders to defend the city "to the death."

That same day, Soviet spearheads advanced westward to within 35 miles of the Dnieper river. At this point, three German army groups including seven armies and one million men were in danger of being cut off and encircled in the southern USSR. A 180-mile gap yawned between German forces near Voroshilovgrad and Byelgorod. Soviet forces outnumbered the Germans by 8 to 1, and the doom of the German Eastern Front appeared sealed. Hitler then approved the evacuation of Demyansk and Rzhev [to the north] so as to release reinforcements instantly. The Germans abandoned Rostov in the south after blowing up the Don river bridges. The German Hollidt Group, now redesignated the Sixth Army, took over the German defense on the Mius river.

By February 1943, the Soviet Sixth Army had pressed westward and formed a broad salient south of Kharkov. Von Manstein had begun to prepare a giant counteroffensive, and once again massive German armored forces were gathering in the area of German Army Group South.

On the night of 16/17 February 1943, General



End of February 1943 between the Dnieper and the Donets: Units of the German Fourth Panzer Army are making a drive toward Balakleya.

Ziegler's force in Tunisia had to break off Operation Spring Wind, which had begun on the 14th. The German 21st Panzer Division had indeed had success, and the US 2nd Motorized Division was finding it hard to hold its position at Sbeitla, but Ziegler's force had now been assigned to join Afrika Panzer Army for its planned drive over the Kasserine Pass to Tebessa.

The 21st of February 1943 is one of the crucial dates in the history of the German panzer force: Hitler appointed General Guderian Inspector-General of Armored Troops.

The growth of Soviet production, the Red Army's increasing experience in mobile warfare, and the German failure to design a tank capable of standing up to the Soviet T-34 and KV tanks precipitated a crisis for the German armored forces early in 1943. Hitler could no longer afford to forego the services of one of the world's finest armored tacticians and strategists. Guderian [—who had been disgraced and on inactive duty for some time—]was recalled to active duty and given unrestricted authority over the training and organization of the entire German panzer force. Even the armored forces of the Waffen SS and the "Hermann Göring" Luftwaffe (antiaircraft) Division were placed under his control. As Inspector-General of Armored Troops, Guderian was also responsible for development of new types of tank and for production.

Guderian's main task was to restore the panzer troop's offensive power at top speed and regain the lost strategic initiative.

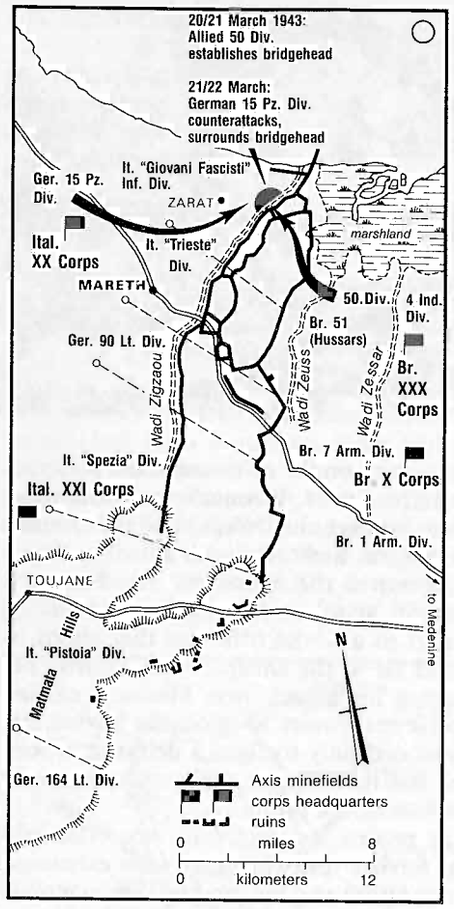
On Monday 22 February 1943, German Army Group South (von Mackensen's First Panzer Army, Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army, and the Kempf Detachment) went on the offensive, counterattacking against the Soviet Voronezh and Southwest Front armies between the Dnieper and the Donets. Field Marshal von Richtofen's 4th Air Fleet (Luftflotte 4) supported the operation. Von Manstein led concentric attacks whose launch coincided with the start of a Soviet offensive that aimed to drive west as far as the Dnieper river. Shortly before mounting his assault, von Manstein carried out deceptive maneuvers to make the Soviets believe he intended only to fight a delaying action, and at the last moment his tanks and motorized units drew into attack position.

With his proven strategic skill, von Manstein caught the Soviets just when they were exhausted by their own attack and low on fuel. Seven mobile divisions of the First and Fourth Panzer Armies grasped the lunging Soviet forces between their two pincer claws, and STAVKA recognized the danger too late. The Soviet Popov Group and Sixth Army were defeated in a classically conducted armored battle.

On Tuesday 23 February, the Axis forces in the Tunisian bridgehead were restructured. The German-Italian Afrika Panzer Army now became the Italian First Army under Italian General Messe, and the newly created Afrika Army Group under Field Marshal Rommel.

On Sunday 28 February 1943, von Manstein had driven his way back east to the Donets along a broad front. Now a gaping hole some 120 miles across had been left in the Soviet front. Shocked, STAVKA halted the attack of the Soviet Voronezh Front armies.

On Monday 1 March 1943, the German OKH ordered a "buffalo maneuver," an evacuation of the German salient at Rzhev and straightening of the German lines, which shortened the previous front line by about 200 miles, thus freeing some 20 to 22 German divisions for other duty.



The Axis bridgehead in Tunis.

On Tuesday 2 March 1943, the German counter-offensive which began on February 22 achieved another success when First Panzer Army took Slavyansk and Bogorodichno, and Fourth Panzer Army reported forming a bridgehead over the Donets at Balakleya.

Four days later, on March 6, Fourth Panzer Army and the Kempf Detachment began an attack west of Kharkov against Rybalko's Soviet Fourth Armored Army and Kazakov's Sixty-Ninth Army.

In Tunisia that same day, Rommel mounted his last failing offensive against the British Eighth Army on the Mareth Line. Participating forces were: 10th, 15th and 20th Panzer Divisions; 90th and 164th Light Divisions; and units from three Italian divisions. The attack broke down when the troops had gotten only as far as Metamyr, where they met concentrated defensive fire. The operation had to be broken off after the panzer divisions took heavy losses. That afternoon, the Axis forces lost 55 tanks and 500 dead and wounded. General Montgomery—thanks to Ultra's reports of the German Enigma signals—had been privy to every detail of the German operation before it began.

Next day, Field Marshal Rommel turned over the Afrika Panzer Group to General von Arnim and flew to Führer Headquarters, his first stop before taking a rest cure. Hitler told him: "Relax so you can get fit again soon. I guarantee you will lead our operation against Casablanca!"

On Tuesday 16 March 1943, having smashed parts of Rybalko's Soviet Third Armored Army, the German II SS Panzer Corps under SS General Hausser (part of Army Group South) recaptured Kharkov.

The Soviets had now lost the initiative to the Germans again. For von Manstein, his whole offensive was a race against time. At the moment, it was still winter and the ground was frozen hard; but as soon as the thaw set in, all movements would bog down for weeks as they had done in the spring of 1942.

That day, before yielding the territory around Vyazma, Gzhatsk and Rzhev, the Germans completed the "buffalo maneuver" they had started on March 1, when half of Heinrici's Fourth Army and almost the whole of Model's Ninth Army—a total of 29 divisions and 250,000 men—wheeled back westward in echelon formation a distance of 100 miles, to form a new, straightened battle line that ran Nevel-Byelyi–Spas Demensk. Rear guards mined the area as they left. The operation took three weeks to complete, allowing for one- or two-day rest stops. The enemy immediately launched armored attacks on the new German positions, but the Germans were able to repel them, inflicting heavy losses. Some of the 22 German divisions, freed for other duties after the straightening of the front, were able to intercept the Soviets who broke through between German Second Army and Second Panzer Army at the end of February.

On Thursday 18 March 1943, General von Knobelsdorff's XLVIII Panzer Corps destroyed the remaining units of the Soviet Third Armored Army south of Kharkov. At the same hour, Fourth Panzer Army and the II SS Panzer Corps, supported by the aircraft of von Richtofen's 4th Air Fleet, began a concentrated attack on Byelgorod and took the city, which was toughly defended by the Soviet Sixty-Ninth Army. Four Soviet armies containing seven armored and two cavalry corps—52 separate units in all—were defeated and the dangerous Soviet salient bulging up to the Dnieper was pushed back. Twelve German panzer divisions had proved that the Wehrmacht was still a force to be reckoned with.

On the night of 19/20 March 1943, the British Eighth Army went on the offensive against the Mareth Line in Tunisia, which was being defended by the Italian First Army. On Saturday 27 March, First Army was compelled by strong pressure from the British to evacuate the Mareth Line and retreat north of Gabes to the 18-mile-wide line Wadi Akarit–Shott el Fedjedj.

At the end of March 1943, the mud period set in on the Eastern Front, ending the four-month winter battle. The fresh Wehrmacht offensive had completely dominated the events of March 1943 in the southern part of the front, and the Soviets were unable to prevent a new, solid German front from forming there. By spring 1943, German Army Group South had been able to recapture a level defensive line from Taganrog [on the Sea of Azov] north to Byelgorod. Essentially this was the same line the Germans had held prior to their 1942 offensive. German defensive battles along the other focal Soviet attack points also ended successfully in March. In fighting for Demyansk in the northwest the Soviets had lost at least 10,000 dead and 423 tanks. The Germans hoped to move on to attack the Soviet salient at Kursk but had to discard their plans due to troop exhaustion and the onset of the mud period.

During the mud period of spring 1943, the German panzer divisions finally had a chance to rest a bit after months of hard fighting. They were able to replenish their losses of men and equipment and pursue the training of soldiers arriving from Germany.

At this time, the number of Soviet tanks was increasing, and the Soviets stopped setting up armored armies with non-mobile components. In spring 1943, the earlier armored armies were used as the foundation for five new armored armies of roughly equivalent strength, generally made up of two armored and one mechanized corps. The armored armies stood under the direct command of STAVKA (Soviet Military High Command Headquarters) and were only operationally at the disposal of the various Soviet army groups. Changes were also made in Soviet tactical armored units to increase their independence and reinforce their firepower and striking ability. Soviet self-propelled artillery units received new-model SU-76, SU-122 and SU-152 weapons.

Changes also took place in the armored forces of Great Britain in March 1943. General Brooks, chief of the British general staff, determined the set-up of special armored units to be used in the planned invasion of the Continent. Their task would be to land on the beaches, lead the assault parties, open independent breaches before the first waves of infantry came ashore, and then hold down defensive positions.

On Thursday 1 April 1943, the Germans too

Tunisia, 28 April 1943: Two salvage vehicles and a US medium tank are trying to drag a British Cruiser Crusader tank out of the dry river bed.



made structural alterations in their armored troops. German mobile troops were now designated panzer troops, and motorized infantry divisions were converted into panzer grenadier divisions. The structural changes in the armored forces made the two types of divisions virtually identical.

On Monday 5 April, Ruoff's German Seventeenth Army finished transferring its forces north of Kuban—Wetzel's V Corps, Angelis's XLIV Corps and Konrad's XLIX Corps—to the Kuban bridgehead.

On Tuesday 6 April 1943, the British Eighth Army began its westward offensive against the positions of the Italian First Army at Wadi Akarit [Tunisia]. Simultaneously, the US II Corps advanced east over the line Gafsa-Fundouk [so that the Americans and British were converging on the Axis forces from opposite directions]. Meanwhile, the German-Italian forces continued their retreat to Sfax and Sousse and combined with Fifth Panzer Army (now under command of Panzer General Vaerst) in the Pont-du-Fahs area where its north flank was holding the knolls west of Bizerta and Tunis. Thus the German-Italian forces were crowded into a very narrow zone in the Tunis bridgehead.

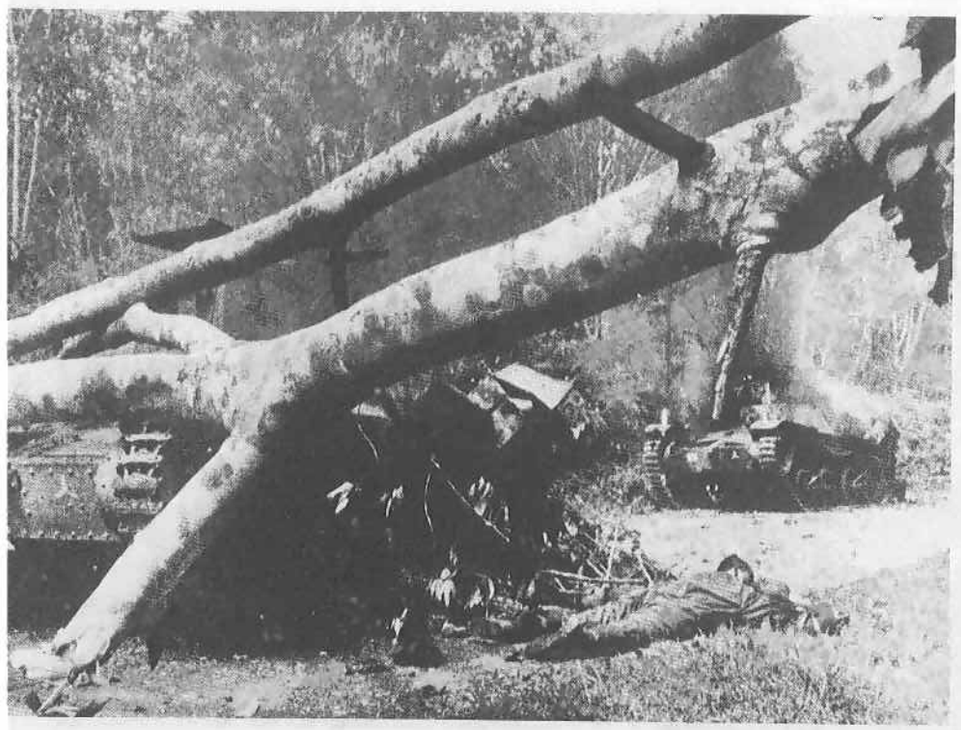
On Wednesday 7 April, a British Eighth Army infantry battalion linked up with armored reconnaissance vehicles of the US II Corps, which had advanced from Gabes in southern Tunisia about 15 miles east of El Guetar. The British, who had started their drive from El Alamein on 23 October 1942, had now joined forces with the Americans who had landed in Morocco on 8 November 1942. General von Arnim's Afrika Army Group was surrounded. At the same time, the Italian First Army began its retreat northward from Wadi Akarit.

A week later, on 13 April, the Italian First Army, its retreat completed, occupied the line Enfidaville–Pont du Fahs. Now the Tunisia bridgehead encompassed an area 80 miles long from north to south, and 30 miles wide from east to west, in the northeastern part of the country.

On Sunday 18 April, in response to Mussolini's urgings, Hitler ordered German Army Group Center to release the Italian II Corps from its duties in the USSR and return it to Italy. This ended the deployment of Italian troops on the Eastern Front.

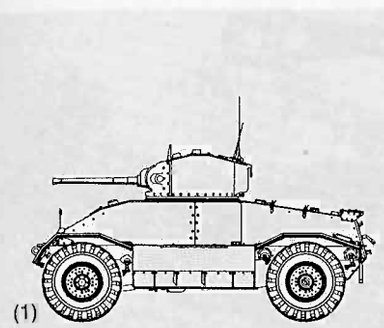
At the end of April 1943, the final Allied attack was mounted in Tunisia. General Koelte's French XIX Corps advanced to Jebel Zaghouan, and the US II Corps was shifted north and rolled toward Bizerta.

On Saturday 1 May 1943, the US 9th Infantry Division (now under command of General Bradley) drove along the coast roads north of Tunis. At this time, the Afrika Panzer Group totalled only seven Italian tanks, 58 Panzer IIIs, 17 Panzer IVs and 4 Tiger tanks.

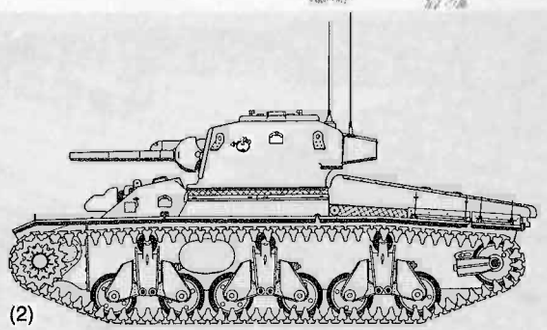


Opposite page:
(1) British A.E.C. Mark I tank; (2) Australian Cruiser Mark I Sentinel (both first produced in 1942)

Left: March 1943, southeast Asia. Japanese HA-GO light tanks of the 14th Armored Regiment, destroyed by Australian troops.



(1)



(2)

Five days later, on 5 May 1943, the British First Army (under General Anderson) on the western Tunisian border began to march against the remnants of Vaerst's Fifth Panzer Army. They broke through the German defensive lines, splitting Fifth Panzer Army into two groups. Now that the Axis surrender in North Africa was imminent, Guderian suggested that the armored crews who no longer had any tanks should be flown back to Germany in returning cargo aircraft and placed at his command; but Hitler vetoed the plan.

The final British offensive was launched in the Medjerda valley on 5/6 May 1943.

At 3:25 P.M. on Friday 7 May, the spearheads of the British First Army rolled into Tunis. Five minutes later the Americans reached Bizerta.

On Wednesday 12 May 1943, the remains of the Afrika Army Group laid down their arms. Next day the Italian First Army surrendered. The Battle of Africa was over.

Taken prisoner were 130,000 German soldiers and 180,000 Italian. Since 10 June 1940, when the Italians had launched their reckless drive from Libya into Egypt, the Axis Powers in Africa had lost 97,500 men (dead, missing and wounded), 7,600 planes, 6,200 cannon, 2,550 tanks, 70,000 vehicles and 624 ships.

Their war efforts in the Pacific occupied all the attention of the Japanese so that they mounted no large-scale operations against China before May 1943. Then in mid-May 1943, they launched an offensive against Chunking, the seat of the Chinese government. Six Japanese divisions and two brigades containing armored components were concentrated along the Yangtze between Yochu and Ichang, whence they drove forward into the Lake Tungting area where they seized large stores of rice.

On Tuesday 25 May, when Japanese lead detachments had penetrated to within 270 miles of Chunking, the offensive broke down. Substantial supply problems, Chinese counterattacks on rear bases and intensive American air attacks threatened to prevent the Japanese from advancing any further.

On the Eastern Front, almost no operations took place in May 1943 except along the German Kuban bridgehead. However, German Army Group Center did mount increasingly powerful actions against the ever multiplying Soviet partisan bands, and often even used armored forces. Lemelsen's XLVII Panzer Corps and Jaschke's LV Panzer Corps (belonging to the Second Panzer Army) carried out Operations Gypsy Baron and Freischütz [Magic Sharpshooter], and forces of Third Panzer Army mounted Operation May Storm against the partisans.

By May 1943, both Germans and Soviets had begun to beef up their forces at the Kursk Salient, and the Soviets installed a deep-echeloned defensive system.

On Friday 25 June 1943, Hitler set the launch date for the German 1943 summer offensive, Operation Citadel, the attack on Soviet forces in the area of Kursk-Orel: 5 July 1943.

The months of May and June 1943 passed without noticeable military activity: The Germans were gathering their assault forces, especially their armored forces, and the Soviets were fortifying their defenses.

The Soviets knew—mainly via their intelligence agents in Switzerland who were privy to the top-secret British Ultra reports of German Enigma signals—that Hitler was planning a massive, albeit localized, summer offensive at the Kursk Salient, using new models of tanks and freshly arrived panzer forces which would bring the decision in battle.

Surprisingly, the British at this time suspected that the Soviets, fearing possible defeat, might try to conclude a separate peace with Germany. Liddell Hart, the renowned British military historian and tank theoretician, even went so far as to report that Soviet-German peace talks actually took place during this lull in the fighting. He claimed that in June 1943, foreign ministers Molotov and von Ribbentrop met in Kirovgrad, which was still German-occupied, to discuss possibilities for ending the war; and that German officers who were present as technical advisers reported that von Ribbentrop suggested Germany would make peace if Russia's



Above: Heavy German Tiger tanks (Panzer VIs). Hitler and the German generals set great hopes on them for the 1943 summer offensive.

future border were drawn at the Dnieper river, whereas Molotov felt that a ceasefire could be discussed only if Russia's border were restored to what it had been in June 1940.

This meeting between German foreign minister von Ribbentrop and Soviet minister Molotov—who allegedly was channelled through the German lines in the central sector of the Eastern Front—never actually took place, and yet reports about it continue to haunt publications even today.

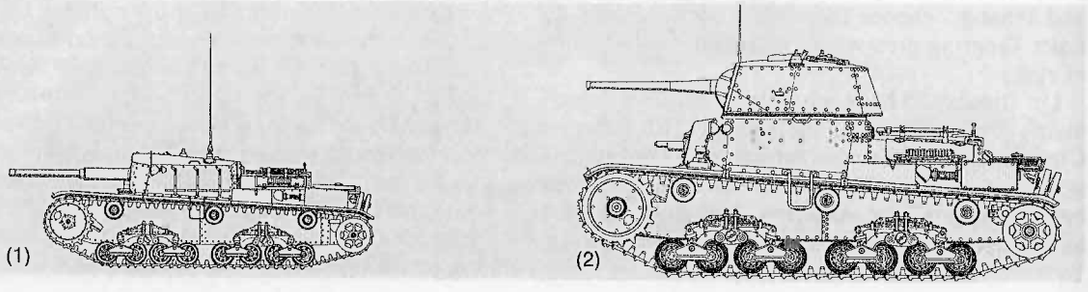
Beginning in summer 1943, the Soviet armored forces were restructured to reflect Soviet experiences during their counteroffensive at Stalingrad, where it became clear that the infantry divisions that formed part of the armored units could not keep up with the armored vehicles and slowed down their maneuvers. The six Soviet armored armies were reconstituted with two armored corps and one mechanized corps [each], in contrast to those established in 1942 which initially had two armored corps plus several infantry divisions. The new armored armies were also strongly reinforced with self-propelled artillery and other motorized auxiliary forces. The increased operational mobility of the Soviet armored forces was facilitated largely by the delivery of large truck vehicles from the USA: Some 434,000 vehicles had been received since summer 1942.

In June 1943 the Soviets began to bring to the battlefield increasing numbers of their excellent 7.62-cm antitank guns, which the German soldiers nicknamed Ratchety-Booms. Suspended from armored vehicles, the 7.62-cm antitank guns protected the armor during temporary lulls in the fighting. Independent antitank units formed barriers and fronts to shield the vulnerable flanks of Soviet armored corps which had penetrated German lines.

The Red Air Force too became increasingly active starting in summer 1943. Type IL-2 Sturmovik ground-attack aircraft were attacking German tanks with mounting violence.

In the first half of 1943, the number of divisions in the German Wehrmacht dropped from 214 to 190, while in the same period the number of Soviet infantry divisions and brigades rose from 442 to 530, armored and mechanized brigades from 186 to 290, and cavalry divisions from 35 to 41. At this time, the total strength of the Soviet Armed Forces was 12.9 million, 5.1 million of whom were fighting with the Red Army on the European Front, against only 3 million Germans.

(1) Italian M43 self-propelled antitank guns; (2) Italian Carro Armato M 15/42 medium tank. (Both first produced 1942.)



1943

July—December

12 Million Foreign Laborers in Germany

Thursday 1 July 1943, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

For the first time, precise details have been published about the deployment of foreign labor for the German Reich. Armaments minister Speer announced in his address in the Berlin Sports Palace that Party District Leader Sauckel, the deputy for labor deployment, has succeeded in increasing the number of arms workers by 23% in one year.

Armored Combat Badges
German Army Decree of 22 June 1943, concerning introduction of higher grade armored-combat and assault badges:

1. In recognition of the zeal for attack shown on repeated occasions by members of the heavy weapons corps during armored assaults, the Führer has sanctioned the introduction of higher grades of armored combat badges.

2. The higher grades of armored-combat badges will have a special pattern and be engraved with the number 25 for the IInd grade, 50 for the IIIrd grade, 75 and 100 for the IVth grade.

3. Requirements for award of the badges are: the IInd grade after 25 accredited missions; the IIIrd grade after 50 accredited missions; the IVth grade after 75 accredited missions.

One armored-combat badge will be of silver and will be awarded to armored crews of panzer units; armored-combat badges of bronze will go to armored reconnaissance units; the general assault badge to members of assault artillery units, armored assault units and antitank units of the antitank detachments.

The IVth grade may be awarded a second time after 100 missions, this time engraved with the number 100.

4. Only one assault badge may be worn [at any one time]; the lower grades of badge may be retained as a keepsake.

5. The accreditation of missions is to comply with regulations for the award of armored-combat badges and general assault badges; and regulations for armored assault units and units of antitank detachments will be applied to members of assault batteries.

By order of
SCHMUNDT
OKH, 2 July 1943

Tuesday 6 July 1943
The *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

A successful local assault operation by German infantry in the Byelgorod sector led to strong Soviet counterattacks which yesterday developed into heavy fighting on the ground and in the air. The fighting has spread into the area north of Kursk and, as of this hour, is steadily increasing in violence.

Armored Battle at Kursk

6 July 1943, Moscow
STAVKA reported in a special communiqué:

Since the morning of July 5, Soviet troops in the areas of Kursk-Orel and Byelgorod have been waging heavy defensive battles against large enemy infantry and armored forces which have gone on the offensive with the support of abundant aircraft. We have repelled the enemy assaults, inflicting heavy losses on the attackers. Only at isolated points have small-scale German formations succeeded in pene-



Close-combat techniques for fighting tanks: theory and practice. Before 1943, when the Germans began to deploy effective close-range antitank weapons like the recoil-less rocket launcher, they got along as well as they could using limpet and antitank land mines, hand grenades or even iron crowbars. Here, an officer of the "Grossdeutschland" Panzer Grenadier Division is explaining the vulnerable points of a Soviet T-34 tank. Nazi propagandists went to great lengths to glamorize close fighting against tanks and to divert attention from the heavy casualties.

trating a short way into our positions. The incomplete data assembled so far indicates that on the first day of fighting we destroyed 586 German tanks and 203 German aircraft. The fighting is continuing.

Thursday 8 July 1943, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The loss of 862 Soviet tanks, including large numbers of the heaviest model, the KV "Klim Voroshilov," and of 847 Soviet planes shot down in three days are the first tangible tokens of success resulting from an unexpectedly violent German counterattack following an all-out Soviet attempt to capture certain important staging areas between Byelgorod and Orel for the heavily and superbly armed Soviet shock army which had assembled for attack there. The Soviets, believing their plans were threatened, threw all their available reserves of armor and aircraft into the developing large-scale battles, which in turn resulted in the deployment of all available German reserves. A major conflict ensued which, according to messages just received, has resulted in German penetration of the deeply extending Soviet system of fortifications into which they poured months of work, and that is virtually carpeted with heavily armed battle stands, mines, barricades, tank traps, mortars and minethrowers and gun batteries; and the heaviest losses in men and matériel have been inflicted on the Soviets.

. . . The battle has continued to rage on the third day with mounting violence, and with the armored units as ever bearing the brunt of battle. The high toll of knocked-out Soviet tanks includes 483 destroyed around Byelgorod and 379 south of Orel. Of the total of 862 destroyed tanks, German aircraft and Luftwaffe antiaircraft guns accounted for no less than 291. The value of the contribution which German planes are making to ward off the massed Soviet attacks, and to the German counteroperations that succeed them, is evident from the fact that they have so far brought down 847 Soviet aircraft while taking losses of only 54.

German Territorial Gains Slight
8 July 1943, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

The third day of the German-Fascist large-scale offensive, whose dimensions are steadily increasing with the influx of fresh reserves, has once again resulted in only minor territorial gains by the German forces, which are out of all proportion to the heavy losses they sustained to make them.

While no notable changes occurred on the Orel Front, the Germans have succeeded in expanding somewhat on the breaches they made at Byelgorod. By evening, our troops had regained their original lines across almost the entire front, and Soviet units temporarily cut off by German armored breakthroughs were successfully relieved.

German tank losses in this sector of the front alone come to more than 220 of which 40 were "Tigers." Savage aerial combat by large formations of aircraft continued over the front throughout the day, with neither adversary succeeding in gaining command of the air. [Soviet] Sturmovik ground-attack aircraft played a major role in smashing the Fascist armored onslaught, as did our new destroyers that fire a novel type of armor-piercing shell.

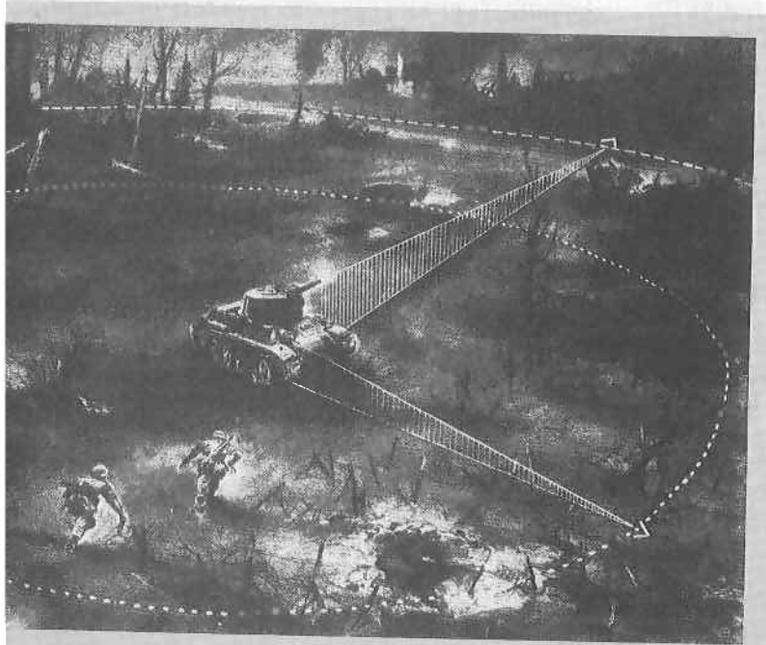
Allied Landing in Sicily

Sunday 11 July 1943
The *Italian Armed Forces High Command* reported:

A violent battle is underway along the coast of eastern Sicily where Italian and German troops are vigorously combatting enemy forces who have landed there and are bravely withstanding their pressure. Enemy aerial forces are active. Axis fighter planes have shot down 22 enemy aircraft, antiaircraft guns 9.

Monday 12 July 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

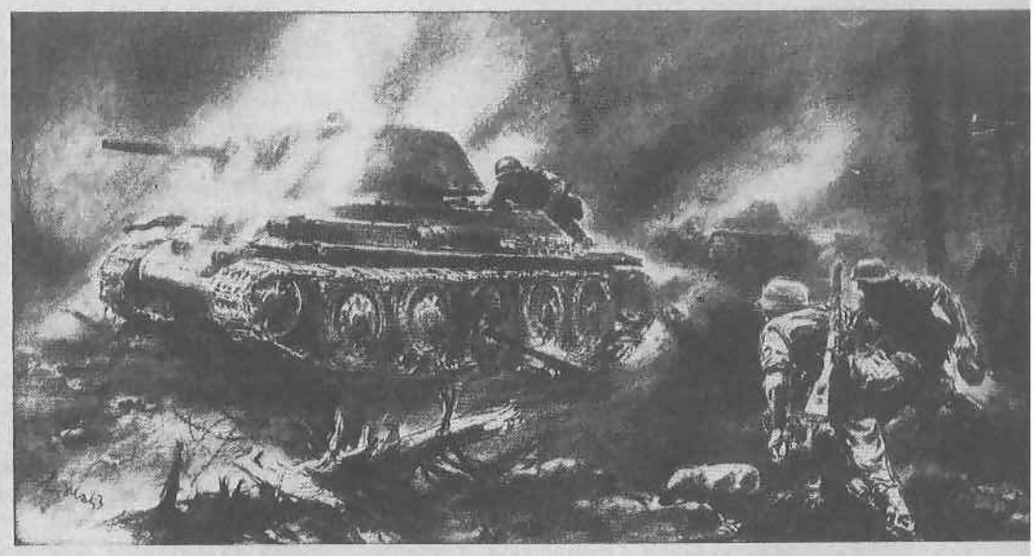
In the battle between Byelgorod and Orel, our troops have succeeded in encircling and destroying a large enemy force, capturing several thousand prisoners, knocking out 129 tanks and seizing large numbers of cannon and other weapons. Yesterday,



The two essentials of modern antitank fighting at close range: Watch out for the "undefended angle" and the "blind zone"!
The advancing tank, cleared for action, has its hatches closed, and the narrow viewslots that look out on its immediate surroundings give it scant visibility. Thus the antitank men allow the tank to get as close as possible and then attack at the "undefended angle" under its defensive machine guns. The swivelling turret and the rotating ability of the whole tank mean that the machine guns can describe a complete horizontal circle. But *vertically*, both weapons have a very limited shift ability. This creates an "undefended angle" (a) below the guns and a "blind spot" (b) around the tank that are free from the sweep of defensive fire. These grenadiers are "diving" into the blind zone at a moment when the tank is incapable of unaided self-defense.



The Crowning Achievement in Close Fighting against Tanks: Blowing Up the Turret!
A grenadier has jumped onto the tank from behind and attached an antitank mine where the turret meets the ceiling armor. The mine will go off almost at once, so the man has only a few seconds to jump down from the tank and get under cover to avoid the massive explosion, which will blast the turret and heavy cannon out of their reinforced fittings. This feat is the dream of every assault engineer and antitank soldier. Our bold soldiers have already destroyed hundreds of Soviet tanks on the Eastern Front with this daring technique. At one time it was the exclusive prerogative of a small circle of specialists, but now every German grenadier is taught this method of tank destruction and trained in use of all special weapons.



Blinded Tanks!
Smoke bombs are among the large array of arms used by the antitank soldier. Agile soldiers throw the shells at the tank, which immediately is swathed in a viscous, impenetrable brown haze that "blinds" it. At the same moment, the attackers leap from cover and apply their heavy "tank-busting" weapons to the helpless giant. The smoke also isolates the tanks, which travel in dense packs, throwing up walls that make it impossible for them to give each other protective cover. Experienced tank specialists use the most refined combinations of smoke shells, laying the foundation for successful close fighting.





Defanging the "Viper"!
In the fight of man against tank it is crucial to destroy the enemy's close-combat weapons. Here a daring grenadier is using an iron crowbar to smash the swivelling radio-operated machine gun.

This man has no antitank weapons, only hand grenades. Bravely he pushes them into the gun barrel, and at the same moment the enemy opens the breech from inside, the grenade explodes knocking out the tank's weapons.

we destroyed a total of 220 tanks and 70 aircraft and repulsed relief attacks which the Soviets mounted east and north of Orel. Since July 5, the enemy has lost 28,000 prisoners, 1,640 tanks and 1,400 cannon. On Sicily, the British and American landing troops tried in vain to expand the strip of coast they occupied. German and Italian troops counterattacked as planned at various points yesterday and drove back the enemy in their first engagement.

12 July 1943
A special correspondent of the American *Associated Press News Agency* reported from General Eisenhower's Headquarters in Sicily:

The latest reports indicate that the Allied forces have penetrated a long way northwest along the road from Syracuse to Pozzallo. American troops under General Patton have repulsed a massive counterattack north of Gela that had the support of 45 armored vehicles. The bulk of the enemy troops belonged to the Italian "Livorno" Division. This attack was the seventh and most powerful counterassault launched by the enemy in the last day; all have failed.

German Attacks Waning
Wednesday 14 July 1943, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

In the past twelve hours, German assault activity has slackened further with the Red Army increasingly seizing the initiative.

Since yesterday evening, German attacks around Byelgorod too have decreased in force. [Soviet] General Rokossovsky, on the other hand, has sent new reserves to the front and is attacking in almost all sectors. The panzer spearheads which the Germans drove into Soviet positions in the first days of their offensive are shrivelling, and the initiative is gradually passing over to the Red Army.

Thursday 15 July 1943
The *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

The heavy fighting on the Eastern Front is continuing despite the deteriorating weather. – We defeated another enemy force in a concentrated attack near Byelgorod, and counterattacks renewed by enemy forces weaker than on previous days have been repulsed with heavy losses to them. East and north of Orel, the enemy continued his attacks Wednesday [yesterday], with the support of tanks and ground-attack aircraft. Attempts by the Soviets to break through German positions have failed under heavy casualties. We immediately mounted counterattacks, which are progressing successfully.

Along the entire sector of this large-scale battle, we destroyed 336 more Soviet tanks on Wednesday, and our air force shot down 70 enemy planes.

Counterstroke at Orel

15 July 1943, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

The following special communiqué was published this evening:

Our troops have now gone on the offensive against the German troops to the north and east of Orel. Our offensive was launched in two directions: southward from the area north of Orel, and westward from the area east of Orel. North of Orel, our troops have penetrated a 24-mile-wide stretch of strongly fortified German defensive positions and have advanced 27 miles in a period of 3 days. Large numbers of enemy fortifications have been destroyed.

The Soviet T-34 Tank
Friday 16 July 1943, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The Soviet T-34 tank has been modified after units armed with this model suffered heavy losses. It is now equipped with a cast-steel armored turret. Its other armor has also been substantially reinforced. Notwithstanding, the reinforced Soviet tank is no match for the armor-piercing German guns.

Winston Churchill to the Secretary of State for War and Chief of Imperial General Staff
16 July 1943:

I learn with great concern from C.I.G.S. that our 1st Armoured Division, a unit of exceptional quality and experience, on which years of training have been lavished, is now being used to guard prisoners of war. As an emergency measure for, say, a month this might be tolerated. It must now immediately be brought to an end. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. V]

British Breakthrough toward Catania
Saturday 17 July 1943
General Montgomery's Headquarters in Sicily reported:

After heavy fighting with German and Italian elite units, the [British] Eighth Army broke through strong enemy defensive positions at Lentini [Sicily] late on Friday evening, fighting its way through to the plain of Catania.

The Eighth Army at Lentini was surprised to encounter the bulk of the [elite] "Hermann Göring" Division and the German 15th Panzer Division, both of which it had already faced in North Africa. Both German divisions had been reformed in southern Italy after the heavy losses they sustained in Africa.

Hard Fighting in Sicily

German war correspondent Lutz Koch reported in the 17 July 1943 issue of the German newspaper *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*:

On the fourth day after British and American troops made their invasion landing in Sicily, General Montgomery, the commander-in-chief of the British Eighth Army, tried to accelerate his assault with repeated support from heavy naval artillery along the coast road north from Syracuse via Augusta to Catania. Under heavy pressure from the British troops, who vastly outweighed them in numbers and matériel, the German lead units were forced to withdraw to new positions after putting up a heroic resistance.

But the tenacity of the German defense repeatedly foiled the movements of the enemy's overwhelming matériel. Smoldering tanks and shot-down planes testify to the harshness of our defense. The hedgehogs formed by our tanks and assault guns always hold out as long as commanders order, so as to secure our mobile retreat to new lines.

The Bazooka Rocket Launcher: A New Weapon
Sunday 18 July 1943, Washington
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Major General L. H. Campbell, in charge of US artillery weapons, recently issued statements about the US Army's new portable antitank gun, which soldiers are calling the "bazooka." Campbell describes it as a kind of rocket launcher.

Monday 19 July 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Yesterday Soviet assaults in the central and southern parts of the Eastern Front failed again. Yet another time they suffered heavy casualties and lost 337 tanks. At the Kuban bridgehead, the enemy halted his attacks during the afternoon in consequence of heavy losses. The Soviets continued their attempts to break through along the Mius and Middle Donets rivers, but these failed against our tough defense or as a result of determined counterattacks by our troops. We smashed Soviet infantry and tank units which attacked in several waves north of



German Operation Citadel at Orel in July 1943: A heavy German Panzer VI (Tiger) tank on fire. Note the two large cylindrical exhaust fixtures.

Byelgorod, before they reached our main line. In changeable battle, our troops throughout the Orel area repelled attacks mounted at various points, inflicting extremely heavy losses on the enemy.

German and Italian troops in Sicily are continuing to put up bitter resistance to the enemy in partially mobile warfare.

News Blockade
19 July 1943, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* announced:

The Soviet army is continuing to advance along the entire front at Orel. Non-official reports say that heavy Soviet attacks are continuing on the southern front. The Soviet High Command has prohibited any further reporting for the time being.

National Committee of German Anti-Fascists
Wednesday 21 July 1943, Moscow
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Today's issue of the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* reports the formation in Moscow of a German national committee to be known as *Freies Deutschland* [Free Germany] which aims to topple the National Socialist régime with the objective of then forming a new democratic German government. The committee's first manifesto was published at the same time and stated: "The British and American troops are standing at the gates of Europe. The day is coming when Germany will collapse under simultaneous blows from all sides. The war is already lost; but Germany must not die."

Red Alert on the Italian Coast
21 July 1943, Rome
Decree of the *Italian Armed Forces High Command*:

Several provinces of Tuscany and Latium [central Italy] may be put on a state of alert if an enemy operation is deemed to be imminent. In such a case, civilians will be forbidden to leave cities or villages. The roads must be left completely clear for the military. Fishing and navigation will be prohibited. A curfew will be imposed during the blackout. All traffic outside inhabited places will be banned, both travel by foot and by any type of vehicle. Private individuals will not be allowed to use either the telephone or telegraph.

Soviet Victory at Orel

Thursday 22 July 1943, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* announced:

The battle at Orel is nearing an end; the city is expected to fall [to us] in the next couple of days. Soviet forces advancing from north and south of Orel are now separated by a gap of only 24 to 26 miles.

Soviet gun batteries are moving up and systematically destroying the German artillery positions which, in addition, are still under heavy bombardment by Soviet Sturmovik ground-attack aircraft, and are opening the way for armored and infantry units.

In the Byelgorod area, the Germans have been forced to yield their main defensive position and are retreating along the whole sector. South of Izyum and southwest of Voroshilovgrad, our troops have repelled a number of massive counterattacks and, following up their pursuit of the defeated troops, have considerably expanded and deepened their bridgeheads on the right banks of the Donets and Mius.

The "battle of the bridgeheads," which is now proceeding on the southern front, will retain its local character only until the Red Army has extended the bridgeheads sufficiently to allow a grand offensive, emanating from these points, to be launched when the right moment comes.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 23 July 1943:

The resistance of guerrilla troops in the former territory of Yugoslavia and in Greece has gained new impetus since the Allies landed in Sicily. . . Recently the [Axis] occupation forces in the Balkans have carried out new measures, probably related to the fact that Italian troops are being called back home. The zone occupied by Bulgarian troops has been extended in northern Greece into the eastern half of the Vardar Valley and near the port of Saloniki. In general, the revival of the fighting in Russia and the Mediterranean, and especially the rapid success of the Allies' first invasion operation in Europe, has caused heightened tension and unrest. . . The determining feature of the situation on the Eastern Front is no longer the German offensive against the Russian salient at Kursk, but the Russian counteroffensive against the German salient at Orel. The Soviet High Command has deployed vast quantities of tanks, mobile artillery and aircraft in its counteroffensive and has made up the territory lost to the Germans in the first phase of the summer fighting.

Winston Churchill to the Secretary of State for War and Chief of the Imperial General Staff
Monday 26 July 1943:

I am willing not to send a personal telegram to Eisenhower on the state of the 1st Armoured Division in order that he may not think you were pressing me to do so. However, I can only agree to this if prompt and drastic action is taken, for I am determined that this fine unit shall be immediately brought to the highest state of efficiency and equipment. [English quoted from p. 579, Appendix C of



July 1943 near Orel: Soviet SU-152 tank destroyers crossing an arm of the Donets. The SU-152 self-propelled gun consisted of a 15.2-cm howitzer mounted on a heavy KV-1 tank chassis. It had its baptism of fire in the battle of Kursk-Orel, and its success in fighting the German Tigers and Ferdinands led the Soviet soldiers to call it the "Winning Beast."

Churchill's *The Second World War*, vol. V]

Bombs Fall on Rumanian Oil Production Center at Ploesti
Tuesday 3 August 1943
The Rumanian *Rador News Agency* reported:

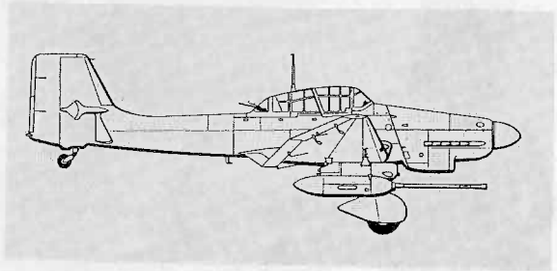
A total of approximately 125 American four-engined bombers attacked our oil production zone between 1:00 and 4:00 P.M. on August 1. Intense resistance by Rumanian and German forces prevented many of the attackers from reaching their target. Casualties included 147 wounded and 116 killed. Of these, 63 of the dead and 60 of the wounded were inmates of Ploesti [Women's] Prison, where a burning American bomber crashed into the roof. So far, it has been determined that 56 enemy planes were shot down and 6 American airmen captured. The Queen Mother Helene visited the oil district on the morning of August 2. Immediately after the air attack, [Rumanian Axis dictator] Marshal Antonescu arrived, accompanied by members of the government.

"Flying Antiaircraft"
The German periodical *Der Adler*, No. 26 of 1943, carried this descriptive account of German Ju 87 dive-bombers armed with two 3.7-cm antitank cannon:

The great battles of attrition that are being fought on the Eastern Front with the full array of modern military technology, have led to development by Germany of a 3.7-cm airborne antitank gun which, suspended like a bomb under each wing of our battle-proven Junkers Ju 87 Stuka dive-bomber, has in the truest sense of the word a "smashing" effect on certain ground targets. The "flying antitank guns" have proved especially valuable as antitank weapons. The much-decorated [German air ace] Major Rudel alone has knocked out over 200 enemy tanks with them.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, dated 16 August 1943 (extract):

Present reports from all parts of the Reich indicate that the [German] people at present feel their powers of emotional resistance are being strained to the breaking-point. . .



German Junkers Ju 87 G-1 dive-bomber, part of a German antitank flying squadron. This model was a Ju 87 D-5 fitted with two 3.7-cm No. 18 antiaircraft guns and was first produced in June 1942.

The reports emphasize that the broad mass of the population are not convinced that we have in our hands all the requirements of victory. Instead they see the war situation approximately as follows: We are on the defensive, trying to ward off overwhelming odds; we are unable to prevent local breaches in Fortress Europe; Italy will defect as soon as the other side makes her some definite concessions. . .; the Balkans are under threat, and with them our supply of oil; the huge matériel deployment and seemingly inexhaustible manpower reserves of the Soviets may lead to a new catastrophe in the East this winter.

Those wearing [Nazi] Party insignia have frequently been addressed by other Germans who say: "What, are you still wearing that thing?"

There have also been numerous reports of the following joke:

Anyone who recruits five new members into the Party gets to leave it himself. Anyone who recruits ten new members gets a certificate testifying that he was never in the Party.

Battle of Kharkov

Monday 23 August 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

In continuing heavy fighting yesterday, all enemy attempts to break through were repelled along the area of the Mius river. Fighting flared up again at Izyum. Strong Soviet infantry and armored thrusts were intercepted and smashed by our counterattacking troops. During the battle, more than 130 enemy tanks were knocked out in the sector defended by one corps alone.

German Army and Waffen-SS troops are also engaged in a furious struggle with Soviet infantry forces near Kharkov. Kharkov, which has changed hands a number of times during the Eastern Campaign, is now nothing more than a heap of ruins, and we have once again evacuated it as part of a planned withdrawal maneuver. Northwest of Kharkov, we continued to clear the area of an enemy force encircled by German panzer grenadiers, and are taking increasing numbers of prisoners and equipment.

Diplomatic Corps Returns
23 August 1943, Moscow
Radio Moscow reported:

All members of the diplomatic corps accredited by the Soviet government returned to Moscow in mid-August. The diplomats had left the Soviet capital in the autumn of 1941 at the behest of the government, and withdrawn to Kuibyshev [farther east].

23 August 1943, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

The Battle of Kharkov raged all day Sunday with unabated violence, with both sides deploying vast quantities of troops and mechanized arms. The fighting was especially bloody west and northwest of Kharkov, where the Soviet advance continued despite stiffening resistance. Red Army units made territorial gains of 2½ to 4 miles in a number of sectors. In all, 30 villages have been freed in the past 24 hours. The Fascists carried out several counterattacks, deploying strong armored formations that cooperated with the infantry in trying to break through Soviet positions.

Vigorous German Resistance
Tuesday 24 August 1943, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

The battle to liberate the Ukraine is now fully under way. Soviet forces attacking in three directions emanating from Kharkov have gained more ground, occupying 18 villages in the past 12 hours and seizing large quantities of heavy matériel, ammunition and food. The most vigorous resistance they encountered came from a German army group in southwest Kharkov, which is defending a well-built barricade north of the Poltava-Lozovaya rail line.

Breakthrough at Smolensk and Kursk

Tuesday 31 August 1943, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

The past 24 hours have brought about a rapid chain of events which mean grave consequences for the German armies:

The German defensive zone, extending along an approximately 60-mile-wide front from around Yartsevo to Spas-Demensk and covering Smolensk on the east and southeast, has now been penetrated. We have severed a 24-mile segment of the rail line from Smolensk to the southeast across Yelnya. Yelnya is now in Soviet hands.

Our troops, attacking frontally from positions west of Kursk and cooperating with a simultaneous general attack by Soviet armies concentrated at Syevsk, have won major success.

Successful Curtailment of the Front
Wednesday 1 September 1943, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

A planned withdrawal of German lines in the area of Voroshilovgrad was carried out despite vain enemy attempts to break through. This has enabled us to achieve a further curtailment of the front and thus allowed us to form operational reserves [with the forces freed from duty on the curtailed sectors].

Invasion Landing in Southern Italy

Friday 3 September 1943
Allied Headquarters North Africa reported:

Allied forces under overall command of General Eisenhower have continued their advances. British and Canadian troops of the Eighth Army, supported by Allied naval and aerial forces, went on the offensive this morning across the Straits of Messina [between Sicily and mainland Italy] and have landed in continental Italy. Italian coastal batteries have already been knocked out of action along a 6-mile-wide front. In the last few days, a number of small Allied assault parties crossed the Straits of Messina to reconnoiter the exact points where today's landing ensued. By 6:00 A.M., British artillery already stood on [the shores of] continental Italy.

A unit of German Panzer IIIs equipped with 5-cm L/60 guns are assembling at Kharkov in August 1943. The 5-mm-thick protective "aprons" on either side of the turret and hull were designed to intercept hollow charges and antitank projectiles.



Surrender of the Italian Army
Wednesday 8 September 1943
General Eisenhower's Headquarters reported:

General Eisenhower has just announced the unconditional surrender of the Italian armed forces. The Allies have granted Italy an armistice. Military action was halted this afternoon.

Italian Troops Disarmed
Friday 10 September 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The treacherous Badoglio government [—Marshal Badoglio had become the Italian premier after Mussolini's overthrow and arrest—] had gathered strong forces around Rome in the past few weeks to

prepare for Italy's defection [i.e. separate surrender to the Allies and adoption of the role of an Allied co-belligerent] and had even fortified the city against German troops outside the city, pleading as an excuse the threat of an enemy landing west of Rome. Since Italy's surrender on September 8, fighting has sprung up between German and Italian troops around Rome.

The German Commander-in-Chief South, Field Marshal Kesselring, brought up reinforcements, led an attack on Rome and issued an ultimatum to the city commanders. Under pressure from him, the Italian commander in Rome has surrendered within an area 60 miles in diameter. Italian troops are in the process of disarming. German forces in Rome have linked up with the German army in the area of Naples and Salerno; they will also take over the protection of Vatican City.

In Northern Italy, the divisions of Field Marshal Rommel's army group have compelled Italian forces to surrender after a short battle in which our troops fought with great ferocity.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

10 September 1943:

September 8, 1943 marked a black day for Germany in the history of the present war: for on September 8, the Soviet army recaptured the Donets Basin with its capital Stalino, and an armistice was enacted between Italy and the Allied powers. At the same time that crowds of people in Moscow jubilantly celebrated the recapture of the largest Soviet industrial and mining district, the news of Italy's surrender was setting off joyful mass demonstrations in the streets of London and New York. The German people heard the news of the defection of their Axis partner with suitable bitterness, and the German public are under no illusions about the gravity of the deep inroads being made by enemy forces simultaneously along the Southern and Eastern Fronts.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, dated 13 September 1943 (extract):

Reports from all parts of the Reich confirm our initial impression of the effect produced by the Führer's address and the German military action in Italy: the people's confidence in their own strength, which temporarily was shaken, has now been restored. Trust in the Führer has been reinforced again.

Tuesday 21 September 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Yesterday our troops led heavy defensive fighting against strong enemy infantry and armored forces north of the Sea of Azov, east of the Dnieper, along the Desna and near Smolensk. In





Opposite page: One of the rare photos of fighting between the former Axis allies, Germany and Italy, at Prima Porta, a northern suburb of Rome, on 8 August 1943. Two Italian armored reconnaissance vehicles, type Fiat Autoblinda AB 41, have been knocked out by German antitank guns. Beside them lie the charred bodies of their crews. In the background German paratroops are leading away captured Italians.
Right: The camouflaged field repair workshop of a German armored division on the Eastern Front, autumn 1943

one corps sector, 76 out of 100 tanks of an army assault troop were destroyed.

Soviets Conquer Nothing but Ruins
Thursday 23 September 1943, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The cities and villages which Soviet reports list (stereotypically) as "conquered" consist for the most part of nothing but ruined walls. German success in moving out all weapons and supplies and the speedy completion of German troop maneuvers are all the more remarkable in that they usually have been carried out right under the noses of the Soviet attackers without the Soviets being able to do anything to prevent them.

The Soviet Troop Relief System
Friday 24 September 1943, Moscow
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Reliable sources here estimate that approximately four million men are fighting in the Soviet armies on the major fronts, only one third of whom are ever in action at any one time. The four million are split into three sections, and while the first group is fighting, the second and third groups are held in reserve. Equipment stays on the battle line and is taken over by the reserve units as they come on duty. Matériel reinforcements go directly to the front [rather than to particular troop units]. Repairs and replacements of damaged equipment are carried out directly behind the lines. This substantially increases the mobility of forces going to the front or retreating into reserve positions, because the troops can be transported minus the equipment that would otherwise weigh down their movements.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

24 September 1943:

Caught up among the new fronts which are still shifting and flowing across Russia, Italy and the Aegean islands, we find the Balkan Peninsula in a state of ferment. Increased activity by Yugoslav partisans in the area that formerly was Yugoslavia has made the area a potential new Allied front. . . As for the Italian front, it has now stabilized along the road leading from Naples to Foggia since the American Fifth Army linked up with the British Eighth Army one week ago. Naples and its people have been undergoing especially harsh trials for a week now. Troops of Kesselring's [German] army have occupied strong positions in the mountains south of Naples and are impeding the progress of Americans trying to penetrate to the coastal plains beyond.

Smolensk and Roslavl Fall to the Soviets
Saturday 25 September 1943, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

News has just arrived from the northern front that the Red Army has won its greatest victory so far in its summer offensive. Last night the German defenses at Smolensk crumbled under incessant attack from all branches of the Soviet service. Shortly before dawn, the first assault troops broke into Smolensk. Bloody fighting ensued in the city streets, many of which were on fire. At the time of this report, most of Smolensk has already passed into Soviet hands.

South of Smolensk, Soviet troops have captured the important German stronghold of Roslavl. Here too the battle was decided only after heavy street fighting.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, dated 30 September 1943 (extract):

Germans are accepting with composure the [German] retreat maneuvers on which their interest has focussed in the past few days; but intense anxiety is evident in many conversations, because our retreat movements have been attributed to overwhelming enemy pressure. Some of the population see the German retreat as a strategic maneuver, part of a brilliant plan of the Führer to consolidate all our forces so that we can then mount a suitably massive counterblow in the spring of 1944. However, a typical comment which has been heard again and again is: "But the retreat has to stop at the Dnieper, otherwise I'll take a pessimistic view of things too."

Allied Advance in Italy
Tuesday 5 October 1943
The *Headquarters of General Clark* [commander US Fifth Army in Italy]:

Our latest reconnaissance reveals that Field Marshal Kesselring had partially completed a strong line of fortifications running from Termoli 50 miles northwest of Foggia, to Riccia and the Volturno river [i.e. a line running east-west across the entire width of Italy at a narrow point]. The positions are now occupied by the German 4th Parachute Division, the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, the 26th Panzer Division and the elite "Hermann Göring" Division.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 15 October 1943:

. . . On the Eastern Front, the Russians, after their summer offensive ended and a short pause ensued in the fighting, unexpectedly launched a powerful fresh offensive on October 7. The Soviet High Command is trying, before the onset of winter, to deny the enemy the Dnieper river line where the Germans planned to hold their winter defenses. The fighting is now raging outside the city of Gomel along the middle Dnieper, the last German strongpoint east of the Pripet Marshes. . . On the southern European front, bitter fighting is also under way between Germans and the Allied forces of the American Fifth and British Eighth Armies, who are facing the troops of Kesselring and von Vietinghoff. The front runs along a west-east axis from the mouth of the Volturno river to the port city of Termoli on the Adriatic Sea. The Anglo-American troops are combatting strong German defenses to gain access to central Italy, with the city of Rome as their next objective. Rome is approximately 90 miles from the present front lines.

Monday 18 October 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

Strong enemy infantry and armored attacks have been repelled north of the Sea of Azov. South of Kremenchug, our troops spent two days in heavy defensive fighting against strong attacking enemy forces. Yesterday we destroyed 43 more tanks.

A German panzer corps commanded by General Hossbach has foiled a threatened enemy breakthrough at the mouth of the Pripet river in two weeks of fighting, and in their counterattack destroyed two infantry divisions and one armored brigade. Along the central sector of the front, the Soviets northwest of Chernigov and west of Smolensk have continued their repeated attempts to break through and have also attacked with strong forces south of Velikiye-Luki.

Winston Churchill to F.D. Roosevelt
Tuesday 26 October 1943:

. . . .

2. But you will have seen by now Eisenhower's number setting forth the condition into which we are sinking in Italy. We must not let this great Italian battle degenerate into a deadlock. At all costs we must win Rome and the airfields to the north of it.

3. I am so grieved to worry you with these matters while you are still suffering from influenza. [English quoted from *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, vol. II "Alliance Forged," p. 563, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1984]

Thursday 28 October 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

Between the Sea of Azov and the Dnieper river the focus of yesterday's fierce defensive fighting continued to be the area west of Melitopol. The enemy's attempts to expand his breach were warded off in tenacious combat or in counterstrokes by our mobile reserves. The fighting is continuing with unabated harshness.

German Front in South Russia before the Collapse
28 October 1943, Moscow
STAVKA reported:

General Tolbukhin, exploiting our huge breakthrough between the Dnieper and the Sea of Azov, has thrown all available mobile forces into his pursuit of the beaten German Sixth Army. The bulk of the Tolbukhin Army Group is storming northwest toward Nikopol. By our last reports, they have already covered two thirds of the distance, and their lead units are approaching the city of Znamenka south of Nikopol. Farther south, strong cavalry and armored troops under Tolbukhin are deep inside the Nogaisk Steppes [foothills of the Caucasus oil region between the Black and Caspian seas]. Hour by hour, reports are coming in of new territorial gains in the direction of Kherson.

The Soviet Armored Force
This descriptive account by German propaganda correspondent Captain Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm appeared in the 28 October 1943 issue of the Berlin newspaper *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*:

Soviet rulers go to great lengths to forge as close an emotional bond as possible between the soldier and his weapon. Tanks are surrounded by what amounts to a religious cult:

Their tank is conferred on [the Soviet soldiers] in solemn ceremonies; they swear an oath to it and are bound to serve it. An equally solemn written record of the presentation is awarded them to seal the bond between tank and armored crew as if it were an indissoluble marriage; all this is designed to answer the ceremonial urges of the oriental mind. So the tank has become the center of a new Soviet military ritual. Thus Bolshevism plays on the religious needs of the simple Soviet soldier, which are still present even though they have been deflected from the Church and Christianity, and uses them more or less successfully for its own ends. Punishment is accordingly severe if a tank is lost due to what appears to be any kind of negligence. It is a common thing for armored commanders to be dropped in rank.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 29 October 1943:

Ever since the Soviet command successfully mounted a surprise autumn offensive following the end of their summer offensive, they have been winning the Battle of the Dnieper, where it was for some time believed that the German Wehrmacht would hold its winter defensive line. The Dnieper forms a vast bend—also known as the "Dnieper Knee"—which made it possible for the Soviet attackers to carry out a large-scale double envelopment of the enemy who had taken up positions behind the river from Kiev [south] to Zaporozhe.

Kiev Back in Soviet Hands

Saturday 6 November 1943, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

After two years and two months of German occupation, Kiev has been recaptured in a storm assault by Soviet guards divisions. General Vatutin has brought to a victorious end one of the most significant operations in the whole of the German-Soviet campaign. The High Command in Moscow regard the victory as a decisive turning point in the war. All reports from the front confirm that a serious crisis has arisen for the Germans, who are retreating westward in disorder and in some cases are in full-scale rout.

When the Soviet guards divisions launched their attack at 1:00 A.M. on the morning of November 6, the German defense was completely disorganized. Mass German surrenders took place for the first time. Our heavy tanks literally rolled over all remaining enemy forces who tried to resist. An incessant stream of Soviet reserves poured onto the battlefield. A part of the 14 German divisions assigned to defend Kiev managed to escape, but they abandoned everything that would have delayed their westward flight.

On the Road to Rome
Wednesday 10 November 1943
The *Headquarters of General Clark* in Italy reported:

General Clark points out in an Order of the Day to the [US] Fifth Army that his troops are now facing their most difficult and also most crucial battles, for the city of Rome. They are now on the way to Rome, but to get there, they have to fight their way through an area that the Germans are defending with all their might. The Germans have fortified themselves in their winter positions. It is the task of the army, Clark said, to deliver the enemy an annihilating blow with prudence, courage and determination.

Secret Report of the German *SS Security Service* on internal affairs, dated 11 November 1943 (extract):

German people feel that the Führer's explanations of our position on the Eastern Front are rather meager. They would have liked to hear more details from the Führer about the current situation and probable future developments (re: Dnieper Line, the Crimea, winter positions, casualties). Nevertheless, what the Führer said about the Eastern Front did have a quieting effect.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 12 November 1943:

The area of the Nogaisk Steppe, which the newly created German Sixth Army had been occupying between the lower course of the Dnieper and the Crimean peninsula, has been conquered by Tolbukhin's Soviet army which broke through at Melitopol with a speed that has not been seen since the

days of blitzkrieg: The Russians have driven westward from Melitopol a distance of some 120 miles in only a week.

Allied Troops at Cassino
Sunday 14 November 1943
The *Headquarters of General Alexander* [Allied Ground Force Commander for Italy]:

Yesterday violent fighting raged in the Mignano area where the Germans savagely resisted the forces of [US] General Clark. The US Fifth Army in this sector has already neared Cassino and is now trying to dislodge the enemy from the last mountain positions he occupies that bar the way to Cassino. The Germans are deploying all branches of service in their counterattacks.

Tuesday 16 November 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

In the large bend of the Dnieper, powerful enemy forces have once again rammed our front southwest of Dniepropetrovsk and north of Krivoi Rog. We knocked out 71 enemy tanks in one divisional sector alone.

In German counterattacks in the Zhitomir sector, we penetrated a number of Soviet field positions, captured large quantities of heavy weapons, and destroyed an encircled enemy force. Strong enemy counterattacks have failed. Despite unfavorable weather, repeated and determined raids by the Luftwaffe have lent extremely effective support to the German army and Waffen-SS units engaged there.

Joseph Stalin to Winston Churchill
Wednesday 17 November 1943:

Your reply reached me on November 15. Thank you for your congratulations on the offensive of the Soviet troops who are now having to withstand strong pressure west of Kiev, whither the Germans have rushed up fresh forces and armour. [English quoted from p. 177 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45,* London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, dated 18 November 1943 (extract):

Present reports indicate that German women, although calm, are very disheartened as a result of the heavy fighting and continual retreats in the East. They are waiting anxiously to see what will happen with Russia now.

Many women also seem concerned that the stability and mutual understanding in their marriages are beginning to suffer due to the protracted war. The separations that have now gone on for years with only brief interruptions, the transformation of living conditions caused by total war, and, on top of that, the heavy demands now being placed on every individual have (they say) changed people and filled up the whole of their lives. Soldiers on leave from the front often show no understanding of the stringencies that war has placed on domestic affairs and are uninterested in the many daily cares of people back home. The result of this is, frequently, a certain estrangement between husbands and wives. Worried wives point out that the time with their husbands, which they had so longed for and which flies by during a man's brief period of leave, is marred by frequent clashes caused by mutual irritability. This is reported to be happening even in marriages which previously were a model of harmony.

Position Warfare in Southern Italy
Friday 19 November 1943
The *Headquarters of General Montgomery* [commander of the British Eighth Army in Italy]:

The British Eighth Army, which is suffering severe hardship due to the persistence of rainy weather (the land has now turned completely into a marsh), has launched a surprise drive to capture two villages so as to provide the troops with some shelter. The two sides are now fighting to win more favorable ground on which to shelter, and the Germans are putting up tough resistance because each village they lose means they will be condemned to bivouac in the open field.

Italian Troops Fighting for the Allies
Friday 10 December 1943
The *Headquarters of General Alexander* [Allied Ground Force Commander for Italy]:

The first units of the Italian army just created by [anti-Axis] Marshal Badoglio are now operating along the front between the [Allied] Fifth and Eighth Armies. The Italian soldiers are armed with American-supplied equipment. Marshal Badoglio said in an Order of the Day addressed to his troops: "You represent the true Italy. It is your destiny to liberate our country and drive the aggressor from our homeland. Show yourselves worthy of the great task that lies before you. We are proud of you."

Saturday 11 December 1943
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

The varied defensive battles southwest of Kremenchug are continuing with unabated violence. We have knocked out large numbers of enemy tanks. Heavy enemy attacks have alternated with counterattacks from us around Cherkassy throughout the day. The enemy lost many dead and 24 tanks. In the Zhitomir and Korosten sector, an attack by us won us further ground despite violent counterattacks from the enemy. Between Pripet and Berezina, enemy offensive activities were weaker on Friday. We attacked and captured several villages and took prisoners and equipment.

German Offensive at Kiev
Sunday 12 December 1943
The Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* reported:

Several days ago, German commanders resumed their counterattack west of Kiev, and since then their attack has made steady and systematic progress. Meanwhile, Berlin will supply no precise references but repeatedly emphasizes that the enemy is putting up tough resistance.

German Army Decree of 18 December 1943 on the award of special badges to individual soldiers who destroy tanks, etc.:

The Führer has approved the ruling that the "special badge for individual soldiers who destroy tanks (etc.)" may also be awarded to soldiers who have destroyed an enemy tank (etc.) or put it out of action in close combat with hand explosives or iron crowbars; but the badge may not be awarded for knocking out enemy tanks with "Puppchen" [an unsuccessful model of antitank weapon using a German bazooka mounted on a light carriage].

French Troops Too Now Fighting in Italy
Wednesday 22 December 1943, Algiers
The American *Associated Press News Agency* reported:

General Juin has been appointed commander of the newly formed French Expeditionary Corps [in Italy]. French units have been fighting in Italy for some time as part of the US Fifth Army. General Juin most recently came to public attention when he was commanding the French forces in the campaign in Tunisia.

The Evacuation Operations

This descriptive account by German propaganda reporter Captain Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm appeared in the 22 December 1943 issue of the newspaper *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*:

The mobility and improvisational skill of our army supply forces have proved themselves once again during the [German troop] evacuations [in the USSR].

For example, 80 evacuation trains have been running every day in the course of retreat maneuvers by a single large force in the south of the Eastern Front. Livestock transported include 198,000 cattle, 210,000 sheep, 128,000 horses. In addition, 40,000 small horsecarts had to be channelled across the Dnieper bridges and over 250,000 civilians transported home [to Germany]. The details of all that was involved in evacuating all the depots, gear and supply camps, while simultaneously setting up fresh supply bases, can be revealed only in time to come . . . Our force could not allow a single transit crossing to stay blocked, a single bridge or defile to clog up, a single traffic jam to persist, if disaster was to be averted.



A German remote-controlled Goliath B-1-B dwarf tank mechanical explosive carrier making a simulated attack on a Soviet SU-85 tank destroyer (an 8.5-cm flak gun mounted on a T-34 tank chassis). The Goliath carried 200 pounds of high explosive. Guided and ignited by cable, it could travel up to 1,900 feet at a speed of approximately 11 mph.

Wartime Christmas in the USA
Thursday 23 December 1943
The American *Associated Press News Agency* reported:

[In the United States] there is no question of any need to hold a blackout. Light is squandered to show off the splendidly decorated display windows where you can find anything the human heart desires, from a diamond necklace down to a humble sausage. The shops are open 12 hours a day, and during this time an incessant stream of customers

crowds up to the sales counters to pick out their Christmas gifts. The most popular items seem to be expensive luxury goods—costly furs, jewelry, fine wood furniture, carpets. The only shadow that falls on the Christmas season is the threat of a rail strike that would involve more than a million men. The President is sparing no effort to settle the looming conflict amicably, while members of the Congress, without a care in the world, have taken a three-week leave.

German Successes at Kirovograd [Ukraine]
Friday 24 December 1943, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The most striking feature of yesterday's military activity on the Eastern Front was the marked reduction in Soviet attacks around Vitebsk. Although the weather favored a continuation of the fighting—there was only a light frost all day and road conditions had improved—the Soviets undertook in company or battalion strength only disconnected, half-hearted attacks which could easily be repelled.

In the area of Kirovograd, the German counterattack continued on Wednesday and resulted in German troops capturing some important high ground that affords them a view of the terrain for miles around. All Soviet attempts to recapture the heights failed with heavy losses to them.

Winter Battle in the East
Sunday 26 December 1943, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

On the first day of the holidays [i.e. Christmas Day], the Soviets continued their offensive southeast of Zhitomir with an increased deployment of Soviet infantry and armor, after extremely savage fighting had gone on in this area all through the night. Present reports indicate that the Soviets took very heavy losses in all sectors of the attack zone and that at some points the German lines had to be pulled back under pressure from frequently far superior enemy forces.

General Vatutin Continues the Soviet Advance
Monday 27 December 1943, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

The fresh Soviet grand offensive west of Kiev between Radomysl and Brussilov [Ukraine] developed into the first great victory of this year's Soviet winter campaign. We can now reveal that early Friday morning, after a preparatory artillery barrage, General Vatutin went on the offensive with three corps along a 60-mile-wide front.

The right flank of his assault army crossed the Teterev river [Ukraine] again along a broad front at Radomysl and advanced westward rapidly. The lead units of his army group have reached points 21 miles northeast of Zhitomir.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, dated 27 December 1943 (extract):

A new note has crept into [German] conversations and tattle about retaliation, [namely] that Germans are linking the idea [of retaliation] with the idea of a swift end to the war. For the first time in a long while, Germans have begun again to set probable dates for the end of the war. Many people are equating the ideas of retaliation and a military decision.

German Army Decree of 28 December 1943 on the award of the "Afrika Armband" to Germans decorated for bravery:

The "Afrika Armband" may be conferred without regard to the period of time a soldier has been in action, provided that he has earned any type of German decoration for bravery while on African soil—including the Iron Cross, the German Gold Cross or a mention in dispatches.

Strategy and Tactics

JULY TO DECEMBER 1943

[When the German army leaders met to confer about a summer offensive against the USSR], General Zeitzler, chief of the German Army general staff, came up with a plan to aim the German attack at the large Soviet salient west of Kursk, thereby restoring the strategic initiative to Germany. General Model, C-in-C of the German Ninth Army positioned north of the salient, had deep reservations about the plan, because he believed the Soviets would expect such an attack and would have gathered reinforcements to ensure its failure. When Field Marshal Keitel averred that an attack was essential for political reasons, General Guderian retorted: "It's a matter of profound indifference to the world whether we hold Kursk or not. I repeat my question: Why do we want to attack in the East at all this year?" [English quoted from p. 309 of the translation of Guderian's *Panzer Leader,* London, Michael Joseph, 1952]

Guderian was opposed to any major German offensive in 1943. His objective was to restore the German armored divisions to their original target strength of 400 tanks each, so that the German forces would then be able to mount grand offensives in 1944 with good prospects of success, but his views were voted down.

At the beginning of July 1943, the Soviets were in fact extremely well prepared to repel any German attack. The Soviet Central Front armies (under Rokossovsky) and the Voronezh Front armies (under Vatutin) had over 1.3 million men, almost 20,000 cannon and mortars, approximately 3,600 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 2,600 aircraft. The Soviets were superior to the German in manpower and matériel. Behind the lines, the reserve armies of the Soviet Steppe Front under Koniev had taken over the task of preparing the defenses. For three months, the Red Army had been building lines of virtually impregnable fortifications around Kursk that extended far back behind the front lines. Meanwhile, Soviet intelligence discovered the day and then the very hour the Germans planned to attack.

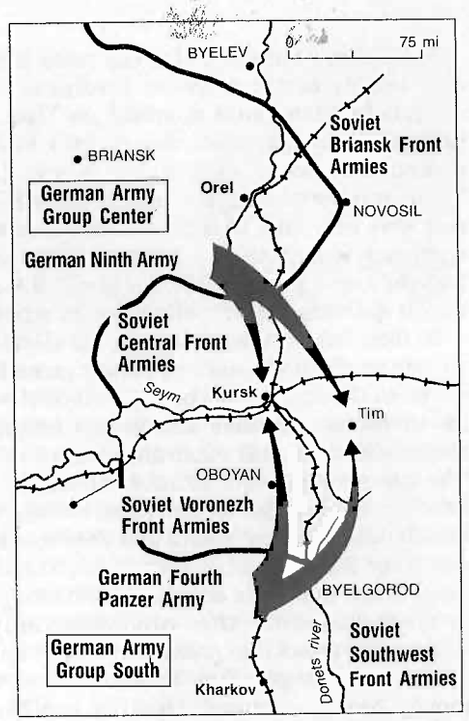
On the German side, 50 divisions—including 14 panzer and 2 motorized divisions—stood around Kursk. The German forces totalled 900,000, men, 10,000 cannon, some 2,000 tanks and 800 self-propelled assault guns; 204 of the tanks were Panthers and 90 were Tigers.

The day of the German summer offensive arrived, July 5, the start of Operation Citadel. Before dawn that day, the Soviet artillery heavily bombarded the German assembly zone, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy troops.

The German forces were in two groups, Group North and Group South. Group North included the forces of Field Marshal von Kluge's Army Group Center: Model's Ninth Army and Panzer General Schmidt's Second Panzer Army along with seven infantry divisions, six panzer divisions and two panzer grenadier divisions. Group South was made up of forces from the Kempf Detachment, Field Marshal von Manstein's Army Group South and Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army, totalling seven infantry divisions, eleven panzer divisions and three self-propelled assault gun brigades. Air support was supplied by Dessloch's Luftflotte 4, comprising the 1st, 4th and 8th Air Forces; and von Greim's Luftflotte 6, including the 1st and 4th Air Divisions. The two air fleets totalled 1,800 planes.

The German Ninth Army attacked the Soviet Thirteenth Army (under Pukhov) and the Seventieth Army, while the Fourth Panzer Army and the Kempf Detachment took on Chistiakov's Sixth Guards Army and Zhumilov's Seventh Guards Army.

This was the first time the Germans had deployed their Panther tank. The haste with which they had pushed through its development and production meant that it still had many "bugs," and as a result more Panthers broke down due to technical faults than were knocked out by Soviet antitank guns. The Panthers were delivered to the field army despite Guderian's warnings that they were not ready for front-line service. One quarter of the



German Operation Citadel against the Soviet Kursk salient

204 new tanks broke down along the road from Kharkov, at the unloading station or near their assembly positions at Byelgorod. The others, one after another, stopped moving during the battle due to engine fires resulting from inadequate refrigeration or to transmission and gear faults. On top of all this, faulty optical instruments inhibited the gunners' use of the excellent long 7.5-cm cannon.

German tanks rolling into position. In the foreground is a Tiger, behind it a Panzer IV.



Moreover, a number of the Germans' ultra-modern, heavily armored 68-ton Ferdinand tank destroyers [antitank guns mounted on Tiger chassis] suffered tactical reverses due to their inability to defend themselves against the Soviet infantry. Their impenetrable armor and heavy 8.8-cm cannon were of no use to them because they were not equipped with machine guns for close-range fighting; the crews had to fire their heavy 8.8-cm cannon at individual Soviet infantrymen attacking.

In their northern assault zone, the Germans had six panzer divisions and two panzer grenadier divisions. In the south, they brought all of eleven panzer divisions and three assault-gun brigades into the attack, while still other units waited in reserve. The panzer regiments attacked frontally, driving head-on into the Soviet defensive barrage and the minefields. The new Tigers and Panthers knocked out large numbers of Soviet tanks, but the Germans failed to make a decisive breakthrough either in north or south. After penetrating only a few miles, the attacking grenadiers were halted by Soviet machine-gun fire. When German tanks—mostly heavily armored Tiger I's and Ferdinand tank destroyers—did succeed in breaking through the Soviet front, they were quickly isolated and destroyed.

On Friday 9 July 1943, extremely heavy fighting raged in the southern sector, where the Fourth Panzer Army drove in the direction of Oboyan [south of Kursk] and overcame vehement resistance to penetrate 21 miles through the Soviet lines. Savage Soviet counterattacks forced the German commanders to change their direction of attack.

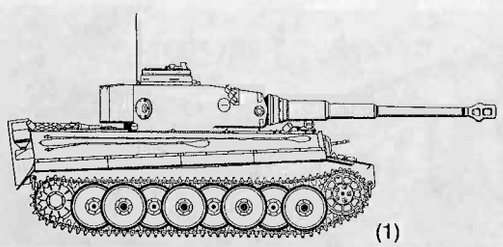
Saturday 10 July 1943 saw the start of Operation Husky, the Allied invasion landing on the southeast coast of Sicily, under overall command of General Eisenhower. His deputy was General Alexander, the commander-in-chief of the ground forces, while the naval forces were under command of Admiral Cunningham. The participating forces were Montgomery's British Eighth Army with five divisions, who landed between Syracuse and Cape Passero on the southeast tip of Sicily, and Patton's Seventh Army with three infantry divisions and one armored division, who landed around Gela and Licata. Also taking part were 280 warships, 320 troopships and 2,125 landing craft of every type. Air support came from 3,680 bombers and fighters of the RAF and USAAF. Airborne operations were mounted, involving 400 transport planes and 170 gliders.

The Axis powers standing ready for the defense of Sicily were: Guzzoni's Sixth Army with four infantry divisions and coastal gun divisions, plus the crack "Hermann Göring" Division and the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division.

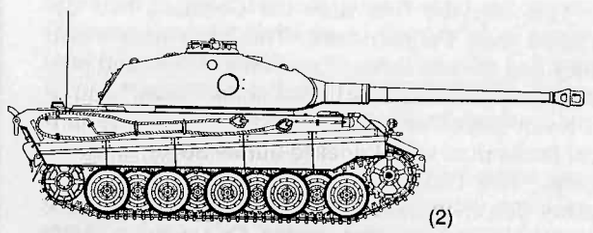
On Sunday 11 July 1943, the armored units of the Fourth Panzer Army and the Kempf Detachment attacked Prokhorovka and gained initial success which they hoped to expand upon next day. But later that same day, the armored spearheads of Popov's Soviet Bryansk Front and the left wing of Sokolovsky's West Front launched a drive against Schmidt's Second Panzer Army which was defending Orel from the east and north, and the assault units of both Soviet army groups went on the offensive at Orel on Monday 12 July 1943. Simultaneously, Vatutin's Voronezh Front went on the offensive along the southern part of the Kursk salient. German Army Group Center was forced to halt the assault of Model's Ninth Army and gather some of its forces to reinforce Second Panzer Army. The counterattacks by the three Soviet army groups led to a bloody armored battle at Prokhorovka, the largest such battle in the Second World War, in which the II SS Panzer Corps (under SS General Hausser) and the III Panzer Corps (under General Breith) clashed with the Soviet Fifth Armored Guards Army (under Rotmistrov) and the Fifth Guards Army (under Zhadov).

Several thousand tanks, supported by powerful aerial forces, were now fighting within a confined space. The Soviet reserve armies of the Steppe Front (under Koniev) then joined in the battle so that the German position was now desperate.

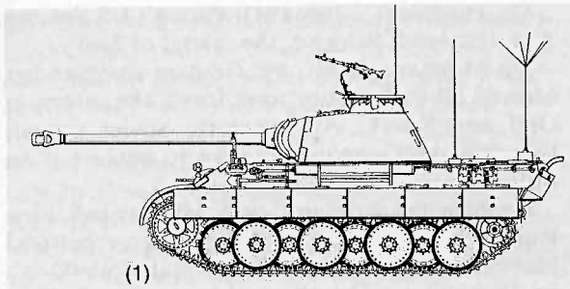
(1) German Panzer VI heavy Tiger tank (designation Sd Kfz 181), version E; (2) heavy Panzer VI Tiger with a Porsche turret. (Both first produced 1943.)



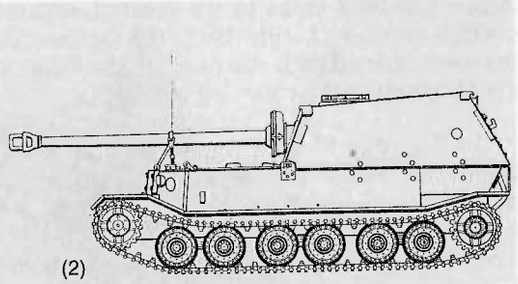
(1)



(2)



(1)



(2)

(1) German Panzer V Panther command tank, version A; (2) German Elephant (Ferdinand) tank destroyer with 8.8-cm antitank gun mounted on a Tiger chassis (designation Sd Kfz 184). (Both first produced 1943.)

The ensuing failure of the German offensive against the southern part of the Kursk salient was due chiefly to the massive counterthrust by the Voronezh Front armies, reinforced by the Soviet strategic reserve armies. The major role in the Voronezh Front offensive was played by Rotmistrov's Soviet Tank Guards and Zhadov's Fifth Guards Army, which halted the German forces and by evening forced them to go on the defensive.

That same day, the British Eighth Army marched along the east coast of Sicily and occupied Syracuse. When it tried to continue its advance, it met with strong resistance from German divisions struggling to secure the evacuation of all Axis forces on Sicily, across the Straits of Messina to mainland Italy.

Next day, 13 July 1943, Hitler called off Operation Citadel, the ill-fated German offensive against the USSR.

In the Battle of Kursk, German aerial forces again cooperated closely with the ground troops. On the Soviet side, the vast minefields, tank traps and great preponderance of antitank guns, reinforced with US tanks and dug-in Soviet T-34 tanks, played a major role in the battle and victory. The Soviet ground-attack planes also greatly outnumbered the German planes.

The Soviet High Command gained valuable experience in the Battle of Kursk which they were able to put to use later that same year, in the Red Army's summer offensive. For example, the Soviets saw at Kursk that the infantry component of their mixed armored armies was lagging far behind the tanks. After that, the Soviets set up armored armies of homogeneous composition that they then deployed as motorized troops along the main direction of attack during the summer offensive. As a rule, the Soviet armies and army groups used their motorized forces on the first day of the attack to penetrate the main German defense line; they would move on to smash the rear defensive installations without losing their momentum and expand on their operational success. The early deployment of motorized troops greatly accelerated the speed with which the Soviets could break through the enemy defense. The great disadvantage of this approach was the heavy losses suffered by the motorized troops, which impaired their operations after they broke through and tried to mop up behind German lines.

Operation Citadel was a disastrous failure that cost the Germans men and equipment they were unable to replace. The Wehrmacht forfeited its strategic initiative and never regained it. The German plan of operations at Kursk contributed to the failure of the offensive because it lacked any element of strategic or tactical surprise.

Two thirds of the German panzer force operated in Operation Citadel. The regiment of Ferdinand tank destroyers sustained such heavy losses that it had to be disbanded. Of the 204 Panthers that set out on the operation, 162 broke down and almost all ended up being captured by the Soviets. The few that survived the Battle of Kursk had to be returned to the factories for alteration. After Operation Citadel, the few remaining Ferdinands were withdrawn from the USSR; each was equipped with a front machine gun [to protect it in close fighting thus preventing further heavy losses]; and they were all sent to the Italian front.

The heavy losses of experienced tank crews also heavily impaired German operations. Crews of young men who had just finished their training often died in their first actions before they had a chance to gain any experience.

After the failure of "Citadel," the possibilities of cooperation between the Luftwaffe and the armored forces steadily reduced so that the German armor now faced the problem of trying the defend itself against enemy aerial attacks as well.

The Battle of Kursk introduced a new phase of armored warfare. In the past, the Germans had been the most skilled and successful in the use of armored tactics, but now the Soviets, British and

Americans used tanks to the greatest advantage.

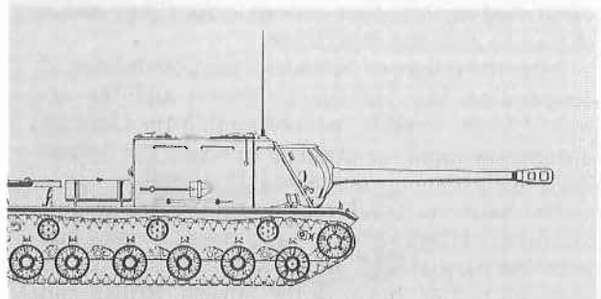
On Thursday 15 July 1943, the German commanders ordered their forces along the Kursk salient to retreat to their starting positions.

On Saturday 17 July, the Soviet armies of the Southwest Front (under Malinovsky) and the South Front (under Tolbukhin) launched an offensive along the Donets at Izyum and on the Mius. The whole Eastern Front started moving and the Germans could no longer hold their lines.

That same day, Panzer General Hube became commanding general of the XIV Panzer Corps, which had been transferred to Sicily from the mainland, and commander-in-chief of all German troops still left on the island.

On Sunday 18 July, Hitler and Mussolini met at a conference in Feltre near Verona and agreed to evacuate Sicily. They believed it would be impossible to defend the entire Apennine peninsula, so they decided to confine their defense to the Po Valley and the industrial area of northern Italy, meanwhile delaying the Allied advance to the north as long as possible. They planned to establish a defensive line in the north, called the Gothic Line, which would cut across Italy through Tuscany from Pisa (in the west) to Rimini (in the east on the Adriatic). To gain time to build their fortifications, they decided to form the Gustav Line farther south, running along the narrowest part of the Italian peninsula (72 miles across) from the mouth of the Garigliano in the west to the mouth of the Sangro in the east. This mountainous, almost impassable terrain was ideal for defense. Enemy tanks could move only along the narrow coast roads, which in winter were flooded by the rivers and turned into marshland. Another advantage of the terrain was that the defenders could withdraw to their next defensive line without difficulty. The Gustav Line, [near] where the Axis forces would eventually take up winter positions, would, they hoped, enable them to block the way to Rome.

Soviet ISU 122-D25/S hunter and assault tank (first produced 1943)



On Thursday 22 July 1943, Patton's US Seventh Army captured Palermo, the capital of Sicily.

On Monday 26 July, the German commanders ordered all their troops to evacuate the salient at Orel and Kursk. An energetic Soviet pursuit thwarted the Germans' attempt to carry out an orderly retreat.

On Monday 2 August, von Mackensen's First Panzer Army and Hollidt's Sixth Army battered Malinovsky's Southwest Front and Tolbukhin's South Front armies, who had launched an offensive on July 7. Soviet losses (apart from dead and wounded) included: 18,000 prisoners, 200 cannon, 700 tanks.

On Tuesday 3 August, Vatutin's Voronezh Front and Koniev's Steppe Front armies maintained an offensive in the areas north and south of Byelgorod, against the north wing of von Manstein's Army Group South, along the direction Byelgorod-Kharkov-Poltava [east to southwest]. More than 300 Soviet partisan groups took part in the operations and, by planting explosives in railway beds, succeeded in halting for two days all rail traffic to the rear of Army Group South.

On Thursday 5 August 1943, the Soviets began an offensive against von Kluge's Army Group Center. That same day, Managarov's Soviet Fifty-Third Army took Byelgorod, and the armored spearheads of Kolpakchi's Third Army took Orel. For the first time since the war began, Stalin ordered Soviet guns in Moscow to fire a victory salute honoring the Red Army.

On Monday 16 August, the five armies of the Soviet South Front went on the offensive against the German Sixth Army and drove toward Stalino.

On Tuesday 17 August, the Axis forces completed Operation Lehrgang, the evacuation of their troops from Sicily across the 1½-mile-wide Straits of Messina to mainland Italy. They successfully transported 62,000 Italian and 39,569 German soldiers, plus 9,832 vehicles, 135 cannon and 47 tanks.

On Sunday 22 August 1943, Panzer General von Vietinghoff, the C-in-C of the Tenth Army, took over command of all German operations in southern Italy.

On Monday 23 August, Kriuchenkin's Soviet Sixty-Ninth Army and Zhumilov's Seventh Guards Army liberated Kharkov after violent fighting in the streets.

On Thursday 26 August, Rokossovsky's Soviet Central Front armies concentrated the main forces along their right flank and drive toward Novgorod-Seversk where they met strong resistance; but on the left flank they were successful and three

days later took Glukhov [Ukraine]. Then Rokossovsky regrouped his forces; they set out along the line Glukhov-Konotop and enlarged their breach until it was 60 miles wide and 36 miles deep.

On Thursday 2 September, after Hitler ordered a step-up of war production, Albert Speer's ministry of armaments and munitions was expanded and its powers enlarged, under the new name of the Reich Ministry for Armaments and Supply.

At 4:30 A.M., the dawn of September 3, the Allied invasion of continental Europe began when two divisions of Montgomery's British Eighth Army landed on the southern coast of Calabria between Reggio and San Giovanni and drove northward to Catanzaro and Nicastro, undaunted by the resistance of General Fries's 29th Panzer Grenadier Division.

That same day, after months-long negotiations, Italian General Castellano, the deputy of Marshal Badoglio [who was being brought in to replace the ousted Mussolini as premier] concluded a secret armistice with the Allies in Cassibile (Sicily). The [anti-Fascist Italians] agreed that the Italian Fascist Party was to be dissolved and Mussolini arrested.

On Tuesday 7 September, Jaenecke's Seventeenth Army began a planned evacuation of the Kuban bridgehead. Naval and engineer units had the mission of transporting German troops and matériel to the Crimean peninsula.

On the afternoon of September 8, General Eisenhower—against the pleadings of the Italians [trying to delay announcement of the armistice until the Allies had made some progress]—revealed publicly over the radio that the Allies had agreed upon an armistice with Italy. Shortly after that, the Germans retaliated against Italy by issuing the codeword "Achse" (Axis), ordering immediate German occupation of Rome and the disarmament of General Garboni's Italian motorized corps and of Italian troops in Italy, southern France, Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece. All the Italian troops were either disarmed, disbanded or captured; and local fighting took place between the Germans and resisting Italian units. General Tito's Yugoslav partisan army profited most directly from Italy's surrender when they captured all the equipment and ammunition of the Italian Second Army in Dalmatia.

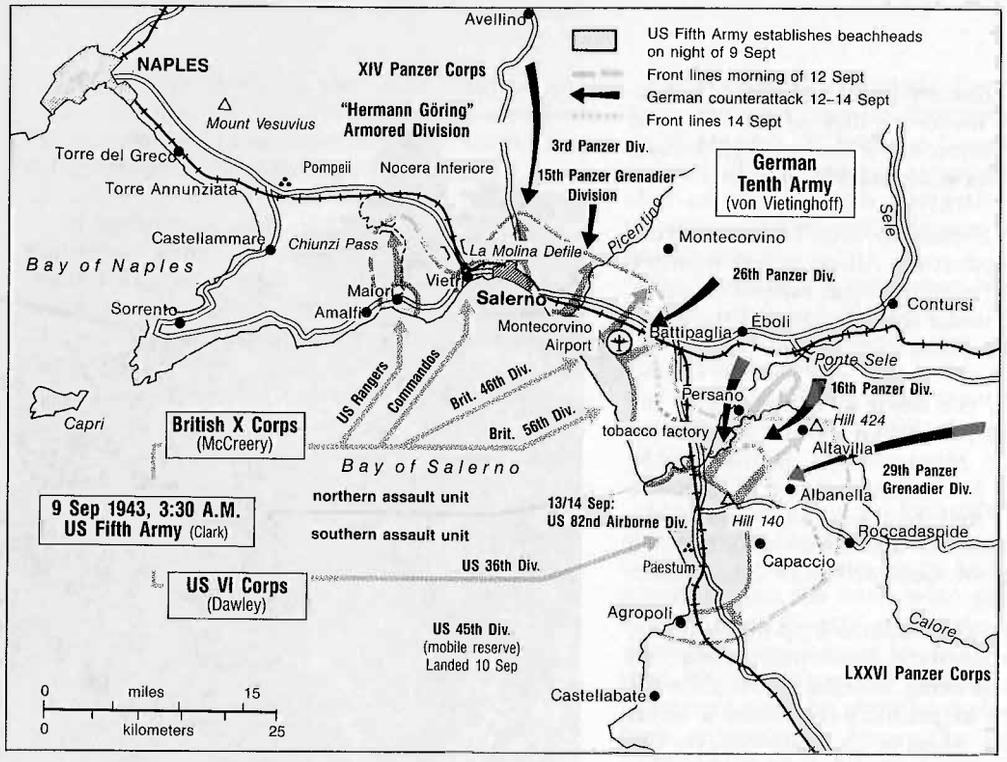
At 4:25 A.M. on Thursday 9 September, four divisions of the US Fifth Army under General Clark and the British X Corps under General McCreery landed along an 18-mile stretch of flat sandy beach in the Bay of Salerno. Operation Avalanche was under way. The first operational target of the US Fifth Army was Naples, whose port the Allies wanted to use to supply their advance to Rome. They hoped to take the Italian capital by Christmas.



August 1943 near Byelgorod: German tanks waiting for an expected Soviet thrust

That same day, the 1st Airborne Division of the British Eighth Army landed at Taranto, and on Saturday 11 September, the 1st Airborne occupied Brindisi [so that the Allies now held two major southern Italian seaports].

On Sunday 12 September, the Germans succeeded in rescuing Mussolini from the Campo Imperatore ski lodge in the Gran Sasso mountains in the Abruzzi, where he had been imprisoned by Badoglio's troops. At 6:00 A.M., German soldiers of the 1st Company (under von Berlepsch) of the crack German Parachute Lehr Battalion and commandos of the Friedenthal Group under SS Major Otto Skorzeny made a daring glider landing outside the lodge. The Italian guards [were caught napping] and did not resist. After a hair-raising takeoff, a Fieseler Storch light plane piloted by Major Gerlach carried Il Duce to Rome. Then Mussolini flew on to Vienna, and from there to



The first Allied landing in continental Europe

Hitler's headquarters in East Prussia.

On Monday 13 September 1943, General von Lüttwitz led the German 26th Panzer Division, General Conrath's "Hermann Göring" Division and Roth's 15th Panzer Grenadier Division in a counterattack to eliminate the American bridgehead at Salerno. The Germans drove the US 6th Corps under General Dawley back onto the beach at Salerno with such ferocity that Clark and his headquarters prepared to reembark. The turning point came when Admiral Cunningham made the bold decision to bring the two battleships *Warspite* and *Valiant* close up to shore and fire on the German positions with their 38-cm cannon.

On Friday 17 September, the British 1st Airborne Division advancing from the south and the armored spearheads of the British Eighth Army moving up out of Calabria linked up with the US Fifth Army which had landed at Salerno on September 9.

On Saturday 18 September, German troops began to retreat northwest under pressure from the British Eighth Army, approaching along the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea.

On Tuesday 21 September, armored forces of the Soviet Central Front under Rokossovsky succeeded in crossing the Dnieper river along a 50-mile-wide stretch on either side of the Pripet delta. They had now broken through the new German defensive line, the Panther Line, where the Germans had scarcely begun to build their fortifications.

On Saturday 24 September, parts of German Army Group South, threatened with encirclement north of Smolensk by Glutsdovsky's Soviet Thirty-First, Polyenov's Fifth and Zhuravlyev's Sixty-Eighth Armies, were forced to evacuate Smolensk and Roslavl. The German troops continued their retreat to their new defensive line Rudnia-Krichev. Further attacks by Sokolovsky's West Front and Yeremienko's Kalinin Front armies were unsuccessful.

By Monday 27 September, Zhumilov's Soviet Seventh Guards Army also established a bridgehead on the west bank of the Dnieper south of Dniepropetrovsk despite immediate counterattacks by one German panzer and one panzer grenadier division.

That same day, armored troops of the British Eighth Army which had been advancing along the Adriatic coast forced their way into Foggia, capturing some 13 airfields in the area for the use of the USAAF and the RAF. These became important bases for the Allied bombing war against southern Germany and the Rumanian oil fields.

In September 1943, thanks to the energetic measures taken by German armaments minister Speer and General Guderian, the situation of the German armored forces began slowly to improve. But even now, 14 panzer divisions had only one tank detachment each, while 8 panzer divisions had two tank detachments and only 2 had three.

Ten panzer grenadier divisions had only one armored detachment that was equipped with self-propelled guns. The target strength of an armored company was 22 tanks, but in fact it had only 17.

On Friday 1 October 1943, General von Vietinghoff's German Tenth Army abandoned Naples. The Allied advance was slowing daily. The Germans were now in a better position to defend themselves, especially in the area extending to the Adriatic coast, which was very mountainous and where the rivers emptying into the sea formed natural barriers that could be cleverly exploited by the defenders.

Meanwhile on the Eastern Front, the Soviet Kalinin Front armies were pressing westward in the direction of Nevel, Vitebsk and Orsha.

On Thursday 7 October 1943, Gyarazimov's Third Shock Army captured Nevel. Other Soviet forces came up to Polotsk and closed in on Vitebsk from three sides.

On Monday 11 October, Clark's US Fifth Army began to launch assault crossings northward over the Volturno river. [On the opposite coast] the British Eighth Army, after taking Termoli on the Adriatic, started amphibious commando operations to cross the river north into central Italy. [Thus, both major Allies were now beginning a lengthy assault on the German Gustav Line.]

On Tuesday 12 October and the following day, the US Fifth Army succeeded in erecting a bridgehead along the northern bank of the Volturno at its mouth, where it flowed into the Tyrrhenian Sea. The German forces evacuated Capua and retreated to the fortified winter line along the Garigliano and Sangro rivers. Here Field Marshal Kesselring, the commander of German Army Group C, planned to halt the Allied advance northward before it reached Rome. After several thrusts, the British Eighth Army succeeded in building several bridgeheads on the Sangro and taking Ortona. The US Fifth Army and the British Eighth Army linked up near the Matese Mountains, approximately at midpoint between the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic seas.

On Wednesday 13 October, the Badoglio government, then based in Brindisi (southern Italy), declared war on Germany.

On Wednesday 20 October, STAVKA changed the designations of the Soviet army groups (fronts) to reflect their new positions. [Now that the Soviets had penetrated west into the Ukraine], the

September 1943 west of Smolensk: German armored unit of Panzer III medium tanks (Sd Kfz 141s) with 5-cm L/60 cannon rolling into their new defensive lines in the area Rudnia-Krichev



Voronezh Front, Steppe Front, Southwest Front and South Front were redesignated the First, Second, Third and Fourth Ukrainian Fronts. The Central Front became the White Russian Front, and the Kalinin and Baltic Fronts [in the north] were rechristened the First and Second Baltic Fronts.

On Saturday 23 October 1943, Tolbukhin's Fourth Ukrainian Front armies opened an offensive against Hollidt's German Sixth Army between Zaporozhe and Melitopol, broke through the German lines and drove southwest. Then the mud period gradually set in as in every previous year, and the front slowly began to stabilize.

On the night of 1/2 November, the Soviet North Caucasus Front (under Petrov) carried out an amphibious landing operation. Divisions of Melnik's Fifty-Sixth Army landed north of Kerch at Yenikale; Lesselitse's Eighteenth Army landed south of Kerch near Eltigen, and a Soviet bridgehead was formed over the Sivash river [Crimea]. Jaenecke's German Seventeenth Army, whose evacuation from the Crimea Hitler had ordered halted after it was already under way, was now cut off from the north and threatened from the east.

On Wednesday 3 November, the armored forces of Vatutin's First Ukrainian Front, which had established bridgeheads north of Kiev, attacked Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army and broke through the German lines. Three days later, the German troops were forced to evacuate Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine.

Von Manstein responded on Monday 8 November by mounting a counterattack. Five of his divisions drove from Fastov and Tripol along the Dnieper toward Kiev. The attack was repulsed, but the First Ukrainian Front was forced to go on the defensive.

On Saturday 13 November 1943, a number of German divisions attacked, this time in the area around Zhitomir. On Monday 15 November, the XLVIII Panzer Corps under Panzer General Balck—part of the German First Panzer Army—struck Grechko's Soviet First Guards Army and recaptured Zhitomir. The Germans reported having captured or destroyed 603 Soviet tanks and over 1,200 antitank guns; but, although German forces succeeded in recapturing the city, the Soviets intercepted and halted their advance north of Zhitomir.

On Sunday 21 November, Field Marshal Kesselring, the German Commander-in-Chief Southwest and supreme commander of German Army Group C, took over the defense of Italy. Hitler ordered Field Marshal Rommel, then C-in-C of Army Group B, transferred to Western Europe, leaving von Mackensen in command of Army Group B.

On Saturday 27 November 1943, the British Eighth Army on the Adriatic coast launched an attack across the Sangro.

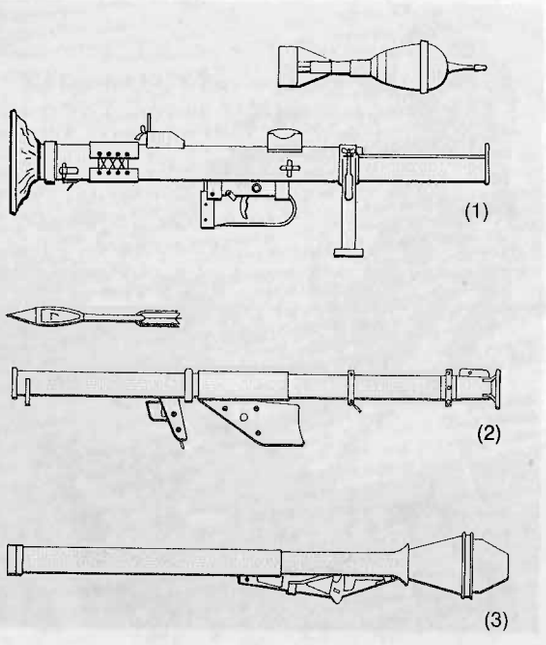
On Saturday 13 December, the first in a series of Soviet defensive battles flared up between Vitebsk and Nevel when the forces of Reinhardt's Third Panzer Army went on the offensive against Yeremienko's First Baltic Front and Sokolovsky's West Front.

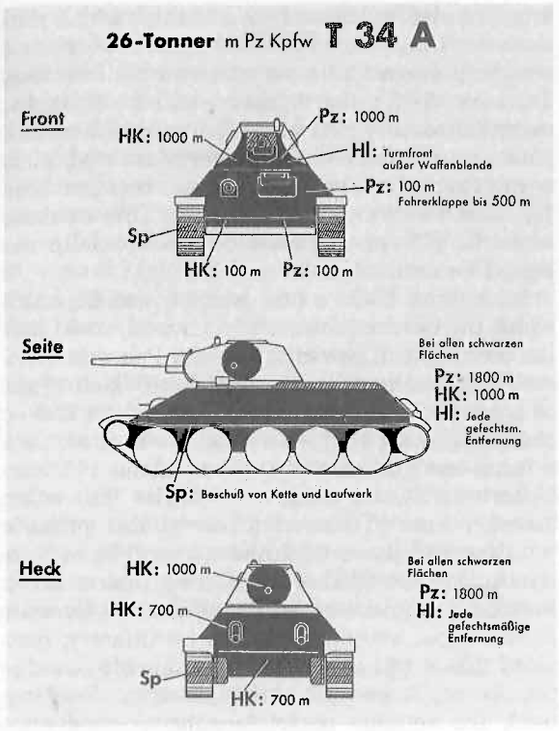
On Wednesday 24 December 1943, Vatutin's First Ukrainian Front opened an offensive against the Fourth Panzer Army (now under Raus) in the Ukraine west of the Dnieper between Kiev and Zhitomir. The offensive was then carried forward by the four Ukrainian fronts and the Second White Russian Front along a 500-mile-wide area from the Pripet area [White Russia] south to the Black Sea.

That same day, General Eisenhower was appointed overall commander of Allied troops for the invasion of France, with British Air Marshal Tedder as his deputy. General Maitland Wilson assumed overall command of Allied forces in the Mediterranean, and General Alexander became Allied C-in-C for Italy.

On the Eastern Front, Hitler tried again and

(1) British PIAT antitank gun with 3-lb shell; (2) US antitank bazooka gun with 3½-lb rockets; (3) German recoilless antitank rocket launcher with 6½-lb hollow shell. (All produced 1942–43.)





For official use only! German Army instructional chart 469/3a for use by German antitank gunners firing 7.62-cm No. 36 antitank guns. Charts like this informed the gunners which points of enemy tanks to fire at and the distances from which to fire at each point. This chart shows the vulnerable spots on the front, side and rear of a Soviet T-34 tank.

again to stop the disaster on the Eastern Front by ordering halts to the German retreat; but this only exposed his forces, [trapped and without any escape route], to encompassment and destruction by the Soviets. Not even the formation of concentrated strongholds could stop the Soviet advance, because there was no longer any firm front line. Up until the end of 1943, the Germans could still have well afforded to maintain an elastic defense, because a retreat of 100 to 150 miles by no means implied disaster.

The German armored forces were now forced to change their fighting tactics. In the past, the panzer troops had been the first to meet the enemy far in advance of other arms, but now they had to form a rearguard to secure the retreat of the infantry. It was not unusual for German combat engineers to blow up the last bridges, cutting off the retreat path of their own tanks because they mistakenly thought they were Soviet tanks.

Now that the German mobile vehicles were continually in service, they suffered large numbers of mechanical breakdowns, and the speed of the Soviet advance allowed German salvage units no time to recover their collapsed machines. In the summer and fall of 1943, the Germans lost many tanks which were damaged or simply stopped running and which they had to blow up as they retreated [to keep the Soviets from capturing them].

Armored tactics suffered particularly from the loss of German air superiority. As a result, by the end of 1943 German tanks generally had to move under cover of darkness, or heavily camouflaged, to deceive enemy airmen.

After the Allies landed in southern Italy, the Germans transferred a number of their armored units from the USSR to the Italian front where they were used mainly for tactical support of the infantry in defensive fighting because the mountainous landscape ruled out operational maneuvers.

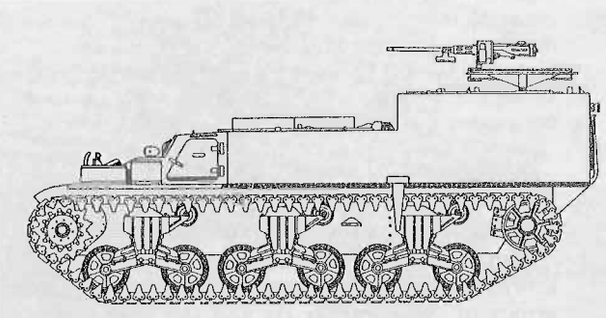
The Germans had to send armored forces and strong contingents of German troops to the Balkans too in an attempt to contain the partisans who had been fighting there since 1941. In this area, they deployed the older German and Italian tank models as well as captured French, Soviet and British tanks.

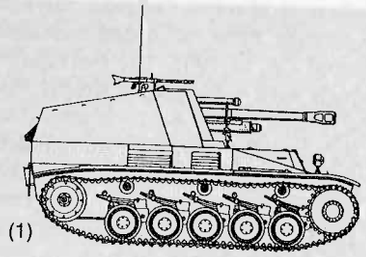
From the end of 1943 on, the Germans experienced great difficulty in the training of armored crews because their panzer divisions were in virtually continuous action except for brief pauses for refurbishment, and no experienced men could be spared to serve as training personnel.

By gargantuan efforts, the Germans succeeded in increasing their armored production—in 1943 they produced 5,966 tanks and 4,781 self-propelled guns—but this was not enough even to supply the needed reinforcements at a time when every division required at least 10 new tanks per month, and more or less non-stop large-scale battles were raging on all fronts.

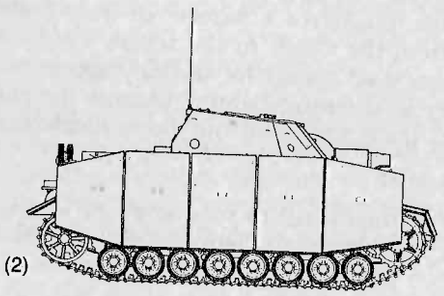
In December 1943, General Guderian recorded that of 3,000 tanks that had been ranged against the USSR before the German summer offensive,

US M30 armored personnel carrier

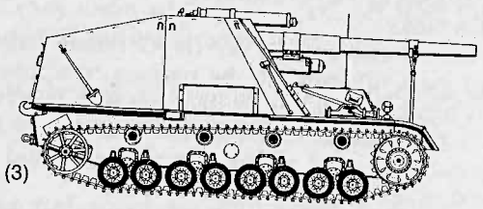




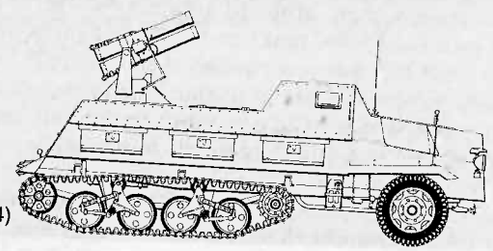
(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)

(1) German Wespe (Wasp) armored howitzer, a 10.5-cm light field howitzer mounted on a Panzer II chassis (first produced 1942);
(2) German No. IV assault tank, a 15-cm H43 howitzer mounted on a Panzer IV tank;
(3) Heavy 15-cm Hummel (Bumblebee) armored howitzer mounted on a Panzer III/IV tank;
(4) No. 42 Maultier (Mule) antitank mortar with 15-cm smoke mortar mounted on an Sd Kfz 4/1 half-track. (2–4 first produced 1943.)

only 300 were left on the Eastern Front; [all the rest had been destroyed, captured or transferred].

Panzer IVs were operating in every German armored battle. In 1943 the Germans reinforced the armor of their Panzer IIs and IVs with a 5-mm armored plate apron and covered them with a protective coating to make more difficult the enemy's attaching magnetic limpet mines to their surface. To make up for the reduced numbers of tanks, many panzer divisions were reinforced with assault guns; but only about 12,000 heavy antitank guns were delivered to the Eastern Front between June 1941 and December 1943; and only 10% of these were the 8.8-cm antiaircraft guns specially designed for antitank use.

In autumn 1943, a new weapon was deployed which the German commanders hoped would halt the onslaught of Soviet tanks: the Panzerfaust, a recoil-less antitank rocket launcher [which could be carried and fired by one man]. A 4.5-cm hollow charge weighing about 6½ pounds was fired from a recoil-less gun to a distance of about 100 feet. Unfortunately, the long trail of fire the rocket launcher emitted tended to reveal the gunner's position, and it was deployed successfully only in terrain that provided a lot of cover and in street fighting. It proved the most useful of all German close-combat antitank weapons for infantry, provided that it was not viewed as a suitable foundation for any large-scale antitank defense. Properly used, the antitank rocket launcher formed only one component within a wide spectrum of cooperating antitank weaponry.

In 1943, German panzer divisions as a rule contained one panzer regiment of two battalions, each of which had a target strength of only 48 tanks.

In the second half of 1943, the German army lost approximately 1,223,000 dead, wounded and missing.

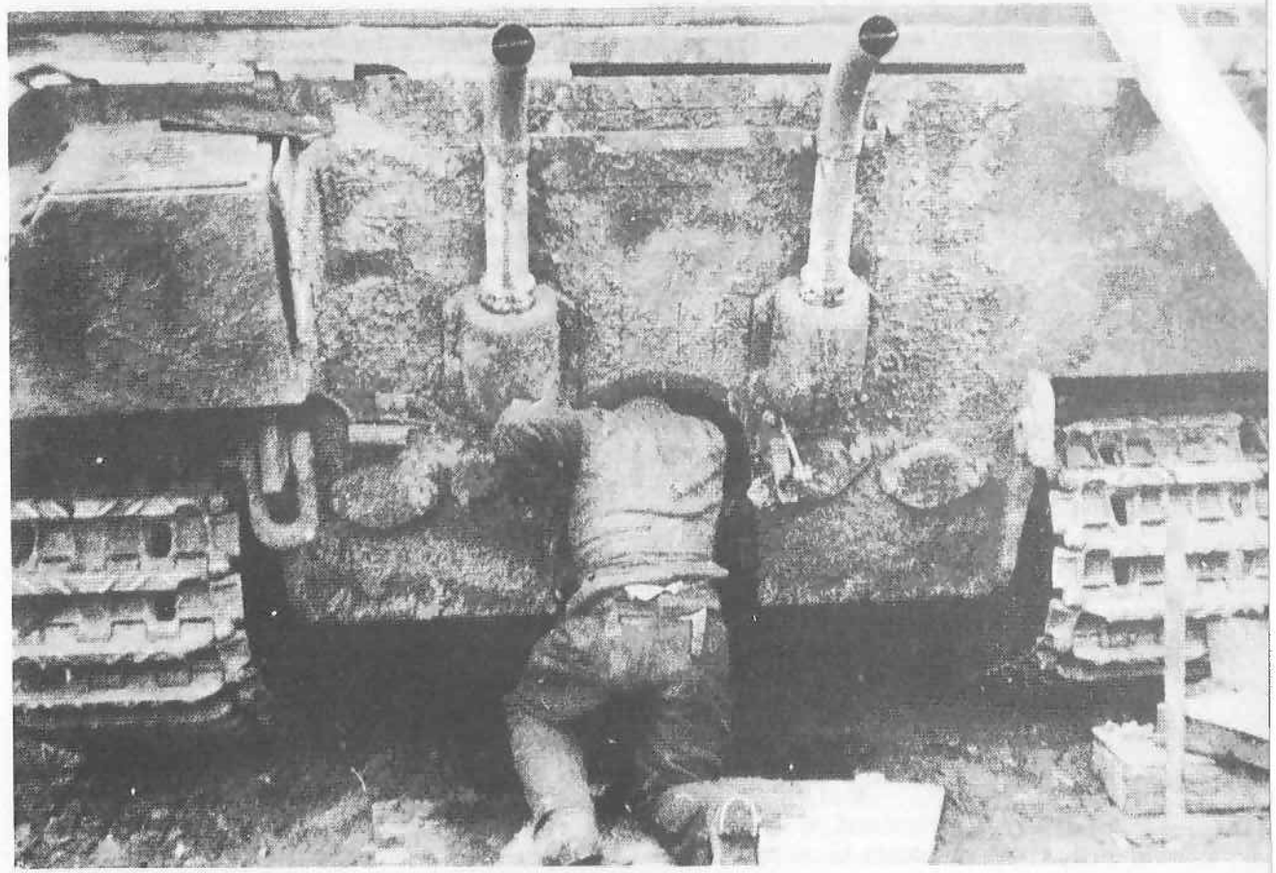
Between July and December 1943, Great Britain and the United States stepped up their bombing attacks on Germany. The Americans carried out daylight precision raids to destroy German tank factories and synthetic fuel plants. German armaments minister Speer had decentralized German arms production and transferred many arms factories to underground depots where they would be safe from bombs, so the Germans had actually succeeded in increasing production. New types of armored vehicles continued to be developed in the teeth of ever-mounting difficulties.

The Soviet summer and autumn offensives brought the Red Army major victories and resulted in a change in the offensive tactics of Soviet armor. The massed preparatory artillery barrage was intensified by heavy mortar raids. Shortly after the initial barrage, small packs of armored personnel carriers would infiltrate known weak points, especially in valley or wooded areas. If successful, the Soviet tanks would dig in and lay down mines around their positions. Increasingly the Soviets would embed tanks along their own front lines to serve as antitank dugouts. In areas easily accessible to enemy tanks, they would set up powerful "antitank fronts" which, in addition to their antitank role, battered attacking infantry with explosive shells. Soviet armored tactics differed from those of the Germans and the Western Allies in that Soviet tanks often would fire while in motion. This had a very demoralizing effect on the enemy, because even the hardiest soldier with the steadiest nerves could not help being dismayed by the sight of a giant tank bearing down on him with guns ablaze. Also, standing tanks made better targets than moving ones. The packs of Soviet tanks would attack without decreasing momentum, firing from all their guns without regard to the effect of individual shots. They rolled over everything in their path and did not shrink from fighting at close quarters against enemy armor or from enemy tanks that might attempt to ram them. After breaking through behind enemy lines, the Soviet tanks would try to evade rather than clash with the German defenses so as to get behind them, block their rear communications and supply lines and thus force them to stop resisting. By the end of 1943, when Allied aid and native Soviet production had increased the Red Army's equipment strength, they were able to deploy large tank and mechanized corps to break through the German defensive lines. This not only accelerated their offensive but at the same time made it easier for them to carry out operations in depth after a breakthrough. On the other hand, some Soviet commanders preferred to deploy their armored armies only after the enemy's tactical defense zone had already been penetrated so as to conserve their strength for long-term operations in depth.

In 1943, Soviet industry produced 24,000 tanks, of which 12,500 were T-34s; 4,000 self-propelled artillery guns; and 130,000 cannon, mortars and rocket launchers. Even so, at the start of their offensive operations, the Soviet armored forces were not yet equipped with their planned quota of tanks and assault guns.

A Soviet design engineers' collective under S. Kotin developed in 1943 a new model of tank which, while retaining the same weight, was more strongly armored and armed than the KV. The new IS ("Joseph Stalin") tank was modelled on the wide-tracked KV series.

Heavy labor after an armored operation: The German driver of a Panzer V Panther, Version A (Sd Kfz 171), is trying to repair damage to his engine.



The British armored force suffered from the irresolution of its leaders who had not yet established a rational theory of operational tank deployment. Nevertheless, in the second half of 1943, the British built a large number of effective specialized tanks known as Funnies. Major General Sir Percy Hobart, pioneer tank theorist and founder of the British armored force, was responsible for their design. Hobart had trained the British 7th Armoured Division, the famous "Desert Rats," in Egypt but was then reassigned by General Wavell because Wavell disagreed with Hobart's tactics (which later became standard). In 1940 Hobart returned to England where he served in an obscure post as a Home Guard corporal. Recalled to service at the personal request of Churchill, Hobart—who also happened to be Montgomery's brother-in-law—set up and trained the 79th Armoured Division. In 1943 his division was assigned to develop special armored equipment that could be used to overcome any obstacles encountered along the French beaches [when the Allies launched their planned Normandy invasion].

Some of the British special tanks were under development before 1943, and indeed some of the concepts they involved derived from World War I; but Hobart was the first to produce special vehicles actually fit for combat. The Crab, a mine-clearance device mounted on a Sherman chassis, had a rotary drum [in front] to which were attached chain flails that beat the ground [as the drum revolved], thus exploding buried mines; it could clear a path ten feet wide, travelling at a speed of 1½ miles an hour.

Another of Hobart's ideas was an armored bulldozer, a special version of the Caterpillar vehicle.

The Duplex Drive tank was a converted amphibious vehicle based on the ideas of an Austrian emigré, N. Straussler. His system made it possible temporarily to convert a normal tank into an amphibious tank while it crossed rivers or sea-beds, after which it would revert to an ordinary Sherman. A collapsible canvas screen jacket was inflated around the tank to the tracks to propel it forward in water at a maximum speed of 2.5 nautical miles per hour. Armored divisions equipped with the DD tank were able to disembark from landing craft and move through water unhindered onto the Normandy beaches.

The Bobbin tank, built on a Churchill tank chassis, carried in front revolving reels (bobbins) that could drop to the ground and spread a ten-foot-wide canvas carpet over the soft sand of the beaches to firm the surface.

Other tanks carried giant bundles of wooden stakes that they could eject across antitank ditches, allowing the tanks to cross over.

Some Churchill AVRE tanks had a bridge fixture mounted on a Churchill chassis. They could lay down a bridge, capable of bearing a 40-ton load, across a 28-foot-wide ditch in 30 seconds or over a wall 14 feet high.

The Crocodile was a flamethrower device attached to a Churchill tank. The flame projector was fixed in the tank hull in place of the machine gun and had a maximum range of almost 350 feet. It towed an armored two-wheeled trailer that carried approximately 400 gallons of flame fuel.

The AVRE Petard tank was a Churchill chassis with a mortar that fired heavy missiles ("flying dustbins") to destroy obstacles the Germans set along the beaches.

A tank carrying a powerful searchlight [to illuminate night actions] was called a Canal Defense Light.

The US armored forces were reorganized in 1943. The size of an armored division was reduced to save men and equipment and to cut down the problems of sea transport. Now a US armored division consisted of three battalions of tanks, armored infantry and armored artillery, plus one armored engineer battalion, one armored reconnaissance battalion and supply troops. Regimental headquarters were abolished and battalions became more independent logistically. An additional staff headquarters (Combat Command) was established to assist armored divisions in carrying out their command responsibilities. The armored battalions remaining after the cut in numbers were assigned to the army groups as reserve forces.

1944

January—June

Soviets Cross Border into Poland
Tuesday 4 January 1944, Moscow
The American *Associated Press News Agency* reported:

Soviet Cossack reconnaissance platoons have at several points crossed the old border between the Soviet Union and Poland.

New Soviet Tactics Fail
4 January 1944, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* announced:

The great winter battle at Zhitomir which the Soviets launched on December 24 is raging on with unabated ferocity. The vast erosion of personnel and equipment in the assault units has forced the Soviets again and again to bring up fresh units so that they can continue their winter offensive which aims to tear the German front wide open. Their tactics are to drive small groups of tanks and mobile infantry into the points of weakest resistance with the objective of penetrating the rear of the German defense. At the same time they are pushing more and more fresh infantry units into their breach lanes—which of course lie under heavy defensive fire from all our arms—trying to widen and expand them into spearheads. German troops have succeeded in foiling Soviet aims by maintaining a mobile, offensively conducted elastic defense.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 7 January 1944:

Never before in history have the relations within the individual warring coalitions been as difficult and strained as they are now in this war, and never has the so-called "interior front" played such a major role in military developments. When Russian troops, headed in the direction of Rovno, crossed the pre-war Polish border into what traditionally has always been Polish territory, the long latent tension between the Soviet government and the Polish exile government in London became acute. The Polish government in London has issued a lengthy statement of its position on the question of Polish-Soviet relations. But meanwhile the "Union of Polish Patriots" resident in Moscow has also published (in its official organ *Wolna Polska*) a program for the future design of Poland which is in the starkest contrast to the aims of the Polish government in England. On the practical (that is, the military) plane, the question is how the Polish people and especially the active Polish resistance movement will react to the Russians marching into their country, and whether they will be willing to fight alongside them against the Germans.

Winston Churchill to Joseph Stalin
Wednesday 12 January 1944:

Personal and Secret—We are watching almost hour to hour the marvellous advances of the Soviet armies . . . If we were in Tehran again, I would now be saying to you across the table: "Please let me know in plenty of time when we are to stop knocking down Berlin so as to leave sufficient billeting accommodation for the Soviet armies."

All plans for our Italian battle have been satisfactorily settled here. I return your handshake well and truly. [English quoted from p. 184 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45,* London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

Joseph Stalin to Winston Churchill
Friday 14 January 1944:

Your message of January received. Our armies have indeed achieved success of late, but we are

still a long way from Berlin. What is more, the Germans are now launching rather serious counterattacks, particularly east of Vinnitsa. There is no danger in that, of course, but they have succeeded in pushing back our advanced units there and in temporarily checking our progress. Hence you should not slacken, but intensify the bombing of Berlin as much as possible. By the time we all arrive in Berlin the Germans will have had a chance to rebuild certain premises that you and we here shall need. . .

I hope your preparations jointly with the Americans for "Overlord" [the planned Allied invasion of Normandy] are making good progress. [English quoted from p. 184 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941-45,* London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

Soviet Offensive at Leningrad

Sunday 16 January 1944
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

South of Leningrad the Soviets have mounted an offensive with the support of tanks and ground attack aircraft. In one sector, fighting is continuing with enemy groups that have broken through our lines. Yesterday all enemy attacks around Oranienbaum failed.

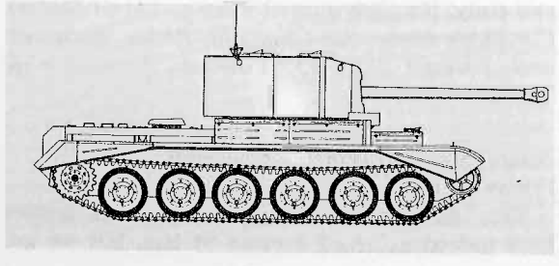
16 January 1944, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

Major Red Army forces have led a series of sharp attacks in a number of sectors between Leningrad and Lake Ilmen and in the area of Staraya Russa, and have taken several important German strongpoints.

Winston Churchill to Joseph Stalin
Saturday 22 January 1944:

Personal and Most Secret – We have launched the big attack against the German armies defending Rome which I told you about at Tehran. The weather conditions seem favourable. I hope to have good news for you before long. [English quoted from p. 186 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941-1945,* London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

British A 30 Challenger tank (first produced 1943)



Winston Churchill to Dominions Secretary
Tuesday 25 January 1944:

It is to my mind very unwise to make plans on the basis of Hitler being defeated in 1944. The possibility of his gaining a victory in France cannot be excluded. The hazards of battle are very great. The reserves of the enemy are capable of being thrown from point to point with great facility. All my information from the interior of Germany goes to show that Hitler and his Government are still in the fullest control, and that there is no sign of revolt as a result of the bombings. In all our contacts with the German troops, such as we see in Italy, their quality, discipline, and skill are apparent. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 602, vol. V]

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 28 January 1944:

This past week, American and British forces made landings behind the German front lines in central Italy, in the small ports of Anzio and Nettuno. . . The invasion landing took place at the same time that fierce fighting was raging on the Garigliano river and at Cassino [i.e. along the German Gustav Line] between Kesselring's German forces and Americans under General Clark and French under General Juin. . . For a 48-hour period the Allies were free to build, expand and fortify their bridgeheads at Nettuno without enemy interference and, under cover from the bridgehead, to unload their heavy equipment, guns, armored vehicles, ammunition etc. and what appears to be a strong landing force. The strip of coast between the landing points and the Appian Way is flat and very sparsely populated, which made it easy for the Allies to deploy.

Rome lies approximately 25 miles north of the landing zone, but there are no indications that the main objective of the landing is to occupy the Eternal City. Instead it should be viewed as a move to attack from the rear the German front lines on the Garigliano and at Cassino, both of which are located south of the landing zone.

General Seydlitz Appeals to German Troops
Sunday 6 February 1944, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

Artillery General Seydlitz, the president of the German Officers' League in the Soviet Union, has made several radio appeals to German troops encircled at Cherkassy to surrender. He said in part: "Based on my experiences at Stalingrad, I can tell you that your position is catastrophic. Your attempts to break out of the pocket have failed, and attacks by relief forces have been unsuccessful. You can expect no further aid. Therefore put an end to the fighting and come over to us. I have the consent of Soviet army authorities to assure you that you will be given food and clothing immediately and that commanding officers will be allowed to remain with their troops. In addition, I guarantee the security of your lives and health."

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, dated 10 February 1944 (extract):

News reports about the Eastern Front have caused extreme unrest among the German people. Reports of our abandonment of Rovno and Lutsk [Ukraine] and of the continuation of the Soviet advance have had an especially alarming effect. Germans view the Rumanian oil fields and especially the German-governed part of Poland as strongly at risk.

General confusion reigns about whether we are undetermined or unable to deal with the East or what in fact is going on. A contributory factor [to this confusion] is that, whereas at one time the Eastern Front war against Bolshevism was represented as the decisive test against our strongest enemy, our press and radio are now focussing less and less attention of the Eastern Front. Instead the West is now described as the main front and the expected invasion there as the determining feature of the war.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 11 February 1944:

The offensive by Generals Govorov and Meretskov against the German army besieging Leningrad has proved one of the swiftest and most successful operations of the entire war in Russia. While Meretskov's troops stormed the city of Novgorod north of Lake Ilmen and began to spread out along the lake's western shore in the direction of the upper Luga river, Govorov's forces penetrated the ring of German siege troops south of Leningrad and fought their way through to the lower Luga where they captured Kingissep and crossed over the border into Estonia in the direction of the ancient fortress of Narva.

Fighting Continues at Cherkassy
Friday 18 February 1944, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

Attention still focusses mainly on the fighting between Cherkassy and Zhashkov [Ukraine] on the southern flank of the Eastern Front, where German forces destroyed 9 Soviet armored and assault guns and knocked another 17 tanks out of action in tough defensive fighting. Despite the incredible



January 1944, southern Italy: General Giraud inspecting an armored regiment of the French Expeditionary Corps, under General Juin, equipped with US M10 Wolverine tank destroyers

difficulties of the terrain which make every movement a strain, German armored forces continued their attacks on the Soviet units amassed here, which greatly outnumbered them, and have taken more territory from them.

Winston Churchill's Address before the House of Commons
Tuesday 22 February 1944:

Here I may point out that the term "unconditional surrender" does not mean that the German people will be enslaved or destroyed. It means, however, that the Allies will not be bound to them at the moment of surrender by any pact or obligation. There will be, for instance, no question of the Atlantic Charter applying to Germany as a matter of right and barring territorial transferences or adjustment in enemy countries. No such arguments will be admitted by us as we used by Germany after the last war, saying that they surrendered in consequence of President Wilson's 14 points. Unconditional surrender means that the victors have a free hand. It does not mean that they are entitled to behave in a barbarous manner nor that they wish to blot out Germany from among the nations of Europe. If we are bound, we are bound by our own consciences to civilization. We are not to be bound to the Germans as a result of a bargain struck. That is the meaning of "unconditional surrender."

Winston Churchill to Foreign Secretary
Friday 25 February 1944:

. . . . .

We "invade" all countries with whom we are at war.



Left: Magnitogorsk in the Urals, one of the most important Soviet centers for tank production

Opposite page: Soviet SU-76 light tank destroyers near Tarnopol [west Ukraine] in March 1944. The SU-76 consisted of a 7.6-cm cannon mounted on a T-70 light tank chassis. This self-propelled gun effectively supported Soviet infantry in breaking through German lines.

2. We "enter" all subjugated Allied lands we wish to "liberate."

3. With regard to a country like Italy, with whose Government we have signed an armistice, we "invaded" in the first instance, but in view of the Italian co-operation, we must consider all further advances by us in Italy to be in the nature of "liberation." [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 608, vol. V]

Soviets Sever Lvov-Odessa Rail Line
Tuesday 7 March 1944
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

The Ukrainian First Army under Marshal Zhukov has succeeded, after more than two days of bitter fighting, in cutting the main German rail supply line in the Soviet Union. Our troops have occupied and crossed over an approximately 18-mile-long segment of the Odessa-Lvov-Warsaw rail line between Tarnopol and Proskurov. The Ukrainian First Army, under command of Marshal Zhukov, forcefully pursued its offensive yesterday, and the Red Army, making additional thrusts up to about 12 miles in depth, captured more than 200 towns and villages. The most important of these is the town of Volochisk along the Odessa-Lvov rail line some 26 miles east of Tarnopol.

German Strongholds and Fortified Locations [in the USSR]

Secret Order	German Supreme
from the Führer	Headquarters
Führer Command No. 11	8 March 1944

To commanders of Strongholds and Fortified Locations

Various events compel me to issue the following orders:

1. A distinction is to be drawn between "strongholds," each commanded by a "stronghold commander," and "fortified locations" [towns etc], each commanded by a "battle commander."

"Strongholds" are to fulfill the same tasks as fortresses did in the past. They have a crucial operational role to play, and it is their job to prevent the enemy from capturing them. They must seal themselves off, tying up as many enemy forces as possible, and thereby pave the way for successful counteroperations.

"Fortified locations" are to serve as tenaciously defended bases deep inside the battle zone after enemy breakthroughs. When drawn into the main battle line, they are to back the defense and during enemy penetrations are to form the pivots and cornerstones of the front and as starting positions for counterattacks.

ADOLF HITLER

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 10 March 1944:

Now, when the winter is loosing its last burst of snow and cold in a desperate but vain defense against the approach of the spring, the world war too is taking a turn toward what may prove significant changes in the whole picture. The outermost zones of the Third Reich have come under threat. German strategy must now defend two or even three fronts and, although those defending the interior [and consequently shorter] line are known to hold a certain advantage, Germany is facing overwhelming odds of personnel and equipment and can no longer keep pace with the vastly superior Allied forces on land, sea and in the air.

Japanese Offensive on the Border of India
Friday 24 March 1944, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

Japanese detachments described as "powerful assault troops" have penetrated across the Burmese border into India. The current view is that it will be impossible for them to transport a real army across the Chin Hills and to keep it supplied there, except by air; and the Japanese are believed not to have enough cargo aircraft to carry out such an operation. Nevertheless, they can of course mount disagreeable thrusts and surprise raids in Manipur and Assam if they are able to cut the Fourteenth Army's supply lines. British observers in India evidently attribute great importance to this aspect of the Japanese operation, especially as the supply line between Imphal, the capital of Manipur, and the rest of India runs parallel to the border of Burma and thus is highly susceptible to Japanese infiltrations. The strongest Japanese detachment is said to be operating in the valley between the Chin Hills and the Indian border. It also has armored vehicles.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

24 March 1944:

. . . The German campaign in Russia is already as good as lost. The defeat of von Manstein's army group in southern Russia—probably the most terrible defeat ever suffered by a German army—has finally sealed the doom of the German armies which not long ago entered the field confidently to conquer the Ukraine and capture the mineral resources between the Dnieper and the Caucasus.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 31 March 1944:

The lands of southeastern Europe have come under the military and political spotlight due to the battle developing in the southern Ukraine, Bessarabia [Rumania], Podolia [west central Ukraine], Bukovina [Ukraine and Rumania] and Galicia. . . For the first time, official German military spokesmen in Berlin are saying that a new phase of the war has begun. They pointed out that the Eastern Front is only one element in the total picture and that all that has happened in the USSR in recent weeks is now overshadowed by the events looming in Western Europe.

British Successes along the Border of India
Tuesday 18 April 1944
Admiral Mountbatten's Headquarters reported:

The Japanese forces in the area of Imphal have abruptly broken off their offensive, while farther north in the Bishanpur [Manipur, India] area, Japanese pressure continues. British tanks and infantry are fighting along the Kohima-Dinampur road, the whole breadth of which they have now succeeded in recapturing.

Soviet Shells Rain Down on Sevastopol
18 April 1944, Moscow
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

At the same time that Yeremienko was attacking from the direction of Yalta and driving the German and Rumanian troops into a confined space [in the Crimea], General Tolbukhin brought more



siege artillery into position directly north of Sevastopol where his forces are now keeping the powerful fortification system under incessant barrage. German resistance has stiffened markedly. Tolbukhin's advance troops have occupied almost the entire north shore of Sevastopol Bay and are engaged in bitter fighting.

19 April 1944, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

The Battle of Sevastopol is continuing its course in the teeth of tough enemy resistance. The strength of the Fascist defenders is estimated at something over 40,000 men. Our aerial and naval forces have completely blockaded the Sevastopol area, so that in all probability only a small percentage of General Jaenecke's troops will escape destruction by us.

After seizing the strongly fortified city of Balaklava [southern Crimea], Yeremienko's forces have continued their thrust through the hilly terrain south of Sevastopol and are attacking the city directly with their tanks and motorized guns. General Tolbukhin's columns operating from the north and east have already advanced closer to Sevastopol, and the harbor bay is now dominated by heavy Soviet guns. The Germans are retreating deeper and deeper into the city of Sevastopol.

Huge fires have been raging [inside the city], giant explosions have occurred periodically, and vast clouds of smoke have been rising into the sky. In this chaos the Fascist German troops have been trying to embark in their ships.

Air Offensive against German Rail Traffic System
Sunday 23 April 1944, London
US Eighth Air Force Headquarters reported:

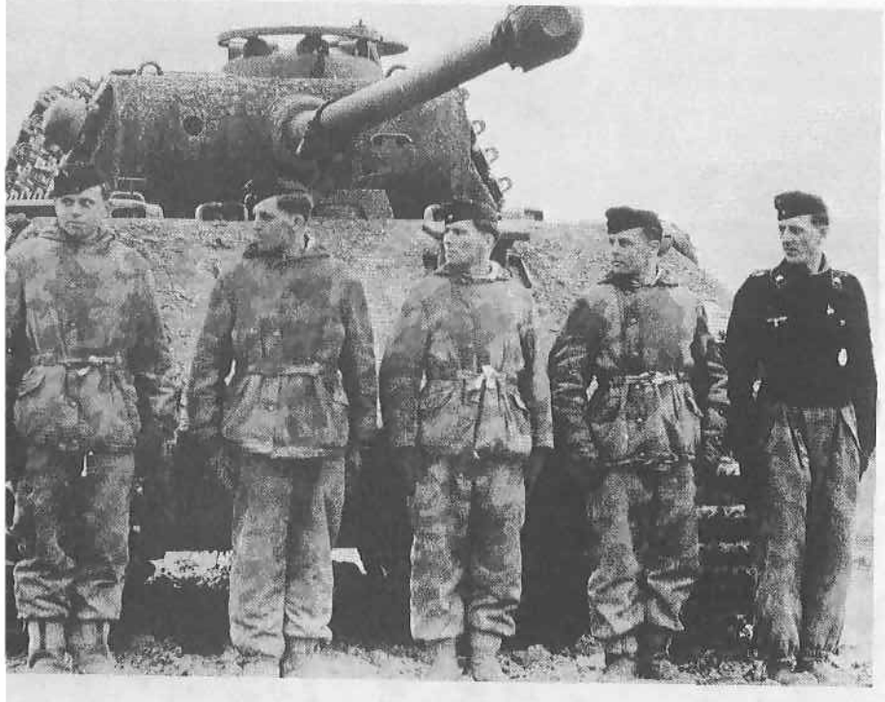
Yesterday Flying Fortress and Liberator bombers carried out a heavy raid on the rail installations in Hamm. The bombers were escorted by very powerful contingents of US fighter planes. Besides Hamm, the US 8th Air Force yesterday attacked rail junctions, airfields and military installations behind the devastated "Atlantic Wall" [of German fortifications along the Atlantic coast].

Rumanian Troops Fighting at Sevastopol
23 April 1944, Bucharest
The *Rumanian Army Report* announced:

All enemy assaults on the bridgehead at Sevastopol and the lower Dniester have been repulsed. The enemy's advance has been brought to a complete standstill. We have recaptured a village in the forest area east of the central Moldavian valley.

Successful Hungarian Counterattacks
23 April 1944, Budapest
The *Hungarian Chief of the General Staff* announced:

Our troops are gaining more and more territory in the area between the Carpathians and the upper Dniester, despite enemy resistance and occasional enemy counterattacks aiming to slow down our attack momentum. We seized the provincial town of Otyssia after heavy street fighting. We destroyed six heavy Soviet tanks and captured one intact.



Opposite page: By mid-May 1944 the Soviets were already preparing their summer offensive. Here, a Soviet brigade of T-36/86 tanks is on its way to the front.

Left: The Eastern Front, April 1944. The crew of a German Panzer V Panther, one of the finest tanks of the war. According to US Army statistics, it cost five Shermans or some nine T-34s to destroy one Panther.

Tuesday 25 April 1944
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

Yesterday the enemy continued his violent attacks around Sevastopol. The attacks failed after dogged fighting, due to the resistance of our troops who were effectively supported by German naval ferries. The Soviets lost 32 planes in aerial combat and 24 more to flak guns and to German naval vessels.

German and Hungarian troops warded off strong enemy counterattacks between the Carpathians and the upper Dniester where our forces destroyed 24 tanks. Southwest of Kovel [Polish Ukraine], after several days of hard fighting in difficult terrain, we encircled and destroyed the bulk of a Soviet cavalry division. The Soviets lost several thousand dead and many prisoners. We captured 38 cannon and large numbers of other arms.

Corporal Knispel, a member of a heavy armored unit in the East, knocked out 101 enemy tanks in the period July 1942 to March 1944.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* for internal affairs, dated 4 May 1944 (extract):

Most Germans look forward very hopefully to an [Allied] invasion in the belief that a decisive turning point in our favor must of necessity take place very soon and that the invasion is (they say) our last opportunity to turn the tide. People show virtually no fear of the invasion.

Bombing Offensive against the Rumanian Oil Center
Sunday 6 May 1944
Allied Air Force Headquarters in Italy:

A strong formation of Flying Fortress and Liberator bombers has bombed Ploesti for the sixth time.

Japanese Successes in China
Thursday 11 May 1944, Tokyo
The Japanese *Domei News Agency* reported:

Since it began 20 days ago, the Japanese offensive in Honan Province [China] has borne fruit of the greatest military, political and economic significance. The objective of the Japanese thrust is clearly the complete occupation of the 720-mile-long Peking-Hankow rail line. At the moment a battle of annihilation is taking place southwest of this line, where 80,000 Chinese have been surrounded.

Raids on German Synthetic Fuel Plants

Friday 12 May 1944, London
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:



A formation of more than 750 Flying Fortress and Liberator bombers, escorted by almost 1,000 Thunderbolt, Lightning and Mustang long-range fighter planes, today mounted extensive raids over Germany. The main operations were aimed at four large factories for the manufacture of synthetic gasoline in the Leipzig area. Another gasoline manufacturing plant has been bombed in Brüx (northwest Bohemia).

Soviet Summer Offensive Looms
Wednesday 17 May 1944, Moscow
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Under the protection of its air force, the Red Army is continuing to assemble troops and equipment in its large deployment zones in preparation for the coming summer offensive. The Soviets report particularly intensive preparations in the Rumanian sector where Koniev is reinforcing his armies in the upper Sereth valley, and in the area between Kovel and the Carpathians. The Germans too are making extensive preparations behind their front lines. Soviet aerial reconnaissance reports that huge German troop concentrations are forming along the front at Lvov and in the Baltic zone.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 19 May 1944:

The week's events were dominated by the grand offensive in Central Italy mounted by General Alexander's Allied army group on the night of 11/12 May. The British Eighth and American Fifth Armies, operating with powerful forces and tre-

mendous fighting spirit, started their offensive along a front little more than 20 miles wide against the barrier of German field fortifications in highly mountainous terrain. . . In the area north of Cassino, Polish forces are fighting shoulder to shoulder beside the British along the Rapido river, a name with which we are all familiar by now. An extraordinary mixture of British, Indians, French, Poles, Americans, and Moroccans and other Africans have been welded together under a single overall command to serve a common cause.

Over 4,000 Aircraft Take Part

Sunday 21 May 1944, London
US Eighth Air Force Headquarters reported:

More than 4,000 aircraft took part in yesterday's daylight operations by Allied aerial forces over France and the Netherlands. Over 1,000 US fighter planes of various types flew cover for the heavy bombers. . . .

Joseph Stalin to Winston Churchill
Friday 26 May 1944:

Personal and Secret—I am obliged to you for the information on the battle in Italy, contained in your latest message. We are watching your successes with admiration.

We are greatly encouraged by your news on the "Overlord" preparations now in full swing. What is most important is that the British and U.S. troops are so full of resolve.

I welcome your readiness to resume later the programme for Arctic convoys.

[English quoted from p. 221 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

26 May 1944:

The gradual intensification of the military activity and preparedness of the Allies in Europe, although it has raised the tension to fever pitch, leaves us with few more real surprises in store. Indeed, Allied and German evaluations of the position sound strikingly similar. . . The course of military events in Central Italy this last week has brought new and substantial success to the Allied troops fighting under command of General Alexander. A week ago they penetrated Cassino in the north and Gaeta on [an inlet of] the Tyrrhenian Sea and began the battle for the main German defensive fortifications. It has been a battle of attrition on a scale the Germans compare with the World War I battles of Verdun, Flanders and the Somme. The main contested points were Mount Cairo overlooking the Liri Valley and, at its feet, the town of Piedmonte where the Polish forces of General Anders engaged in bitter fighting against Austrian mountain troops.

General Alexander to Winston Churchill
Tuesday 30 May 1944:

Thank you for your telegram.

Our serviceable tank strength is about 2,000.

You will see in my Operation Order that my aim is to destroy German Army in the field.

Except for the use of roads through Rome, battle formations are not to go into the city. Further, I am considering the advisability of only mentioning the capture of Rome in my military communiqué among inhabited localities taken by my armies in their stride from day to day. I shall appreciate your advice in this matter.

You will have heard of fresh enemy divisions which are on their way here. I hope our tap will not be turned off too soon, as it was before, and prevent us from gaining full fruits of our present advantageous position. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 538, vol. V]

German Counteroffensive at Jassy [Rumania]
Wednesday 31 May 1944, Moscow
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The success of [yesterday's] surprise attack by German troops north of Jassy came after weeks of vain attempts by the Axis forces to drive the Soviets back to the Dniester. Tuesday's attack—in Moscow a concerted effort is being made to avoid using the term "offensive"—continued with fresh forces during the night and this morning but so far seems not to have resulted in further territorial gains by the Germans. Military observers in Moscow believe that the Germans will intensify the attack and that they even have plans to drive the Soviets off Rumanian soil.

Winston Churchill to General Alexander
31 May 1944:

I entirely agree with your operational intention, and trust you will execute it.

The capture of Rome is a vast, world-wide event, and should not be minimized. I hope that British as well as Americans will enter the city simultaneously. I would not lump it in with other towns taken on the same day. [English quoted from Churchill's *The Second World War*, p. 538, vol. V]

Allies Penetrate to Rome

Monday 5 June 1944
General Alexander's Headquarters reported in a special communiqué:

Yesterday Allied troops penetrated to Rome and crossed the Tiber river.

Hard Fighting at Jassy
5 June 1944, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

Very early yesterday morning, after more German-Fascist reserves, mostly armored divisions, reached the front at Jassy [eastern Rumania], the Germans launched a massive attack in five waves along a 15-mile-wide front against the Soviet lines. After very hard fighting in which both sides suffered heavy losses, our infantry units retreated several miles. Finally, as the battle surged back and forth, the Germans formed three spearheads which at their deepest point extended between 2½ and 3 miles into the Soviet defense sector. Our troops then deployed field artillery and motorized automatic guns against these spearheads, setting on fire dozens of German tanks and cannon or knocking them out by other means. Our troops succeeded in holding their positions and securing them against the Fascist attacks.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
5 June 1944:

We [the German Press] are ordered to devote detailed commentaries to the German evacuation of Rome. While at the same time touching on individual military matters that are still being reported in special announcements, we should emphasize that the British and Americans have been fighting for Rome for all of nine months ever since they made their treacherous pact with Badoglio; and, after suffering the heaviest military casualties, they have now been able to occupy the city only because the German commanders, moved by its cultural, religious and historical significance, have avoided including Rome in their operations and instead have declared it an open city.

Invasion in Normandy
Tuesday 6 June 1944, London
The *British War Office* reported:

Under the command of General Eisenhower, Allied naval units supported by powerful aerial forces have begun the landing of Allied troops on the coast of France. Heavy air raids preceded the landing.

Winston Churchill to Joseph Stalin
Wednesday 7 June 1944:

. . . .

About "Overlord" I am well satisfied with the situation up to noon today, the 7th of June. Only at one American beach has there been serious difficulty and that has now been cleared up. . . By tonight we hope to have the best part of a quarter of a million men ashore including a considerable quantity of armour (tanks) landed from special ships or swimming ashore by themselves. In this latter class of tanks there have been a good many casualties especially on the American front owing to the waves overturning these swimming tanks. We must now expect heavy counter-attacks but we expect to be stronger in armour, and, of course, overwhelming in the air whenever the clouds lift.

2. There was a tank engagement of our newly landed armour with fifty enemy tanks of the 21st Panzer-Grenadier Division late last night towards Caen as a result of which the enemy quitted the field. The British 7th Armoured Division is now going in and should give us superiority for a few days. [English quoted from pp. 224–225 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]



Monte Cassino in May 1944. Allied troops of Polish II Corps attacking German mountain fortifications amid the debris of US M4 Sherman medium tanks.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
7 June 1944:

While the military struggles on the Atlantic coast so far merit no special emphasis, what we [the German Press] should particularly stress is the political background of the invasion which is a bloody operation carried out on the orders and in the interests of Moscow. Above all we should emphasize Roosevelt's statement that the target date of the invasion was decided in Teheran [i.e. at the conference between the Allied leaders, including

Stalin, at the end of 1943], that is, by the Bolshevists.

Secret Report of the German *SS Secret Service* on internal affairs, dated 8 June 1944 (extract):

German people are universally experiencing the arrival of the invasion as a release from unbearable suspense and oppressive uncertainty. It is virtually the only topic of conversation. Everything else has receded completely into the background.

The start of the invasion has completely drowned out the news of our abandonment of Rome.

Efforts Redouble
Thursday 15 June 1944, Tokyo
The Japanese *Domei News Agency* reported:

Prime Minister General Tojo, in his capacity as Japanese armaments minister, stated today at a conference of all deputies involved in arms production that the moment has now come when the Axis nations must launch a general offensive in Eastern Asia and in Europe. Tojo emphasized that the final victory would always belong to those who have faith and self-confidence and fight with unyielding martial courage.

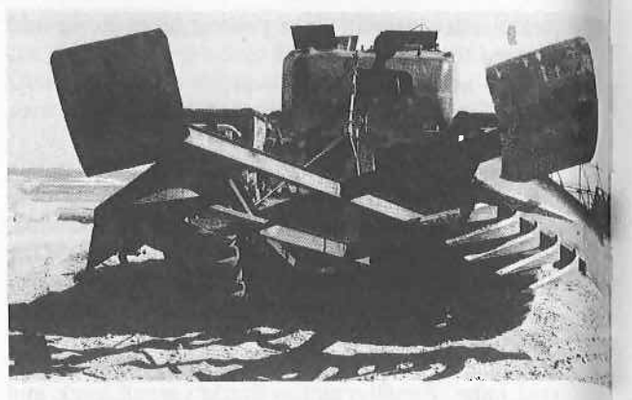
Tojo ended with the words: "On the European front, the might of the German troops is now being fully deployed against the enemy invasion forces. In this important arena, where the war is entering its decisive phase, all those involved in war production must redouble their efforts so as to increase their nations' fighting power."

New German Weapon
Monday 19 June 1944
The *Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force* (SHAEF) reported:

German troops have deployed on the Normandy front a new weapon, a rocket projectile that can be used by the infantry. Only one man is needed to fire the projectile. The launcher has a barrel several feet long which fires an 88-mm missile.

Allied Supply Deliveries to the Soviet Union
19 June 1944, Moscow
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The Soviet Foreign Trade Commission has published its first report on [Allied] supplies delivered [to the USSR] through the "Lend-and-Lease Bill." The report says that by the end of April, supply deliveries included: 12,256 airplanes, 9,214 tanks (enough to equip 90 tank brigades) and 215,000 trucks. It also points out that Great Britain supplied the largest quantity of tanks and electrical equipment, while almost all trucks, clothing and footwear came from the United States. For the



June 1944, one of the many "Funnies" of the British 79th Armoured Division: the Bullshorn Mark III Plough. Animal-like in appearance, it was a mine-exploder vehicle used along the Normandy beaches during the invasion. The special exploding device was mounted on the chassis of a British A 22 Churchill infantry tank.

first time the percentage of losses has also been reported. Around 10% of all supplies has been lost en route.

German Retreat in Italy
Tuesday 20 June 1944, Rome
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

German troops in Italy have resumed their retreat on all fronts from the western coast to the Adriatic Sea [on the eastern coast]. Now only German rearguard units are trying to hold up the Allied advance, while the bulk of German troops in all sectors are avoiding battle and evidently are withdrawing to the line Pisa-Florence-Rimini [in the north]. So far there are no indications of the intentions of the German High Command: In any case, we can count on intensified fighting along the [northern] line.

Armored Battle in Normandy

Wednesday 21 June 1944
General Eisenhower's Headquarters reported:

The battle in the eastern sector of the [western] invasion front has flared up again violently around Tilly[-sur-Seulles]. The Germans have mounted a number of armor-supported counterattacks. The center of especially violent fighting is the village of Hottot southwest of Tilly. On Tuesday evening [yesterday] the Germans operated here with about 30 Tiger tanks followed up by Panthers. They tried to break through the British lines in a spearhead formation but were caught under a strong defensive barrage. Several tanks burst into flame, whereupon the others veered off. Later, fresh German counterattacks ensued, leading to bloody close-range fighting. The Germans, deploying a large number of tanks, mounted an especially heavy attack at dawn, and penetrated to the edge of the village. In another sector, British armored formations mounted a relief attack which is progressing satisfactorily. We took the village of Onchy southwest of Tilly after hard fighting.

Joseph Stalin to Winston Churchill
21 June 1944:

. . . The second round of the summer offensive of the Soviet forces will begin within a week. The offensive will involve 130 divisions, including armoured ones. I and my colleagues expect important success from it and I hope it will be a substantial help to the Allied operations in France and in Italy.

Eden Reports German Peace Proposal
Thursday 22 June 1944, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden confirmed in the House of Commons that around the turn of the year 43/44, Germany made Britain a peace proposal taking the form of an enquiry [about what peace terms would be acceptable to the Allies] from a high-ranking, very noted National Socialist state figure. This enquiry bore all the traits of a typical German maneuver to sow dissension among the Allies, so the British government ignored the German tender.

Tilly, Normandy, 20 June 1944: US M4 Sherman medium tanks of the British 21st Army Group during a lull in the fighting

22 June 1944, London
US Eighth Army Headquarters announced:

Yesterday morning a contingent of over 1,000 four-engined bombers of the US 8th Air Force, escorted by almost 1,000 long-range fighters, led the heaviest raid so far against the German capital and its suburbs.

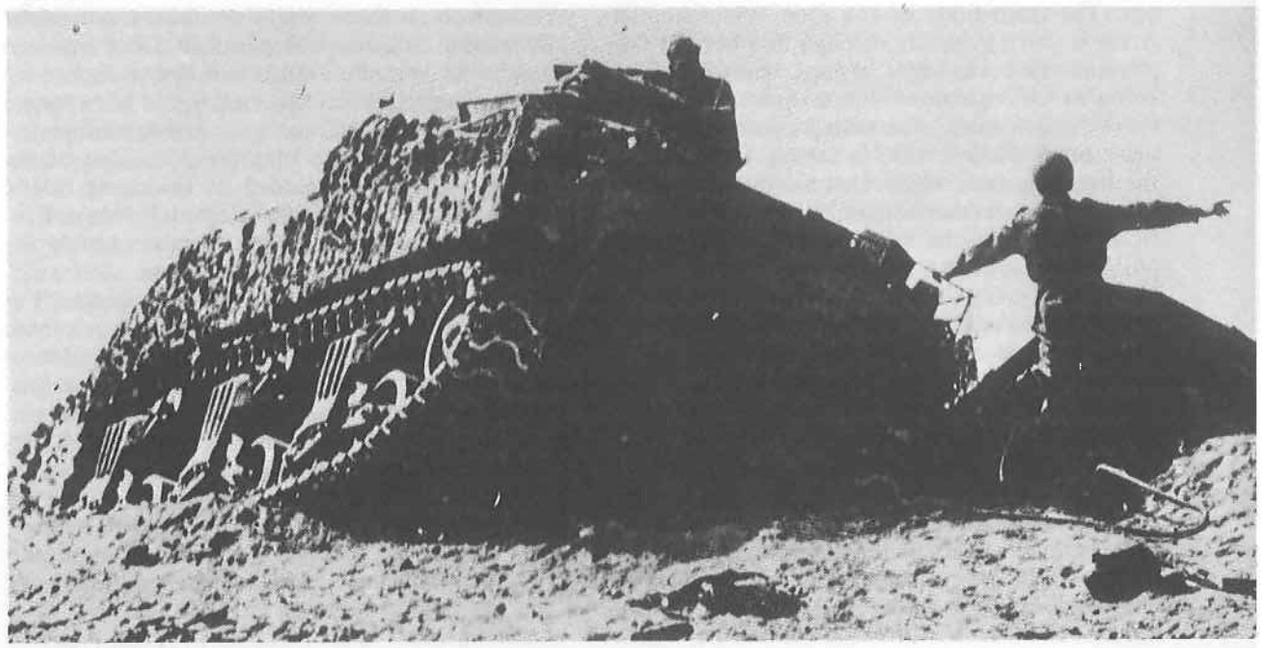
Start of the Soviet Summer Offensive

Friday 23 June 1944, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

The long-awaited Soviet summer offensive began on Thursday. Whereas the Soviets on the southern flank of the Eastern Front contented themselves with reconnaissance thrusts and pinning attacks, [farther north] they mounted a grand offensive along a broad front from south of Mogilev to the Vitebsk area, deploying strong artillery and armored forces. This offensive began yesterday afternoon. As far as we can tell from existing reports, the focal point of the massed Soviet operations lay along either side of the Smolensk-Orsha highway where German reconnaissance forces several days ago detected a large build-up of Soviet artillery. The German defenses have smashed all the attacks, inflicting heavy casualties.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Saturday 24 June 1944:

The new German weapon has been designated the "V-1." The "V" is an abbreviation of *Vergeltung* [= retaliation], whereas the number 1 means that the present weapon is only the first in a series



of retaliatory weapons. The German Press must offer a brief, but by no means sensational, explanation of the term the first time that it is used in a report.

Soviets Penetrate Vitebsk
Monday 26 June 1944, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

An Order of the Day issued by Stalin to Soviet Generals Bagramian and Chernyakhovsky at 7:45 P.M. today, says that troops of the Soviet First Baltic Front army group and the Third White Russian Front army group have carried out a flanking and enveloping maneuver in which they surrounded an enemy force of five infantry divisions, drew the net tighter, and today stormed and occupied the city of Vitebsk, an important strategic strongpoint in the Fascist defenses.

Major Soviet Victories
Thursday 29 June 1944, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

The Soviet offensive launched by four armies along a wide arc in the direction of Minsk [capital of White Russia] has turned into a race between the various participating Soviet army groups [to see which will be first to fight through to Minsk]. The Rokossovsky, Chernyakhovsky and Bagramian army groups started at an approximately equal distance from Minsk on Wednesday evening; but the latest reports indicate that Rokossovsky's drive along the left flank is accelerating in speed as it goes along. The ring of Soviet troops encircling Bobruisk has foiled German attempts to break out. The main body of the First White Russian Army is driving rapidly through and beyond Osipovichi. Rokossovsky's troops captured large amounts of equipment in Osipovichi. Rokossovsky's right wing, after taking Berezino some 48 miles north of Bobruisk, is driving farther along the Berezina river, while other troops have veered westward where the lead units are still 40 miles from Minsk. At the same time, Rokossovsky is pushing his southern flank along the rail toward Slutsk.

The advance units of Chernyakhovsky's army group have penetrated to the Upper Berezina at Borisov. The city of Borisov now lies under Soviet artillery fire. It appears that the enemy will try to hold up Chernyakhovsky's advance to gain time to reorganize his forces. When our troops captured Kostritsa 7 miles northeast of Borisov, they seized equipment and took several hundred prisoners.

Bagramian's army group has mounted an encompassing maneuver against Polotsk, which the latest reports say is making good progress in the north.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)
Friday 30 June 1944:

This week was notable mainly for the fact that the major Allied powers have now put into action the program they announced to the world on December 1 of last year after their heads of state met at Teheran and planned to launch a combined assault on "Fortress Europe" from the east, south and west. The assault from the south began on May 11 with the offensive in Italy, followed by the assault from the west in the form of the Normandy invasion on June 6. On June 22—the third anniversary of the Geman attack on the Soviet Union—the assault from the east ensued along a broad front, and with enormous vigor, when the Soviets led a general offensive in White Russia. Thus the three-front land war has now become a reality, and the German Wehrmacht is facing the hardest test the war has so far posed to its fighting strength.

Strategy and Tactics

JANUARY TO JUNE 1944

The surprisingly hard German defense in the winter war in Italy intensified the difference in opinion between the British and Americans about future Allied strategy in the Mediterranean. Churchill, as well as Generals Alexander and Wilson, favored a plan in which the Allies would make their drive across the Adriatic, along the Croatian coast and through Istria and Ljubljana [Yugoslavia] to reach Hungary and Austria before the Soviets. The British believed that this approach through the Balkans would eliminate the need for Operation Dragoon, the planned Allied invasion landing in southern France. But Roosevelt and his chief of staff General Marshall would not approve these plans; and Stalin too was urging an invasion of France in order to keep the Allies out of the Balkans which he regarded as belonging to the Soviet sphere of influence. Roosevelt was not inclined to prevent the Soviets from occupying the Balkans because he wanted to ensure their assistance in the final struggle against Japan. The Americans were supplying most of the equipment for Allied land operations, so they were able to push through their views, reduce Italy to a secondary theater, and send in only enough forces to take Rome while continuing to pin sizeable German forces in the south. Field Marshal Kesselring in turn did not choose to retreat further from his positions in Italy. He hoped, with some reason, that the terrain, which favored the defense and greatly inhibited enemy deployment, would enable him to repel future Allied attacks.

On Saturday 1 January 1944, Field Marshal



Normandy, June 1944. A British armored division equipped with American Sherman tanks is forming up to attack.

Rommel was appointed Commander-in-Chief of German Army Group B in western Europe, under overall command of Field Marshal von Rundstedt, the German C-in-C West. Rommel thus assumed command of Salmuth's Fifteenth Army and Dollmann's Seventh Army (both formerly under command of Christiansen, the Wehrmacht C-in-C Netherlands) which were now incorporated into Army Group B.

At the start of 1944, Germany's available forces included 315 divisions and 10 brigades. Approximately 70% of these forces were ranged along the Eastern Front, including 198 divisions, 6 brigades, and 3 air fleets, plus 38 divisions and 18 brigades supplied by Germany's allies. The Axis had a total strength of 4.9 million men, over 54,000 cannon and mortars, 5,400 tanks and assault guns, and 3,000 aircraft.

Ranged on the Soviet side were 6.1 million men, 88,900 cannon and mortars, 2,167 Katyusha rocket launchers, approximately 14,900 tanks and self-propelled guns and 8,500 aircraft. The main Soviet forces continued to be concentrated along a south-westerly direction, where Soviet troops were determined to smash the German armies and to liberate the Crimea and the Ukraine west of the Dnieper.

The task facing the German army was to stabilize the front by means of a strategic defense. The Germans planned to try to regain the Dnieper Line in the south so as to deny the Red Army access to the Rumanian border and the Crimea during a Soviet offensive.

On Tuesday 4 January 1944, Vatutin's First Ukrainian Front armies, advancing through Volhynia [northwest Ukraine] against Field Marshal von Manstein's German Army Group South, crossed over the pre-war border of Poland at Sarny.

On Wednesday 5 January 1944, Clark's US Fifth Army, comprising two American, three British and two French divisions, mounted its first assault north of the Garigliano river along the outskirts of the main German defensive line. Von Vietinghoff's German Tenth Army fought a delaying action as its seven divisions pulled back across the Rapido river.

On Friday 14 January, the Soviet armies in the northern sector of the front went on the offensive at Leningrad. Ferdyuninski's Soviet Second Shock Army, Maslennikov's Fifty-Second Army, and units of Popov's Second Baltic Front armies broke through the lines of Field Marshal von Küchler's German Army Group North.

The night of 17/18 January 1944 saw the start of the second Allied assault on the mouth of the Garigliano, supported by smaller landings behind the German front lines.

On Tuesday 18 January, Reinhardt's German Third Panzer Army fought a defensive battle at Vitebsk which ended in victory for the defenders. Germans records set Soviet casualties at 40,000 dead, with losses of 349 cannon and 1,203 tanks.

On the night of 21/22 January, after heavy air raids on the German supply lines leading down from Rome to the Garigliano, General Lucas's VI Corps (part of the US Fifth Army) made landings

at Anzio and Nettuno south of Rome. There were scant German forces in and around the landing zone, but the Americans, [due to a hesitant commander], did not exploit this opportunity to expand their gains.

On Saturday 22 January 1944, Hitler chose General Model to replace Field Marshal von Küchler as supreme commander of Army Group North in the USSR.

On Friday 28 January, the Soviets pinched off the German salient at Cherkassy despite hard German resistance. The First Ukrainian Front and the Second Ukrainian Front (under Koniev) carried out a pincer operation at Zvenigorodka, encircling parts of Wöhler's German Eighth Army, Stemmermann's XI Corps and Lieb's XLIII Corps within their two pincer claws.

At the end of January 1944, the Germans brought up reinforcements to support the infantry regiments of their Tenth Army in its struggle against the Allied beachhead at Anzio and Nettuno. The reinforcements included one panzer division from the Adriatic area, two divisions from northern Italy, one division from France and one from the Balkans, all of which were combined to form von Mackensen's Fourteenth Army.

On Friday 4 February 1944, the Japanese Fifteenth Army under General Shozo Kawabe led an offensive in western Burma to attack eastern India and, with the support of armored units, surrounded three British divisions in the cities of Imphal and Kohima. The Allied High Command deployed the Chinese 22nd and 38th Divisions which drove out from around Ledo (India) toward Myitkyina [northern Burma] and entered into heavy fighting with the Japanese 18th Division under General Tanaki.

On Saturday 12 February 1944, General Eisenhower was officially appointed overall commander of the Allied western invasion forces, whose headquarters were known as SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force). Eisenhower's brief, specified in a directive of 12 February 1944, was to land an invasion force on the continent of Europe in May 1944 (Operation Overlord and, after securing suitable harbors along the Channel coast, to mount an offensive against the heart of the German Reich with the objective of destroying the Wehrmacht.

On Tuesday 15 February 1944 at the urging of General Freyberg, the commanding general of the 2nd New Zealand Corps fighting in central Italy, 299 American planes carrying 453 tons of bombs raided the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino [which held a commanding position overlooking the German defensive line], even though the Germans only later integrated its ruins into their defense. The Allies increased their deployment of tanks in a vain attempt to accelerate the tempo of their offensive in Italy and achieve a breakthrough. The valley basin, extending from Minturno over Cassino and the Liri valley that led on to Rome, was crisscrossed by the Rapido, Liri and Garigliano rivers and formed an almost insurmountable barrier to tanks. Cooperation between Allied infantry and armor was virtually ruled out during the battles of Cassino. There was no full-scale armored warfare in the Italian Campaign because the terrain, plus the development of effective small close-range antitank weapons, impaired armored operations.

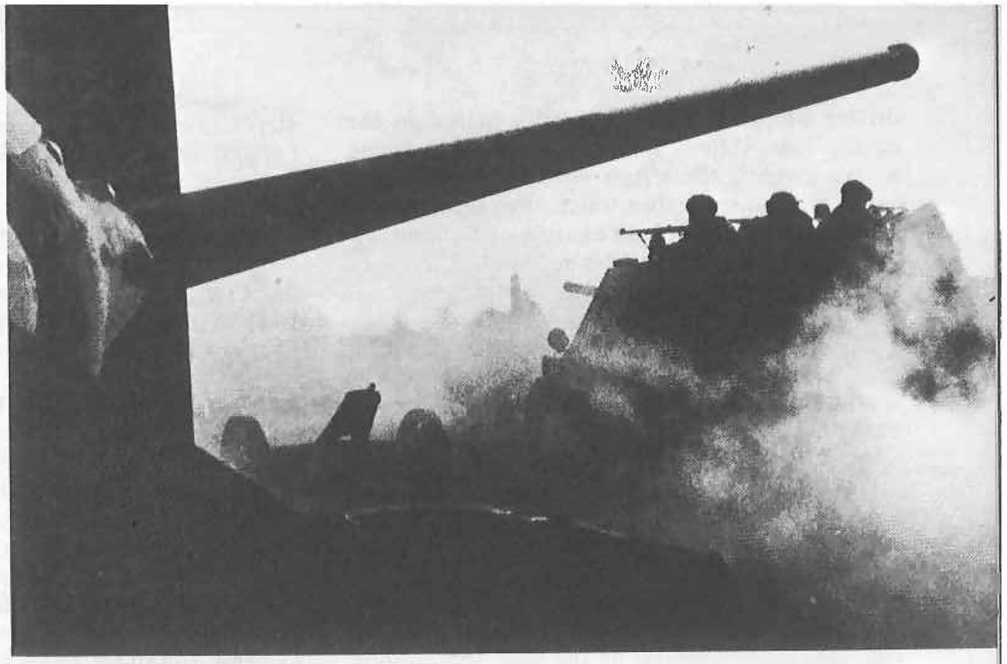
On Wednesday 16 February 1944, von Mackensen's German Fourteenth Army began a grand offensive to liquidate the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead. The German drive made slow headway due to Allied air supremacy and artillery support from Allied warships along the shore.

Next day, February 17, German forces including Schlemm's 1st Airborne Corps and Herr's LXXVI Panzer Corps succeeded in forcing a deep wedge into the Allied forces lining the sea [and drove them almost into the water]. General Clark was preparing to evacuate the beachhead when an American counterattack turned the tide and the German Fourteenth Army was forced to halt its drive. The German attack on the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead was a testing ground for the combat techniques the Germans planned to use to repel the expected 1944 Allied invasion in France. The fact that the attack failed, even though the Germans threw in heavy forces, led to policy disagreements among the German commanders in the West [about what tactics to use against the Allies who would invade France].

On Sunday 20 February 1944, the Germans continued their successful resistance against heavy American attacks along the Cassino Front.

On Tuesday 29 February, the Germans mounted a second massive assault with four divisions against the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead but had to break off the attack next day after intolerably heavy losses.

On Saturday 4 March, the Soviet First Ukrainian Front armies, which had just come under command of Marshal Zhukov, launched the Soviet spring offensive along a 110-mile front against Armored General Hube's First Panzer Army and Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army, which formed the northern wing of von Manstein's Army Group



Sarny [Ukraine], January 1944: Westward-driving Soviet armored forces are crossing the prewar border into Poland.

South, at Shepetovka west of Berdichev. [Reference to the map of the Soviet offensive lines on p. 265 will make it easier to follow the descriptions of the ensuing battle.—Trans.] The Soviet armor made a breakthrough and drove westward and southward across the line Proskurov-Tarnopol.

Next day, March 5, Koniev's Second Ukrainian Front joined the offensive, driving westward against the seam between the German Eighth Army and the First Panzer Army in the area of Uman.

On Monday March 6, Malinovsky's Third Ukrainian Front was next to go on the offensive, leading a massive assault on Field Marshal von Kleist's Army Group A. Katukov's Soviet First Tank Army, Rybalko's Third Guards Tank Army and Rotmistrov's Fifth Guards Tank Army were now fighting along a 500-mile-wide front, supported by artillery and shock armies and strong aerial forces.

On Wednesday 15 March 1944, the northern part of Wöhler's German Eighth Army was defeated, and Soviet armored spearheads crossed the Bug river.

That same day the Americans began their third attempt to break through at Cassino, but this attack, like the others, was repulsed with heavy losses.

On Sunday 19 March, Hitler ordered Operation Margarethe I, the occupation of Hungary [after Germany's ally showed signs of wavering in the face of the Soviet onslaught]. Under Field Marshal von Weichs, a German task force supported by armored units occupied Budapest without a fight. The new Hungarian government under Sztojay [who had replaced the former resigning prime minister] promised Germany increased military support.

[The attacking Soviet armies were forming loops to encircle the German forces.] On Friday 24 March, General Hube's First Panzer Army was surrounded at Kamenets Podolsk by the forces of the First Ukrainian Front. Field Marshal von Manstein [the commander of the Army Group in this area] used skillful deceptive maneuvers to allow the doomed First Panzer Army to break out [toward the west—he had had to wrangle with Hitler to gain permission to do this because Hitler did not want any of his forces to retreat]. On Thursday 30 March, Hitler replaced him with Field Marshal Model and at the same time changed the name of von Manstein's army group from Army Group South to Army Group North Ukraine [to reflect the change in command policy]. Hitler also dismissed Field Marshal von Kleist, giving his command to General Schörner and redesignating Army Group A, Army Group South Ukraine. Model was replaced by General Lindemann as commander of Army Group North.

That same day, the Soviet First Ukrainian Front armies occupied Chernovitz, [tightening the net around] First Panzer Army which was trying to break out of the Soviet encirclement but not toward the south as the Soviets were anticipating. Instead it followed von Manstein's plan, driving left along the Dnieper and heading west in a "mobile pocket." Thanks to the leadership of their veteran armored general Hube, First Panzer Army carried out a model disengagement. Panic never set in, not one wounded man was abandoned and cargo planes kept the army supplied. When a fuel crisis arose during the breakthrough, Hube ordered destroyed all motor vehicles except tanks and the most important armored and command vehicles. Hube organized the mobile pocket so that the panzer divisions kept attacking in westward-

driving loops securing the army's flanks on the north. The infantry divisions fought a delaying action covering the army's rear, while reconnaissance forces kept a thin watch over the Dniester Line. All forces no longer capable of fighting, including the sick and wounded, marched along in the center of the pocket.

On Wednesday 5 April American bombers took off for the first time from the Foggia airfields in southern Italy to raid the Rumanian oil production center at Ploesti.

On Thursday 6 April, the 7th Indian Division in Arakan (lower Burma) led a drive toward eastern Assam to attack the Japanese-occupied cities of Imphal and Dinampur.

On Friday 7 April, the Soviet Fifth Shock Army under Tsviatayev, supported by Khriukin's Eighth Air Army, led an assault on the land neck leading to the Crimean peninsula, which was being defended by Jaenecke's German Seventeenth Army. The Soviets smashed the Rumanian 10th Infantry Division, and strong Soviet armored forces drove toward Simferopol.

That same day the mobile pocket containing General Hube's First Panzer Army linked up with the armored spearheads of II SS Panzer Corps (under SS General Hausser) advancing to relieve it. General Hube reported that his troops had destroyed 352 Soviet tanks and assault guns during their retreat. After a brief pause for rest and refurbishment, the bulk of First Panzer Army was again ready for combat because they had managed to save many of their armored vehicles and guns.

On Monday 10 April 1944, the German Sixth Army under General de Angelis was forced to evacuate the city and port of Odessa and retreat toward the Dniester river.

Two days later, on April 12, Hitler forbade the Seventeenth Army in the Crimea to carry out the operations it had already begun to ship its soldiers and equipment to Konstantsa (Rumania) and ordered them to "hold Sevastopol until further notice."

For official use only! German army instructional manual illustrating close-range antitank fighting using a German Panzerfaust [one-man rocket launcher]



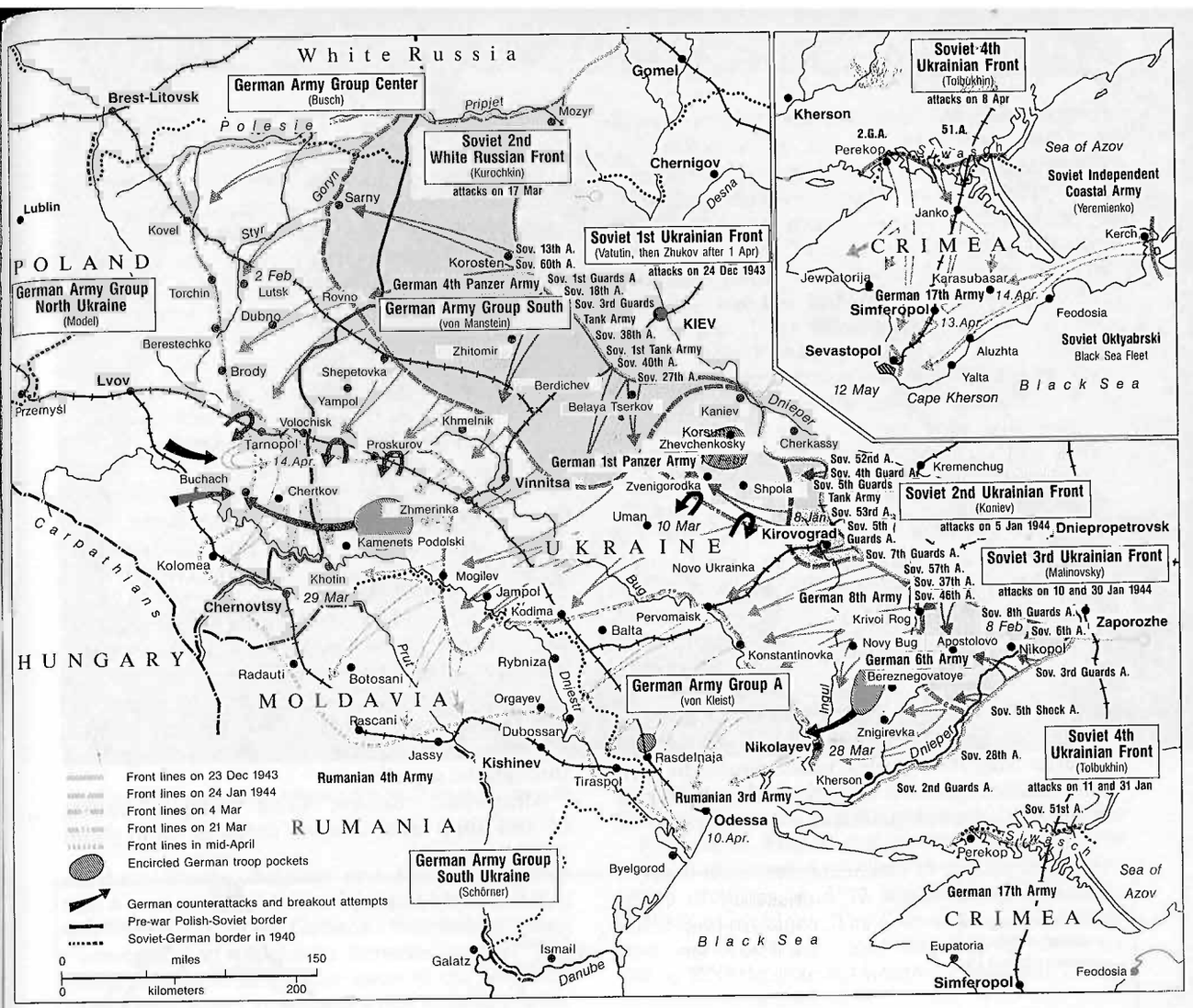
Zielen: Auge — roter Strich in der Visieröffnung — Oberkante Geschoß — Haltepunkt am Feindpanzer bilden eine gerade Linie.
Das Visier ergibt Visierschuß bei 30 m Schußentfernung.

By the end of their spring offensive in April 1944, Soviet troops had penetrated more than 270 miles farther west and had completely liberated the Ukraine west of the Dnieper. Their drive to the Carpathians had split the German strategic front in two.

On the Italian front, exhaustion on both sides led to a pause in the fighting that lasted until the start of May. While American bombing raids severed German supply lines in Italy again and again, the German Fourteenth Army extended its field fortifications in depth around the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead. The Adriatic sector where the British Eighth Army had been trying to drive north also quieted down, except for local skirmishes. General Alexander decided to exploit the fact that large German forces were tied up maintaining the defense along the Adriatic front, [paused to regroup] and then diverted some of his forces from Monte Cassino toward Rome [through the Liri valley]. Montgomery's British Eighth Army had to surrender several of its divisions so that five additional corps could be added to Clark's US Fifth Army for the drive on Rome. The new Fifth Army corps contained not only Americans but British, Canadians, French, Italians, New Zealanders, South Africans, Yugoslavians, Maoris, Indians, Gurkhas, Algerians, Moroccans, Tunisians, Berbers, Jews, Poles, Brazilians, and Japanese-Americans. The main force was an American corps plus the French Expeditionary Corps under General Juin, now reinforced to four divisions, which drove along the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea. A British and a Polish corps stood on either side of Cassino, and one Allied corps of three divisions was held in reserve. The two German armies, von Vietinghoff's Tenth and von Mackensen's Fourteenth, had to hold five divisions in reserve because they expected to confront a twofold attack along the main front and from the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead.

On Sunday 7 May 1944, the Soviet 27th Division, with 200 tanks, began a generalized assault on the German-held fortress of Sevastopol. By afternoon they had fought their way through to the city center and the harbor.

On the evening of 11 May 1944, the US Fifth Army and the British Eighth Army mounted what they hoped would prove a decisive offensive against the German Tenth Army's lines on the Garigliano river. The attack began with a 40-minute artillery barrage. The Americans and French



Southern zone of the Eastern Front, December 1943 to April 1944

forced the Germans back some 12 miles until two German reserve divisions intervened to halt the retreat.

That same day, the Allies systematically bombed out 100 (unoccupied) airfields within a 300-mile zone around Normandy, and 23,000 metric tons of bombs fell on the German Atlantic Wall, most of them on installations either side of Calais to make the Germans think the planned Allied invasion would take place there. This was Allied Operation Fortitude.

On Friday 12 May 1944, the last German defenders of Sevastopol laid down their arms.

On the afternoon of the same day, the Allied aerial forces mounted a bombing offensive to destroy German synthetic fuel plants. The Leuna Works in Merseburg, Tröglitz and Böhlau, and the plants in Brüx near Prague were destroyed almost without a trace.

On the night of 17/18 May 1944, the Germans had to abandon their mountain fastnesses around Cassino, and Monte Cassino monastery, under extreme pressure from the British and Poles.

In mid-May fighting died down along the whole Eastern Front. This lull in the hostilities lasted almost five weeks, during which time the Red Army prepared for its largest operation so far, the destruction of German Army Group Center.

On Tuesday 23 May, while the French, Americans, British and Poles were fighting their way forward in Italy a foot at a time, heading northwest to Rome, five US divisions with strong aerial and artillery support broke out of the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead. Two days later on the 25th, these five divisions were able to link up with the main Allied forces at Terracina. At the same time, British and French broke through the German lines at Cassino, although they were unable to exploit their success at once. Counterattacks by German armored

forces intercepted both the Allied thrusts, into the Sacco Valley and simultaneously toward Rome.

At the end of May, German Army Group Center under Field Marshal Busch reported that Soviet troops were carrying out assembly preparations along his army group's sector of the Eastern Front. Hitler thought the Soviets were merely engaged in diversionary maneuvers [and did not intend to launch a serious attack in the area], and he commanded that Bobruisk, Mogilev, Orsha, Vitebsk and Polotsk all be turned into "strongholds," [that is, fortified cities] to be held even if Soviet troops (temporarily) took the surrounding ground. He ordered this whole area [of White Russia] to be fiercely defended.

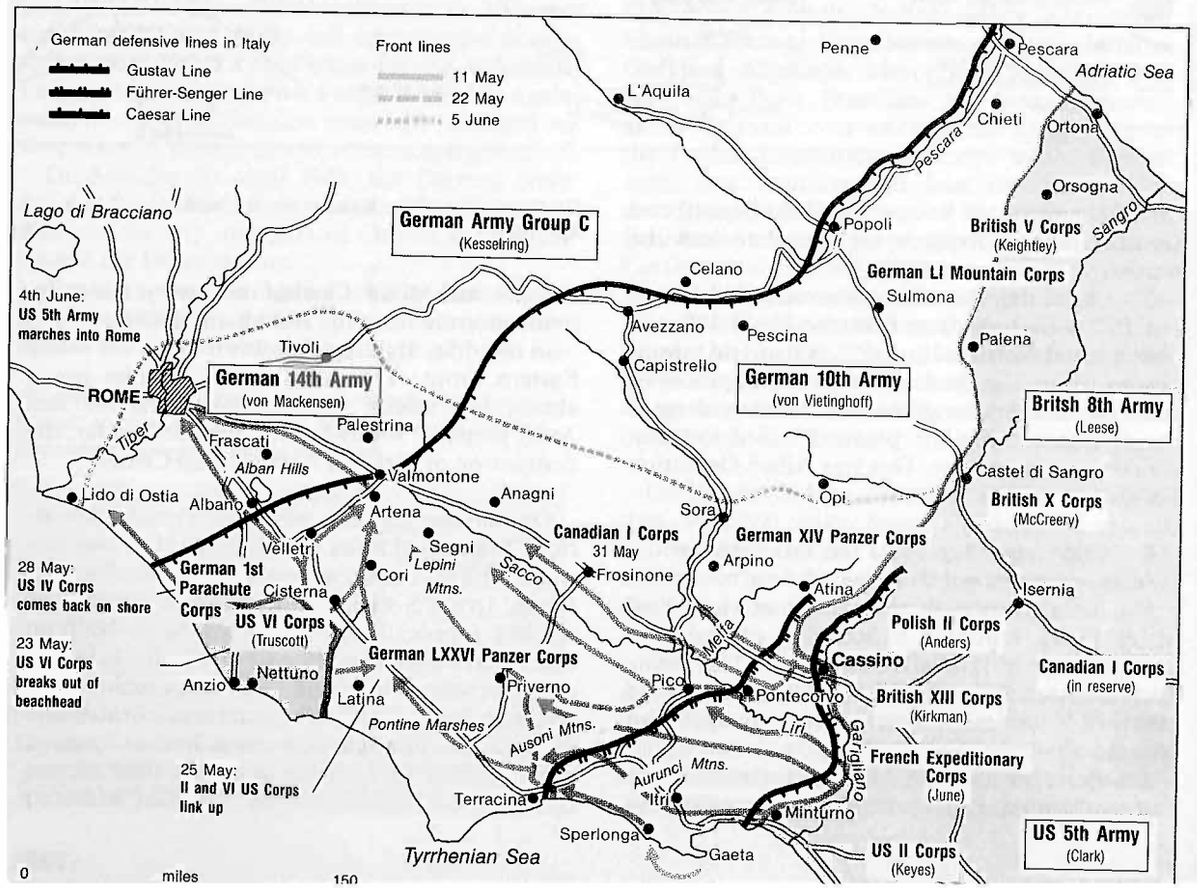
The Soviet High Command in turn carefully veiled their intention to attack here. They built fortifications, dug trenches, sent out signal traffic, transferred and assembled troops, all in conditions of such strict secrecy that they completely deceived German reconnaissance about their true plans.

German fuel supplies had now broken down as a result of the Allies' intensified bombing raids on German synthetic fuel plants. Their shortage of fuel after May 1944 gravely handicapped the German forces, especially the armored units which consumed enormous quantities.

Thursday 1 June 1944 was a disastrous day for the German Wehrmacht. Hitler ordered one of its most important agencies, the Abwehr or military counterintelligence, removed from German army control, and he dismissed its chief, [anti-Nazi conspirator] Admiral Canaris. Now the Wehrmacht was the only army in the world that lacked its own counterespionage agency or secret service for in-depth intelligence gathering outside its country's borders. The German secret service was now placed under the authority of the SS leader, Heinrich Himmler, and his own security agency, the RSHA [Reichssicherheitshauptamt].

On Sunday 4 June 1944, Clark's US Fifth Army became the first Allied force to enter Rome, which Field Marshal Kesselring had providently decided to declare an open city, thus preserving it from destruction. Von Mackensen's Fourteenth Army had the difficult task of retreating without destroying even one of the bridges over the Tiber inside the city zone. The German rearguard suffered heavy losses inflicted by the American armored spearheads now crossing through Rome, who fired vigorously on the German units pulling back through the suburbs.

Meanwhile, extensive Allied strategic bombing of rail lines and coastal defenses throughout





View through the vision slot of a Soviet T-34 medium tank

northern France, Belgium and Holland revealed that a massive amphibious operation by the Allies was imminent. The German Wehrmacht High Command had to choose between at least two plans of operation as they awaited the invasion. Either they could follow up Field Marshal Rommel's plan to reinforce their defenses along the coasts to try to prevent enemy forces from landing, or steer toward Field Marshal von Rundstedt's plan to drive the enemy back into the sea immediately after he landed, using rapidly assembled armored units. Each of these plans had its advantages and drawbacks, and Hitler was hard put to choose between them. The German "Atlantic Wall" of coastal fortifications so celebrated by Nazi propagandists was actually a weak, inadequately armed system of earthworks and half-completed mine belts and tank obstacles. The Germans' uncertainty about where and when the invasion would occur and the contradictory views of the military commanders about what measures to take resulted in a wide scattering of the German forces [as they spread out to defend all potentially threatened areas].

Of the approximately 300 divisions left in the Wehrmacht, more than 160 now stood along the Eastern Front: 6 in Finland, 40 with Army Group North, 41 with Army Group Center, 41 with Army Group South, 35 in Rumania. There were another 47 divisions in Italy and the Balkans and 27 in Norway, Denmark and Poland.

By now, in France and Holland there were 59 German divisions, including 10 panzer and 17 infantry divisions, and 32 settled army and Luftwaffe field divisions. The C-in-C West, Field Marshal von Rundstedt, and the C-in-C of Army Group B, Field Marshal Rommel, each held 3 panzer divisions in reserve.

[The German forces in the West consisted of two army groups, B and G, plus the 10-division Panzer Group West.] Of Rommel's Army Group B, 3 divisions were in Holland; Salmuth's Fifteenth Army of 17 divisions lay between the Scheldt and the Seine; and Dollmann's Seventh Army (15 divisions) between the Seine and the Loire. Farther south stood the forces of Blaskowitz's Army Group G, including Lemelsen's First Army between the Loire and the Pyrenees and von Sodenstern's Nineteenth Army along the southern French coast; the two armies totalled 21 divisions.

This organization [with the preponderance of forces in the north] showed that the German commanders anticipated the main Allied invasion to come in northern France; for, whereas 30 divisions held the coast between the bay of Mont-St.-Michel and Calais, only 8 were ranged along the Mediterranean coast. Central and southwestern France had been virtually stripped of German troops.

Guderian, the German Inspector-General of Armored Troops, was responsible for training the nine panzer and one panzer-grenadier division in

the west. Guderian assigned the task to veteran specialist Panzer General Baron Geyr von Schweppenburg. Geyr von Schweppenburg was under command of von Rundstedt, the C-in-C West, for actual reception of operational orders.

On the Eastern Front, where it was now unusually quiet, two German army groups defended the strategically all-important central sector from north of Vitebsk south to the Carpathians. These two groups were Field Marshal Busch's Army Group Center in White Russia, and Field Marshal Model's Army Group North Ukraine in the western Ukraine. The Army High Command believed that the Soviets would launch their main drive southward from Polesye and transferred the bulk to their armored forces there. The German forces in White Russia were distributed thinly, like a line of sentries, along the extended front with few tactical or strategical reserves to their rear to shore up the defense.

At fifteen minutes after midnight on Tuesday 6 June 1944, the Allies began Operation Overlord, their invasion of Normandy, with Operation Neptune, the initial assault phase, in which airborne commando troops were dropped onto the Cotentin peninsula behind the German coastal fortifications. Three airborne divisions landed their paratroops and gliders at 3:30 A.M. while it was still dark. Then the seaborne assault followed up at dawn [after aerial and naval bombardment] when landing craft carried ashore eight regiments under



covering fire from naval artillery. The 6,500 landing vessels were defended by 7 battleships, 27 cruisers and 164 destroyers. The German navy (the Kriegsmarine) could set only 3 destroyers, 36 motor torpedo boats and 34 U-boats into the field against this flotilla.

The US First Army under General Bradley formed two beachheads on the Cotentin peninsula at the western end of the landing zone: Collin's US VII Corps landed on Utah Beach and Gerow's US V Corps on Omaha Beach. Dempsey's British Second Army established three beachheads to the east of the Americans: Bucknall's XXX Corps seized Gold Beach, and Crocker's I Corps Juno and Sword beaches. The actual British assault on the coast was carried forward [largely] by "Funnies," the specialized invasion tanks of General Hobart's 79th Armoured Division.

Thanks to the Funnies, the British forces were able to overcome the German coastal defense obstacles with substantially fewer losses than the Americans, who had been assigned to special tanks except for amphibious tanks equipped with duplex drive (combination track and propeller movement). Most of the American DD tanks, which General Bradley had adopted from the British 79th Armoured, sank along with their crews in the heavy seas without ever reaching the beach. An American commander, despite the sea turbulence, had sent the heavy DD tanks into the water when they were still four miles from the coast.

Whereas the British Second Army encountered no major problems in seizing the beaches cleared by their special tanks, the American First Army, lacking Funnies, suffered heavy losses and was held down under German fire for several hours on Omaha Beach before gaining a foothold. Of the 2,500 Allied soldiers who died on this first day of the invasion, 1,000 were killed along Omaha Beach.

The British Funnies were deployed in a certain order to derive maximum advantage from their special capabilities. The Sherman duplex drive amphibious tanks were the first ashore, where they opened fire on the German coastal fortifications. They were followed by the Crab flail minesweepers which exploded paths mine-free along the beaches. Next the bridge-carrying tanks laid bridges across the sea walls and antitank ditches so that the DD amphibious tanks could move up and open fire directly on German positions. Under cover from the DDs, the infantry crossed the beaches and continued to expand the beachheads while the Crab flail sweepers kept up their work of clearing out land mines. Then, finally, the flamethrowing and missile-throwing tanks advanced to smash bunkers still offering resistance.

The Germans responded to the invasion at once

Opposite page: Major General Sir Percy Hobart, prominent British tank theoretician and commanding general of the 79th Armoured Division, who initiated the design of Funnies

Right: One of General Hobart's creations, the Bobbin, a special device mounted on a British Churchill tank which laid down canvas on the Normandy beaches to make soft sand passable to tanks



with counterattacks at Carentan, but to no avail. By evening the British units had succeeded in uniting their beachheads in a strip of land that stretched unevenly several miles inland. The two American beachheads were still separated, and at Omaha the troops had scarcely moved off the beach. [But although the assault troops had not penetrated as deeply as they had hoped], by dusk eight Allied divisions, including 14 armored battalions, had landed in France as scheduled, where they were met by one and a half settled German divisions.

On the night of 6/7 June 1944, the only immediately available German panzer division, 21st Panzer under General Feuchtinger, counterattacked against the British and opened a corridor to the coast in the British landing zone west of Caen but then bogged down under fire from Allied naval artillery and had to break off its drive. Due to Allied command of the air and destruction of the area's bridges, the German army reserve forces, especially the panzer divisions from around Paris, were delayed in reaching the battle zone and had to be deployed individually as they came on the scene.

On Wednesday 7 June, the German forces failed to prevent the Allies from expanding their beachheads. In the course of the day, the British and Americans were able to link up their forces.

On Friday 9 June, strong Soviet forces of Guziev's Twenty-First Army and Cherepanov's Twenty-Third, supported by air force and artillery, led a surprise attack on the Karelian isthmus, the Finnish front where there had been no major action for months. General Laatikainen's Finnish IV Corps of five and a half infantry divisions, one armored division and one cavalry brigade was forced by the preponderance of Soviet tanks and ground attack aircraft to retreat to its rear-line positions.

That same day at Caen in Normandy, units of Geyr von Schweppenburg's Panzer Group West drove against the British beachhead area without success.

On Saturday 10 June 1944, Allied fighter bombers led a vigorous raid on the operational headquarters of Panzer Group West inside the sixteenth-century chateau of Thury-Harcourt on the Orne. The German armored divisions offered the greatest threat to the invasion troops. Now the Ultra decoders of German Enigma signals had pinpointed the location of their central command post and Allied bombers were able to destroy it completely. Almost all the leading German staff officers were killed or wounded. Geyr von Schweppenburg himself was only slightly injured, but all the German armored communications were knocked out. This disastrous air raid put an end to Rommel's hopes of driving the enemy back into the sea with a large-scale coordinated armored operation.

By Monday 12 June, 13 Allied divisions with 24 armored battalions, totalling 326,000 men, had landed in Normandy. Opposing them were 9 German divisions. The unique artificial harbors erected by the Allies enabled them to land these large numbers of transport vessels.

On the night of 12/13 June 1944, the German "155th Flak Regiment" [the codename for a special rocket-firing unit] under Colonel Wachtel began to launch the newly invented unpiloted V-1 rocket missiles at London from the Pas de Calais.

On Wednesday 14 June, American troops, after securing their beachhead, drove through Ste.-Mère-Eglise and on through the Cotentin peninsula, forcing four German divisions back to Cherbourg.

On Monday 19 June 1944, the first Allied advanced airfields within the invasion zone became ready for use. At once Allied fighter bombers started to step up their relay raids on the German armored forces. As a result, German motorized troops were forced to carry out their movements only under cover of darkness.

On the night of 19/20 June, the greatest sabotage operation of the entire war took place to the rear of German Army Group Center on the Eastern Front when—according to Soviet statistics—143,000 Soviet partisan guerrillas set off 10,500 explosions along all the rail lines, major bridges and telephone lines from the Dnieper river westward to Minsk. German supplies broke down completely for days. The German army high command did not yet suspect that this operation was directly linked with an imminent Soviet summer offensive.

On Thursday 22 June 1944, the third anniversary of the German attack on the Soviet Union, the 4 Soviet army groups launched a sudden surprise attack of hitherto unparalleled strength. The 4 fronts totalled 14 armies and 5 air armies of 200 divisions, some 7,000 planes, 6,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, plus 45,000 cannon and mortars. Soviet statistics claim that the Soviets had double the men in the field and outnumbered the German artillery by three to one, tanks by four to one, and aircraft by five to one. In some sectors the Soviets had concentrated 200 cannon for every half-mile of front. The Soviet forces consumed 25,000 metric tons of ammunition, fuel and food per day, which were supplied to them by 12,000 trucks. German statistics, on the other hand, claim that the Soviet preponderance was even greater and that the Soviets (with 2.5 million men) outmanned the Germans six to one, and outnumbered them in guns ten to one.

The Soviet summer offensive unfolded in several stages, with the army groups exploding into action starting first in the north. Bagramian's First Baltic Front and parts of Chernizhovsky's Third White Russian Front were first to attack. On June 22 they drove against Reinhardt's Third Panzer Army on either side of Vitebsk.

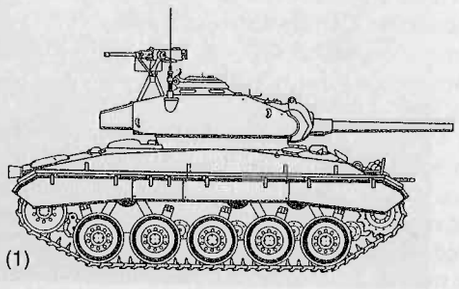
Next day, June 23, Zakharov's Second White Russian Front opened attack on the German Fourth Army under von Tippelskirch. Barely 24 hours later, Rokossovsky's First White Russian Front drove against Jordan's German Ninth Army. Following a thousand-cannon artillery barrage and massive Soviet air raids, several waves of Soviet infantry divisions stormed forward against the German positions along a front over 600 miles wide. Soviet armored and mechanized units tore open the front lines of Busch's Army Group Center, rolled over the remaining pockets of resistance and drove into the rear of the fighting zone.

Beginning on Friday 23 June, broad mobile penetrations at six different points allowed the Soviets to surround and cut off large German forces at Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev and Bobruisk. All the German strongholds had now been encircled.

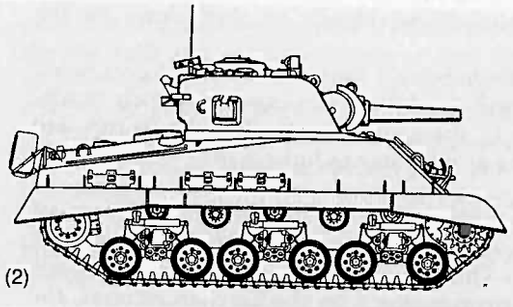
On Sunday 25 June, the British Second Army (under General Dempsey) mounted a grand offensive with armored forces in the area west and south of Caen in Normandy. The British clashed with German armored forces which, just then assembling for a major counteroperation, had to take up battle before they were ready.

Opposite page. 22 June 1944, the start of the Soviet summer offensive. Soviet infantry charging with armored support.

Below: (1) US M24 Chaffee light tank; (2) US M4 Sherman medium tank with a 10.5-cm howitzer mounted on top. (Both first produced in 1944.)



(1)



(2)



On Monday 26 June, after Beloborudov's Soviet Forty-Third Army had broken through German lines at Vitebsk-Bobruisk, Soviet armored forces began a double envelopment of German Army Group Center. That day Third Panzer Army lost some 35,000 men trying to break out of its encirclement at Vitebsk.

By Wednesday 28 June 1944, one week after the start of the Soviet summer offensive, the German front in White Russia had already collapsed completely, Third Panzer Army and Ninth Army were already defeated and Fourth Army had been enveloped from north and south.

That day Field Marshal Busch was relieved of his post and replaced by Field Marshal Model, who now assumed command of the whole of Army Group Center while simultaneously retaining supreme command over the North Ukraine Army Group. Model ordered the immediate transfer of his North Ukraine forces out of the western Ukraine into White Russia to check the Soviet advance and relieve the encircled Fourth Army.

On Thursday 29 June, Bobruisk fell to the Soviets after the German Ninth Army had lost 70,000 men in the area; but 30,000 succeeded in breaking out to the west.

On Friday 30 June, the German fortress of Cherbourg under von Schlieben surrendered after the harbor was totally destroyed. By this time there were already 850,279 Allied soldiers in Normandy, along with 148,803 vehicles and 570,505 metric tons of equipment. Thirty Allied infantry divisions and 13 armored divisions were now engaged against the German troops.

The German panzer divisions in France in June 1944 were well trained and well equipped but despite their courage and high performance, they could achieve nothing in the face of Allied air supremacy.

A fully operational German panzer division of the kind Guderian had envisioned for 1944 had never materialized, with the exception of Bayerlein's Armored Lehr Division, made up of crack demonstration troops from the armored schools, which was fully mechanized and equipped with the most modern gear.

At the start of 1944, an armored regiment in a German panzer division had an inadequate target strength of 103 armored vehicles (unless it was a Waffen SS or other elite unit, in which case it might have more). The situation improved somewhat with the introduction of Tiger and Panther tanks. Also, instead of the old VW motorcycles,

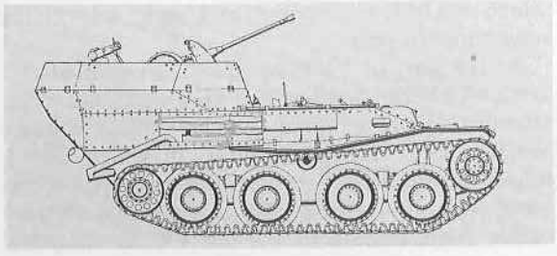
German reconnaissance platoons were now equipped with jeeps and amphibious trucks. Both reconnaissance and tank destroyer platoons were equipped with assault guns or armored self-propelled guns, while the grenadier regiment components of panzer divisions had in many cases replaced their trucks with armored personnel carriers for transport of infantry. Many armored signals and engineer corps had now been assigned additional antiaircraft forces and assault artillery to protect them. German flak guns were deployed in an effort to counteract enemy command of the air, and the antiaircraft components of the armored divisions were reinforced.

Whenever the Soviets were building up to an armored attack, they would step up their fire against specific targets, and Soviet reconnaissance activity also intensified. Thus precise observation of Soviet fire and of scout maneuvers was enough to tell the Germans the location of a main Soviet thrust before the attack began. To avoid revealing the position of their antitank guns prematurely, the Germans would use close-range antitank weapons like the Panzerfaust and Panzerschreck antitank rocket launchers.

Soviet armored army assault tactics had changed repeatedly since the end of 1943. In the past, the armored armies had been thrown into battle on the first day of operations once German lines had been penetrated to a depth of 2 to 5 miles; but in the 1944 summer offensive, the order to attack was issued only after a penetration of 15 to 25 miles. The reason for this was that by the summer of 1944 the Red Army was already strong enough to let its armored and mechanized corps complete the penetration of the German tactical defense zone and no longer needed to send in such massed armor. Instead, the Soviets waited to drive their fresh tank armies into the breach until they had wider scope for operational maneuvers.

Soviet armored troops were now being asked to perform new operational tasks. After the breakthrough and in-depth drive behind German lines, the armor had to smash the German operational reserves, thus foiling the German rear-line defenses. Soviet tanks attacked the German reserves with deep wedges of infantry following to mop up. Attacks of this kind were pushed as straight and deep as possible. The armor stopped moving at night to give strong infantry forces a chance to catch up and dig in immediately after reaching their objectives. Additional assault wedges then closed up in stages.

German 8-ton antiaircraft tank with 2-cm No. 38 guns mounted on a 38-ton LT-38 Czech tank (first produced December 1943)



During the 1944 summer offensive, the Soviets as a rule repelled counterattacks by German armored forces in direct clashes conducted with great striking force and speed. Soviet lead armor at once took up pursuit of the retreating German troops.

The intensifying action and the effectiveness of close-range antitank weapons forced both sides to give their armor direct infantry protection. The Soviets simply installed infantry on their tanks, while the Germans carried infantry along with the tanks in armored combat and transport vehicles. The Soviet armored crews tried to counteract the German Panzerfaust antitank rocket launcher by attaching makeshift springboards to their tanks to deflect the fuse.

Unlike the Germans and Soviets, the Western Allies had made no provisions for operational deployment of tanks. It was rare for them even to deploy two armored divisions of a corps simultaneously. Their armored divisions simply attacked individually along a broad front. Another serious deficiency of the Allied armor was that the Allies underestimated the importance of maintaining sufficient armored reserves, and consequently even the commanders-in-chief of the army groups had virtually no capability to influence operations [by sending in reserves at crucial points]. After the Normandy landings and the breakout from the beachhead, the Allied armored forces tended to be widely scattered.

The British had strictly segregated their armor from their infantry forces. As a rule, they did not regroup armored units of less than brigade strength. The Americans, on the other hand, were trying to increase the flexibility of their armored units—which in mid-1944 consisted of six armored divisions of 270 tanks each—by setting up two operational headquarters in each division.

In June 1944, the British armored force, including a large Canadian component and General Maczek's Polish 1st Armored Division, consisted of five armored divisions, eight independent armored brigades and several specialized tank units, totalling 3,300 tanks, mainly Shermans, Churchills and Cromwells. Only now were the new British Cromwell tanks beginning to be fitted with Meteor engines (a version of a Rolls Royce aircraft engine). At last the Western Allies had acquired a tank comparable in quality to the German Panther II and Tiger and to the Soviet T-34 and KV 2.

1944

July—December

German Panzer Troops Score Successes
Saturday 1 July 1944, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

Early yesterday, two American armored and infantry divisions assaulted German defensive lines in the northwest corner of the Cotentin peninsula (Normandy). They succeeded by a massive artillery deployment in driving several breaches into the German defenses, and then strong armored wedges moved in and penetrated to Jobourg.

The German counterattack at the large armored battle at Tilly (-sur-Seulles) continued to progress favorably all day Friday. German panzer forces attacking from the southwest on Friday morning further narrowed the area of the enemy breach, which in any case covered only a few square miles, and forced the British back to the southern edge of the village of Baron. The terrain we regained was thickly strewn with ruined tanks, destroyed guns of every caliber, and great numbers of shattered vehicles.

German Army Group Center Collapses

Monday 3 July 1944, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* announced:

Reports received by the High Command in Moscow around midnight say that the whole of German Army Group Center under Field Marshal Busch has collapsed along a 250-mile front. The three Soviet White Russian Fronts are bypassing the large German-held bastions of Minsk and Polotsk and instead are charging with the bulk of their forces toward Vilna [Vilnius, Lithuania], the border of eastern Poland, and toward Brest-Litovsk in the south.

Wednesday 5 July 1944
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

In Normandy on Tuesday morning, the enemy on both sides of the Baheur-Caen road attacked with strong infantry and armored forces after a heavy preparatory artillery barrage. Violent fighting ensued in which the enemy was repulsed everywhere with heavy losses. Southeast of Tilly several enemy thrusts broke down under our defensive fire.

In the southern sector of the Eastern Front, our forces have evacuated the city of Kovel in an orderly manner, without pressure from the enemy, in order to carry out a local curtailment of our front. In the central sector, the harsh struggle continues in the marshes around Baranovichi and Molodechno. East and north of Baranovichi, our blocking positions have intercepted the Soviets after heavy fighting. South of Minsk our forces are continuing to fight their way back. Northwest of the city we have repulsed violent Soviet attacks. A German armored group knocked out 232 enemy tanks here in the period 27 June to 3 July. We are engaged in bitter fighting for Molodechno. Violent struggles are also in progress against Soviet spearheads attacking northeast of Vilna (Vilnius). West and east of Polotsk, large numbers of armor-supported enemy attacks have broken down from heavy casualties.

8 July 1944, London
The *British Air Ministry* reported:

Despite increasing activity by the German air force along the French coast, the Allies continue to hold command of the air above the entire zone of operations. The ratio of Allied to enemy air forces was still 200 to 1 today.

East Prussia under Threat

10 July 1944, Moscow
The *United Press News Agency* reported:

The Soviet offensive is still driving westward at undiminished speed. Three large armies are push-

ing against the Baltic area and threatening to break through the border of East Prussia. The most recent reports from the front say that Soviet lead units have penetrated to about 60 miles from the East Prussian border.

Joseph Stalin to Winston Churchill
Tuesday 11 July 1944:

I congratulate you on the glorious victory of the British troops who have liberated Caen. [English quoted from p. 235 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

Vilna Surrenders
Friday 14 July 1944, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

Early on the morning of June 13, Germans still holding out in the city of Vilna [Lithunania] and on the castle hill were given a last chance to surrender; the time limit on the surrender was 11:00 A.M. When no reply was received, hundreds of assault guns opened fire on the barricades and the castle hill, causing devastation that led the German commanders to surrender. A number of white flags appeared abruptly at 12:30 P.M. Two deputies under a flag of truce were received by Soviet adjutant Chernyakhovsky, and shortly afterward our troops were ordered to cease fire. Small clumps of worn-out and dead-tired Fascist soldiers marched to the town hall in Vilna where they had been ordered to deliver their arms. Yesterday evening we recorded 5,840 prisoners-of-war, including many high-ranking officers, and the final toll is expected to be considerably higher.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

14 July 1944:

At the moment all interest is focussed on the stormy advance of the Russian armored armies from White Russia across Lithuania towards East Prussia. Yesterday it was reported from Moscow that strong lead armored units under command of General Chernyakhovsky are barely 24 miles from the border of East Prussia and that Soviet siege artillery is on its way to open fire on the border; thus the Russian advance guard have penetrated deeply at this point and are now dangerously close to the borders of Germany. . . In Normandy, the Americans and British are still involved in heavy tactical fighting against Rommel's tanks, and both sides emphasize the violence and harshness of these battles.

Armored Battle along Border of East Prussia
Monday 17 July 1944, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

Yesterday strong Soviet units crossed the Niemen river north of Grodno to Olita and fanned out toward the west from their bridgeheads. By the latest accounts, huge Soviet pincers are reaching out from Olita and Grodno toward Suwalki [Poland] where an armored battle developed along the borders late yesterday evening. The Germans are deploying motorized troops in an effort to brake the Soviet advance, but their defensive operations are so hastily improvised that they are breaking down before they can develop properly.

Attempt to Assassinate Hitler

Thursday 20 July 1944, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

A report from Führer Headquarters says that an explosives attack was made against the Führer today. Several people with him were severely injured, including General Schmundt, Colonel Brandt and Staff Member Berger. Less seriously wounded were General Jodl; Generals Korten, Buhle, Bodenschatz, Heusinger and Scherff; Admirals Voss and von Puttkamer; Naval Captain Assmann and Lt. Colonel Borgmann.

The Führer himself was unhurt, except for slight burns and bruises. He returned to his work again at once and, as planned, received Il Duce for an extended conference.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 21 July 1944:

Authorities in Berlin at first informed members of the press that the British secret service was responsible for the attack on Hitler; but they dropped this version after Chancellor Hitler held Thursday night a German radio address in which he gave intriguing details about the assassination attempt. He called it a crime unparalleled in German history and said that a clique of German officers had hatched a plot to get rid of him and the staff officers of the German Wehrmacht.

Joseph Stalin to Winston Churchill
Sunday 23 July 1944:

Secret and Personal—Your message of July 20 received. I am now writing to you on the Polish question only.

Events on our front are going forward at a very rapid pace. Lublin, one of Poland's major towns, was taken today by our troops, who continue their advance.

In this situation we find ourselves confronted with the practical problem of administration on Polish territory. We do not want to, nor shall we, set up our own administration on Polish soil, for we do not wish to interfere in Poland's internal affairs. That is for the Poles themselves to do. We have, therefore, seen fit to get in touch with the Polish Committee of National Liberation, recently set up by the National Council of Poland, which was formed in Warsaw at the end of last year. . . We have not found in Poland other forces capable of establishing a Polish administration. The so-called underground organizations, led by the Polish Government in London, have turned out to be ephemeral and lacking influence. [English quoted from pp. 241–242 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

Friday 28 July 1944
The *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

France: In the battle zone on both sides of Saint Lô, the Americans continued their grand assault throughout the day. Whereas they made only a few minor incursions east of Saint Lô, our troops southwest of the city have been driven farther back to the south and southwest in bitter fighting that took a heavy toll of both sides. Counterattacks are under way to close up the German front after it was torn open at several points. We have knocked out 75 tanks.

Heavy retaliatory fire from German V-1 flying bombs is raining down almost incessantly on the area of Greater London.

Italy: In Italy the enemy has been probing us with countless localized attacks along the whole front. Early this morning the enemy again mounted a major counteroffensive which has continued ever since along a broad front south of Florence. Violent fighting is now raging there.

Eastern Front: On the Eastern Front the huge defensive battle between the Carpathians [in the south] and the Gulf of Finland [in the north] has increased in violence. As part of our operations to straighten the front, we have evacuated our forces from the cities of Lvov, Brest-Litovsk, Bialystok and Daugavpils after destroying all important military installations.

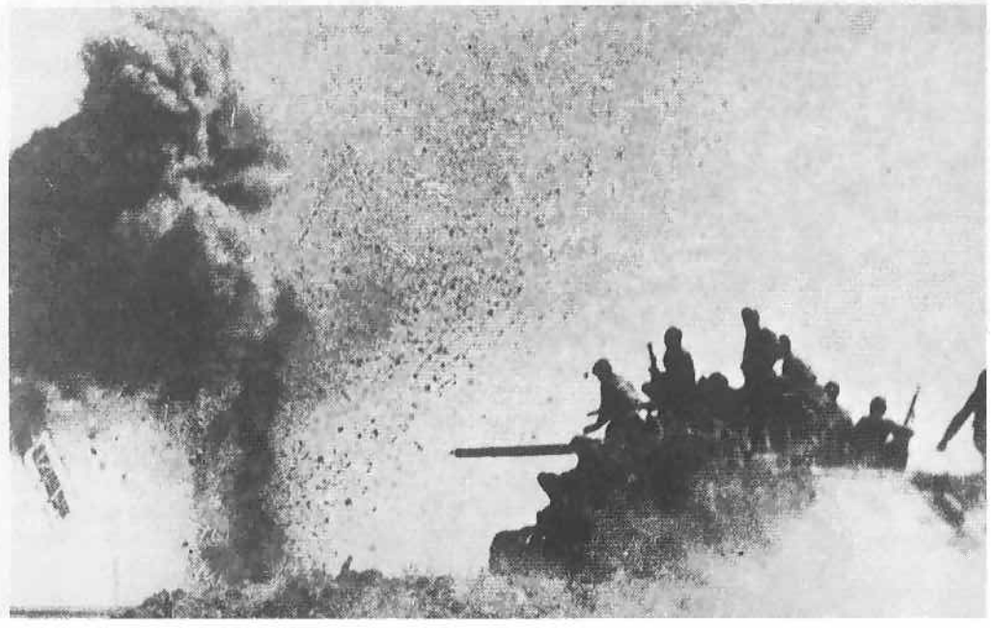
The Allies Are Six Miles from Florence
28 July 1944
The American *United Press News Agency* reported from the headquarters of General Alexander (Supreme Allied Commander for Italy):

The left wing of the British Eighth Army has made further progress in its drive on Florence, in the teeth of tough German resistance. South African armored troops have approached to within 3 miles of the Empoli and linked up with the Americans along the Arno west of the city. The lead armor is now only 6 miles from Florence.

The Fall of Lvov
28 July 1944, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

Yesterday we overcame the last remaining German defense positions which had been blocking Koniev's advance. German-held Lvov [Poland], which had been surrounded by Soviet forces for days, raised the white flag after Soviet field artillery and assault cannon started a 6,500-barrel bombardment at 10:00 A.M. The defenders, who had retreated to the center of town, put up only a "symbolic resistance" inside the city. The commanding general of the German troops in Lvov broke off the fighting when heavy tanks reached the downtown area.

The German Defense Stiffens
Tuesday 1 August 1944, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:



Near Brest-Litovsk (eastern Poland) in July 1944: Soviet armored forces with mounted infantry are storming into the hinterland after breaking through German lines.

Yesterday's great battle on the Eastern Front was marked by effective counteractions from the German defending forces.

The enemy failed yesterday to continue his disruption of the planned German assembly maneuvers in the most important battle sectors and was no longer in a position to stop a series of powerfully mounted German counteroperations. The message is clear for all to see.

Warsaw under Attack
1 August 1944, Moscow
The American *United Press News Agency* announced:

A report just arrived from the front says that Rokossovsky has begun an attack on Warsaw. After a preliminary artillery bombardment lasting several hours, strong Soviet and Polish forces, supported by large formations of fighter bombers and Soviet "Sturmovik" ground attack aircraft, are now storming the industrial suburb of Praga on the right bank of the Vistula.

Fires are raging in Warsaw. It is assumed that the Germans are destroying their supply depots; and violent explosions indicate that they are also blowing up buildings.

Violent German Resistance at Florence
Thursday 3 August 1944
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported from Allied Headquarters in Italy:

South of Montelupo, a village located about 9 miles west of Florence at the confluence of the Pesa and Arno rivers, Indian Division troops have crossed the Pesa along a wide front and advanced approximately 1⅓ miles. Violent fighting is continuing southwest of Florence.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 4 August 1944:

In the four main sectors of the Eastern Front—the Baltic zone, East Prussia, the Vistula river and Galicia—the Russians have made fresh advances, although their progress has now slowed down. . . Coinciding with the great Russian victories has come a turning point on the invasion front in France. On July 25 the Allies launched a drive on the western front in Normandy, with Americans under General Bradley pushing south between the seacoast and Saint Lô to take Granville and, on July 30, occupying Avranches opposite the famous Mont-St.-Michel.

Joseph Stalin to Winston Churchill
Saturday 5 August 1944:

I am in receipt of your message about Warsaw.

I think that the information given to you by the Poles is greatly exaggerated and unreliable. . . The [Polish] Home Army consists of a few detachments misnamed divisions. They have neither guns, aircraft nor tanks. I cannot imagine detachments like those taking Warsaw, which the Germans are defending with four armoured divisions, including the "Hermann Göring" Division. [English quoted from p. 249 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

Sunday 6 August 1944
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* announced:

The enemy has attacked repeatedly south of Caen but without success. The strong enemy attacks, supported by tanks, northwest and west of Vire and east of Avranches all day yesterday also brought him only minor successes.

Our retaliatory bombardment of London [with V-1 flying bombs] has been continuing day and night. In Italy the enemy has so far been merely groping his way forward with reconnaissance drives along the entire Arno sector.

East of Warsaw, the Soviet 3rd Armored Corps, which had been cut off and surrounded since August 4, was annihilated after several days of hard fighting. The Soviets suffered heavy casualties and lost 152 tanks and 43 cannon. Between the Vistula and Niemen rivers, the enemy has continued his attacks along the previous lines of thrust.



Opposite page: Sherman tanks of the British Eighth Army advancing north through Italy in August 1944

Left: Front view of a US M4 Sherman medium tank in the service of the French Expeditionary Corps in northern France in July 1944

Evacuation of Southwestern France?
Tuesday 8 August 1944, Madrid
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Reports from the border zone between France and Spain say that the Germans have begun to evacuate large areas of southern and southwestern France. Our information is that only a few Gestapo and police personnel are being left behind in the former German garrison cities along the Franco-Spanish border, while the troops are being hastily transported east along with their artillery and all other military equipment.

Thursday 10 August 1944
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

Violent fighting is raging in the East at Sanok and Riebylec [Poland] against enemy forces that have broken through our lines. Northwest of Baranov, we have smashed repeated enemy attacks and driven back the Soviets in counterattacks. In the period 6–9 August we knocked out 108 enemy tanks in heavy fighting. Southeast of Warka [Poland] a counterattack by our armor is continuing to gain ground against tough enemy resistance. West of the upper Narev river, we repulsed or intercepted repeated enemy attacks. Counterattacks by our troops are under way at Wilkowischken. Near Raseiniai, Latvia, north of the Niemen river [German *Memel*], renewed Soviet attempts to break through have failed with heavy casualties.

German Counterattacks on the Eastern Front
Wednesday 16 August 1944, Moscow
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

On Tuesday the fighting on the Soviet front was marked by violent German counterattacks extending to almost all the fronts. Only in the Baltic area did the Soviets win notable successes while continuing their operations to split up the enemy armies.



The Soviet offensive against East Prussia has bogged down. The Germans pursued their counterattacks along the northern half of the front, especially in the Raseiniai area where pressure on the Soviet positions has increased since the arrival of more German armored and infantry reinforcements.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 18 August 1944:

It cost the Allies great labor, courage and self-sacrifice, and extraordinary organizational and military achievements to consolidate their position on the narrow invasion front in Normandy and to break the strong German resistance there so that they at last could break out into open ground and reap the fruits of their struggles. The great battle in the West has now turned into the Battle of France, on the same scale as the battle of four years ago which the Germans won when the positions and relative strengths were the reverse of what they are now. . . Those [same Allies], whom a certain high-ranking German in a famous Reichstag address described as "military imbeciles" lucky if they managed to stay ashore for nine hours after an attempted invasion, have now revealed themselves as military commanders of the first water who are capable not merely of drawing up a strategic plan on paper but also of carrying it out on the battlefield. . . The week's events in the Western theater can be summarized in three main points: (1) the battles of encirclement [in which German forces were surrounded] at Falaise and Argentan in Normandy; (2) the Allied landing along the French Riviera; (3) the Allied breakthrough between the Seine and the Loire as they drive toward Paris. . . As important as the events in central France was the August 15 landing of an Allied army on the Mediterranean coast in southern France between Cannes and Toulon.

Heavy Armored Battles on the Eastern Front
Sunday 20 August 1944, Moscow
The American *Associated Press News Agency* reported:

The armored battle started by the Germans to liberate the German armies encircled in the Baltic States is continuing with extreme bitterness. Six panzer divisions have joined battle with the Soviets in a narrow strip of ground while the Soviets are bringing up ever-increasing numbers of reserves to hold their ring around Schörner's Army Group.

It is not clear how the fight is progressing. At several points, the Germans have apparently succeeded in driving the Soviets back several miles and have won ground, especially at Siauliai [Lithuania].

Thursday 31 August 1944
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

North of Paris we have halted the enemy who was keenly pursuing our troops in their withdrawal maneuvers. We have mounted counterattacks against enemy assault columns pushing northward from the area of Beauvais.

In Italy, the enemy has renewed his counterattacks along a wide front on the Adriatic coast. By the massive employment of ground attack aircraft, artillery and tanks, and with the support of his naval forces, the enemy achieved local breaches at Urbino and Pesaro.

In Rumania, enemy pressure has stepped up in the direction of Ploesti [the oil production center]. Renewed violent Soviet attacks along the southeast borders of Transylvania have been smashed. On the rest of the Eastern Front, major military actions occurred yesterday only northeast of Warsaw, where we once again foiled the Soviet attempt to break through to the city after knocking out 124 Soviet tanks.

The Decisive Blow is at Hand
Monday 4 September 1944, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

The Allied armies have already crossed over the Maginot Line and now are about to cross the Siegfried Line, the last German fortified line in the West. The great question is whether the German High Command can bring enough men and equipment up to the line to halt Bradley and Montgomery. The German strategy of linear defense along the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and in the USSR is now working against them. Germany could now raise scarcely more than five [additional] divisions and a few corps of hastily and indiscriminately levied reservists, insufficient to hold a single one of the German interception zones in support of the Seventh and Fifteenth Armies defending Germany.

The Allies expected to run up against strong German fortifications on the Sambre and the lower Meuse, and then at Charleroi, Givet, Dinant, Namur and Huy; but they have already passed these zones unimpeded. Beyond them lies the next line which would readily lend itself to defense, extending from Liège to Louvain to Mechelen (Malines) and Antwerp. The Germans are reported to be already flooding these areas to serve as a glacis to their fortifications. No doubt Eisenhower will not give his enemies the months of preparations they would need to fill their gaps of men and equipment.

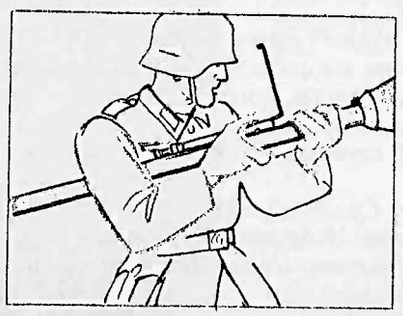
Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 8 September 1944:

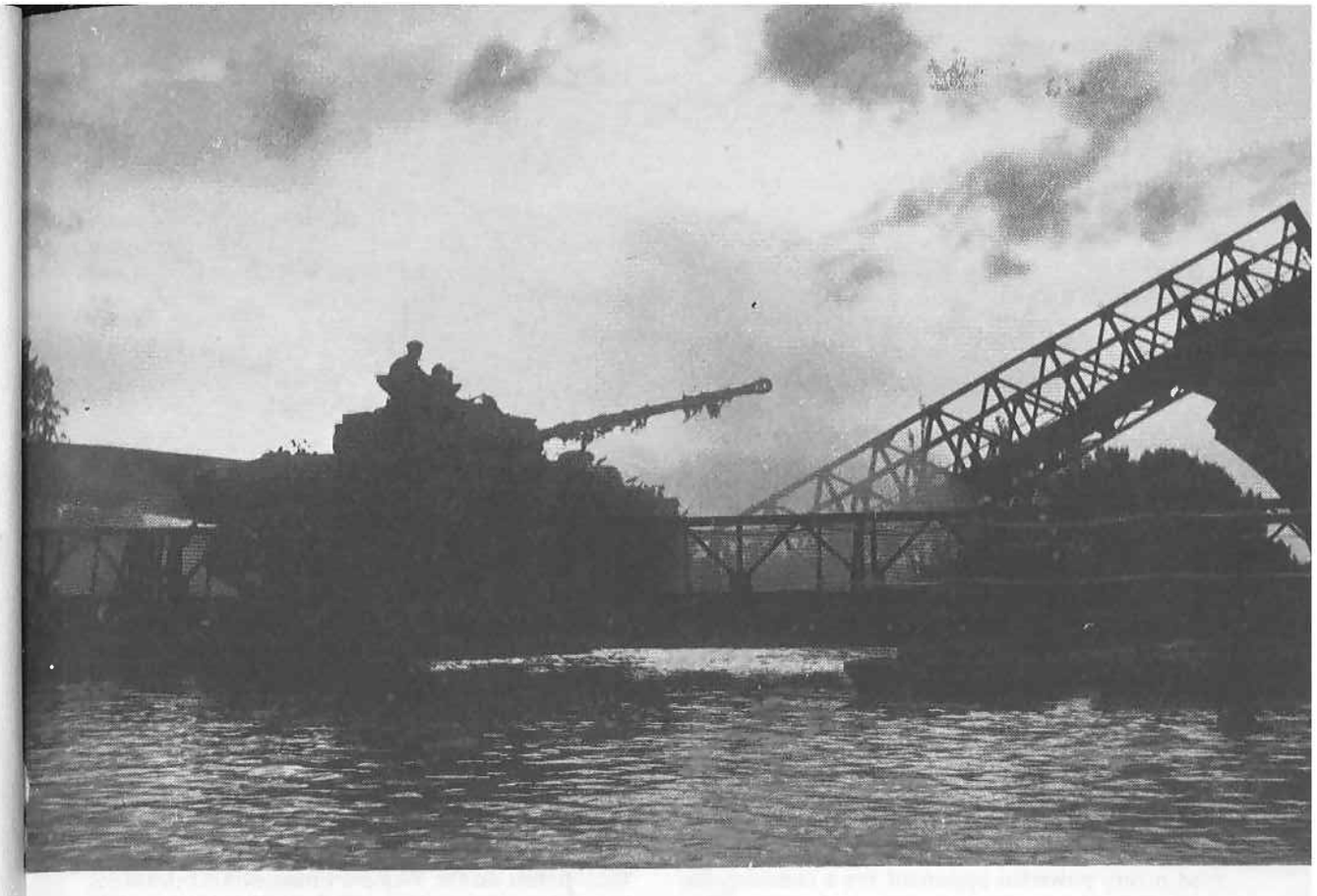
Once the Battle of Normandy was over, one could no longer speak of an actual front line (in the West) because everything was in flux and moving very rapidly. But now a new Western Front is starting to define itself as German resistance begins to stiffen to confront the Allies approaching the German border. We do not yet know much about the northernmost part of this new front because at the moment precise data are not available on the location of troop movements in Holland. In Belgium, the German front, including the Albert Canal several miles west of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle), is now collapsing. South of there, American forces east and south of Namur have set up bridgeheads on the right bank of the Meuse and may already have penetrated the hilly forest area of the Ardennes, while south of the zone, where the borders of Belgium, Luxembourg and France come together, they have reached the Moselle and crossed it at some points.

German Army instructional manual on use of the Panzerfaust antitank rocket launcher

d) Das Abfeuern:



Panzerfaust unter den rechten Arm nehmen oder auf den Oberarm legen, linke Hand unterstützt etwa 5 cm hinter dem vorderen Rohrende.



France in September 1944: Tanks of the British 11th Armoured Division cross the Seine on an improvised bridge and push on northeast.

Monday 18 September 1944
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

In Holland yesterday noon, the enemy, after heavy preliminary air bombing, dropped paratroops and airborne troops behind our front lines in the areas around Arnhem, Nijmegen and Eindhoven. Then in the afternoon he went on the offensive between Antwerp and Maastricht, trying to establish contact with his parachute and airborne units. Violent fighting ensued, especially in the Neerpelt area, in the course of which the enemy was able to make small territorial gains in the north. Concentrated counterattacks have been launched against the enemy airborne forces.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Wednesday 27 September 1944:

We [the German Press] should give wide coverage to the enemy statements assenting to the Morgenthau Plan. [The Allies agreed in the plan, drawn up under US Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, to strip Germany of its industry and various territories, after enforcing its unconditional surrender, and reduce it to an agricultural country; the plan stiffened the resistance of all Germans, including anti-Nazis, to the Allied invasion.] The most recent of Vansittart's slogans, "Germany must learn humility," especially warrants vigorous declarations [by us] of Germany's will to survive. [British Baron Vansittart was a Germanophobe who believed that Germany had to be permanently demilitarized to prevent future aggression.]

The Battle of Arnhem Ends
Thursday 28 September 1944
Allied Headquarters reported:

Two thousand men, the remains of the Allied airborne divisions [that landed in Holland to try to take Arnhem bridge in Operation Market Garden], are coming back from Arnhem. The evacuated troops were brought back across the Rhine during the night. . . The front has expanded along the Meuse. On Monday and Tuesday nights, the soldiers of the British 1st Airborne Division were withdrawn across the lower Rhine after putting up a heroic resistance since September 17.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 29 September 1944:

Every motorized offensive inevitably reaches the point where it begins to slow down. It takes time to unlock the main enemy force to the assault troops,



to organize the rear zone and communications, to bring up supplies of equipment, ammunition and food; and all this has a braking effect on the offensive. If the defenders wait until the enemy advance inevitably bogs down and then build and occupy defensive positions on mountainous terrain or along a watercourse, they have a chance of halting even a very powerful opponent for a considerable time. This is what happened in Italy when Kesselring's troops stopped Alexander's army from advancing beyond Rome along the Apennine mountains. Alexander's offensive has not yet picked up enough momentum to turn into a full-scale mobile and armored war in the Po valley. Outstanding military prowess and skilled tactical management have saved the German army in Italy from the fate their brothers-in-arms have suffered during the same period in White Russia, Eastern Poland and Rumania in the East, and in France and Belgium in the West. . . Meanwhile, the Russians have penetrated to the Iron Gate—the Danube river gorge [cut through the Carpathians] along the border between Rumania and Yugoslavia. In Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Army [which formerly fought on Germany's side] has now been taken over by the Russian High Command. In the wooded Carpathians, the Russians and [Germany's former allies the] Rumanians have fought their way together to the Hungarian border at Oradea (German *Grosswardein*), where they are now standing at the edge of the low plains of Hungary. . . The disadvantage for the German Wehrmacht is that it is forced to disperse its troops, stationing strong forces not only in the Balkans but also along the borders of Hungary and Slovakia. The way in which their operations have been conducted since Stalingrad and Tunis has in fact made it impossible for the German armed forces to concentrate their main strength for the final battle.

Tuesday 3 October 1944
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

Hard fighting is continuing along the previous focal points on the Western Front, while both sides have stepped up their aircraft deployment. The Canadian ground forces, which have penetrated at several places across the Antwerp-Turnhout canal, have won ground against tough resistance.

Military activity has intensified in the area between Maaseik and Aachen. We destroyed large numbers of American tanks in close-range fighting during their numerous local raids and unsuccessful reconnaissance drives.

The American Fifth Army has renewed its attacks in the Etruscan Apennines. Our toughly fighting grenadiers beat them back northwest of Firenzuola and intercepted the enemy where he had broken through farther east in the depth of the battle zone. We have repulsed British attacks along the Adriatic.

Southwest of Temesvar [Timisoara, Rumania] and along the Danube river on both sides of the Iron Gate, our troops are engaged in violent fighting against attacking Soviet-Rumanian forces. Strong Soviet forces have penetrated to the Serbian-Rumanian border at Weisskirchen.

In the Eastern Beskid mountains (in the Carpathians), the area south of Dukla, Poland, continued to be the point of main enemy thrust. The Soviets were able to make only small territorial gains and suffered very heavy casualties.

The uprising in Warsaw has collapsed. After weeks of fighting leading to the almost total destruction of the city, the remaining rebels, abandoned on all sides [because the Allies had failed to bring them the expected help], have stopped resisting and surrendered.

On the rest of the Eastern Front, there is nothing to report except that enemy attacks have been warded off northeast of Warsaw, and our grenadiers have carried out successful assault operations east of Mitau in Latvia.

Armored Battle at Aachen
Friday 6 October 1944
The American *United Press News Agency* reported from General Eisenhower's Headquarters:

Yesterday American forces east of Ubach penetrated a mile and a half into the new system of defensive fortifications which the Germans have drawn up behind the Siegfried Line. In the afternoon they took the harshly contested town of Beggendorf on the north flank of the breakthrough zone, thus eliminating one of the most important positions before Geilenkirchen. The Germans stubbornly held on to the ruins of this completely bullet-riddled village and repeatedly brought up reinforcements to mount counterassaults there. But in the course of yesterday's fighting, General Hodges was able to deploy units of his armored troops on both sides of Beggendorf and carry out a rapid enveloping maneuver which forced the Germans to retreat. Later, large numbers of German tanks also intervened in the fighting, and an armored battle unfolded around the village that went on until evening.

The Soviets Are outside Belgrade
6 October 1944, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* reported:

Our armored forces have succeeded in rapidly surrounding the Yugoslavian capital and throwing a powerful circle of troops there around the German-Fascist troops, which have broken up into many small groups.

Our front encircling Belgrade is close to 150 miles long; about two thirds of it is being held by Soviet troops and the rest by Yugoslavians. Several Soviet engineer regiments are ranged along the Danube near Pancevo; late last night, they began the work preliminary to forging the river.

The Volkssturm Is Growing Stronger
Monday 23 October 1944, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

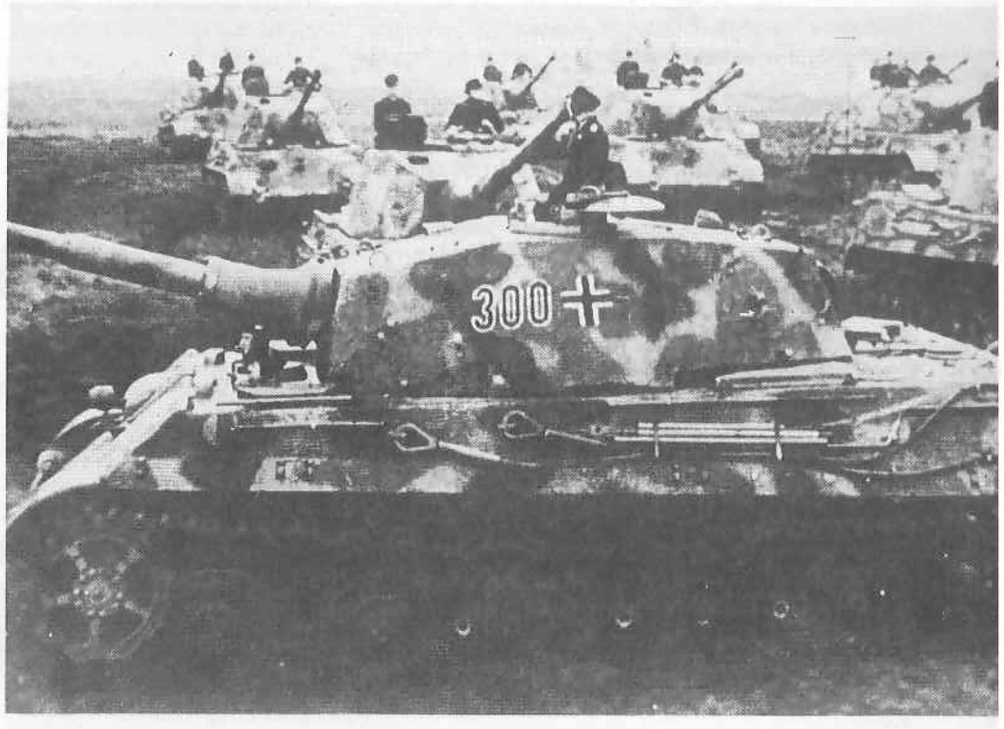
Reports from all over Germany testify that yesterday vast numbers of volunteers turned up to join the German *Volkssturm* [territorial army formed of men and boys unfit for the regular military]. A genuine horde of volunteers, including hundreds of thousands in Berlin, is said to be streaming in to register. Not only the age groups called up, but also younger and older men have joined the Volkssturm militia.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)
Friday 27 October 1944:

In Eastern Europe, the Russians are now fight-

Opposite page: A British armored division advancing through the Somme valley of France in September 1944

Right: A heavy German armored battalion armed with Tiger II (King Tiger) tanks, along the Eastern Front in November 1944. The King Tiger or Panzer VI weighed 70 tons and had a Henschel turret with a long 8.8-cm cannon (German designation 43 L/71). It was the heaviest, strongest and best-armored fighting tank of the war.



ing on the soil of nine different countries: Norway, Finland, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia. . . On German soil, a heavy battle has begun for East Prussia, where the attacking Soviets under Chernyakhovsky are fighting the Germans under Schörner. . . In Yugoslavia one week ago today, the capital of Belgrade fell to the Allies—the same day that Aachen (Axi-la-Chapelle) fell in the West. The partisan forces of Marshal Tito in Yugoslavia are fighting in close cooperation with Russian Marshal Tolbukhin's forces which are moving in from Bulgaria.

The Final Battle for the Mouth of the Scheldt
Thursday 2 November 1944, Berlin
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

The Germans around the mouth of the Scheldt river in Holland are defending every foot of ground with great stubbornness, trying to drag out as long as possible the battle to liberate the entrance to the harbor of Antwerp; but it now appears to have entered its final stage. British and Canadian troops have taken South Beveland island [one of two islands in the Scheldt estuary connected both to the mainland and to the island of Walcheren] and are now mounting concentric attacks on the islands of Walcheren, which has been occupied by the Germans. After a successful British commando operation at Vlissingen [= Flushing, strategic port on Walcheren], Allied troops moved onto the west bank [of the Scheldt] this morning.

Winston Churchill to Joseph Stalin
Sunday 5 November 1944:

. . . . .

Many congratulations on your advance to Budapest.

2. We have now got effective control of the approaches to Antwerp and I hope that coasters will be through in about ten days and ocean-going ships in three or four weeks. This solves the problem of the northern flank of the advance into Germany. . . [English quoted from p. 267 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

Hitler's Orders to the OKW for Operation Watch-on-the-Rhine [the Ardennes Offensive eventually launched in December]
Friday 10 November 1944 (extract):

1. The objective of the operation is to destroy enemy forces north of the line Antwerp-Brussels-Luxembourg, thereby turning the tide of the Western Campaign and consequently perhaps even of the entire war. I am determined that this operation shall be carried out, even given the extreme risk that the enemy's attack on either side of Metz and his imminent drive into the Ruhr District may lead to great losses of territory and emplacements.

2. The German Commander-in-Chief West is to take Army Group B (15th, 6th Panzer, 5th Panzer and 7th Armies) and to exploit the poor weather conditions prevailing on Day X so as to penetrate the weak front of the American First Army between Monschau and Wasserbillig after a preparatory artillery bombardment lasting approximately one hour. Army Group B will make a daring and ruthless drive to seize the bridges across the Meuse between Liège and Dinant while shielding its flanks with rearguard units. Its further objective is to drive forward to Antwerp and the west bank of the Scheldt estuary, cutting off all the British forces and the northern wing of the American First Army from their lines of communication and destroying them in cooperation with Army Group H. . . .

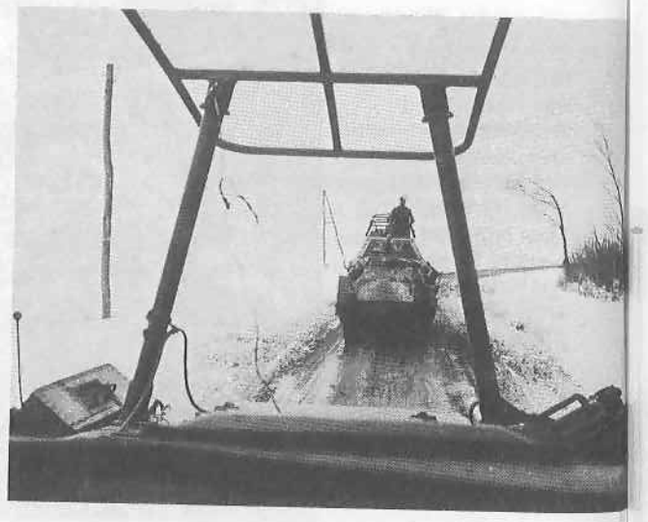
Signed, ADOLF HITLER

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 24 November 1944:

Given the climatic conditions in Europe, it is unusual in the history of European warfare for major military operations to be undertaken in the month of November. Nevertheless, a grand offensive is now under way in what General Eisenhower, the commander-in-chief of the Allied armies who are on the attack in the West, describes as weather fit for a dog. The offensive zone extends from the

The Eastern Front in November 1944: Heavy German 8-wheeled armored reconnaissance car (the Sd Kfz 232), part of the vanguard of a German panzer division on its way to Hungary



border of Holland to the Swiss border, and the objective of the Allies is to reach the Rhine. They are fighting for the Rhineland, or at least (for the time being) for the left bank of the Rhine river, where they must first penetrate a dense carpet of tanks before the real struggle for Germany can begin. . . On the other fronts, the main notable feature is the battle in Hungary where Malinovsky's Soviet troops are meeting hard German resistance. The Germans are preparing to fight to defend Budapest.

German Commanders Report the Condition of German Troops in the West

To be read at once!

SECRET
To: Headquarters of the German Chief-of-Staff on the Western Front, General Jodl
28 November 1944
10:30 P.M.

The Commander-in-Chief 19th Army reported on November 28:
The party field officer, sent to LXIV Corps today on my orders, gave me the following report on the condition of the troops:

"1. Troop morale is good with only few exceptions. The soldier knows what is at stake and has the will to fight. But he is completely exhausted by physical and mental exertions, due to damp and mountainous terrain in the first case and, in the second, enemy air and tank supremacy and artillery barrages which have for the most part continued non-stop since August. (This was not so for the troops in Russia.)

"2. The stragglers, picked up by the military police working for corps and divisional headquarters and brought to assembly points, are mostly men who have genuinely been separated from their units [i.e. not deliberate deserters]. The American breakthroughs have left them isolated on both sides so that they had no choice but to go to the rear.

"What they want is: to get back to their own unit. And before that to eat one hot meal, get a chance to sleep, get hold of dry clothes and stockings without holes in them. Many arrive with infected toes.

"3. The battalion commanders reject soldiers sent forward without having first received the modest demands just listed, because in this case [of not having eaten or rested] they are not fit to fight anyhow. On the other hand, the overwhelming strength of the enemy, the extended front and the impossibility of sending in replacements force the stragglers to be sent back to the front immediately. In this situation, what a soldier wants—aside from newspapers or newssheets—are only comrades and arms."

Signed, FIELD MARSHAL VON RUNDSTEDT,
the Commander-in-Chief West

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 8 December 1944:

On the Italian front where American General Clark is commanding [the Fifth Army], the Allies have taken the city of Ravenna, thereby breaking through to the first major city on the plain at the northern foot of the Apennines. Bologna is still in German hands, however, the Allies have now overcome the great barrier of the Apennines in a difficult mountain war against Kesselring and are finally coming out into the Po valley.

Fresh Offensive Expected at Aachen
Sunday 10 December 1944, Stockholm
The Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* reported:

Although the struggles on the Saar river and in Alsace-Lorraine are at the time preoccupying public attention, reliable sources in Berlin are still insisting that the main thrust of the British-American offensive will remain in the north. The battle east of Aachen died down further over the weekend, but the German High Command announced today that it will soon flare up again. General Eisenhower is regrouping his forces, and behind the front he is amassing matériel for a new major offensive. The Germans for their part are making preparations too, by pulling back their troops from the area between Düren and Roermond and sending them down to the east bank of the Ruhr river to gain more favorable positions.

Monday 18 December 1944
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

At 5:30 A.M. on December 16, after a brief but powerful prefatory bombardment, strong German forces along a broad front of the Siegfried Line have moved onto the attack and in their first assault have overrun the foremost American positions in the Ardennes between Hautes Fagnes and northern Luxembourg. This great offensive battle is now raging, with strong German fighter formations flying cover for the ground troops. The enemy was taken completely by surprise, and details will not be released until later so as to keep him in the dark. By last account, our fighters have shot down 48 enemy bombers in combat over the front lines. Luftwaffe flak guns destroyed another 21 aircraft. During the night, strong bomber and night ground attack aircraft effectively raided enemy troop movements and supply centers.



German SS panzer-grenadiers advancing through the Ardennes on 20 December 1944. In the background is a burning US half-track personnel carrier. [The half-track ran on tracks in the rear and wheels in front.]

Along the rest of the Western Front, fighting is continuing along the Ruhr river; west and south of Düren; in the dugout positions at Saarlouis; at Bitche; and outside the West Wall (= Siegfried Line) on the border between Alsace and the Rhine Palatinate.

German Offensive in the Ardennes
18 December 1944
The American *United Press News Agency* reported from General Eisenhower's Headquarters:

The German Army has counterattacked along a 120-mile-wide front between Aachen and Luxembourg. A field order from von Rundstedt, which was found on captured Germans, says: "The time has now come when the German Army must rise again and strike." The report is that the first German panzer group crossed over the Belgian border between Zitterwald and Schnee-Eifel and penetrated 2 miles into Belgian territory where they reached the town of Honsfeld approximately 12 miles southeast of Malmedy. In this zone, German King Tiger tanks bypassed the sentry chain of American infantry, who remained in their positions and took up battle with von Rundstedt's troops as they followed up the tanks. The German drive is also threatening the Belgian crossroads of St. Vith.

Latest Report from the Ardennes Front
Wednesday 20 December 1944
The American *United Press News Agency* reported from General Eisenhower's Headquarters:

Frontline correspondents report that the right wing of von Rundstedt's offensive group has bogged down south of Monschau. American infantry have beaten back six heavy German armored assaults supported by powerful artillery forces.

Thursday 21 December 1944
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

In the winter battle in Belgium yesterday, the American forces holding the Schnee-Eifel area were destroyed or captured far behind their front lines. We captured 8,000 Americans. Along the leading assault front, our troops have penetrated the Ardennes and crossed the great Liège-Bastogne-Arlon road in a wide bend. Enemy supply columns pouring toward the Meuse have been overtaken and bypassed by German tanks; American units that had just been brought up were smashed while they still formed individual groups and failed to halt our advance. The toll of prisoners now exceeds 20,000. In yesterday's fighting, we captured 50 cannon and 43 tanks and armored vehicles, and destroyed 36 tanks. The enemy kept up his unsuccessful defense on the Western Front. Heavy defensive battles developed only in the area northwest of Bitche. Our V-1 launches against London and Antwerp are continuing.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 22 December 1944:

This large-scale offensive [i.e. the German Ardennes offensive, known by Americans as the Battle of the Bulge due to the "bulge" or salient of German troops which drove a wedge into the American forces along the center of the attack front] is a tactical weapon forming part of a strategic defense. The history of the whole war has taught us that mere defense of a fortification system, however strong and deeply extending, cannot in the long run enable a nation to resist attack from a determined assault army with superior forces. . . Von Rundstedt has led this surprise strike with all the weapons of modern warfare from the airplane to the tank and the guided rocket; he of course also deployed paratroops in the Ardennes. . . Ultimately, the progress of operations must depend on the available reserves of personnel and equipment. The German soldier has an advantage at the moment in that he has been able, in a surprise attack and with concentrated forces, to assault and to cave in a relatively thinly occupied enemy position of his own choosing. The American soldier has the means with which to parry the enemy's initiative as soon as he can gather enough strength to deliver a counterblow.

Tuesday 26 December 1944
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

The focal point of the fighting in the West has shifted to central Luxembourg. After bringing up additional forces which had to be pulled away from other sectors of the front, the enemy tried to collapse our southern flank and to relieve his troops encircled around Bastogne. We smashed the enemy attacks in hard fighting and tightened the ring of troops around Bastogne. West of the Ourthe river (Belgium), our assault spearheads are advancing further after warding off a large number of enemy counterattacks. By the last account, over 700 American tanks and armored vehicles have been captured or destroyed since the start of our attack in the West on December 16.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Wednesday 27 December 1944:

[In our Press reports] we should present the great winter battle in the west as a successful relief attack to reduce strain on the hard-pressed German front lines at Aachen, on the Saar river and in Alsace. We should at the same time emphasize the success we have already achieved: the fact that we have driven a deep and dangerous wedge into the enemy hinterland, rapidly eliminated the enemy's offensive pressure on the above-mentioned fronts, smashed large numbers of enemy divisions, knocked out a high toll of tanks and taken sizable numbers of prisoners.

Sunday 31 December 1944
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

In the winter battle going on at the Meuse and Moselle rivers, both sides have brought up such strong forces that they have stripped the other fronts bare. As a result, approximately one half of all the divisions in the Western theater are now involved in this battle [of the Ardennes, or of the Bulge]. The battle is focussing around the areas of Rochefort and Bastogne. The enemy tried to block our attack southwest and southeast of Bastogne with strong counterattacks aimed at the southern flank of our offensive wedge. Their purpose was foiled in bitter fighting in which we destroyed 34 enemy tanks. The battle is continuing. Our guided rocket fire against the enemy supply bases of Liège and Antwerp is still going on.

Strategy and Tactics

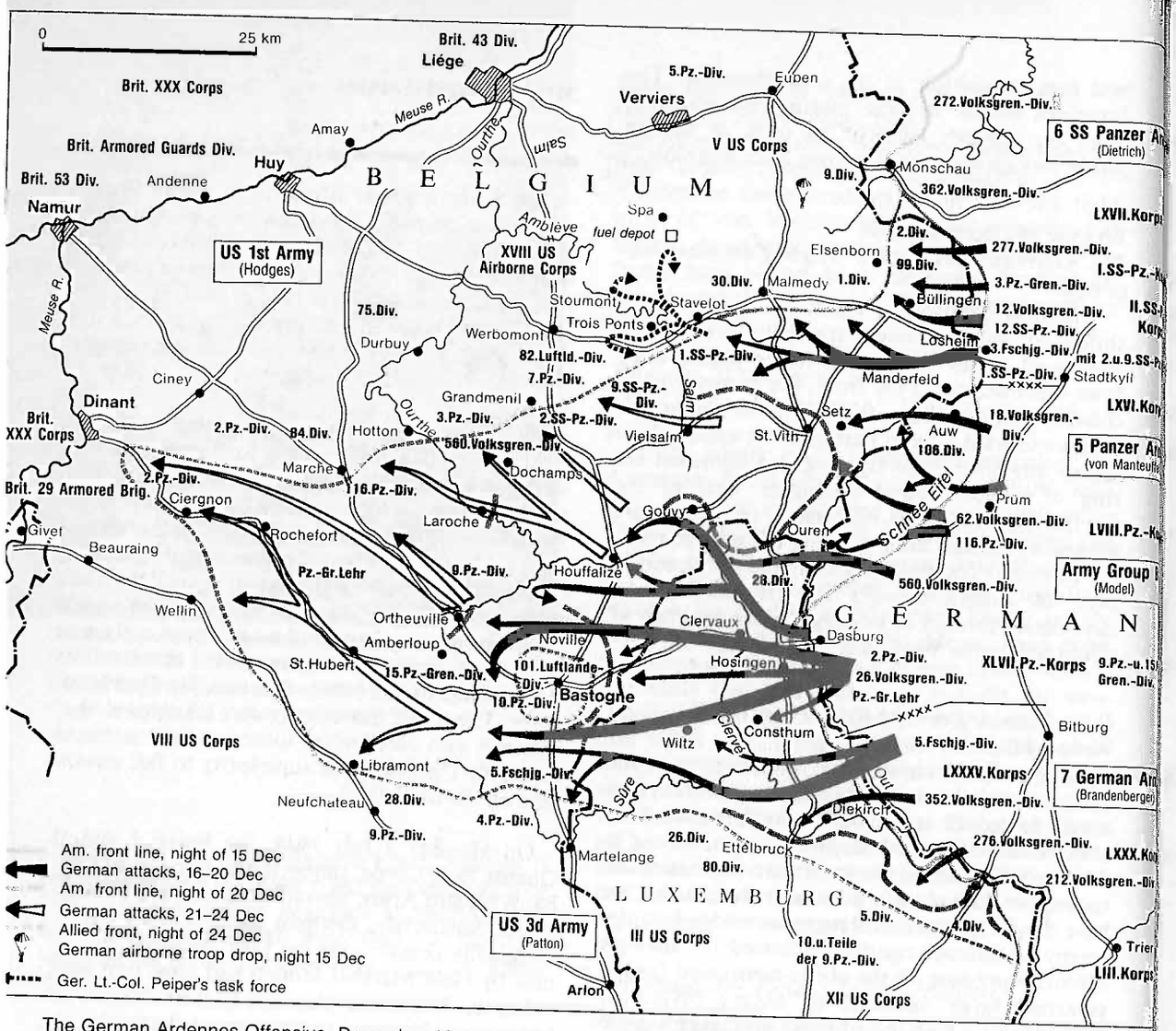
JULY TO DECEMBER 1944

The Soviet summer offensive in White Russia, which had opened only one week earlier, had by the start of July resulted in a complete collapse of the German lines in the center. The Soviet armored forces carried out a headlong pursuit of the defeated German troops, rolling westward across the sandy forest paths while the Germans tried desperately to escape encirclement.

By Saturday 1 July 1944, 13 American and 12 British divisions had landed in Normandy and were forcing back the German defensive line a step at a time. In the almost impassable *bocages* [the Normandy hedgerows that broke up the terrain with high wide overgrown embankments blocking the movement of tanks] west of Caen, the Germans were able to intercept the Allies' forward drive. German antitank and assault guns and small close-range antitank weapons took a heavy toll of Allied tanks in this [easily defended] hedged landscape. The Allies' movements were cramped so that they met with only limited success in their attempts to deploy their material superiority to full advantage on the battlefield.

On Monday 3 July 1944, the Soviet I and II Guards Tank Corps, supported by infantry of Gorbatov's Third Army, liberated Minsk from the Germans. Meanwhile, German Army Group Center (originally commanded by Field Marshal Busch, now by Field Marshal Model) had gone into total collapse: The entire German Eastern Front had been torn wide open in the area of the Soviet attack. Now there were still fit for combat only 8 German grand units along the 210-mile stretch from the Dvina river at Polotsk in the north, to the Pripet river at Pinsk in the south. They faced Soviet forces of 126 infantry divisions, 6 cavalry divisions, 16 motorized brigades and 45 armored brigades!

The Soviet Sixty-Fifth Infantry Army (under General Batov) had moved to Minsk from the southeast, and the city fell under a simultaneous two-sided attack from armored forces of the First and Third White Russian Fronts. East of the city the German Fourth Army under von Tippelskirch and the Ninth Army under Jordan were cut off from their retreat route to Berezina, and some 100,000 German soldiers were now sealed inside a giant Soviet pocket. By the end of the battle, approximately 40,000 had been killed while 57,000 were forced to surrender. The "fortified locations" [German-garrisoned Soviet towns that the Ger-

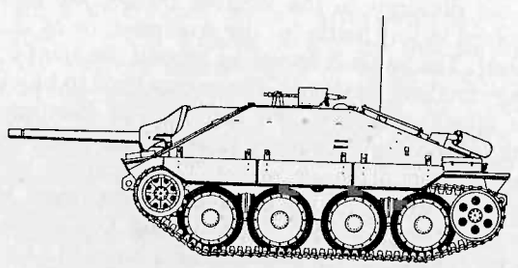


The German Ardennes Offensive, December 1944 (the Battle of the Bulge)

mans held as bases for operations after the enemy had already swept past] had now become a pointless exercise: for, whereas a few months earlier the Germans had still been strong enough to use the fortified towns [as bases from which] to disrupt Soviet supply lines and communications [after a Soviet breakthrough], by the summer of 1944 the Red Army was able to envelop the fortified areas and defeat their defenders while at the same time continuing their advance. This time German casualties were twice what they had been after the Stalingrad disaster: 28 divisions, totalling 350,000 men, were wiped out. The German Ninth and Fourth Armies ceased to exist. The Soviet troops, now deep inside Poland, had penetrated almost 200 miles farther west since launching their offensive on 22 June 1944.

That day Hitler replaced General Lindemann, the commander-in-chief of German Army Group North, with General Friessner. At the same time Field Marshal von Rundstedt, the German com-

German Hetzer (Baiter) tank destroyer with 7.5-cm antitank guns (39 L/48s) mounted on a Czech Skoda 38-ton LT 38 tank (first produced 1944)



mander on the Western Front, was moved out and replaced by Field Marshal von Kluge.

On 3 July 1944, the British Fourteenth Army under General Slim, supported by armored units, captured the Japanese stronghold of Ukhrul along the Indian-Burmese border.

Field Marshal Model, now commanding Army Group North Ukraine as well as Army Group Center, tried to bring up reserves from the North Ukraine and the Baltic states to set up an interception area along the line Baranovichi-Molodechno; but they could not halt the relentless westward drive of the Soviet armored forces.

On Saturday 8 July 1944, the important rail junction of Baranovichi fell to the Soviets.

On Thursday 13 July 1944, at the height of the Soviet summer offensive, the Soviet First Ukrainian Front (now commanded by Koniev) launched the second stage of the Soviet offensive: an assault by Katukov's First and Rybalko's Third Guards Tank armies; Grechko's First and Lyelyushenko's Third Guards Rifle armies; Pukhov's Thirteenth Army, Churavyev's Eighteenth, Moskalenko's Thirty-Eighth, Chernyakhovsky's Sixtieth; and two motorized cavalry divisions, totalling 80 divisions, 10 armored and mechanized brigades with 1,200,000 men, 13,000 cannon and mortars, 2,220 tanks and assault guns. The offensive, supported by Krasovsky's 2nd and Khriukin's 8th Air armies with 2,800 aircraft, targeted Model's Army Group North Ukraine.

On Sunday 16 July 1944, Boldin's Fiftieth Army captured the Polish city of Grodno.

Meanwhile, Hitler stubbornly refused to draw more reinforcements from Salmuth's Fifteenth Army on the Pas de Calais to send to the main Western Front, because Allied deceptive maneuvers, known as Operation Bodyguard, had led him to expect an Allied invasion landing at Calais.

On Monday 17 July 1944, a car containing Field Marshal Rommel and several companions was attacked in Normandy near the village of St. Foy-de-Montgomery by a low-flying Spitfire plane piloted by Squadron Leader J. J. LeRoux of 602 (City of Glasgow) Squadron. The badly wounded German driver, Sgt. 1st Class Daniel, lost control of the car and crashed into a tree. Rommel suffered many injuries, including a skull fracture; and the German Supreme Commander West, Field Marshal von Kluge, rather than appointing a replacement, took over command of Rommel's Army Group B in addition to his other duties.

Next day, 18 July 1944, after carrying out a heavy aerial bombardment, British forces, including an armored guards division of British VIII Corps, mounted a drive from the Caen area in the direction of Cagny—Operation Goodwood. Their objective was to enable the Allies at last to break out of the Normandy beachhead zone. The British tanks drove straight into defensive fire from three German panzer divisions reinforced by additional Tiger tank and assault gun units. By the time the British broke off their attack, over 200 British tanks were lying in flames on the battlefield.

On Wednesday 19 July 1944, after weeks of heavy fighting and high casualties that had followed the first day of the invasion June 6, units of Dempsey's British Second Army finally took Caen.

On Thursday 20 July 1944, an [attempt was made to assassinate Hitler]. A time bomb, smuggled into the conference room of Hitler's "Wolf's Lair" headquarters by the German anti-Nazi conspirator Count von Stauffenberg, exploded at 12:42 P.M. Hitler was only slightly injured, although several of the men conferring with him were killed. Among the dead was General Zeitzler, the chief of the German general staff. Hitler appointed as his successor General Guderian, who had most recently served as Inspector-General of Armored Troops.

On Sunday 23 July 1944, Hitler appointed General Schörner commander-in-chief of Army Group North, whose armies were in the Baltic zone. General Friessner became C-in-C of German Army Group South Ukraine in Eastern Rumania.

On Monday 24 July 1944, Bogdanov's Soviet Second Tank Army and Chuikov's Eighth Guards Army took Lublin (Poland). Next day the "Polish Committee of National Liberation" formed by Stalin, which later took over the government of the People's Republic of Poland, declared Lublin its temporary seat of residence.

On Tuesday 25 July 1944, four US armored divisions and eleven motorized divisions in Normandy west of St. Lô launched an offensive—Operation Cobra—against the remaining intact units of 13 German divisions in the area. Canadian armor south of Caen started a simultaneous offensive—Operation Spring—in the direction of Falaise but was halted by German armored divisions after fierce fighting.

On Thursday 27 July 1944, Grechko's First Guards Tank Army (part of the First Ukrainian Front) took Stanislav in Galicia. Moskalenko's Thirty-Eighth, Chernyakhovsky's Sixtieth and Rybalko's Third Guards Tank armies took Lvov, Przemysl and Przeworsk. Gorbatov's Third Army

(part of Kurochkin's Second White Russian Front) took Bialystok, while Malyzhev's Fourth Shock Army (from the First Baltic Front) drove through to Daugavpils (Latvia).

On the night of 27/28 July, the US First Army finally broke through the lines of the German Seventh Army (under SS General Hausser), and the German forces retreated southeast. The way was now open for the American armored forces to



Near Caen, northern France, in July 1944: A British armored division is forming up to try to break out of the Normandy beachhead.

drive out from the Cotentin peninsula towards the Seine and Paris.

On Saturday 29 July 1944, Katukov's Soviet First Guards Tank Army and Dukhov's Thirteenth Army crossed the Vistula and formed a bridgehead around Baranov. The Germans at once launched counterstrokes in which they deployed their new King Tiger tanks (Tiger IIs) for the first time. The King Tiger was the heaviest, strongest and best-armored tank of World War II.

On Sunday 30 July 1944, a major armored battle began to rage east of Warsaw between Decker's German XXXIX Panzer Corps and the Soviet III Tank Corps (part of Rokossovsky's First White Russian army group), which was trying to seize the bridges across the Bug and Narev rivers near Radzymin north of the Polish capital. The "Hermann Göring" Armored Parachute Division, parts of the 4th Panzer Division, the 19th Panzer Division and the SS Panzer Division "Viking" succeeded in knocking out large numbers of Soviet tanks and driving them back to Wolomin.

The city of Kovno (Kaunas) in Lithuania fell to the Soviets on Monday 31 July 1944. The Germans launched a local counterthrust but managed to halt the Soviet lead units only when these had reached Suwalki (Poland) just outside the border of East Prussia.

The Soviet III Panzer Corps now approached Warsaw. It did not intend actually to liberate the Polish capital but instead bypassed the eastern districts of the city, heading toward the Bug river bridge at Zegrze Pomorskiye (Seeger). This drive had a tragic aftermath, for on Tuesday 1 August 1944 General Count Bor-Komorowski, the commander-in-chief of the Polish Home Army which was the main Polish resistance group fighting the German forces of occupied Poland, mistakenly believing that the Soviets were about to take Warsaw, ordered his forces in the capital to rise against the Germans: He wanted his own people to take over Warsaw before the Red Army could march in so that they could found a government sympathetic to the Western Allies.

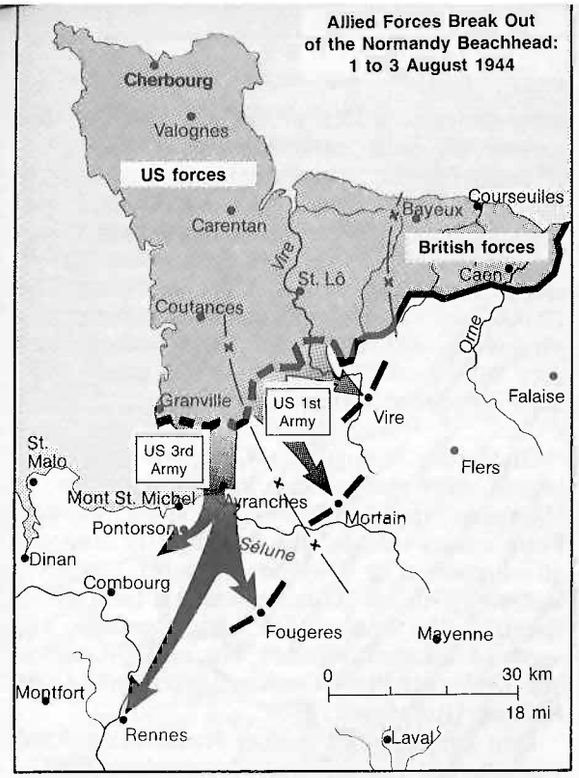
By the start of August 1944, the Red Army had penetrated over 430 miles west along the central sector of the Eastern Front and now stood at the Niemen river (German *Memel*) in the north and outside Warsaw and Belgrade in the south.

On the same day, 1 August 1944, when Bor-Komorowski ordered the start of the Warsaw Uprising, US General Bradley combined his First Army and Patton's Third Army to form the US Twelfth Army Group. General Montgomery combined Dempsey's British Second Army and Crerar's Second Canadian Army to form the British Twenty-First Army Group.

On Wednesday 2 August, armored forces of the US First Army and the US Third Army in Brittany, heading in the direction of Rennes, broke through a narrow (12-mile wide) gap at Avranches and drove to the lower Loire. US armored spearheads penetrated eastward behind the rear lines of German Army Group B in Normandy.

Rennes fell to the Allies on Friday 4 August 1944. Elements of the US Third Armored Army veered off to the west and marched toward Brest, while the German troops occupying Brittany retreated to Lorient and St. Nazaire. A simultaneous British offensive with strong armored forces, launched from south of Caen toward Falaise (Operation Totalize), made only slow progress.

On Sunday 6 August 1944, German troops evacuated Drogobych (west Ukraine), the most important oil production center in Galicia, under pressure from Grechko's Soviet First Guards Army and Churavlyev's Eighteenth Army.



On Monday 7 August 1944, German Operation Liège—a counterattack in the West ordered by Hitler and carried out by Armored General Eberbach's Fifth Panzer Army, with four armored divisions supported by approximately 500 fighter planes—was definitely smashed. The German armor had been ordered to cut off the US armored forces that had broken through at Avranches; but their operation was destroyed chiefly from the air (for the first time in the history of armored warfare) by Allied fighter bombers.

On the night of 7/8 August 1944, armored units of Crerar's First Canadian Army which were breaking through to Falaise were halted by tough German resistance at Bretteville. Once again it was proved that tanks were highly successful only in massed and surprise thrusts, whereas dogged struggles for individual pieces of terrain only resulted in losses out of all proportion to the gains. The skilled use of close-range antitank arms by German infantry enabled the German armor to hold out against British and Canadian forces that outnumbered them ten to one and against a preponderance of enemy artillery and total Allied command of the air.

SS Second Lieutenant Wittmann and the rest of his Tiger crew of the 2nd (501) Panzer Detachment (part of the 1st SS Panzer Division "Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler") were killed in the armored battle south of Caen. Wittmann, the most successful armored commander of World War II, had knocked out the record kill of over 140 enemy tanks.

On Tuesday 15 August 1944, Allied Operation Anvil/Dragoon, the invasion of southern France, began when six American divisions of Patch's US Seventh Army and four French divisions of General de Lattre de Tassigny's II Corps embarked from Oran and Naples. They landed again on the French Mediterranean coast at Fréjus and the Hyères islands east of Toulon, where they encountered only token resistance.

Next day, August 16, Blaskowitz's German

Infantry and heavy Soviet KV tanks fighting the SS Panzer Division "Viking" near Warsaw in August 1944



Army Group G, including Lemelsen's First Army and von Sodenstern's Nineteenth Army, began to retreat from the Spanish border and the coast of the Atlantic toward the Swiss border, the Saone and along the upper Marne.

On Thursday 17 August, Hitler transferred Field Marshal Model—formerly the commander-in-chief of German Army Groups Center and North Ukraine—to France and appointed him Supreme Commander West and commander-in-chief of Army Group B. Army Group Center was placed under command of Reinhardt and Army Group North Ukraine under command of Harpe.

That same day, the armored spearheads of Krylov's Soviet Fifth Army penetrated to the border of East Prussia. Chuikov's Eighth Guards Army and Kolpakchi's Sixty-Ninth Army expanded the Soviet bridgeheads on the Vistula river near Magnuszew and Pulawy (Poland) along a front 45 miles wide and 30 miles deep.

On Saturday 19 August 1944, armored spearheads of Crerar's First Canadian Army linked up with the armor of Hodges's US First Army at Chambois during their pursuit of Operation Totalize. Between their prongs they had now sealed into a pocket at Falaise large German forces including SS General Hausser's Seventh Army and Eberbach's Fifth Panzer Army, plus the remnants of ten other divisions: a total of 150,000 men. Only one narrow exit path remained, on the Dives river (France) between Mt. Ormel and St. Leonard, both of which were held by Poles of General Maczek's 1st Panzer Division. The German troops abandoned all their heavy equipment and tried to escape there. They suffered heavy losses, and only 20,000 men with 62 tanks managed to break out. Meanwhile, 407 tanks and self-propelled guns, over 7,000 motor vehicles and 990 cannon had been abandoned in the pocket.

On Sunday 20 August 1944, the Soviets began to launch their third blow. Malinovsky's Second Ukrainian Front and Tolbukhin's Third Ukrainian Front armies—eleven tank and infantry armies in all—supported by Goriunov's 5th Air Army and Sudyets's 17th Air Army, mounted a fresh offensive from the area west of Jassy (Rumania) and south of Terespol (Poland). The objective was to encircle Fretter-Pico's German Sixth Army around Kishinev (Rumania).

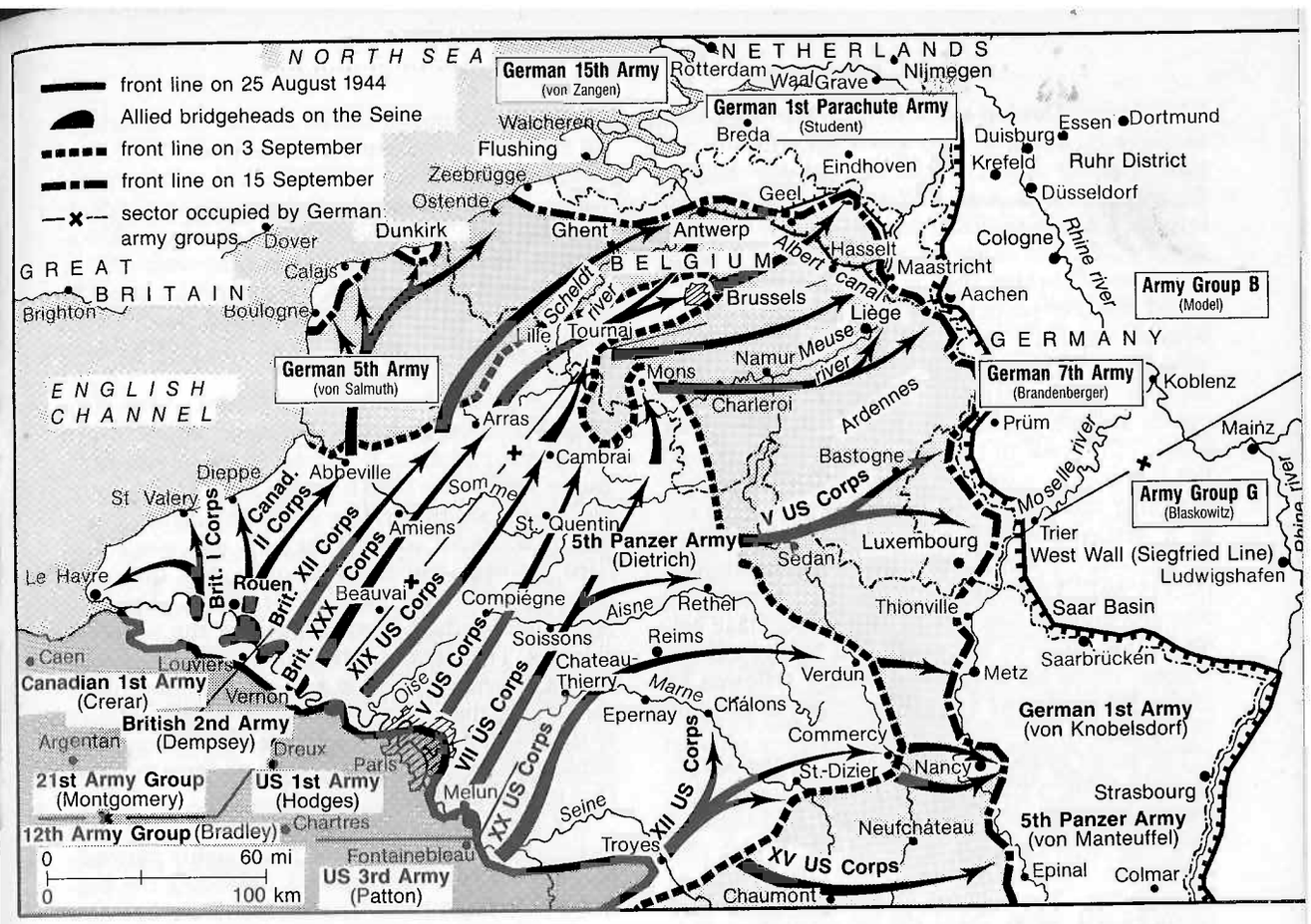
Four days later, on August 24, the Sixth Army was surrounded and completely wiped out just like the former Sixth Army in Stalingrad.

On Friday 25 August, the French 2nd Armored Division under General Leclerc and the US 4th Infantry Division liberated Paris. German infantry general von Choltitz, the commander of the city, halted the Germans' resistance, thus saving the



Opposite page. The Allied advance through France and Belgium

The reconnaissance platoon of a French armored division advancing through southern France in August 1944



French capital from destruction in direct contravention of Hitler's vengeful order to destroy the city.

On Tuesday 29 August 1944, after a series of heavy defensive battles in Italy, Hitler approved the retreat of von Vietinghoff's Tenth Army to the German Gothic Line defenses in the Apennines.

The Germans in France had lost approximately 2,000 tanks and self-propelled guns in the Falaise pocket and during their retreat to the Seine: almost 15% of their entire production for that year.

On Wednesday 30 August 1944, Soviet troops occupied the most important German fuel source, the Rumanian oil production center at Ploesti, and next day Managarov's Fifty-Third Army marched into Bucharest.

German resistance in France had now been broken for good. German troops were unable to hold a planned defensive line along the Seine. Of 2,300 German tanks that fought in the Battle of Normandy, barely 100 had survived. The Allied armored units met almost no opposition as they crossed the Seine and drove on toward Belgium.

The German defense in Normandy was destroyed [by Allied command of the air and] by superior Allied technology. Their modern amphibious transport vehicles enabled the Allies to land more troops, and to land them faster, than the German leaders had anticipated; and artificial harbors and a fuel pipeline that stretched across the English Channel to France helped them to overcome their supply problems.

By the end of August, the Wehrmacht had only 327,000 tons of fuel reserves. It had already become necessary to cut all fuel rations by half.

On Friday 1 September 1944, the armored spearheads of Tolbukhin's Third Ukrainian Front armies reached the Danube river at Giurgiu (Rumania).

On Sunday 3 September, Hitler reappointed Field Marshal von Rundstedt Commander-in-Chief West [after von Kluge's suicide], while Field Marshal Model continued as commander-in-chief of Army Group B.

That same day, the armored forces of Dempsey's British Second Army liberated Brussels.

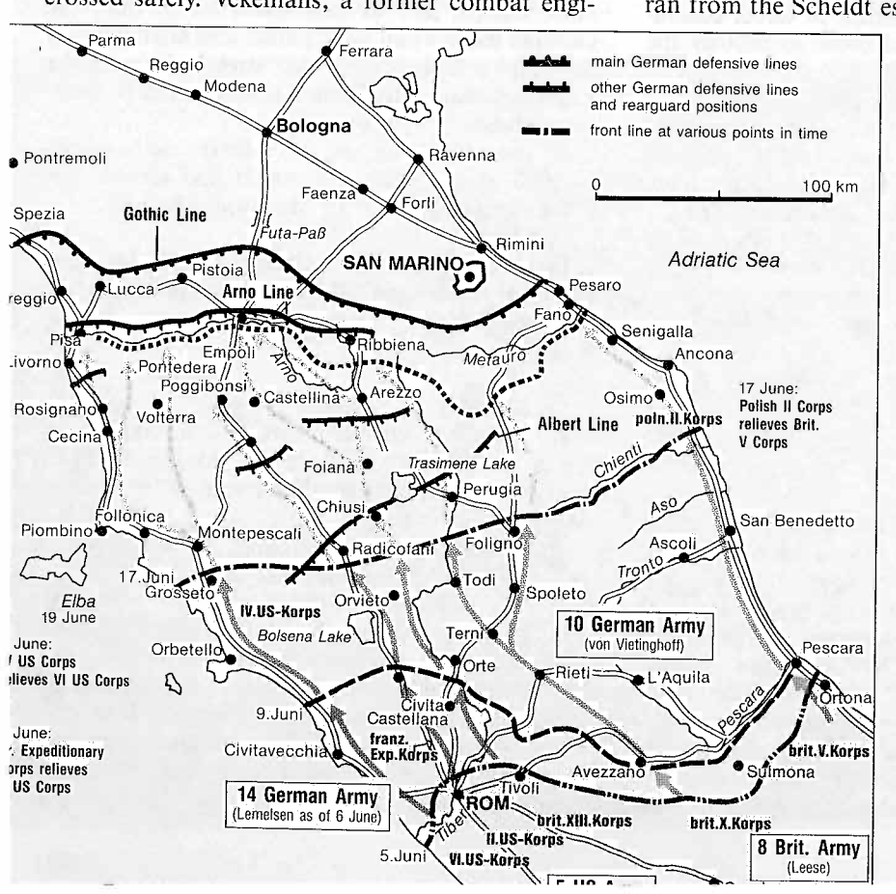
At dawn on 4 September 1944, Roberts's British 11th Armoured Division crossed the border into Belgium at Tournai and was given the mission of taking the city and port of Antwerp. A lead unit from the 3rd Armoured Regiment, commanded by Major Dunlop, was still rolling its tanks along the road at Boom some 6 miles south of the target

when Major Dunlop saw a lone civilian signalling desperately, trying to stop the tanks. He was Belgian engineer Robert Vekemans of the Belgian Bureau of Road and Bridge Construction. He informed the astonished Major Dunlop that he could guide him safely to Antwerp via sideroads and a small bridge that at the moment, he believed, had not yet been occupied by the Germans; whereas the main road and all the other bridges were well defended and heavily mined. Vekemans climbed into an armored scout car and the armored column turned off into a side lane. They crossed the canal in the village of Willebroek and left three tanks behind to guard the crossing while the other tanks followed Vekemans's armored car as it headed north. Just before reaching a little bridge over the Rupel river, they stopped behind a factory wall. The tanks swivelled their guns to the rear and draped their turrets with camouflage netting. Then three of the tanks, led by Lt. Gibson Stubbs, rolled on toward the bridge, followed by Major Dunlop's tank and the armored car carrying Vekemans.

The tanks headed for the bridge at top speed. German soldiers guarding the bridge thought that these were their own tanks retreating; and the first tank had already made it across the bridge and reached a line of houses before the Germans opened fire. The second and third tanks also crossed safely. Vekemans, a former combat engineer officer, jumped out of the car on the bridge. To ensure that the explosives could not be ignited manually, he used a knife to cut the firing cable leading to the charges the Germans had set to blow up the bridge. The tanks moved a short way downstream, hugging the shore, and then were able to capture in a surprise raid the main bridge intact. The British, led by Vekemans, moved rapidly from here to the main sluice gates of the port of Antwerp.

By evening the British succeeded, with help from Vekemans and other resistance members, in occupying intact the port and docks of Antwerp. But in their haste the 11th Armoured Division neglected to take the bridges across the Albert Canal on the northern edge of the city, and when they tried to form a bridgehead shortly after, they were driven away by the German defenders. The 11th Armoured's advance was halted at the northern suburbs. The Germans still held the island of Walcheren, where they dug in and clung stubbornly to the Scheldt river estuary which connected Antwerp to the North Sea. As a result, the Scheldt remained impassable to the Allies for the next three months. [See map p. 291]

Not until the start of September 1944 did the Germans halt their retreat at the roughly patched-up West Wall of fortifications defending the borders of Germany itself. The German front line now ran from the Scheldt estuary at Antwerp eastward



Opposite page: The strategically important bridge over the Rhine at Arnhem was the northernmost river crossing along the Allies' route to Germany. Field Marshal Montgomery planned to move tanks of the British Second Army across the bridge directly into the German Ruhr District. Had he succeeded in capturing the bridge, the war might well have ended in 1944.

The Allied Advance through Italy from June to September 1944



to the Meuse; south of Aachen it followed the West Wall which extended to Treves [German *Trier*], and then ran on via Metz and Belfort to the Swiss border.

On Monday 4 September, the Finnish forces, [which had been fighting on Germany's side], ceased fire all along the front. There were also German troops around Finland helping to defend it: The Twentieth Mountain Army under General Rendulic had nine divisions (200,000 men and 60,000 horses and pack animals) plus several armored units equipped with supplies for nine months. This force was ranged along a 500-mile strip, extending south from the Arctic Ocean, that lay on Soviet territory 30 to 60 miles east of the Finnish border. Now that Finland had surrendered, the German Mountain Army was ordered to retreat. In an operation known as the "Birch Maneuver," it pulled back its troops in the south to northern Lapland, to the line Petsamo-Ivalo-Skibottn.

At 6:38 P.M. on Friday 8 September 1944, the German 485th Motorized Artillery Detachment under Colonel Hohmann started firing the newly developed V-2 long-distance rockets (also known as A4s) at London and southern England. The launch zone was Wassenaar, a suburb of The Hague, [which was still in the hands of the Germans].

On Saturday 9 September, a pro-Soviet government under Georgieff took over power in Bulgaria, Germany's erstwhile ally, and German forces there either were interned or had to fight their way out to Serbia.

On Monday 11 September 1944, Dempsey's British Second Army crossed the Belgian border into Holland, and in the afternoon, a scouting patrol under US Sgt. Holzinger (from Major Oliver's US 5th Armored Division) crossed the border into Germany near Stolzenbourg (Luxembourg).

On Friday 15 September 1944, the Soviets mounted a grand offensive against Schörner's Army Group North. Four Soviet army groups took part, including the Leningrad Front and the First, Second and Third Baltic Fronts. The Leningrad Front under Marshal Govorov broke through the bottleneck at Narva (stronghold on the Baltic in Estonia) in its first assault.

On Sunday 17 September, large Allied paratroop units carried out airborne landings at Arnhem and Nijmegen (Netherlands) in Operation Market Garden, whose objective, ultimately to shorten the war, was to capture bridges over the lower Rhine [along the German border] before the Germans had time to build up a new defensive line. But the troops at Arnhem happened to land in a zone near units of crack SS troops—the 9th and 10th Divisions of SS General Bittrich's II SS Panzer Corps—which, although they were undergoing refurbishment and not assembled for combat, attacked at once; and [after prolonged hard fighting] the British and their Allied reinforcements were eventually defeated and forced to flee or surrender.

When the British 1st Airborne Division under General Urquhart landed at Arnhem on September 17, at the start of its ten-day battle, only 60 miles separated it from the British armored forces. But by Tuesday 26 September 1944, the Allied airborne operation at Arnhem bridge had come to a disastrous end.

At Nijmegen, on the other hand, the airborne troops succeeded in establishing a bridgehead and building a corridor connecting the bridge to the slowly advancing armor of the British Second Army. Gradually they were also able to expand the corridor.

On Sunday 24 September, German Army Group North Ukraine under General Harpe was redesignated Army Group A; and Army Group South Ukraine under Friessner was redesignated Army Group South.

After the catastrophic blows of the summer and autumn of 1944, the Germans gradually succeeded—for the last time—in rebuilding continuous fronts both in the east and west. The bad weather and the cold prevented enemy operations and gave the Wehrmacht its last spell of relief.

Meanwhile, starting on 4 October 1944, General Löhr's German Army Group E in the Balkans began wide-ranging retreat maneuvers.

On Thursday 5 October 1944, Bagramian's First Baltic Front armies—Rotmistrov's Fifth Guards Tank, Malyzhev's Fourth Shock, Chistiakov's Sixth Guards, the Fifty-First, Byeloborodov's Second Guards Army—went on the offensive near Raseiniai (Latvia) against Raus's German Third Panzer Army.

In the first week of October 1944, Moskalenko's Thirty-Eighth Army overcame stubborn German resistance and approached the strategically important Dukla Pass (Poland) in the Carpathians. The Czechoslovakian I Corps under General Svoboda (serving with the Soviet Thirty-Eighth Army) captured the Dukla Pass on October 6 with the LXVII Infantry Corps (under General Zhmygos) and the XXXI Armored Corps (under General Grigoriev). Czech troops had once again stepped onto Czech soil.

On Tuesday 10 October 1944, Soviet armored spearheads reached the Baltic Sea north of the Niemen river (German *Memel*) at Polangen and encircled the port of Klaipeda (Lithuania).

On Saturday 14 October 1944, armored forces of Simpson's US Ninth Army surrounded Aachen, the first major German city to be invested by the Allies.

That same day, the tanks of Zhdanov's Soviet IV Mechanized Guards Corps and of the 1st Proletarian Division of the Yugoslavian partisan army under Colonel Vaso Jovanic fought their way through to Belgrade.

On Monday 16 October, Chernyakhovsky's Third White Russian Front launched a grand offensive along an 85-mile-wide front in Lithuania, driving toward Königsberg/East Prussia. Its five armies totalled approximately 40 infantry divisions with several armored forces, and it had strong support from ground attack planes.

After taking Belgrade, Malinovsky's Second Ukrainian Front drove westward out of Transylvania across the Tisza river in the western Ukraine (German *Theiss*).

Meanwhile, German Army Group South managed to assemble substantial armored forces in the area, and General Guderian ordered them to move out from Debrecen (Hungary) and attack the Soviet north flank.

On the same day, October 16, the Germans halted the Soviet assault forces in an armored battle that went on for a week and stopped the Soviet attack along the Tisza and Danube rivers.

On Friday 20 October 1944, the US Sixth Army under General Krueger landed on Leyte, a long, narrow, jungle- and swamp-strewn Philippine island, and began an offensive to reconquer the Philippines.

All the US divisions deployed on Leyte had armored units which were trained in cooperation with the infantry; but the infantry had had no experience fighting in cooperation with tanks. The Leyte offensive deteriorated into a lengthy tug-of-war with the Japanese, who doggedly refused to surrender. The US troops, with their small-sized, combination armored-infantry forces, won ground a step at a time, while heavy rainfall impaired all movement. The US tanks could advance through the swamp-filled jungle only along roads or major paths. The Japanese antitank guns and close-range weapons such as land mines and tank traps were hard to see in the tall grass and claimed heavy casualties. If the tanks took the lead ahead of the infantry, the Japanese knocked out the tanks; if they dropped behind the infantry, the infantry made no progress.

That same day, October 20, the armored units of the Soviet Eleventh Guards Army under Galitski penetrated into East Prussia and captured Goldap and the road to Nemmersdorf, overtaking large columns of German refugees along the way.

On Tuesday 31 October, Heinrici's German First Panzer Army gave up its struggle in Slovakia against the national uprising, supported by Soviet paratroops who had attached themselves to the



Left: US soldier carrying a bazooka, the American close-range antitank weapon, near Aachen in December 1944. He is passing a knocked-out German tank destroyer with a 7.5-cm antitank gun (the 39 L/48) mounted on the chassis of an LT-38 Czech tank—the 38(t) tank in the German designation.



Opposite page: German and Hungarian tanks on their way to the front near Debrecen, Hungary, in October 1944. On the right is a Hungarian Turan I medium tank weighing over 18 tons (the 40 M Turán-Köz kk) and armed with a 4-cm cannon (the 41 M L/51 or Skoda A-17). On the left is a German Panzer IV, Version (Mark) G.

Slovakian Army, which had broken out on 29 August 1944. At the start of the fighting, the rebels had 33 Czech Skoda 38 tanks, while the Germans had 28 Panzer IVs, 2 Tigers and 16 self-propelled guns.

That day German rearguard troops evacuated Salonica (Greece), and, at the same time, they began to retreat from Albania.

The last German soldiers left Greece on the night of 1/2 November 1944.

On Thursday 2 November 1944, the German Fourth Army under General Hossbach recaptured Goldap (East Prussia). The Soviets lost some 1,000 tanks and 300 cannon in attack and counterattack. General Guderian tried, but in vain [because Hitler regarded this as a retreat], to get Hitler's permission for Friessner's Army Group North to break out of the pocket, where it was encircled by Soviet troops, in the direction of East Prussia. Hilpert's German Sixteenth Army and Boege's Eighteenth Army, plus Raus's Third Panzer Army, left isolated in the north with a total of some 26 divisions, used Friessner's group to form the Kurland bridgehead, a force occupying the former duchy of Kurland on the Baltic Sea in the area between Liepaya, Maschejki and Tukums (Latvia and the border of Lithuania).

On Thursday 16 November, Simpson's US Ninth Army led an attack near Jülich (west Germany) against von Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army, and the fighting flared up into what the Germans called the Battle on the Ruhr.

By mid-November 1944, the German armies on the whole of the Western Front had 775 combat-ready tanks and self-propelled guns. The Western Allies had ten times that number.

On Thursday 23 November, the armored spearheads of the US Seventh Army penetrated Strasbourg, took the city and reached the Rhine.

Between the last days of November and the first days of December 1944, the Germans succeeded in rebuilding a firm front line in the West. It ran along the rivers and canals of Holland in the north, and then down to the lower Rhine and the West Wall to the upper Rhine.

Between September and November 1944, German arms factories produced 1,764 tanks, only 1,371 of which reached the troops; the rest were destroyed en route by Allied air raids. Tank production during this period had fallen by 20%.

On Saturday 16 December 1944, the Germans launched a major surprise offensive in the West, [their last attempt to regain the strategic initiative], along the front between the Ardennes and Luxembourg. The Germans called it Operation Watch-on-the-Rhine, or the Ardennes Offensive or the Rundstedt Offensive, [and the Allies knew it as the Battle of the Bulge]. The main German offensive force was Model's Army Group B including SS General Dietrich's Sixth SS Panzer Army, von Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army and Brandenberger's Seventh Army: a total of 12 infantry divisions, 2 parachute divisions, 7 panzer divisions plus reserve forces (4 infantry divisions, 2 panzer divisions and one panzer-grenadier division) with 1,750 tanks and self-propelled guns in all. Air support was supplied by the approximately 1,800 planes of Schmid's Air Force West. The German objective was to [attack the thinly distributed American troops in the Ardennes while bad weather was keeping Allied planes on the ground], drive a wedge between the American and British forces, push through to take Antwerp and compel the Allied invasion troops to retreat. Sixth SS Panzer Army met determined resistance from the start and was able to advance only about 6 miles, while Fifth Panzer Army drove about 20 miles through the American lines.

Sunday 17 December 1944, the second day of the

offensive, saw no real change in the German position. Sixth SS Panzer Army did succeed in driving a deep breach through to Clervaux and penetrated to within 3½ miles of Malmedy; but the German Seventh Army and the forces along the flanks of the offensive spearhead had bogged down. The projected target for that day had been to set up bridgeheads over the Meuse; but the Germans were still far short of the targeted zone.

On Monday 18 December, the attack by Sixth SS Panzer Army ground to a virtual standstill.

On Saturday 23 December, a spell of good weather in the Ardennes allowed the Allies fully to deploy their aerial forces for the first time since the German offensive began. That day 3,170 planes attacked German traffic columns and troop concentrations. The German Luftwaffe never appeared to protect its forces.

On Sunday 24 December, Budapest was encircled on the south by Ryzhov's Fourth Guards Infantry Army and Galanin's Fifty-Third Army. The fortress of Budapest, under its German commandant SS General Pfeffer von Wildenbruch, defended itself with the forces of IX SS Mountain Corps and von Hindy's I Hungarian Corps: a total of about 70,000 men.

On Monday 25 December 1944, von Rundstedt concluded that the German Ardennes offensive could not succeed because it was impossible for German forces either to reach Antwerp or to destroy Allied forces east of the Meuse. He reported his views to Hitler and asked permission to halt the offensive and to withdraw his troops to the fortified West Wall; but Hitler insisted that the offensive continue because he hoped that the situation would change when Army Group G launched Operation North Wind, an offensive drive out of northern Alsace planned for the start of January.

On Tuesday 26 December, the Soviet XVIII Armored Corps took the city of Esztergom [German *Gran*] on the Danube in northern Hungary, thus cutting off Budapest from its last land connection to the outside world.

By Friday 29 December 1944, four US divisions had already succeeded in breaking up the German Fifth Panzer Army troops that had drawn a ring around Bastogne. The 2nd Panzer Division, which lay farthest to the west, had to retreat to Rochefort, and the German offensive gradually veered over into a defeat.

Now that Finland, Bulgaria and Rumania had been knocked out of the war, depriving Germany of its allies, the OKH faced the virtually insoluble task of maintaining a continuous front in the East and the Balkans. German armored operations suffered greatly because the Wehrmacht ought now to have adopted an appropriate defensive strategy; but it was not allowed to do so by the political and military leaders who still wanted to pursue an offensive course. Thus in 1944 the armored forces were compelled to fight what were actually defensive battles, using an organization that was still structured along the offensive lines set up in 1942/43.

In late summer of 1944, the OKH ordered their forces to form 13 independent panzer brigades composed of 35 tanks and 12 storm (assault) guns each, plus one grenadier battalion, one engineer, one antiaircraft and one reconnaissance platoon each. But the brigades were deployed separately rather than en masse so they suffered heavy losses; and this form of organization soon had to be abandoned.

The German panzer troops were better equipped than ever in 1944 in that they had a higher quantity and quality of matériel; but they were not yet uniformly organized. Most panzer corps were not composed purely of armored units but included panzer-grenadier and even infantry divisions in addition to tank divisions.

By reinforcing the small armored components of a panzer division [like engineers, antiaircraft etc], the OKH were able to deploy powerful mixed units in crucial areas. Unfortunately, this tended to deplete the armored troops which were repeatedly called in as an emergency force, especially for counterattacks and counterstrokes. On the other hand, Germany was now under such threat from every quarter that it needed to draw on the improvisational capability of the armored troops: For improvisation in the organization and deployment of armor was often the only chance left to rapidly seal off tactical and operational breakthroughs, or set up new front lines.

In December 1944, the front in Italy ran from La Spezia on the Ligurian Sea, across the Apennines to the Adriatic Sea near Ravenna.

At the end of 1944 just before the Ardennes Offensive, the Germans set up several panzer corps whose divisional strength was to be maintained at a constant level. The Germans wanted to combine the remaining forces of several panzer divisions so as to create large corps of the strength required for offensive operations and, at the same time, to economize on the baggage train, repair and administrative personnel which would have been needed to maintain many individual units.

German antitank fighting methods had improved to such an extent that the Soviets on the Eastern Front now had to sacrifice an average of five of their own tanks to destroy one German tank

or self-propelled storm gun. However, the costly battles of 1944 had further depleted the Germans' tank stocks. Although German arms producers worked at top speed in autumn 1944, there was no way to make up the losses. By now, a panzer division averaged no more than 80 combat-ready tanks. The shortage of effective antiaircraft guns meant that the losses of German tanks to tactical bombing raids were soaring on the Eastern Front as well as in the West and in Italy. Yet despite the massive Allied strategic bombing raids on German industrial plants, the German arms industry was able to increase its production in 1944: 7,908 tanks, 8,885 assault guns and tank destroyers.

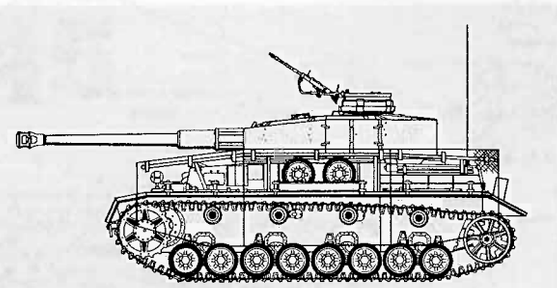
In the summer of 1944, German arms production achieved peak levels, increasing its capacity more than 300% over what it had been at the start of 1942. In December 1944, 598 tanks and self-propelled and storm guns were produced, bringing the year's production to an all-time record.

The creation of the Volkssturm Militia in autumn 1944 imposed a rest on German tank manufacture. Production had repeatedly to be cut down or broken off completely because the workers were away on compulsory military exercises. Germany now entered the final phase of its war effort in which it became more important for workers to enter military service than to manufacture arms.

Meanwhile, Fifth Panzer Army and Sixth SS Panzer Army in the West were used up in the German Ardennes offensive, while simultaneously in the East the German armored forces were grouped strategically in widely scattered operations, or tried to hold small non-essential territories like Kurland in western Latvia. German armored resources were overstrained and frittered away in a militarily indefensible way.

Soviet armor used new deployment tactics in the assault operations of summer and fall 1944. The powerful lead armored detachment now became an important element in the Soviets' drive to accelerate their offensive. The armored and mechanized lead units of the general armies formed connecting links between the main forces and the various rapidly advancing mobile groups. As a rule the lead units drove forward parallel to the retreat paths of the German troops, captured crossroads and important sectors of terrain and then held them until the main forces arrived. These advance detachments were so strong that they could carry out independent missions up to a depth of 60 miles; and on cooperative missions, they could be sent into action more than 30 miles ahead of the main troops.

The Soviets had also substantially improved cooperation between armor and the Red Air Force. Armored units earmarked for operational missions



German Panzer IV medium tank, Version J (first produced end of 1944)

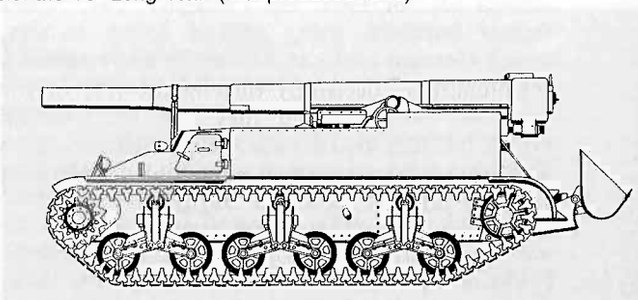
even had special fighter and ground attack planes assigned to them for use in their operations.

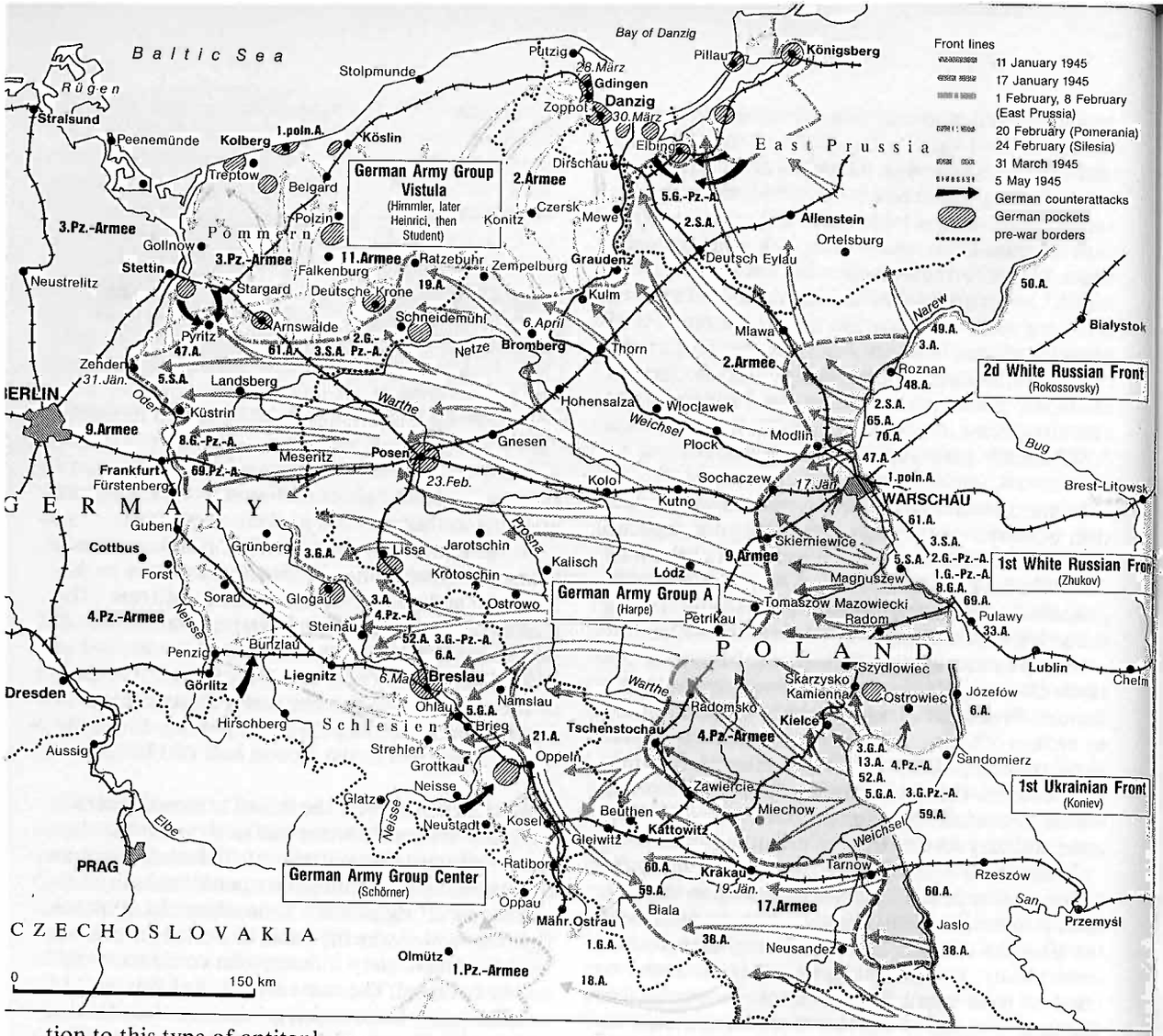
At the end of 1944, the density of tanks and self-propelled guns along the Soviet lines rose to between 70 and 100 for every half mile of front. The tanks also increased the operational depth at which they worked, from about 72 miles in 1943 to 240 miles and more by the end of 1944. The pace of the offensive had accelerated from an average of 6 miles per day to 30 or 35 miles per day during the major offensives in the second half of 1944.

By the end of 1944, the Allied armored forces in Italy and Western Europe had achieved major tactical feats in the pursuit of defeated German troops but had led almost no operational missions.

The most significant innovation in antitank fighting tactics was the small close-range antitank weapon which every infantryman could carry and use on his own. The most effective of this type of weapon were hollow-charge devices that fired a missile on the rocket principle: the American "bazooka," the German "Panzerfaust" and "Panzerschreck," and the British "PIAT" (Projector Infantry Anti-Tank) which worked by spring pressure and so emitted no muzzle flash to betray the gunner's position. Notably, neither the Red Army nor the Imperial Army of Japan devoted any atten-

US 15.5-cm cannon mounted on a self-propelled gun chassis: the T6 "Long Tom" (first produced 1945)





tion to this type of antitank arm.

Strong nerves and courage were needed to use the small antitank weapons, because a man had to move in fairly close to an enemy tank to have any chance of knocking it out; and, moreover, tanks rarely attacked alone but were almost always accompanied by other tanks or by infantry. On top of that, a single square hit with an antitank rocket launcher was often not enough to destroy a tank.

The airplane became the deadliest of foes in the second half of 1944. On 7 August 1944, Allied fighter bombers, using ground attack rockets, struck German tanks at Avranches and crushed a counterattack, decisively turning the tide of the invasion. Not only did they halt the German armor, but they also disrupted its maneuvers again and again and even made it impossible for German tanks to move at all in the daylight.

The Soviet Winter Offensive 1945

The Lutfwaffe had a highly successful antitank aircraft, the Junkers Ju 87 G Stuka dive bomber, which was deployed along the Eastern Front. Major Hans Ulrich Rudel had the idea of equipping each of these planes with two 3.7-cm No. 18 antiaircraft cannon and forming them into antitank squadrons. Rudel, who knocked out 519 enemy tanks from the air, was the most successful tank-destroyer ace of World War II.

The Soviet air force used its Ilyushin I1-2 Sturmovik ground attack plane in an antitank role. The Sturmoviks were armored aircraft that carried eight rockets [in addition to other armament]; the Soviets were the first to equip their planes with rockets.

1945

January—August

Battle of the Ardennes Intensifies

Friday 5 January 1945
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

Yesterday the battle in the northern Ardennes increased in violence still further. In combined fire by all arms, the American divisions tried once again to break through but bogged down after slight initial success. In the area of Bastogne, our armored forces continued to exert strong pressure; enemy attacks failed. Our front lines are shifting between Saargemünd and the Rhine. Despite counterattacks by enemy troop reinforcements, our soldiers are advancing again, especially in the lower Vosges mountains in northeastern France. We have liberated the town of Weissenburg in Alsace, as well as a number of places in Lorraine, and have crossed the Lauter river to the south. . . .

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 5 January 1945:

On the Eastern Front, despite occasional violent military actions, the front lines have for some time remained stable in [the west Latvian region of] Kurland on the Baltic, on the border of East Prussia, and in Poland. . . Meanwhile, the German Wehrmacht has found the strength in recent weeks to mount fresh offensive thrusts. The [official Nazi Party newspaper the] *Völkischer Beobachter*'s prediction remains unfulfilled that Rundstedt's offensive in the Ardennes would in a few weeks enable the Germans to regain the initiative. It is already being admitted in Berlin that the offensive initiative in the embattled Ardennes salient [the "bulge" in the Battle of the Bulge] has once again passed to the Americans.

Savage Street Fighting in Budapest

Thursday 11 January 1945, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

In the devastated terrain surrounding the eastern railroad station in Budapest, fighting continued with the most extreme ferocity throughout the day. In general, we prevented further Soviet incursions in hand-to-hand and other fighting. Several enemy tanks broke through and approached a lead-in to Rokokczi Street, one of the city's main shopping thoroughfares; but German storm guns set the tanks on fire. Counterattacking German and Hungarian troops have closed the dangerous gaps which had opened along the front.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief

Saturday 13 January 1945:

Yesterday the Soviets launched their winter offensive and are expected to expand it to further sectors of the front today. As a result, the German Army of the East is once again waging the most massive defensive struggle. The German Press will show the same mighty will to resist as the whole of the German people, stand fast to halt the onslaught and confront it with the greatest energy and determination.

Monday 15 January 1945
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

In the West yesterday, our defensive fighting continued to focus around the area south of Malmedy between the Salm and Ourthe rivers and on either side of Bastogne. Our brave forces defended themselves fiercely and prevented yet another attempted American breakthrough in which the enemy deployed extremely massive forces both

on the ground and in the air. The enemy won ground only locally at very few points. We knocked out 25 tanks. The Soviets, as expected, have expanded the area of their winter offensive. After a prefatory heavy barrage lasting several hours, they attacked from their bridgeheads on the Vistula river at Pulawy and Warka; from the triangular confluence of the Vistula and Bug rivers north of Warsaw; and from bridgeheads on the Narev [Narew] river on either side of Szezytno (German *Ortelsburg*). Fierce fighting has flared up along the entire Eastern Front. We are continuing our retaliatory bombardment of London [with V-1 flying bombs and V-2 rockets].

Unprecedented Offensive

Wednesday 17 January 1945, Berlin
The *German News Bureau* reported:

Dr. Max Krull, a military correspondent of the German News Bureau, writes concerning the [Soviet winter] offensive: The Soviets have poured masses of men, arms and matériel into the winter battle between the Carpathians [in the south] and the Memel [Niemen or Neman] river [in the north] on a scale unparalleled in the more than five years of military action preceding the present offensive. Infantry divisions and armored corps are erupting from the Soviet bridgeheads along the great bend of the Vistula in numbers which it has so far been impossible to count. This assault is more than just another of those innumerable Soviet attempts to break through our lines, which they have mounted against us again and again, with variable success, ever since 1943. Their present offensive is unprecedented in that it represents a total deployment of all available forces. An attempt is being made to overthrow with a single blow the entire German front in the East and to open up all the paths into the heart of Central Europe. German commanders are holding large strategic forces in reserve in the various deployment zones and will send them into action only when the enemy spearheads have penetrated deeply enough so that vulnerable areas open up along their flanks.

Thursday 18 January 1945
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

The battle in the great bend of the Vistula is continuing with unabated violence. We brought up reserves which intercepted the enemy spearheads between Krakow and Czestochowa. After fighting in the city streets, Czestochowa and Tomaszow have fallen into enemy hands. Soviet armored wedges have penetrated the area between Lodz and the Vistula. Our forces are also engaged in heavy fighting against powerful enemy forces between Kielce and the lower Pilica river. A German panzer division from lower Saxony knocked out 85 tanks there in a single day.

We have evacuated our troops from Warsaw in the great bend of the Vistula. In the West, local assaults have developed into vigorous battles in the German salient bulging westward at Maaseik [Belgium], after the British moved strong forces into action. Bitter fighting is raging for individual towns and villages east and northeast of Bastogne.

German Offensive against Strasbourg
Saturday 20 January 1945
The American *United Press News Agency* reported from General Eisenhower's Headquarters:

In the area north of Strasbourg, Germans have used ferry boats and pontoon bridges to convey additional reinforcements, including a large number of Tiger tanks, across the Rhine. As a result, they have successfully linked up their Rhine bridgehead with their troops north of the Hagenau Forest [lower Alsace] so that the enemy now holds a continuous front approximately 42 miles long, running from Bitche to Sulz and on to Gambsheim on the upper Rhine. The breakthrough that led to the linkup of the two enemy forces occurred after the Germans extended their bridgehead northward to the area of Seltz [France] and recaptured the villages of Leutenheim and Kaussenheim to the southwest, only a few miles from the German troops at Hatten.

Wood and Cardboard Mines

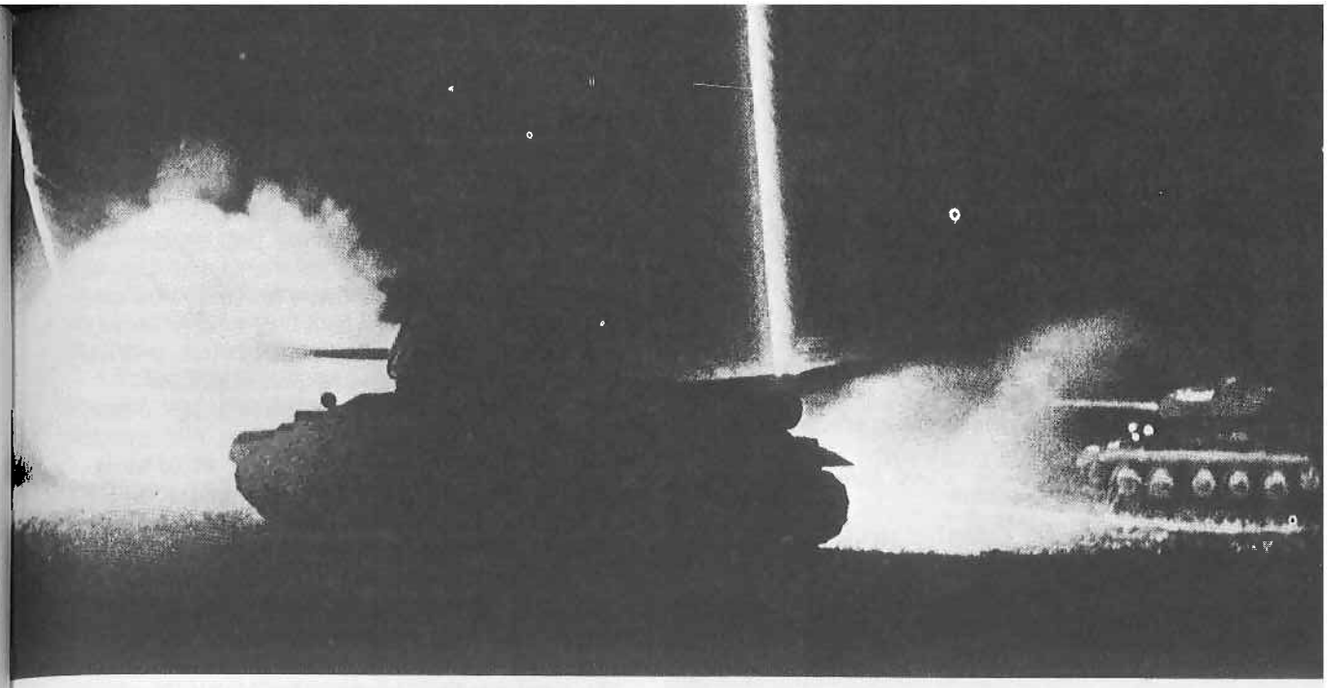
Wednesday 24 January 1945, Mulhouse [France]
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The French First Army has been given the task of clearing large quantities of land mines out of the Mulhouse area [German *Mülhausen*] which has just been occupied by the Allies. The French have been struck by the fact that the Germans—due no doubt to their shortage of iron—did not lay down any steel mines but only mines encased in glass, cardboard, wood or other substitute materials.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 26 January 1945:

One day the war histories will make clear—for it is not clear now—how the Russians were able in their first, irresistible charge, to wrest one defensive position and one fortified city after another from the German Army in the East practically overnight, and they were able not only to meet with no effective resistance, but to capture virtually intact the Polish road and rail traffic network,



12 January 1945, the Baranov bridgehead (Poland). Tanks are bursting through the German front lines in the first minutes of the Soviet winter offensive.

the manufacturing plants of Lodz (the greatest of the Polish industrial cities) and, in fact, all the cities of western Poland including Krakow. The Russians have now left eastern Poland, which is poor in roads and rail lines, and are entering [western Poland] where they have found ready and waiting for their use a dense and high-quality traffic and supply system which improves the closer they penetrate to the German border.

The Battle of the Ardennes Comes to an End
Saturday 27 January 1945
The American *Associated Press News Agency* reported from General Eisenhower's Headquarters:

Our frontline correspondents reported late last night that the battle in the Ardennes [the Battle of the Bulge] is over and that American armored spearheads have now penetrated to the German border. The whole length of the road from St. Vith to Büllange [Belgium] has been completely cleared of the enemy, and at some points he has been thrown back behind the starting positions for his December offensive. Most of northern Luxembourg has been liberated again, and, farther south, the German city of Treves [Trier] once more lies within range of American artillery.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

Friday 16 February 1945:

Last Monday evening, February 12, marked the publication of a joint declaration signed by President Roosevelt, Marshal Stalin and Prime Minister Churchill, summarizing the results of their week-long conference. . . Most significant for Europe was their statement about [the fate of] Europe after the liberation. This statement was clearly inspired by the Americans and reflects the "open door" principle, that is, the idea of joint responsibility and cooperation among the Allies within the liberated nations, as well as inside the so-called former Axis satellite nations. The policy, by giving the other Allies joint control, is designed to curtail the exclusive rights of any individual major Allied power to dispose affairs in an occupied country.

Winston Churchill to Joseph Stalin
Friday 23 February 1945:

The Red Army celebrates its twenty-seventh anniversary amid triumphs which have won the unstinted applause of their allies and have sealed the doom of German militarism. Future generations will acknowledge their debt to the Red Army as unreservedly as we do who have lived to witness these proud achievements. I ask you, the great leader of a great army, to salute them from me today, on the threshold of final victory. [English quoted from pp. 305–306 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
Sunday 25 February 1945:

In the headlines [which we write] to the German News Bureau Report, and in reporting military commentaries, we should continue to emphasize the views expressed in them about the long-range objectives of the American offensive in the West, which has failed to achieve any notable success on its first day.

London Dock Workers' Strike

Saturday 3 March 1945, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

An unauthorized strike by 5,000 London dock workers has paralyzed most of the London port installations. This morning more than 1,000 British soldiers started work in the docks so that at least the most important cargoes could be processed, namely those bound for the front.

Allied Ring Closes around Cologne
Monday 5 March 1945
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

The fight for the capital of the Rhineland (Cologne) has now entered the siege phase. The siege began after Allied forces crossed the mountain chain that cuts across the western suburbs of Cologne, and the American First Army assembled along a continuous semicircular front running from the bank of the Rhine opposite Leverkusen to the Erft river west of Bonn. The defenders are putting up a very tenacious resistance but have for the most part already been thrown back to their inner defense perimeter. The fight is focussing along the roads leading into Cologne from the cities of Grevenboich, Jülich and Düren. [US] General Hodges's lead troops are said to be marching on Bonn.

The Bridge at Remagen

An article by Gladwin Hill in the 9 March 1945 issue of *The New York Times* [retranslated]:

The Allied bridgehead on the Rhine, (Friday) 9 March:

The censors have allowed release of the following details concerning this great military coup:

US troops of the 9th Armored Division commanded by Major-General John Leonard of San Antonio, Texas, were operating near Euskirchen about 23 miles northwest of Remagen, and as resistance slackened they drove on southward and led a vigorous attack in which they took a German munitions depot in the Rheinbach Forest, and the villages of Rheinbach and Meckenheim-Stadt.

On Wednesday morning, elements of Combat Command B under Brigadier-General William M. Hoge of Lexington, Missouri, moved out of Meckenheim-Stadt. The 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, Major Murray Deevers of Hayville, Arkansas, commanding, took the lead. They rolled through the valley between the steep vineyards and reached undamaged villages on the Rhine where improvised American flags were draped out of the windows.

So rapid was their advance that Major Deevers's headquarters, which normally moved forward in stages from one village to the next, stayed where it was inside a half-track vehicle.

Major Deevers said that General Hoge had told him he needed a bridge, "and when he says he needs something, he needs it!"

German prisoners captured at Remagen revealed that the Germans were planning to blow up the bridge there at 4:00 that afternoon, so Major Deevers sent in A Company, led by 2nd Lt. Carl

Near Czestochowa, Poland, in January 1945. German tanks during the violent retreat battles near the border of Germany. On the right is a Tiger tank, on the left several Panzer IVs.



Zimmerman of West Point, Nebraska. The first platoon across the bridge was under command of Lt. Emmett J. Burrows of the Bronx. Major Deevers sent in B Company to clear the bridge of explosives only shortly before the German sentries there lit the charges to blow it up. The first vehicle across the bridge was an ambulance driven by Protestant chaplain William T. Gibble of Arkansas.

The Germans were so disheartened that several crossed the river from east to west and surrendered.

Our troops on the west bank of the Rhine hurried south to Remagen to carry out operations to exploit this unexpected advantage. Last night, roads leading to the bridge were jammed for miles around with trucks carrying equipment and soldiers, in defiance of the hilly landscape, the miserable narrow roads and the deep mud that covered their vehicles almost up to the axles. The Germans, in their desperate struggle to hold the bridgehead, this evening brought up fresh troops from their rear. Last night, two large German vehicle columns were seen to be shining their headlights onto our bridgehead at Remagen. Today, despite the dense cloud cover, American planes tried to bomb three rail switchyards 15 miles north of the bridgehead in Siegburg, Oberlar-Troisdorf and Hennef to interrupt the flow of German reinforcements. . . .

Handicapped by poor flying weather, the Germans led four unsuccessful air raids on the bridge yesterday afternoon. The enemy aircraft included three old Junkers Ju 87 Stuka dive bombers and one Messerschmitt Me 109 fighter. All four planes were shot down by American flak. At 8:00 this morning a lone Focke Wulf fighter plane tried to destroy the bridge with a remote-controlled glide bomb. A couple of hours later three planes flew over, two of which were shot down. Four more planes attacked individually at noon. German artillery also bombarded the western bridgehead to no avail.

Daily Keynote from the Reich Press Chief
18 March 1945:

Foreign reports of the utterly ruthless conduct of the American occupation troops in the Rhineland—especially their starvation policy toward German civilians—merit continual emphasis [in our news reports].

The Costly Road to Cologne

German war correspondent Kurt Neher reported in the 20 March 1945 issue of the German newspaper *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*:

As the last German soldiers left the ancient

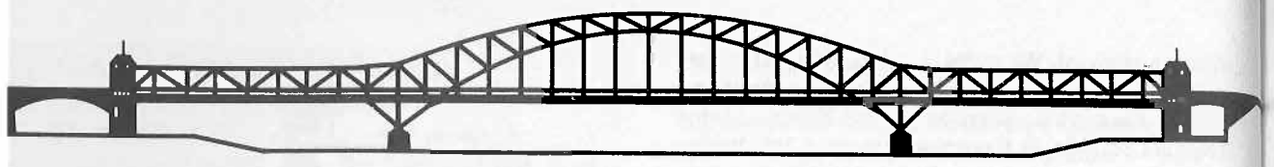


An elderly German Volkssturm militiaman with a Panzerfaust antitank gun attached to a trench periscope. "The dread of tanks is the result of psychological suggestion."

Hanseatic city of Cologne in their assault boats, they did so in the knowledge that they had blocked the enemy's access to the Rhine for almost 3½ months.

A miles-wide field of craters that has been plowed up by gunfire again and again now surrounds Cologne in the area between the great circular road around the city and the outlying houses of its suburbs. It is a ring of suffering; but at the same time it is also a thorny crown of self-conquest and self-sacrifice. When German panzergrenadiers took up their positions in these craters to face the American tanks, with the empty houses of a destroyed city lying at their back, they felt more keenly than ever before the merciless harshness of the war being waged by our enemies.

The might of the enemy onslaught met the might of the German defense one last time along the arterial roads in the outer districts of Cologne. The perseverance of the German forces made it possible for German tanks and heavy weapons to move out safely across the last remaining intact bridge in Cologne and to reach the right bank of the Rhine. As their forces broke up, they fought in the street, forming islands of resistance to which enemy tanks laid siege as if to fortresses, while the enemy infantry had already taken up battle with the Volkssturm Militia to their rear. At 1:00 P.M. on March 7, German engineers blew up the Hohenzollern Bridge. The following night, the



The Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen, built in World War I to transport needed equipment and supplies to the Western Front. It was the last intact bridge across the Rhine and the Allies needed it. When General Eisenhower heard it had been taken he cried: "That bridge is worth its weight in gold!" The swift transfer of US armored troops across the river to the eastern bank did indeed help to shorten the war by several months; but only a few days after its capture, on 17 March 1945, the bridge collapsed because of overloading, killing 28 US soldiers.

crews of the tanks that had stayed behind to cover our retreat, blew up their vehicles. Not one German weapon fell whole into enemy hands.

News Blackout
Friday 23 March 1945
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

A news blackout has been imposed along the whole Ruhr Front now that another Allied grand offensive is clearly about to take place in the area. The great assembly operations of Montgomery's army group are being veiled under a huge wall of smoke. An artificial fog, some 60 miles in length and generated by 85,000 smoke pots, is wending its way upstream from Remagen.

The Allies Force the Rhine
Sunday 25 March 1945
The American *United Press News Agency* reported from General Eisenhower's Headquarters:

This morning revealed at least 10 Allied divisions, including the British 6th and American 17th Airborne Divisions, standing on the far bank of the Rhine. Armor-supported infantry had already linked up yesterday with troops of the 1st Airborne Army who had gotten a foothold on the hill chain overlooking the valley, a couple of miles from the banks of the Rhine. They knocked out the most important German artillery emplacements guarding the valley below and fought successfully to open a path for our troops to advance to Bocholt.

Joseph Stalin to Winston Churchill
Sunday 15 April 1945:

Your message on the occasion of the death of President F. Roosevelt has reached me.

In President Franklin Roosevelt the Soviet people recognized an outstanding political leader and unswerving champion of close cooperation between our three countries.

Our people will always value highly and remember President F. Roosevelt's friendly attitude to the Soviet Union.

As for myself, I am deeply afflicted by the loss of this great man, our common friend. [English quoted from p. 322 of *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941–45*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1958]

Wednesday 18 April 1945
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

Yesterday the main feature of our defensive struggle on the front in central Italy was that the enemy deployed the most massive equipment ever. The Anglo-Americans tried to smash our positions with a long heavy artillery barrage and relay air raids. We broke the onslaught yet again, inflicting heavy casualties, thanks to the steadfastness and unbending fighting will of our veteran soldiers in Italy. The enemy won ground only locally in isolated sectors.

Thursday 19 April 1945
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

On the third day of the great battle of attrition outside Berlin, the Bolshevists threw men and matériel into the fight on a scale never seen before. Our brave troops, borne along by the example of their officers, stood up to the massive onslaught and frustrated all attempts to break through.

South of Frankfurt-on-the-Oder, our forces have maintained their positions against Soviet forces who vastly outnumber them. We have sealed off by immediate counterstrokes Bolshevist troops who penetrated on either side of Seelow to east of Müncheberg. South of Wriezen, our tanks halted the attacking foe after hard fighting. Reports that are still incomplete say that we destroyed 218 tanks again yesterday.

While the British remained generally quiet between the Ems and Weser rivers [in western Germany], they continued their powerful attack on the Lüneburg Heath. Soltau has fallen into enemy hands after hard fighting in which we knocked out 49 tanks. The enemy is driving northward along a narrow front at this point. Violent fighting has broken out around Lüneburg and Uelzen.

Our defensive war in central Italy continued with the enemy deploying the same massive matériel as before, and heavy losses on both sides.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)
Friday 20 April 1945:

Military events in Europe are moving toward their climax with uncanny swiftness and violence, so that the end of the war in our part of the world is now already in sight. . . The advancing Americans and British have made truly horrifying discoveries in the concentration camps and prisoners' camps which have fallen into their hands. Newspaper correspondents and liberated prisoners, including a number of renowned French scholars, tell of conditions which were a mockery to all humanity in these camps where the wretched victims of the Gestapo were subjected to hideous tortures and perished in the thousands. . . The appalling hidden background of the Nazi regime is gradually coming to light as the Allied armies penetrate farther into Germany.

Monday 23 April 1945
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

The battle for the German capital has flared up to a peak of violence. South of the city our troops intercepted massive Soviet armored forces along the line Beelitz-Trebbin-Teltow-Dahlewitz. Köpenick railroad station, which we had already lost, has now been recaptured in a counterattack. We have sealed off an enemy penetration along the Prenzlau road. North of the city Soviet assault spearheads penetrated to the Havel river, which they tried unsuccessfully to forge.

The situation in Baden-Württemberg became more critical yesterday. French Gaullist forces and superior armored forces of the American Seventh Army have torn our front wide open in several sectors after violent fighting and advanced south, where they have reached the Danube at various points between Villingen and Donaueschingen.

Although we have intercepted the enemy along the Ligurian coast [in Italy] and in the Apennines in western Etruria after gaining several miles of ground, we were outweighed by the enemy armored forces who achieved several deep breaches in the Vignola-Bologna area. We managed to seal off these breaches only when they had already reached either side of Modena, and north of Bologna.

Thursday 26 April 1945
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

In northwest Germany our troops have repelled numerous attacks by tank-backed Canadian forces along either side of the lower Ems river.

After a prefatory artillery bombardment lasting several hours, the British moved to attack Bremen.

March 1945, an armored unit of the French First Army (under General de Lattre de Tassigny) advancing west of Strasbourg



They penetrated the southern and southeastern suburbs in heavy and variable fighting, and fierce combat is now raging there.

American drives out of their Elbe river bridgehead at Barby have led to the loss of several villages despite tough resistance from us.

Yesterday both sides threw reserves into the Berlin area. Heavy street fighting has exploded in the southern part of the capital in Zehlendorf, Steglitz and along the southern fringe of Tempelhof Airport. In the east and north, our troops are resisting fiercely at the Silesian and Görlitz rail stations and in Tegel and Siemensstadt; fighting has also broken out at Charlottenburg. Large numbers of Soviet tanks have been destroyed in the battles.

In Italy, the Anglo-Americans have brought up strong forces from the rear to attack the Po river northwest of Ferrara and have forged the river at several points with extremely massive support from artillery and ground attack aircraft.

In the southern sector of the Eastern Front, the enemy has confined himself to local attacks.

At the [East Prussian] seaport of Pillau [= *Baltiysk* in Lithuania], heavy fighting is continuing against the enemy who has now penetrated the city.

Wednesday 2 May 1945
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

The Führer has died at the head of the heroic defenders of Germany's capital city. He gave his life, inspired by the will to save his people and Europe from destruction by Bolshevism. His example of "faithfulness unto death" is binding on all soldiers. The remnants of the brave Berlin garrison, split into separate bands, are fighting on fiercely in the government district. The American Seventh Army has launched a southward attack in upper Bavaria between Plattling and Freising. Savage street fighting continues in downtown Munich.

In upper Italy the enemy is driving northward on either side of Lake Garda. He has been repelled with heavy losses in the mountain spurs north of Verona.

Our troops on the Kurland sandbar (narrow bank of sand separating Kurland Lagoon from the Bay of Danzig) destroyed 6 amphibious vehicles of a Soviet landing party.

Friday 4 May 1945
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

The struggle for the German capital is over. In a unique, heroic struggle, Volkssturm militiamen, and troops of all branches of the Wehrmacht, loyal to their oath of allegiance, have resisted to the last breath, exemplary of the German soldier at his best.

In the area south of the Danube, the Americans have driven through to Linz in Austria and are moving on south and have pushed across the Inn river heading eastward.

Fighting continues on the Kurland sandbar [German *Frische Nehrung*].

No military engagements have taken place in Holland, Kurland (Latvia), Denmark and Norway. The Dutch population, with the consent of the German supreme commander in the Netherlands, is being supplied with food airlifted into the country by British aircraft.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

4 May 1945:

American and Russian forces have met each other inside Germany at the Elbe river. The forces came together on April 25, and their link-up was officially announced on April 27 by the governments of all three of the major Allied powers. This was, in military terms, the decisive moment for the Germans everywhere to begin laying down their arms. . . On the evening of May 2, Stalin, in an Order of the Day, announced to cheering crowds that Russian troops have now occupied the entire city of Berlin. The Russians naturally regard the capture of Berlin as the symbol of their victory.

War Ends in Europe

Monday 7 May 1945, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

At 6:45 this evening a special British radio bulletin announced that tomorrow, Tuesday 8 May, will be Victory in Europe Day. At two o'clock Prime Minister Churchill will issue the official declaration that the war is over.

Tuesday 8 May 1945
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported:

Our artillery and fortresses along the Atlantic went on fighting enemy batteries and troop movements. We repelled weak enemy reconnaissance thrusts.

The day passed peacefully in Norway.

In Croatia our troops, headed west, crossed the line Koprivnica-Slunj.

While the Soviets in the southern part of the Eastern Front are holding their positions, American forces are advancing east from around Linz.

In Moravia our violent defensive fighting continued southeast of Brünn and in the area of Greater Olmütz [Czech *Olomouc*]. We lost the



An M4 Sherman tank west of Ulm in April 1945, part of a US First Army armored unit advancing toward the "impregnable fortress" of the German Alps.

cities of Olmütz and Sternberg. American units have reached Bernau.

The situation on the Kurland sandbar has not changed despite ongoing powerful enemy attacks.

In Kurland yesterday, the Soviets confined themselves to local thrusts.

Beromünster Radio (Switzerland)

8 May 1945:

The war in Europe, which lasted exactly 2,075 days, is now over. The formal surrender took place yesterday morning (Monday) at 2:41 A.M. French time [with operations to cease one hour before midnight on May 8]. The instrument was signed in Reims by General Jodl, the German chief of the general staff and, on the Allied side, by one representative each of the American, British, Soviet Russian and French armies. The content of the document has not been published . . . The thunder of cannon has now died away above the Old World of Europe; but for the time being, the war is continuing in the Far East. Japan's Foreign Minister Togo has delivered an address protesting the surrender of Germany on the grounds that it violates the treaty of alliance between Germany and Japan.

An Honorable Defeat
Wednesday 9 May 1945
The German *Wehrmacht High Command* reported from the headquarters of Admiral Dönitz:

Since midnight the weapons have been silent on all fronts. By command of the Grand Admiral, the Wehrmacht has ceased a battle which had become hopeless, thus bringing an end to almost six years of heroic struggle. It gave us great victories but great defeats as well. The German Wehrmacht has made an honorable surrender to a massively superior force.

Atom Bombs

Monday 6 August 1945, Washington
President Truman announced:

Today US bombers dropped a completely new type of bomb, an "atomic bomb," on the Japanese base of Hiroshima.

Soviets Take Action against Japan

Thursday 9 August 1945, Chungking
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

This morning Soviet troops attacked the border of Manchuria along a broad front and have gained several miles of ground in the first hours of their



Left: A Soviet tank destroyer taking part in the street fighting in Berlin, April 1945

Opposite: Tanks of the US Seventh Army rolling through Munich 30 April 1945 on the road that leads to Dachau

offensive. No details have been released about the Soviet operations, but it is known that the main attack is three-pronged.

9 August 1945, Tokyo:

Shortly after midnight this morning, Soviet Army forces led attacks on eastern and western Manchuria. Troops of Japan and Manchukuo [name of Japanese puppet state of Manchuria during the war] in these areas counterattacked and are now engaged against the Soviet Army.

Soviets Capture Crossroads of Hailar
Saturday 11 August 1945, Moscow
The *Soviet Information Bureau* announced:

Four large Soviet forces continued their concentric advance into Manchuria yesterday. The [Japanese] Kwantung Army continued its stubborn resistance on the front along the Amur and Ussuri rivers and along the coast, but Japanese opposition crumbled rapidly in the western border provinces of Manchuria. Our troops won their most important success in this area when they captured the strongly fortified traffic center of Hailar on the Trans-Manchurian rail line. The Japanese garrison defended Hailar energetically but were defeated after brief, bloody street fighting. Our tanks then drove on eastward along the rail line toward Tsitsihar.

Japanese Surrender Offer?

11 August 1945, London
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

The governments of Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union and China have accepted a Japanese peace proposal on the condition that the Emperor of Japan agrees to submit to the authority of the Allied commanders-in-chief.

Veteran Soviet Marshals Command Forces in Far East
Sunday 12 August 1945, Moscow
The American *Associated Press News Agency* reported:

It has been confirmed that several Soviet commanding generals who became famous during the war in Europe are now leading the various Red Army groups in Manchuria. Overall commander of Soviet forces in the Far East is reported to be Marshal Alexander Vassilevsky, whose Third White Russian armies beseiged and captured Königsberg in East Prussia. The former commander of the Second Ukrainian Army Group, Marshal Malinovsky, whose forces occupied Rumania and Hungary and later marched into Vienna, is leading the drive through the Greater Khingan Mountains on Manchuria's western border. Marshal Meretskov is commanding the army group west of Vladivostok. The only commander for Manchuria who was not well known during the war in Europe is General Kurbayev; he is leading the two drives from Khabarovsk and Blagovyeshchensk against the central city of Harbin.

Stormy Drive through Manchuria
Monday 13 August 1945, Moscow
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

By the latest reports, the bulk of the Soviet Transbaikal Army under Marshal Malinovsky has already crossed over the main ridge of the Greater Khingan Mountains. The Soviet armored troops and cavalry are now driving down through the mountain valleys toward the central plain of Manchuria. Malinovsky's right flank is already struggling toward the area of Mukden.

Premature Victory Celebrations
13 August 1945, Ottawa
The British *Reuters News Agency* reported:

Canadian Prime Minister William Mackenzie King had prepared and recorded an address to be played over Canadian radio when Japan surrenders. His speech was broadcast by mistake when a radio bulletin falsely announced that Japan had accepted the Allied surrender terms. Until long after midnight, a cheering crowd streamed through the streets of Ottawa, halted the flow of cars and trams, sang and danced and gave vent to their joy at the sudden end of the Far East war. In Halifax, Nova Scotia, the police and harbor police had to take action to prevent soldiers and civilians from storming a brandy shop in the course of their delirious celebrations.

US Wartime Fuel Consumption
Tuesday 14 August 1945, Washington
The American *Associated Press News Agency* reported:

A report, published by the US department in charge of wartime fuel production, says that during the period from Pearl Harbor (7 December 1941) to Victory in Europe Day (8 May 1945), American forces consumed 83 million tons of gasoline and crude oil in their struggle to defeat Germany. This includes the small quantities needed to support civilian motor traffic in Europe.

Eisenhower in Moscow
14 August 1945, Moscow
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Soviet crowds cheered General Eisenhower yesterday when he appeared in the streets of Moscow. The front page of the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* carried a photograph of Eisenhower and Stalin taken on Sunday. In a conference with Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov, Eisenhower praised the outstanding military cooperation between the Soviets and the Western powers. He also explained the reasons why he had ordered his armies to stop before entering Berlin. Eisenhower said that what the world really needs is to do away with all its soldiers so that every man in every country could devote all his energy to the tasks of peace.

Pétain Receives Death Sentence
Wednesday 15 August 1945, Paris
The news agency *France Press* reported:

After consultations lasting several hours, the judges resumed their seats in the courtroom. Marshal Pétain had already been led to his seat. It was 4:00 A.M. The presiding judge read out a decree rejecting the petitions of the defense. Then he read out a further decree approving the indictment



point by point. The court found that the accused was guilty of premeditated treason. Marshal Pétain was sentenced to death, loss of all French honors and confiscation of all his property. The court expressed its wish that the death sentence not be carried out because of the advanced age of the condemned man.

Soviet Protest

15 August 1945, New York
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Edward R. Murrow, US war correspondent in London, reports that the Soviets have lodged an energetic protest at the idea of an American taking over as Allied commander-in-chief in the Far East. Murrow said that Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov and American Ambassador to the USSR Averell Harriman had an emotional clash in Moscow over the issue. The Soviets said that a Russian should be supreme Allied commander. Several hours passed before they withdrew their proposal and decided to comply with the wishes of the United States.

Wednesday 22 August 1945, Moscow
The Soviet *TASS News Agency* reported:

The Japanese Kwantung Army formally surrendered to Soviet General Zhalakhov yesterday in Harbin (Manchuria).

End of the Manchurian Campaign
Friday 24 August 1945, Moscow
The Soviet *TASS News Agency* reported:

Yesterday evening in Moscow, 24 salvos were fired in a 324-cannon salute. A short time earlier, an Order of the Day sent by Marshal Stalin to Marshal Vassilevsky, the Soviet troop commander in eastern Asia, was read out. It said that the Soviets have now completely occupied all of Manchuria, southern Sakhalin island, several North Korean cities and ports and both of the Kurile Islands, Simusiu and Paramushiro.

US Automobile Production Resumes
Saturday 25 August 1945, Washington
The American *United Press News Agency* reported:

Yesterday the Department of War Supplies lifted all the US wartime restrictions on manufacture of non-military motor vehicles.

In Tokyo Bay

US correspondent Robert B. Cochrane reported in the 3 September 1945 issue of *The Baltimore Sun* newspaper [retranslation]:

On board the US battleship *Missouri* in the Bay of Tokyo, September 2.

World War Two ended officially this morning at 9:18 Tokyo time. It ended with the words of General Douglas MacArthur: "These proceedings are closed."

Japan's dream of conquest died beneath the menacing guns of the battleship *Missouri* when Japanese Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu and General Yoshijiro Umezu, chief of staff of the Japanese Imperial Military Headquarters, signed their names to the surrender document which delivered Japan unconditionally into the hands of the Allies. The ceremony was conducted according to strict military protocol, but it was a stately and solemn occasion that had the quality of a religious rite.

Strategy and Tactics

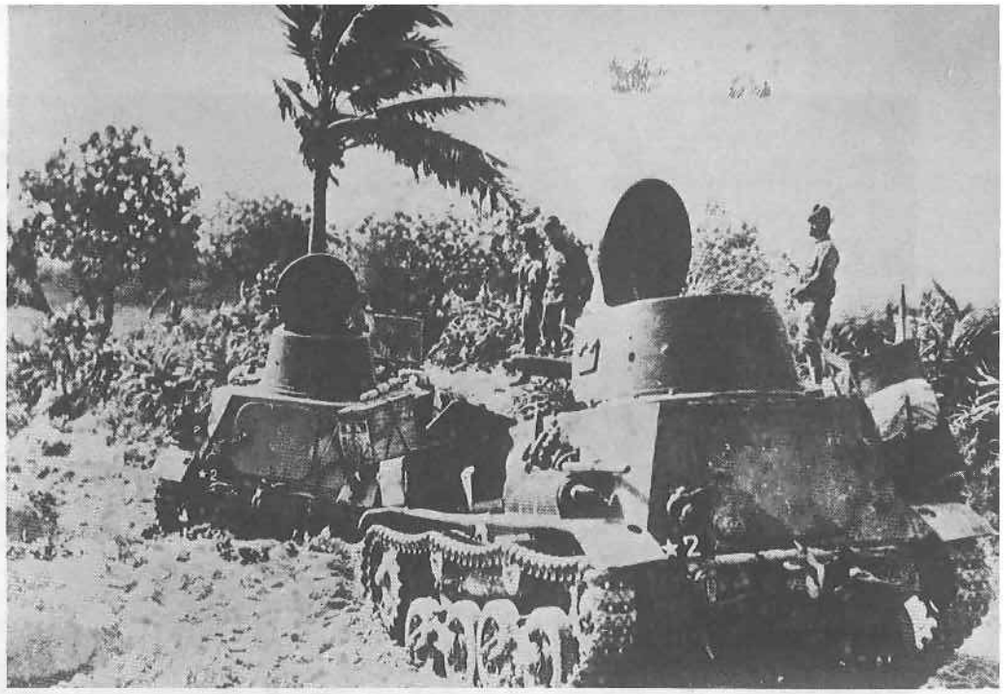
JANUARY TO SEPTEMBER 1945

At the start of 1945, the Germans were left with a total of only 145 divisions, divisional task forces and brigades for the whole of the Eastern Front—some 720 miles in length—that stretched from Kurland in western Latvia on the Baltic Sea coast, south to Lake Balaton in western Hungary. The German forces included 16 mobile divisions (one of which was still in the process of being set up) and 12½ armored divisions containing 318 combat-fit tanks, 793 antitank guns and 616 self-propelled guns and tank destroyers.

German Army Group A under General Harpe held the all-important 420-mile-long central sector of the Eastern Front along the bend of the Vistula river. Army Group A had some 133 to 137 German infantrymen posted every kilometer (.6 mile) of the front, facing approximately 1,500 Red Army infantry along the same ground. General Harpe had only a handful of operationally effective armored forces. These included four panzer divisions, one panzer-grenadier division, plus one armored task force of brigade strength (the remains of the 10th Panzer-Grenadier Division) to be held in reserve. German Army Group South, on the other hand, was assigned sizable reinforcements [even though it occupied a less crucial sector of the front].

On the Soviet side, the combat-ready forces included: 55 armies, 6 tank armies, and 35 armored and mechanized corps, all totalling 6,289,000 men. The official Soviet records indicate that they had 115,100 cannon and mortars, 158,150 motor vehicles and 15,100 tanks and self-propelled guns.

General Guderian, the chief of the German



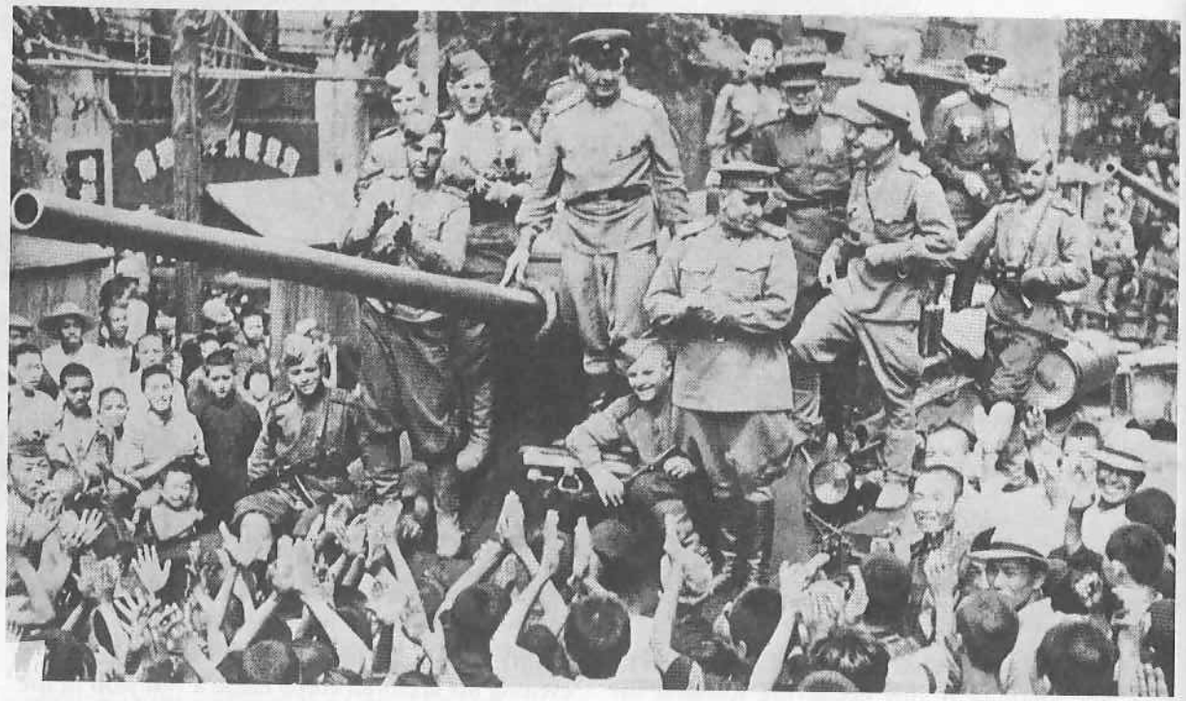
Indochina in August 1945: Japanese tankettes, series M 2592

army general staff, repeatedly asked permission to evacuate German troops occupying Kurland on the Baltic and to transfer other forces from Norway and the Western Front, so as to form them all into a strong reserve army with which to focus the German defense around the area of Lodz and Inowroclaw in Poland [i.e. on the Central Front]; [but he was refused]. The German Army High Command hoped to hold back the reserve panzer divisions intended for operational counterattacks until it became clear exactly where the Soviets were laying their main lines of attack. Premature use of the precious panzer reserves for the purposes of tactical defense was strictly forbidden. But when they came to evaluate the enemy's intentions, [most] concluded that the Soviet High Command would choose, as their first and main objective, to penetrate across East Prussia in the north and, as their second, to lead a strong attack across Slovakia and Hungary in the south. They were sadly mistaken, for STAVKA was planning the main Soviet drive in the central sector, out of the Magnuszew bridgehead approximately 42 miles south of Warsaw, along the line Lodz-Kutno-Poznan and straight into Berlin. The Soviets hoped to push through without stopping and to let their follow-up divisions take on the task of smashing the German troops in the great bend of the Vistula between Magnuszew and the Baranov bridgehead.

But how did German commanders come to miscalculate Soviet plans so drastically, and with such catastrophic consequences for Germany?

In broad daylight of Monday 1 January 1945, Soviet General Poluboyarov's Fourth Guards Tank Army (part of Marshal Koniev's First Ukrainian Front) moved out from Rzeszow to Debica. Each evening his armored corps made a rest stop in the villages; and each time they moved on, they left behind them mock tanks, trucks and cannon which they had set up under cover of night. Special units were left to guard the dummy vehicles and give the area the appearance of being occupied by troops.

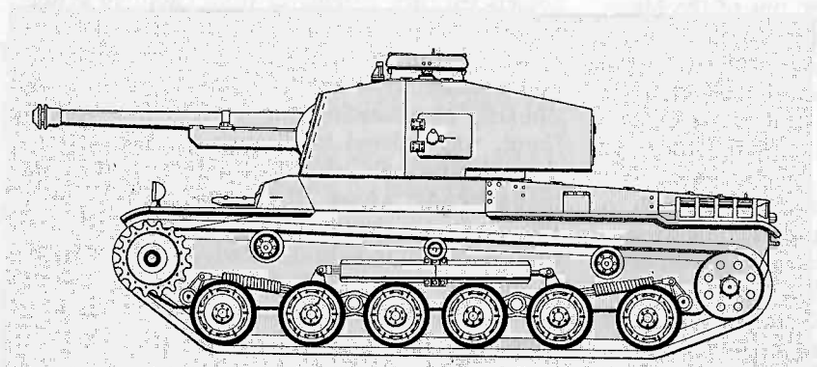
This was the final phase of a deceptive operation larger in scale than any the Soviets had so far mounted. Not until 1980, exactly 35 years after the event, did the historical research branch of the Soviet general staff publish details of the operation, drawing on the previously unpublished notebooks of Marshal Zhukov. [By his account], the Soviet forces prepared their offensive at three bridgeheads they had established on the left bank of the Vistula river in Poland in the autumn of 1944. The bridgeheads were at Magnuszew, Pulawy and Baranov. The German Army High Command (the OKW) knew that as a rule the Soviets led their offensives from captured bridgeheads; so the Germans built defensive emplacements sited in depth along the three bridgeheads and concentrated their troops there. Marshal Zhukov, commanding the First White Russian Front, was ordered to disguise the real preparations to attack out of the Magnuszew and Pulawy bridgeheads along the main axis Kutno-Poznan-Berlin, by diverting the Germans' attention to the Baranov bridgehead. He was supposed to simulate preparations for a main attack out of Baranov along his left flank at the junction between his forces and Koniev's First Ukrainian Front. The Soviets simulated concentrations of infantry and armored forces, artillery and engineer



units and aerial squadrons, as well as lively rail and vehicle traffic [in the southern area around Baranov and Sandomierz], and they converted wire, wood and cardboard into thousands of mock tanks, trucks and self-propelled guns. Some of the signals installations of Katukov's First Guards Tank Army and Bogdanov's Second Guards Tank Army were transferred into a simulated assembly zone, because the German radio-reconnaissance forces were thoroughly familiar with them [and would be sure to track their movements].

Tanks and trucks were driven along the snow-piled forest paths in the Soviet rear zone to give the impression that a lot of activity was going on there. Soviet engineers commanded by General Prozhlyakov rapidly built new bridges, repaired the old ones and cleared the paths for roads. Forward airfields were laid and hundreds of dummy aircraft installed to make the fields look like new airbases, while genuine planes kept up the appearance of lively air traffic. As soon as German reconnaissance began to show increased interest in a simulated assembly zone, the staff of the First White Russian Front would at once reinforce "troop transfers" into that area and step up the simulated maneuvers to the rear of it. Field kitchens were made to pour out steam; large campfires set alight; and new observation posts, artillery stations and back-up roads constructed. The heavy artillery began test firing, and cannon were transferred from one spot to another overnight. Scouting activity stepped up, false intelligence was spread.

At the same time, genuine preparations were going on at the Magnuszew and Pulawy bridgeheads farther north from which the Soviets planned to launch the main axis of their winter



Above: North Korea on 24 August 1945. Soviet tanks have reached the streets of Pyöngyang.

Left: Japanese KE-RI 3 medium tank (first produced 1943)

offensive: but there appeared to be total inactivity except for leisurely work on defensive fortifications. All rail transports of tanks or artillery into this area were disguised as animal feed or building materials, and unloading was carried out at night or under cover of heavy fog. Tanks and cannon were taken swiftly to their designated attack sectors and then immediately camouflaged. Before daylight all traces of the vehicles, including the marks of their tracks, would have been removed and the emptied rail cars shipped back to the rear zone. Troops too were transported to their attack positions only at night. Avoiding the larger villages, they moved up in small groups. Engineers worked only in darkness, and their work was carefully concealed before sunrise, with officers supervising the camouflage work from the air. During the day, only isolated trucks were allowed to travel in the construction zone. This immense concentration of troops and equipment made it necessary for the Soviets to build over the Vistula large numbers of bridges they would use when they launched the attack. They built 13 in all, each about half a mile long and capable of carrying 16 to 60 tons. Several of the bridges, and the roads leading up to them, played an important role in the camouflage operations. For instance, Chuikov's Eighth Guards Army had three roads leading to its bridgehead: two through the forest and the third through open country. Troops, supplies and ammunition destined for the Magnuszew bridgehead were sent along the two screened forest paths, while the emptied vehicles, camouflaged so as to suggest to the Germans that the Soviets were withdrawing troops from the Magnuszew area, would return along the third, open road toward the rear zone. Similar operations were carried out along the right flank of the First White Russian Front too, with the objective of simulating large troop assemblies on the right bank of the Vistula opposite Warsaw.

Operational plans for the offensive were worked out with unprecedented secrecy inside army group headquarters and the headquarters of the individual armies, and Stalin permitted only a small circle of high-ranking officers to know what the Soviets really intended. Nothing was allowed to appear on paper, and absolutely no radio messages were sent relating to the Soviet plans. All orders were delivered orally while field telephones and teletype machines were switched off. A written directive from the commanding generals to their army staff, ordering the attack, was to be issued only a few days beforehand; and divisional commanders would be notified verbally four or five days ahead. The main troops would not learn of the attack until a few hours before it began.

Attack preparations were also simulated on the northern flank of Koniev's First Ukrainian Front. For instance, mock assemblies of armored troops were displayed around Ropczyce, Ociecka and Debica, the sector of Kurochkin's Sixtieth Army. Poluboyarov's Fourth Guards Tank Corps was assigned to carry out the mock operations. First the roads between Ropczyce, Ociecka and Debica were repaired and routes for tanks laid out around the villages of Ostrow and Zawada; an access road leading to the Ropczyce railroad station was also built, and another extending from the Zawada rail station into the nearby woods. The edges of existing roads were levelled with bulldozers and bridges improved and reinforced. Soviet railmen and local civilians built ramps for unloading tank shipments at the rail stations. Soviet officers wearing armored troop uniforms scouted the area, at the same time spreading pseudo-secret information among the Polish population. In Ociecka, Przeslawie, Sedziszow and Debica, Soviet billeting officers went out to warn the local Poles, "as a precautionary measure," to get ready to leave their homes and move to safe quarters elsewhere, because Soviet armored units needed to be billeted there. At the same time, 320 easily disassembled dummy T-34 tanks, 250 dummy trucks and 600 dummy cannon were set up overnight on guarded fields. This simulated concentration of Soviet armor not only drew a heavy German artillery bombardment to the area of Zawada, Radomysl-Wielki and Dabie but also made the Germans send in large numbers of reinforcements to defend this area of the front.

On Saturday 6 January 1945, the German IV SS Panzer Corps under SS General Gille drove eastward from Komorn in its first attempt to relieve the Soviet-besieged fortress of Budapest. The attempt failed.

On Sunday 7 January 1945 at the Baranov bridgehead on the Vistula, the Soviets simulated an artillery force advancing into its firing positions. First, some 180 Soviet guns of all calibers opened fire on the German positions. Then all the real guns withdrew, leaving behind over 550 mock cannon in their place while they moved into their true firing positions.

A small but crucially important deceptive maneuver was carried out on the northern flank of the First Ukrainian Front. Two artillery divisions and two antitank gun brigades were transferred in the strictest secrecy from the zone of Glutsdovsky's Sixth Army to the Baranov bridgehead. Soviet engineers produced 329 dummy cannon that they set up in the abandoned artillery positions, while several genuine cannon, which systematically shifted their positions, kept up their fire. Meanwhile, the Baranov bridgehead was camouflaged with the

utmost care. It was especially hard to conceal the attack preparations there, because the Germans had occupied observation points overlooking this bridgehead close to Sandomierz (Sandomir) and could see for 5 miles into the depth of the Soviet positions. The Soviet armor, infantry, artillery, supply columns and depots in the Baranov bridgehead were all hidden in the woods or in earthen dugouts. Soviet troops were brought into the bridgehead only at night and before daylight were under cover in a prepared sector of the woods. Never had the Soviets mounted before any main offensive a deceptive operation on such a grand scale. The success of the operation depended on extremely detailed organization, which enabled them to manage a large troop concentration within a relatively narrow strip of hilly wooded terrain.

In preparing their offensive, the Soviet commanders positioned the assembly zones for motorized troops 25 to 50 miles behind the main battle line, while form-up zones for tanks were set 10 to 20 miles behind the main line, and tank starting positions one-half to two miles behind the line. In the most important sectors where the Soviets hoped to force a breakthrough, they had stationed up to 250 cannon per kilometer (.6 mile), that is, one cannon every 4 or 5 yards, staggered so as to give each other cover. The main assault out of the Magnuszew bridgehead would be led by four combined-arms armies, two tank armies and one cavalry corps along a front only 10 miles wide—that is, with one giant force for each 1½ miles of front. The mechanized troops were told that they were expected to advance an average of 25 miles per day!

The need to amass huge assault forces within a narrow space resulted in a deep staggering of the Soviet forces. As a rule each army, corps, division and regiment was divided in two or even three sections positioned at different depths. An armored section of approximately the strength of an armored battalion would cooperate directly with the assault-artillery regiments, while a third divisional regiment of infantry would bring up the rear, forming a second-wave assault force.

The armored reconnaissance platoon assigned to each Soviet armored regiment operated to supply information early enough so that before starting their attack the Soviets could evaluate the data on the ease of the terrain and on German blockades and defenses. When a drive was being made to break through German lines, each size of armored force would operate along a specifically assigned width of front. A tank army would attack along a front 6 to 9 miles wide; an armored corps along a 2½- to 3-mile front; an armored division along a 1- to 2-mile front; an armored infantry regiment along a front less than a mile wide; and an armored battalion along a front less than one-half mile wide.

According to Soviet records, the total forces of the First White Russian Front and the First Ukrainian Front were: 16 armies, 4 tank armies and 9 independent armored, cavalry or mechanized corps, with 163 divisions; 32,143 cannon and heavy mortars, 6,460 tanks and self-propelled guns, 4,772 planes; and 2.2 million men. Soviet forces along the main attack sectors outnumbered the Germans 9 to 1 in infantry, 9 or 10 to 1 in artillery and 10 to 1 in armor.

The first phase of the Soviet offensive began at dawn on Friday 12 January 1945 when Koniev's First Ukrainian Front—the Third Guards Tank, the Fourth Tank, Gordov's Third Guards, Zhadov's Fifth Guards, Pukhov's Thirteenth, Korotyev's Fifty-Second, and Kurochkin's Sixtieth armies—broke through the weak defensive positions of Graeser's Fourth Panzer Army. [For order of battle see map p. 298.]

Next day, on Saturday 13 January, Chernyakhovsky's Third White Russian Front—including Galitski's Eleventh Guards, Krylov's Fifth, Luchinski's Twenty-Eighth, Ludnikov's Thirty-Ninth, Chanchibatse's Second Guards and Zhafranov's Thirty-First armies, plus I and II Guards Tank Corps—launched a grand offensive out of the area centering on Pillkallen (East Prussia). Their objective was to advance to the Kurland Lagoon on the Baltic Sea to liquidate Raus's German Third Panzer Army.

That same day, Soviet forces beat back the Germans' second attempt to relieve the besieged fortress of Budapest with a drive by Breith's III Panzer Corps out of the area north of Lake Balaton in western Hungary.

[Over the past two days the Soviets had launched their minor offensives along the south and north sectors of the Eastern Front.] Finally, on Sunday 14 January 1945, Marshal Zhukov's First White Russian Front opened the most vital phase, along the central sector, of the Soviet winter offensive when its armies moved out of the Magnuszew and Pulawy bridgeheads on the Vistula river. First to move was Bogdanov's Second Guards Tank Army. Poplawski's Polish First Army, Byelov's Sixty-First Army, Byerzarin's Fifth Shock Army, and Pyerkhorovich's Forty-Seventh Army drove west and northwest breaking through the front lines of Jordan's German Ninth Army.

The Soviets staged another deceptive maneuver just at the start of these attacks. As a rule the Red Army, fully one day before actually launching an offensive, would carry out massive reconnaissance missions to discover the enemy's order of battle; but this time the Soviets attacked right after their



German positions at the Soviet Baranov bridgehead (Poland) at the start of January 1945. German Nashorn (Rhinoceros) tank destroyers are lying in wait. The Nashorn consisted of 8.8-cm (88-mm) antitank guns mounted on a Panzer III or IV chassis.

scouting missions began [thus taking the Germans by surprise]. Nor was this all. As the first reconnaissance battalions began to advance, the Soviets gave them no heavy covering fire of the kind that normally preceded a major attack but merely kept up their usual light artillery fire to a depth of less than a mile and gave them some aerial support. This misled the Germans, who failed to realize that anything out of the ordinary was happening. Caught napping, they were unable to halt the drive when it came and then panicked, thinking that the reconnaissance must be a general assault by an entire Soviet front; so they began to retreat from their front lines to their rear-line defensive positions. Because the Soviets attacked with the support of tanks, many of which were mobile mock tanks designed to simulate a large armored group, the Germans thought the reconnaissance battalions were really the main forces.

The Soviets then launched an annihilating prefatory artillery bombardment that lasted about thirty minutes while, in the meantime, Soviet lead battalions invaded the German outer system of trenches with tanks and assault guns. The Soviets travelled along narrow corridors where they were not exposed to fire from their own guns and in this way were able to penetrate the German main line and infiltrate between the German strongpoints.

As soon as the Soviet cannon stopped firing on the German positions, the first wave of Soviet rifle divisions stormed forward with their allotment of tanks, assault guns and self-propelled guns, supported by a double creeping artillery barrage. Heavy tanks and assault guns were deployed in the first and second waves to knock out lingering nests of resistance, while the accompanying infantry came along directly behind, forming the third wave. This was followed by a fourth and a fifth wave of infantry. These tactics helped to speed up the Soviet drive because the two armored waves cleared the way for the infantry, so allowing the first two waves of infantry to maintain the momentum of the attack while only the third wave of infantry would pause to mop up the terrain.

The German defensive positions along the main axis of the attack were not effectively camouflaged, so the Soviets were able to discern their exact layout as well as details of their tactical order. The Soviets knew the location of German divisions down to battalion level and also knew what overall German tactics would be, and they adjusted their own assault tactics accordingly. Their attack procedures were the same that they had used in autumn 1944 during their offensive against German Army Group North Ukraine. By now Soviet assault tactics were highly evolved and at their peak of success.

As a rule, a Soviet rifle division was supported along its main axis by two or three armored regiments, two or three assault gun regiments and a company of flamethrower tanks. In general, armored units did not operate under the strength of an independent regiment, although an army could order out smaller units in especially difficult ter-

rain. Armored forces, deployed to support the infantry, attacked in two waves. The first wave was made up of medium and mine-exploding tanks, the second wave of heavy tanks, assault guns and flamethrower tanks. The first wave would move in ahead of the infantry while the second followed 300 to 600 feet behind the infantry. Tanks were forbidden to stand assembled in their starting positions for longer than two or three hours.

The attack was supported by massive deployments of ground attack planes, dive bombers and tactical bombers. Regimental and divisional antitank gun reserve forces were installed to help ward off possible counterthrusts or counterblows by cooperating with the artillery to shield troops along directions exposed to enemy armored attack. In the event of large-scale enemy infantry and armored attacks, the heavy tanks and self-propelled guns at the rear would open fire while the medium tanks attacked the enemy flanks. After repelling an attack, some of the tanks would pursue the enemy while others continued to secure the advance of the infantry.

After driving through the main front lines, the operational armored and mechanized forces would move up into the breach zone and complete the breakthrough by driving through the enemy's second defensive line and into his rear zone. A detailed plan of operations was worked out for the staggered deployment of the assault forces (infantry, engineers, escort tanks) who followed the lead battalions at some interval. A novel feature of the Soviet attack was that armored forces (armored or mechanized corps or tank armies) would be held back until the overall commander ordered them in at a suitable moment to finish a breakthrough. Only after the breakthrough had begun and the initial drive had reached the enemy artillery positions did a Soviet commander feel justified in calling on his operational tanks to participate in the climax of the battle.

By the time of the Soviet offensive, the German infantry had received additional training in close-range antitank fighting (using the Panzerfaust etc.), and German antitank guns attached to the regiments and divisions were positioned to lend direct support to the infantry. The Germans hoped to use counterattacking reserves to wipe out Soviet penetrations in the main combat zone. The standard technique of German infantry was to allow the attacking tanks to roll by and then to attack the enemy infantry when it followed up to the rear of the tanks. In the event this approach proved a disaster; for either the German infantry were knocked out by the first two waves of Soviet armor, or they were encircled and wiped out by the waves of Soviet infantry that followed the armor. Neither the stationary German antitank guns nor the operational tank reserves could cope with the masses of enemy tanks. The German reserve armor faced the impossible choice of trying to intercept the enemy tanks after they had broken through at the risk of destroying the German infantry caught in the middle, or attacking right away, deploying the precious reserves prematurely. The Germans' hope of regaining lost positions with the tactical reserve forces attached to each regiment and division was also dashed, because

The Baranov bridgehead (near Sandomierz) where on 12 January 1945 the Soviets launched part of the huge offensive operation which carried them 250 miles from the Vistula to the Oder river, a distance of only 50 miles from Berlin; wrested Silesia from the Germans; and separated massive German forces—26 divisions in Kurland and 27 divisions in East Prussia—from the main body of German troops on the Eastern Front.



these reserves either were caught in the Soviets' preliminary artillery bombardment or pinned early on by the deeply extending assault wedge. Consequently, the only thing that counted was whether the German infantry in the leading trenches could manage, by direct cooperation with the various antitank weapons and supported by the divisional and army artillery, to brake the momentum of the first enemy assault and to avoid being isolated from the rest of the troops. But despite all their improvisational skills, the German infantry and stationary antitank guns suffered such heavy losses that the main combat zone was virtually eliminated at one stroke.

Concerning the absence of German counterattacks in the battle, the high command of Harpe's German Army Group A noted: "The attacks led by our armored and infantry forces had no effect, because our forces were brought to battle when they were still in their assembly areas." The catastrophic defeat of Army Group A put an end to German hopes of getting the Soviets under control before they reached the borders of eastern Germany.

On that same January 14 when Zhukov's First White Russian Front opened its offensive, Rokossovsky's Second White Russian Front attacked too. Rokossovsky's armies—another shattering force including Fedyuninsky's Second Shock Army, Guzyev's Forty-Eighth, Grizhin's Forty-Ninth, Batov's Sixty-Fifth and Popov's Seventieth armies, plus II Guards Cavalry Corps, VII Mechanized Corps, I Guards Tank Corps and VIII Guards Tank Corps—drove out from two bridgeheads on the Narev (Narew) river in the direction of Elblag [German *Elbing*], an East Prussian port near Danzig, and attacked Weiss's Second Army.

On Monday 15 January 1945, Moskalenko's Thirty-Eighth Army, one of the armies of Petrov's Fourth Ukrainian Front, attacked the southern flank of Jaenecke's German Seventeenth Army in the direction of Krakow.

That same day, Pukhov's Thirteenth Army, along with Lyelyushenko's Fourth Tank Army and Gordov's Third Guards Army, attacked Kielce. Meanwhile, Pyerkorovich's Forty-Seventh Army (part of First White Russian Front) crossed the Vistula north of Warsaw.

On Wednesday 17 January, units of the Polish First Army mopped up any German rearguard forces still lingering in Warsaw. In the four days since the start of its offensive, the Soviet First White Russian Front had broken through the German defensive lines along a front over 160 miles wide and penetrated to a depth of up to 80 miles. The German defense along the Vistula had ceased to exist. As always, the tanks had to cover the retreat of the slower German forces. The panzer



March 1945, west of Poznan (Poland). In 1944 the Germans attacked Soviet tanks only when they had left their infantry far to their rear; so in 1945 during deep armored drives, Soviets protected the tanks with mounted infantry.

divisions now broke down into smaller groups of company or battalion strength.

On Thursday 18 January 1945, the Soviet Second White Russian Front set out to penetrate the lines of Weiss's Second Army which had now retreated to the Mlawa-Ostrolenka area of Poland.

That same day, German troops evacuated Krakow to avoid being encircled by Korovinko's Fifty-Ninth and Kurochkin's Sixtieth armies.

Meanwhile, Hitler had relieved General Harpe of his post as commander of Army Group A and replaced him with General Schörner.

Also on January 18, the left wing of the Soviet First Ukrainian Front blockaded Krakow on the north, northeast and northwest; the brigades of the IV Tank Corps stormed into the streets and occupied the city next day.

On Friday 19 January 1945, Zhukov's First White Russian Front captured the Polish industrial city of Lodz.

By Monday 22 January 1945, the armored spearheads of Rybalko's Third Guards Tank Army were already standing south and north of Breslau (Polish *Vroclaw*) on the Oder river.

On Tuesday 23 January, the Soviet First White Russian Front took Bydgoszcz (German *Bromberg*) and the following day, a lead detachment of the Third Guards Tank Army took Opole (German

Oppeln) while Guzyev's Twenty-First Army took Gliwice (German *Gleiwitz*).

On Wednesday 24 January, the Germans formed a new army group, Army Group Vistula, with the SS leader Heinrich Himmler commanding.

On Friday 26 January, Hitler replaced Reinhardt, the commander of German Army Group Center, with General Rendulic and changed the name of Army Group Center to Army Group North. The former Army Group North was now designated Army Group Kurland, and Army Group A became Army Group Center.

On Saturday 27 January 1945, the Germans made their third and most forceful attempt to relieve Budapest. The relief force was IV SS Panzer Corps commanded by SS General Gille. It drove out of the area north of Lake Balaton in western Hungary, but the drive was broken off at Dunapentele on the Danube following violent Soviet attacks.

On Sunday 28 January 1945, the Soviets occupied Katowice and next day the entire coal basin of upper Silesia. The First White Russian and First Ukrainian army groups had now penetrated to the Oder river and established bridgeheads on its west bank, thus concluding Soviet Operation Vistula-Oder.

At this time, things had quieted down again in the Ardennes in the West. Some 600,000 US soldiers were fighting there. They had begun by waging a defensive battle to parry the German Ardennes offensive and then had counterattacked. Of the US forces involved in the Battle of the Bulge, 81,000 were killed, wounded or captured, while the British lost 1,400 men. On the German side, some 100,000 men were killed, wounded or captured.

On Tuesday 30 January 1945 Byerzarin's Fifth Shock Army and the lead units of Bogdanov's Soviet Second Guards Tank Army fought their way through to the Oder between Küstrin (Polish *Kostrzyn*) and Frankfurt-an-der-Oder and set up bridgeheads on the west bank.

The Red Army's January offensive shattered the whole of the Eastern Front. In the central zone the Soviets now stood barely 36 miles outside Berlin, and the Germans had lost the important industrial center of upper Silesia. General von Mellenthin wrote: "What happened between the Vistula and Oder rivers in the first months of 1945 is indescribable. Europe has not seen the like since the fall of the Roman Empire."

Now that the region of Kurland on the Baltic had been cut off from Germany, the German army group occupying the area (Army Group Kurland) was isolated and left with nothing to do, while in East Prussia, German Army Group North cracked into three parts and was fighting for its life. The newly created German army group, Army Group Vistula, commanded by SS leader Heinrich Himmler, was assigned to defend Danzig, West Prussia and the outskirts of Berlin. Meanwhile, Army Group Central held the front along the Oder southward to the Carpathians, and Army Group South was fighting in Slovakia and Hungary. The German front line was over 1,000 miles long. This not only led to the dissipation of the remaining German forces (175 divisions and 22 brigades, plus a few Hungarian units) but prevented them from carrying out any coordinated operations.

Meanwhile, the devastating power of the Soviet armored units was becoming increasingly apparent: Bogdanov's Second Guards Tank Army, for instance, was able to push forward a distance of over 450 miles in only 16 days (from 16 January to 1 February 1945), that is, close to 30 miles a day.

On Thursday 8 February 1945, the First Ukrainian Front opened an offensive from the Soviet bridgeheads at Leubus and Steinau on the Oder river. The lead units of Zhadov's Fifth Guards Army and Glutsdovsky's Sixth Army set out to encircle Breslau (Vroclaw) from the south and north, respectively.

That same day, Crerar's First Canadian Army mounted a new grand offensive west of Cleves (Kleve) between the Rhine and the Meuse. Despite vigorous German resistance in the forest, the Canadians marched on southeast.

On Monday 12 February 1945, Malinovsky's Second Ukrainian Front and Tolbukhin's Third Ukrainian Front occupied Budapest.

On Thursday 15 February, Koniev's First Ukrainian Front surrounded the fortress of Breslau, whose forces were commanded by General von Ahlfen. Inside the fortress were 7 tanks, and 8 self-propelled assault guns and 200 medium and light cannon.

On Friday 23 February, Simpson's US Ninth Army led a major attack out of bridgeheads on the Roer river in the direction of the Rhine.

The German armored divisions had been severely depleted and now were also suffering equipment and fuel shortages. Despite all this, Hitler could not bring himself to give up his illusions that Germany was still capable of mounting a grand offensive. SS General Dietrich's Sixth SS Panzer Army was pulled back from the Western front and sent to Hungary to reconquer the line of the central Danube. Task forces were hastily assembled in

Pomerania and Silesia; but none were strong enough to achieve even one operational success.

Despite all the reverses Germany was suffering, tank production surprisingly continued high for the time being: In February 1945, 1,210 new tanks were built, far more than the number of tanks and self-propelled guns produced, for instance, in December 1942 (721). A sharp fall in production occurred only in March 1945. Between September 1939 and February 1945, Germany had manufactured a total of 43,840 tanks and self-propelled and storm guns.

On Thursday 1 March 1945, German armored troops began what was to be one of their last offensive actions when a panzer group under General Nehring (including Decker's XXXIX Panzer Corps and Kirchner's LVII Panzer Corps) carried out a surprise operation in lower Silesia in which they succeeded in inflicting heavy losses on the Soviet XCIX Mechanized Corps and temporarily liberated the city of Lauban.

On Tuesday 6 March, SS General Dietrich's Sixth SS Panzer Army and Armored General Balck's Sixth Army, with support from Löhr's Army Group E and Angelis's Second Panzer Army, opened the last German offensive in Hungary north of Lake Balaton. Their objective was to force Tolbukhin's Third Ukrainian Front to retreat to the area west of the Danube and secure the Germans' only remaining source of oil at Nagy-Kanisza; but they were forced to break off the operation after massive Soviet counterattacks.

That day the British and Indian forces of General Slim's Fourteenth Army, supported by tanks, seized the fiercely contested Burma Road, and the Japanese were forced to retreat from the area.

On Wednesday 7 March, General Millikin's III Corps (part of Hodges's US First Army) drove through to the Rhine, and General Leonard's US 9th Armored Division succeeded in capturing the important Ludendorff Bridge over the Rhine river at Remagen. Some of the division crossed over to the east bank of the Rhine and established a bridgehead which they continued to expand hourly.

On Friday 9 March, the British-Indian 19th Division, advancing out of northern Burma, surrounded Mandalay, the former capital of the kingdom of Burma.

On Saturday 10 March 1945, Hitler appointed Field Marshal Kesselring, the German C-in-C Southwest (for Italy), to the post of C-in-C West, replacing Field Marshal von Rundstedt.

On Sunday 11 March 1945, Hitler made his last visit to the front, to Castle Freienwalde along the Middle Oder. He implored Infantry General Busse, the commander of the Ninth Army, and his officers to delay the Soviet assault on Berlin long enough for him to get a mysterious new weapon ready for combat. He pointed to the example of Field Marshal Schörner who, with his Army Group Center, was defending Silesia and Bohemia with relentless energy; he then took his leave, saying: "Each day and each hour is precious; we need the time to prepare the terrible weapons that will turn the tide of the war!"

On Monday 12 March 1945, General Rendulic took over command of German Army Group Kurland, while General Weiss became commander of Army Group North in the Danzig area.

On Tuesday 20 March, the British 19th Division in Mandalay took Fort Dufferin, an important Japanese base in Burma. British armored units, after hard fighting, mopped up the destroyed city and secured the bridges over the Irawadi river.

On Thursday 22 March, Busse's German Ninth Army began a large-scale offensive to try to liquidate the Soviet bridgehead on the Oder west of Küstrin (Kostrzyn); but Byerzarin's Soviet Fifth Shock Army and Chuikov's Eighth Guards Army beat off the attack.

That day XII Corps of Patton's US Third Army forged the Rhine at Oppenheim and drove toward the Main river.

At the same time, German General Heinrici replaced Himmler as C-in-C of Army Group Vistula on the Oder front.

On Friday 23 March 1945, Dempsey's British Second Army, Crerar's First Canadian Army and Simpson's US Ninth Army forged the Rhine near Wesel and formed bridgeheads on the eastern bank. This operation was preceded by a series of heavy air raids in which over 1,200 metric tons of bombs fell on the area. The Canadian 5th Armored Division secured the river crossings from the north.

Next day, 24 March 1945, Field Marshal Montgomery's Allied Twenty-First Army Group crossed the lower Rhine north and south of Wesel. Simultaneously, 1,572 transport planes and 1,326 gliders dropped forces of the British 6th Airborne Division and the US 17th Airborne Division into Germany north of Lippe. The operation, involving a vast deployment of men and equipment, met with only token resistance. The Germans no longer had any panzer divisions, only small armored groups, [with which to repel the invaders].

On Wednesday 28 March 1945 General Guderian, the chief of the German army general staff, was sent "on leave" by Hitler and replaced by Infantry General Krebs.

On Friday 30 March 1945, German troops evacuated the besieged and fiercely contested city of Danzig and retreated to an area of the Vistula estuary that was protected by field fortifications. Danzig was occupied and later set on fire by armored forces of Fedyunisky's Second Shock Army.

Not until March 1945 did the OKW appoint a uniform structure for panzer and panzer-grenadier divisions, establishing their target strength at 11,422 men, 1,080 trucks, 1,091 other motor vehicles, 76 tanks, 90 infantry personnel carriers, and 16 armored reconnaissance cars. But this ideal structure existed only on paper: for by now the Germans were incapable of maintaining any armored force larger than antitank brigades, each consisting of 6 to 8 companies of 100 men (mostly adolescents from the Hitler Youth); every man was armed only with a Panzerfaust and submachine gun. Some riding in vehicles and some on bicycles, they were sent to fight in the thick of the antitank defense or against tanks that had broken through to the rear zone. These men too were sacrificed to no avail.

On Sunday 1 April 1945, Hodges's US First Army, advancing into Germany from the south, and Simpson's US Ninth Army, advancing from the north, linked up around Lippstadt, creating the "Ruhr Pocket" between the Rhine, Ruhr and Sieg rivers. Inside the pocket were the surrounded forces of Field Marshal Model's Army Group B, Harpe's Fifth Panzer Army and Zangen's Fifteenth Army.

Meanwhile, General de Lattre de Tassigny's French First Army crossed the upper Rhine at Philippsburg near Karlsruhe.

That same day, after a heavy preliminary naval gun bombardment and massive air raids, Buckner's US Tenth Army—Geiger's III Marine Corps and Hodges's XXIV Corps—landed on the Japanese island of Okinawa. Bushmaster amphibious transport vehicles were used there for the first time and proved especially effective in the bloody fighting following the landing.

On that same April 1, after transferring his command of the army general staff to his successor General Krebs, General Guderian, the creator of the German armored service, retired into Ebenhausen Sanatorium near Munich.

On Monday 2 April 1945, Zharokhin's Soviet Fifty-Seventh Army (one of Tolbukhin's Third Ukrainian armies) took the Hungarian oil production center of Nagy-Kanisza.

At the same time that the French First Army was occupying Karlsruhe on 4 April 1945, the last German troops were abandoning Hungary.

That day, the lead units of Tolbukhin's Third Ukrainian Front penetrated the suburbs of Vienna, and the struggle began for possession of that Danube metropolis.

On Saturday 7 April, German General Rendulic took over command of Army Group South while Hitler appointed General Hilpert commander of Army Group Kurland.

On Monday 9 April 1945, the British Eighth Army's long-awaited grand offensive began under McCreery in the eastern sector of the Italian front. By throwing in everything they had, the Allies finally succeeded in breaking German resistance and driving through to Bologna.

Germany had collapsed completely by the spring of 1945. In the East, the Soviets now stood along the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse [river flowing into the Oder from the East German–Polish border] at Bratislava (Czechoslovakia) and at Vienna. On the Western Front the Allies had now crossed the Rhine into Germany and were advancing swiftly east. The most important German industrial zones were already occupied. The remnants of the German armored forces received no more reinforcements either of men or equipment and had almost run out of fuel and ammunition. Despite all this, German leaders were determined to continue the struggle and above all to hold Berlin. Reserve units were set up, the Volkssturm Militia was organized and the last supplies of arms and equipment assembled. Approximately one million soldiers with 1,200 tanks and assault guns took up positions in the Greater Berlin area. The defense forces fell to the command of Heinrici's Army Group Vistula, whose Ninth Army under Busse was holding the line from the Lusatian Neisse along the Oder to Eberswalde.

On Tuesday 10 April 1945, Simpson's US Ninth Army marched into the cities of Essen and Hanover.

At this same time, the Japanese were leading a new offensive in China to capture Chinkiang airbase a couple of hundred miles southwest of Hankow.

In Burma, British armored forces, after taking Mandalay and pausing to regroup and take on reinforcements, moved to deliver a decisive blow at Rangoon. The main forces drove along the Mandalay-Rangoon rail line while other units rolled parallel to the Sittang river. The armor had to depend on the aerial forces to supply it with food, fuel and ammunition.

On Friday 13 April 1945, rifle units of Zakhvaratayev's Soviet Fourth Guards Army, supported by tanks and self-propelled guns, captured Vienna.

On Saturday 14 April, the US Ninth Army and Hodges's US First Army, which had surrounded the "Ruhr Pocket" from north and south, split open the German forces inside the pocket after heavy air and armored attacks. Zangen's German Fifteenth Army and Harpe's Fifth Panzer Army—a force of 325,000 men representing all that was left of 19 German divisions—were taken prisoner by the Americans. Field Marshal Model committed suicide.

That same day, exactly eight months after the disastrous failure of Allied Operation Market Garden, the British 49th Division finally liberated the embattled Belgian town of Arnhem.

On the night of 15/16 April 1945, General Wenck's German Twelfth Army, which had formed up along the east bank of the Elbe, achieved a surprising victory when its weak forces, supported only by a few Panther tanks, succeeded in smashing a US Ninth Army bridgehead south of Magdeburg.

On Monday 16 April 1945, Koniev's First Ukrainian Front and Zhukov's First White Russian Front led a major offensive along the Neisse river and out of the Soviet bridgeheads on the Oder. Their objective: to encircle and take Berlin.

The offensive began with a massive preliminary artillery and aerial bombardment. The Soviet armored forces at once broke through the German defenses on the Oder and Neisse and drove toward Berlin.

Soviet forces participating in the Battle of Berlin included 8,354 aircraft, 42,973 cannon and mortars, 6,287 tanks and self-propelled guns and 18 armies totalling 2.5 million men.

On Wednesday 18 April 1945—contrary to the wishes of General Eisenhower—Patton launched the armored spearheads of his US Third Army in a bravura drive across the German border into western Bohemia (Czechoslovakia) and advanced in the direction of Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary), Pilsen (Plzen), Prague and Budweis (Ceske Budejovice). General Eisenhower was asked by Stalin and Roosevelt to halt Patton's push to liberate Czechoslovakia; for the Soviet and American leaders had agreed between them that Czechoslovakia would belong to the Soviet sphere of influence. That same day, Hodges's US First Army captured the German city of Düsseldorf which had been destroyed by Allied bombers.



Near Baden-Baden in spring 1945: French First Army forces are attacking under cover from their tanks.

On the morning of 20 April 1945, Rokossovsky's Second White Russian Front—Fedyuninsky's Second Shock Army, Batov's Sixty-Fifth, Popov's Seventieth and Grizhin's Forty-Ninth armies—opened an offensive out of bridgeheads on the lower Oder between Stettin (Szczecin) and Schwedt to take western Pomerania and Mecklenburg. They rolled past Heinrici's German Army Group Vistula, which was forced to retreat.

That afternoon—Hitler's 56th birthday—the artillery batteries of the Soviet LXXIX Infantry Corps (part of Simoniak's Second Shock Army) began to bombard central Berlin. Hitler divided into two parts all territory still held by Germany: a northern zone placed under command of Admiral Dönitz, and a southern zone under Field Marshal Kesselring.

On Saturday 21 April 1945, the lead troops of Marshal Zhukov's First White Russian Front entered Berlin. An enemy tank alert was sounded in Mahlsdorf [area of eastern Berlin] early in the morning when three Soviet armored crews smuggled their vehicles in among a German armored column and passed the outer perimeter of antitank obstacles before their identity was detected.

Next day, 22 April 1945, lead units of armor from Marshal Koniev's First Ukrainian Front fought their way through to the southern suburbs of Berlin. The Second White Russian Front re-

pulsed a counterthrust by German Panzer General von Manteuffel's Third Panzer Army, driving from the north.

That same day, Stuttgart was taken by the French First Army, commanded by General de Lattre de Tassigny.

On Monday 23 April 1945, the armored spearheads of Dempsey's British Second Army reached the area of Hamburg and Harburg.

On Tuesday 24 April 1945, troops of Chuikov's Eighth Guards Army, who had marched all the way from Stalingrad to Berlin, linked up with a lead unit of Katukov's First Guards Tank Army (part of the First White Russian Front) and also with the Twenty-Eighth Army and Rybalko's Third Guards Tank Army (part of the First Ukrainian Front). Between them all, they had surrounded most of Busse's German Ninth Army in the area west of Frankfurt-an-der-Oder.

At that same hour, the French First Army and Patch's US Seventh Army occupied Ulm (southwest Germany).

Also on 24 April 1945, a Soviet reconnaissance troop approached Potsdam from the area around Paretz to the southwest, while simultaneously a Soviet rifle unit moved into Potsdam from Priort to the northeast. When they shook hands at Ketzin, the two units had completely closed the ring around Berlin. They were the first arrivals of troops now joining forces—Pyerkhorovich's Forty-Seventh Army and Bogdanov's Second Guards Tanks Army enveloping Berlin from the north, and the VI Guards Mechanized Corps of Lyelyushenko's Fourth Guards Tank Army advancing from the south.

Units of Reinhardt's US 69th Division (part of Hodges's US First Army) rendezvoused with the Soviet 58th Guards Rifle Division of Zhadov's Fifth Guards Army at 11:30 in the morning near the city of Torgau on the Elbe river in eastern Germany. The Western and Soviet Allies, in this historic meeting deep inside Germany, had effectively cut in two all the territory still held by the Germans. But although it was indeed two infantry soldiers who shook hands at the Elbe—US Lt. Kotzebue of 273 Infantry Regiment, 69th Division, and Soviet Lt. Col. Gardiev of 175 Infantry Regiment, 58th Guards Division—this did not change the fact that the war in Europe had been decided not by infantry but by the great armored operations. The European war was to end not now but two weeks later, when Western Allied and Soviet armor had finally broken all German resistance.

Bitter and dogged street fighting still raged in Berlin on Saturday 28 April 1945. That day Panzer General Wenck's German Twelfth Army drove from Belzig to the area around Ferch southwest of Potsdam in an attempt to relieve Berlin, but he had to call off the attack because of a shortage of men.

That afternoon the Soviets broke through at Prenzlau northeast of Berlin. General Heinrici was relieved of his post as C-in-C of Army Group Vistula and replaced by General Student.

On Sunday 29 April 1945, after prolonged secret negotiations, the German forces in Italy—German Army Group C, under von Vietinghoff, which included Panzer General Herr's Tenth Army and Panzer General Lemelsen's Fourteenth Army—surrendered to Allied forces under General Alexander; the surrender agreement was signed at Caserta. News of the capitulation was to be published three days later, on 2 May 1945, and the ceasefire would come into effect at 2:00 P.M. that day.

At 5:00 A.M. on Monday 30 April 1945, the Soviet 171st Rifle Division under General Negoda and the 150th Rifle under General Zhatilov stormed the Reichstag (German parliament) building in downtown Berlin. At 12:25 P.M. exactly, two Soviet sergeants, M. A. Yegorov and M. V. Kantariya, hoisted the Red Banner over the Reichstag. Meanwhile, a Dakota cargo plane that had taken off from Moscow was landing on the forward airfield at Kalau. It carried the "Ulbricht Group" [including German Communist leader Walter Ulbricht, who had been organizing a Communist German national committee from Moscow] whom Stalin had appointed to assume power in Germany. Soviet tanks were already moving into the square in front of the Reich Chancellery building when a different dictator, inside the underground bunker beneath the chancellery buildings, took his departure: At 3:30 P.M. Hitler committed suicide, taking with him into death Eva Braun, who had been his wife for only 39 hours, and his German shepherd bitch, Blondi.

A Soviet T-34 tank brigade during a pause in their advance east of the Oder river in April 1945



At that hour the first armored spearheads of Patch's US Seventh Army were rolling through the debris-strewn streets of Munich.

At 3:00 P.M. on Wednesday 2 May 1945, the Berlin garrison, under the Berlin defense commander General Weidling, stopped resisting and were taken prisoner.

On Thursday 3 May 1945, the tanks of General Ritchie's British XII Corps rode into Hamburg, which had been declared an "open city."

That same day, tanks of the British Indian 26th Division occupied Rangoon, the capital of Burma, after its abandonment by the Japanese. The 75,000-man British-Indian Army with its 250 tanks was now free to take on new operations outside Burma and began to prepare an attack on Singapore.

On Friday 4 May, soldiers of the US 103rd Infantry Division, part of the US Seventh Army which had occupied Bavaria and Austria, made their first contact with a unit of the US Fifth Army (the 88th Division), moving up northward out of Italy, at the Brenner Pass on the border of Italy and Austria.

That same day, May 4, also saw the surrender of all German forces in Holland (under Blaskowitz), in northwest Germany and its offshore islands (under Field Marshal Busch) and in Denmark (under General Lindemann). The capitulation agreement was signed by Admiral-General von Friedeburg at the headquarters of Field Marshal Montgomery on the Lüneburg Heath and went into effect at 8:00 A.M. on May 5. The surrender allowed Student's Army Group Vistula, including the remnants of the Twenty-First Army and the Third Panzer Army, to retreat west and surrender to the British, [thus escaping the Soviets]. Montgomery agreed to take them prisoner, saying that he was not a monster. Schulz's Army Group G, including what was left of the First and Nineteenth armies, surrendered at Haar near Munich.

On Sunday 6 May 1945, the Soviet First, Second and Fourth Ukrainian Fronts—totalling three tank armies and 17 infantry armies, plus the Polish Second Army, the Rumanian Second Army and the Czech I Corps and supported by the Soviet 2nd, 5th and 8th Air armies—opened a concentric attack on Field Marshal Schörner's Army Group Center, now comprising the First and Fourth Panzer armies and the Seventeenth Army in the area between Prague, Gablonz (Jablonec) and Pardubitz (Pardubice) in Bohemia.

That same day, the fortress of Breslau (Vroclaw) under General Niehoff surrendered to Glutsdovsky's Soviet Sixth Army.

At the same time, General Eisenhower ordered Patton's US Third Army to halt its advance in Bohemia.

At 2:41 A.M. on Monday 7 May 1945, the general surrender of the German Wehrmacht was enacted at Eisenhower's Headquarters in Rheims. The instrument was signed by General Jodl and came into force at midnight of 8/9 May 1945.

On Wednesday 9 May, the general surrender of the Germans was repeated for Soviet benefit at Soviet headquarters in Berlin-Karlshorst. This time the surrender agreement was signed by Field Marshal Keitel, General Stumpff and Admiral-General von Friedeburg, and it came into force at midnight that night. The war in Europe was at last over.

The Axis armored troops, like the other branches of service, were vastly outnumbered by the Allies, who had close to 10 armored vehicles to every German one.

The following figures give some idea of the disparity existing [toward the end of the war]: Great Britain 1939 to July 1944 produced 25,773 tanks; the USA 1941 to June 1945 produced 88,446 tanks; the USSR 1941 to June 1945 produced 95,099 tanks; Canada 1939 to June 1945 produced 40,609 tanks and self-propelled guns. Total Allied tanks: over 212,000.

The Axis statistics were as follows: Germany 1939 to March 1945 produced 23,487 tanks (not including self-propelled and assault guns); Japan in the whole of the war produced 3,600 tanks and 900 self-propelled guns; Italy 1938 to July 1943 produced 2,622 tanks.

Not the most daring operations, the most skilled strategy and tactics nor any other Axis resource could make up for this disparity in equipment. So

the final outcome of the war of the tanks was, in effect, decided not on the battlefields of World War II, but long before then in the manufacturing plants.

Germany's errors claimed 6.73 million German lives, of whom 3.25 million had been soldiers and 3.48 million civilians. The dead of all the other participating nations totalled over 45 million.

The last die-hard German units were now laying down their arms. On Thursday 10 May 1945, General Hilpert's Army Group Kurland, including Volckamer von Kirchensittenbach's Sixteenth and Boege's Eighteenth armies, declared their willingness to surrender, and 208,000 soldiers entered Soviet captivity.

At the same hour, the armored troops of Rybalko's Soviet Third Guards Tank Army occupied Prague.

Also on May 10, soldiers of Patch's US Seventh Army captured a group of German officers in the Tyrol. Among them was General Guderian.

At 12:00 noon of Monday 14 May 1945, the last forces of von Saucken's Army of East Prussia surrendered on the Hela peninsula [land spit northwest of Bay of Danzig] to Rokossovsky's Second White Russian Front, and some 150,000 men entered Soviet captivity.

On Sunday 24 June 1945, the Australian 9th Division, supported by tanks and amphibious vehicles, captured the Seria oil fields on Sarawak, northern Borneo.

On this and succeeding days, Soviet armored troops, including Kravchenko's Sixth Guards Tank Army, began their transfer out of Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Poland into the Far East.

On Tuesday 24 July 1945, the last Japanese forces still resisting on Okinawa surrendered to the Americans.

By the end of July 1945, the Red Army had shifted large quantities of troops from Karelia, East Prussia and Czechoslovakia to Asia.

The overall commander for the Soviet operations in Asia was Marshal Vassilevsky. The Soviet High Command planned to mount concentric drives from the east, west and north converging on the center of Japanese-held Manchuria to break up and then liquidate the pieces of the Japanese Kwantung Army. The plan was for the Soviet Transbaikal Front to advance out of eastern Mongolia through the Greater Khingan mountains of Manchuria in the direction of the major cities of Changchun and Mukden, while the First Far East Front was driving from north of Vladivostok westward toward Kirin. The Second Far East Front armies were positioned on the north back of the Amur river and on the lower Ussuri river south of Khabarovsk. After crossing the Amur west of Khabarovsk, the orders were to advance along the Sungari river. [See map of Soviet campaign in Manchuria, p. 326.]

Marshal Meretskov's First Far East Front, positioned at Vladivostok and the Ussuri river, was reinforced by Krylov's Fifth Army just transferred out of Königsberg (East Prussia, now *Kaliningrad*). Marshal Malinovsky's Transbaikal Front in eastern Mongolia was reinforced by Ludnikov's Thirty-Ninth Army, which transferred in from East Prussia, and Managarov's Fifty-Third Army and Kravchenko's Sixth Guards Tank Army, which had been transferred from Czechoslovakia. To reach their new posts, these armies and their equipment had to travel between 5,400 and 6,600 miles inside 136,000 railway cars. The following were the Red Army forces assembling in the Far East to prepare an offensive against the Japanese Kwantung Army: the First Transbaikal Front (the Seventeenth, Thirty-Sixth, Thirty-Ninth and Fifty-Third armies, the Sixth Guards Tank Army, the 12th Air Army, the Transbaikal Antiaircraft Army, plus a Soviet-Mongolian Mechanized Cavalry Group, with a total of 1,751 tanks); the First Far East Front (the First, Fifth, Twenty-Fifth and Thirty-Fifth armies, the 9th Air Army, the Amur Antiaircraft Army, the Chuguyev Task Force and I Motorized Corps, with a total of 1,201 tanks); and Purkayev's Second Far East Front (the Second, Fifteenth and Sixteenth armies, the 10th Air Army, V Infantry Corps and the Kamchatka Garrison, with a total of 752 tanks). The Mongolian People's Republic added its 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th Cavalry Divisions, the 7th Armored Brigade, the 3rd Armored Regiment, the 3rd Artillery Regiment, the 1st Air Division and the First Signals Regiment, totalling about 25,000 men. All these Mongolian units were placed under command of General Pliyev's Soviet Motorized Cavalry Group. This group also included the 43rd Armored, 25th and 27th Motorized Brigades, the 59th Cavalry Brigade, the 35th Antitank Artillery Brigade, 30th Motorcycle Regiment, 1914 and 1917 Antiaircraft Artillery Regiments, 350th Fighter Plane Regiment, 60th Rocket Artillery Regiment and a technical engineers battalion. All together, the Soviet forces totalled 80 divisions, including two armored divisions and four armored corps, plus motorized units: 1,557,725 fighting men; 26,137 cannon and mortars; 3,704 tanks; 1,852 self-propelled guns; and 3,446 combat aircraft.

On Wednesday 8 August 1945, the USSR declared war on Japan, thus breaking the non-aggression pact signed between the two nations on 13 April 1941.

At ten minutes past midnight local time on the night of 8/9 August 1945, Soviet forces of all three Soviet army groups opened their offensive from three directions at once against the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria. [The Transbaikal armies made rapid progress.] By evening, the infantry had penetrated up to 30 miles and the armored forces up to 90 miles. They met strong resistance only on their left flank, the sector of Luchinski's Thirty-Sixth Army. Soviet units on the right flank drove the enemy back deep into the interior of Manchuria. As they retreated, the Japanese blew up bridges and telegraph lines and poisoned the springs and wells.

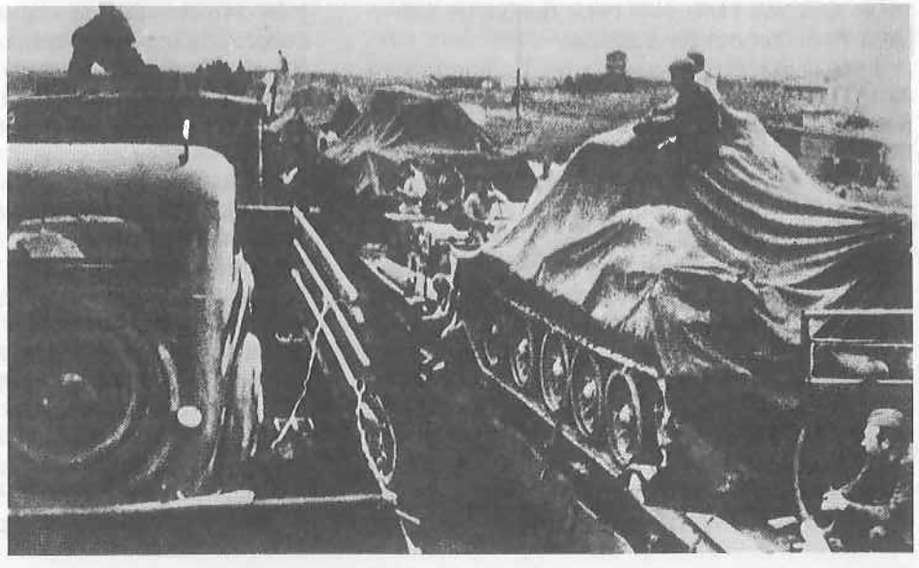
Armored forces had hard going through the gorges of the Greater Khingan mountains, which were almost impassable after rainfall.

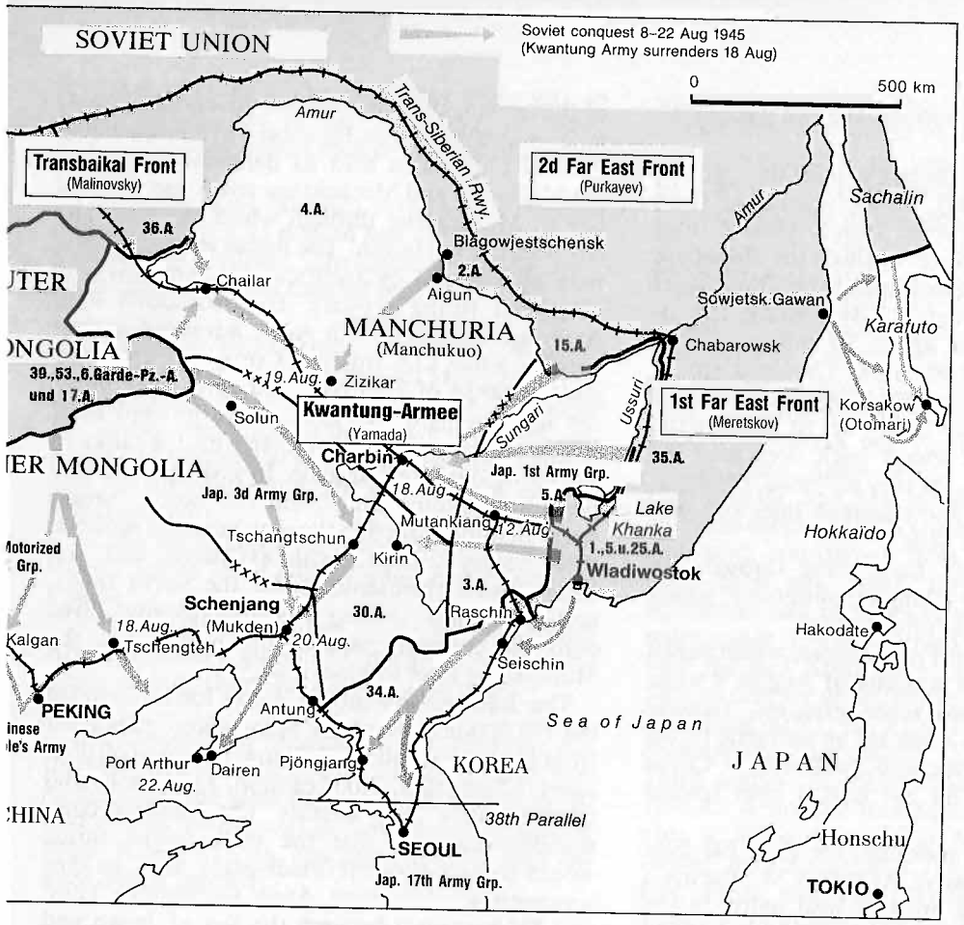
The Second Far East Front armies, which began their offensive on the morning of August 9 while it was still dark, also made progress. General Mamonov's Fifteenth Army led an energetic thrust along the Sungari river, and Paakhov's V Corps drove out of Bikin on the Ussuri river toward Raohe.

At 1:00 that same morning, the First Far East Front joined the offensive. At 8:30 A.M., the main army forces followed up their lead units. In the sector of Zakhvatayev's Thirty-Fifth Army, the Soviet divisions crossed the Ussuri and Sungari rivers. The motorized units advanced through the pathless hills. Roads had to be built through the forests before the tanks, artillery and transport columns could move through. The tanks felled trees that the engineers then used to build a corduroy road over 15 feet wide. Despite the handicaps of the terrain, the Soviet armor advanced up to 45 miles in two days. The Japanese Fifth Army under General Shigemitsu held its defensive line along the Muling-he and Mutankiang rivers and held the city of Mutankiang through which the road and rail lines ran to Harbin. The routes to Mutankiang were all guarded by fortifications, machine gun nests and strong artillery. Byeloborodov's First Army and Krylov's Fifth Army advanced against the city, while LIX Infantry Corps of First Army and the tanks of 75th Armored Brigade captured the neighboring city of Linkau. At the same time, XXVI Infantry Corps, together with the tanks of the 257th Armored Brigade, forged the river and penetrated Mutankiang from the north. Savage street fighting ensued in the city. Japanese soldiers, their bodies strapped with explosives and grenades, threw themselves under the Soviet tanks, and 15 Japanese soldiers wearing explosives dived onto the concrete piers of the bridge over the Mutankiang river to blow it up.

The Japanese Kwantung Army forces included the 178,000-man Army of Manchukuo, plus units from Inner Mongolia and China: a total of 40 divisions, 27 brigades, 5,000 cannon, 1,000 tanks and approximately 1,000 aircraft. The Japanese commanders assumed that the main Soviet thrust would come out of the Vladivostok area, so they concentrated their First Army Group (the Third and Fifth armies) between the Sea of Japan and Lake Khanka. The Japanese Third Army Group (the Thirtieth and Fortieth armies) was positioned in central Manchuria, and the Fourth Independent Army stood in northwestern Manchuria, while the Seventeenth Army Group (the Thirty-Fourth and Fifty-Ninth armies) secured Korea. Guarding the border to the Mongolian Republic were the troops

June 1945, Soviet tank brigade moving out of East Prussia headed for Mongolia in the Far East to fight the Japanese





August 1945, the Soviet conquest of Manchuria



Tanks of the Soviet Thirty-Fifth Army on the shore of Lake Khanka, eastern Manchuria in August 1945

of the Chinese puppet government, subservient to Japan.

On the night of 9/10 August, Soviet Rear-Admiral Antonov's Amur Flotilla, carrying forces of Tyeryekin's Second Army who had established a bridgehead on one bank of the Amur, crossed the river south of Blagovyeshchensk and Poyarkovo.

On Saturday 11 August 1945, the Soviet Thirty-Sixth Army set out for Tsitsihar.

By that day, Kravochenko's Sixth Guards Tank Army had already crossed out of the Greater Khingan mountains. By evening they had taken Luobei and Fuyuan in the central Manchurian plain, covering a distance of almost 25 miles. Ludnikov's Thirty-Ninth Army took three days to get through the Greater Khingan, and then ran into an area near Halun strongly fortified with bunkers.

The Soviet Transbaikal Army Group faced particular problems with fuel and other supplies. The Sixth Guards Tank Army, especially IX Motorized Corps and V Tank Corps on whose tanks the entire drive depended, had to give up their fuel to keep all the other vehicles running. As a result, the 46th Tank Brigade had to pursue its attack with only 18 tanks, and the 30th Motorized Brigade with only 7. Then transport planes began to fly in fresh supplies of fuel. The Soviets advanced slowly because their movements were impaired by the persistent rain: The tanks were averaging only 2½ to 3 miles per hour.

On 12 and 13 August, air transport squadrons airlifted in large supplies of fuel, water and ammunition for the Soviet armored forces.

After the Soviet Transbaikal Front had reached the Manchurian plains, the Front's right wing joined forces with the Chinese Eighth Communist People's Liberation Army under General Chu Te. Meanwhile, Byeloborodov's Soviet First Army and Krylov's Fifth Army—both part of the First Far East Front—were caught up in fierce fighting in the Mutankiang area.

On Tuesday 14 August, the Soviet XXVI Corps, fighting in Mutankiang, was thrown back to 6 miles northeast of the city following heavy Japanese counterattacks.

That same day, the tanks of the Sixth Guards Tank Army, after a 270-mile forced march through the desert and over the precipitous slopes of the Greater Khingan mountains, broke through to the plains of central Manchuria where they found themselves standing to the rear of all the Japanese forces. They had averaged between 25 and 40 miles per day on their march through the mountain wastes. The Soviet-Mongolian Mounted and Mechanized Group under General Pliyev had poured out to cover a 210-mile-wide front, securing the main drive of the Transbaikal Front along the south. Pliyev's forces continued their advance through the Gobi Desert in two parallel columns about 110 to 120 miles apart. The mounted and motorized troops operated with dramatic success in the Gobi. They not only prevented the Japanese from building up any effective defense but also cut enemy communications between Manchuria and the northern provinces of China where Japanese forces stood ready to move into Manchuria. The Japanese commanders were astounded that the Soviets had been able to cross the Greater Khingan and the Gobi Desert. The success of the Soviet First Far East Front and the disorganization of the Japanese communications left General Yamada's Japanese First Army Group with little hope of retreating successfully into southern Manchuria.

On the evening of 14 August 1945, the Japanese Kwantung Army received orders to burn all its flags, important secret documents, and orders from or images of the Emperor. Meanwhile, the Soviets prepared a major attack on Mutankiang.

On the night of 15/16 August, the Soviet XXVI Corps, reinforced by the 257th Tank Brigade, forged the river and stormed Mutankiang next day. To avoid encirclement, the Japanese retreated from the city area. Meanwhile, Krylov's Fifth Army marched southwest to support the Soviet Twenty-Fifth Army, whose forces were advancing toward Korea.

On Friday 17 August 1945, the regiments of the 361st and 388th Infantry Divisions of Purkayev's Second Far East Front, supported by tanks, stormed the city of Kiamusi on the Sungari river. The city was defended by General Mitsuru's Japanese 134th Division. Simultaneously, Soviet airborne troops prepared to drop into the larger cities of Manchuria so as to hasten the advance of the army groups.

On Sunday 19 August 1945, just as the tanks of Kravochenko's Sixth Guards Tank Army started to enter Mukden, 225 Soviet paratroops dropped near the city. Simultaneous landings occurred in Kirin, Harbin and Changchun, all designed to speed up the surrender of the local garrisons.

That same day, Luchinski's Thirty-Sixth Army (of the Transbaikal Army Group) took the city of Tsitsihar, while the right wing of the army group approached Peking in the south.

Meanwhile, the Second Far East Army Group pursued its operations mopping up all enemy forces left in northern Manchuria.

On Monday 20 August 1945, the Sixth Guards Tank Army took Mukden and the Twenty-Fifth Army of the First Far East Front took Kirin. Soviet troops moved into southern Sakhalin island at the same time.

On Wednesday 22 August, Soviet airborne troops took Port Arthur and Dairen on the Kwantung peninsula; other Soviet forces landed on the Kurile Islands.

On Friday 24 August 1945, the lead units of the Sixth Guards Tank Army and the main forces of the Soviet Thirty-Ninth Army reached the port of Dairen and the city of Antung near the border of Korea.

The Japanese had lost 700,000 men, including 83,737 dead and 594,000 prisoners, during 15 days of heavy fighting in the Soviet campaign in Manchuria. The Soviets captured 1,665 cannon, 2,139 mortars, 600 tanks, and 861 planes. Soviet losses were: 8,219 dead, 22,264 wounded, and 158 tanks.

At 10:30 A.M. local time on Sunday 2 September 1945, Japan signed an unconditional surrender agreement in a special ceremony on board the US battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. Japanese Foreign Minister Shigemitsu and General Umezu, the chief of the Japanese general staff, signed for Japan, and General MacArthur for the Allies. Other Allied representatives were: Admiral Nimitz for the USA, General Su Juan-czan for China, Admiral Fraser for Great Britain, General Dyeryevenko for the USSR, General Leclerc for France, Admiral Helfrich for the Netherlands.

At the end of the ceremony General MacArthur said: "Let us pray that peace be now restored to the world and that God will preserve it always. These proceedings are closed." [English quoted from p. 172 of *The Fall of Japan*, Chicago, Time-Life Books, 1983]

Numbers and Nationalities of Armored Forces in Campaigns and Battles of World War II

These figures are not exact. Official statistics often do not distinguish between tanks and armored scout cars or tanks and self-propelled guns. Armored strength varied from moment to moment through continual casualties and replacements; and many other factors (camouflage, propaganda etc.) also have resulted in widely diverging estimates of tank strength.

		Tanks
Poland	Sept 39	3195 German 190 Polish
Finland	Nov 39– Mar 40	1500 Soviet 60 Finnish
Denmark/Norway	Apr– Jun 40	50 German
France	May– Jun 40	3379 German 3500 French 640 British 50 Belgian/ Dutch
Cyrenaica/Compass	Jun 40– Feb 41	580 Italian 275 British
Balkans	Apr– May 41	1000 German (incl. Axis allies) 200 Allied
Cyrenaica	Apr– May 41	50/130 German and Italian 260 British
Cyrenaica/Battleaxe	Jun 41	170 German 200 British
Eastern Front/ German advance	Jun– Dec 41	3200 German 20000 Soviet
Cyrenaica/Crusader	Nov– Dec 41	249 German 309 Italian 724 British
Soviet winter offensive	Dec 41– Feb 42	1450 German 2000 Soviet
Philippines	Dec 41– Apr 42	200 Japanese 50 American
Burma	Dec 41– Mar 42	70 Japanese 120 British
Cyrenaica	Jan 42	84 German 89 Italian 150 British

		Tanks
Stalingrad	Dec 42– Jan 43	675 German 894 Soviet
Kharkov	Feb– Mar 43	350 German 250 Soviet
Tunisia	Nov– Dec 42	40 German 80 British/US
Tunisia/Kasserine	Feb 43	150 German 20 Italian 350 American 100 British
Tunisia	Mar– May 43	130 German and Italian 2200 Allied
Kursk/German offensive, Soviet counteroffensive	Jul– Sep 43	2800 German 3600 Soviet
Sicily	Jul– Aug 43	200 German and Italian 600 Allied
Allied drive to Cassino	Sep– Nov 43	250 German 800 Allied
Dnieper R./Soviet offensive	Aug– Dec 43	2100 German 2400 Soviet
Smolensk/ Soviet offensive	Aug– Oct 43	500 German 1400 Soviet
Ukraine/ Soviet offensive	Dec 43– Jan 44	2200 German 2000 Soviet
Allied drive to Rome	May– Jun 44	250 German 1400 Allied
Normandy/Invasion	Jun 44	1500 German 5300 Allied
No. France/Op. Goodwood	Jul 44	300 German 1350 British
No. France/Op. Cobra	Jul 44	110 German 1500 American

		Tanks
Eastern Front/Poland	Jul– Aug 44	1800 German 6000 Soviet
So. France/Invasion	Aug– Sep 44	100 German 700 Allied
Italy/Gothic Line	Aug– Sep 44	200 German 1200 Allied
German Ardennes Offensive	Dec 44– Jan 45	1750 German 2800 Allied
Soviet drive to the Oder	Jan 45	934 German 6460 Soviet
Allied drive to the Rhine	Feb– Mar 45	500 German 5000 Allied
Burma	Dec 44– Aug 45	80 Japanese 250 British
Manchuria	Aug 45	1000 Japanese 5556 Soviet
Ukraine/Soviet counteroffensive	Jan– May 42	3000 German 5000 Soviet
Cyrenaica/Theseus	May– Jun 42	332 German 228 Italian 849 British
Caucasus/Stalingrad	Jun– Nov 42	3000 German 1250 Soviet
Egypt/El Alamein	Jul– Aug 42	35 German 30 Italian 150 British
Egypt/Alam Halfa	Aug– Sep 42	200 German 240 Italian 935 British
Egypt/El Alamein	Oct– Nov 42	210 German 280 Italian 1029 British

Makeup and Deployment of the Armored Forces of the Belligerent Armies

Countries are listed in alphabetical order. Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the USA and the Soviet Union have been omitted because their armored forces are described extensively in the main body of the text.

Australia

A volunteer professional army, with universal conscription starting in 1940. Armored production 1939–45: 57 tanks. Manned two armored divisions until 1945. Operations: North Africa from 1940 on; Greece 1941; Malaya, New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Bismarck Archipelago, Borneo.

Belgium

Target strength of the army, 700,000 men. In 1939 Belgium had one motorized cavalry corps of 30 tanks and 50 armored reconnaissance cars. Operations: Belgium 1940; approximately 2,500 exiled armored troops served with Great Britain; east Africa (against Italy) 1940–41; northern France and Belgium 1944.

razil

39: one armored company. Operations: Italy 43–45 (one infantry division of approximately 75 aks).

ulgaria

arting in 1941, the Bulgarian army (with German l) armed the 21st Infantry Division, 2nd Cavalry vision and a tank brigade of 60 German tanks. erations: 1941 against Yugoslavia and Greece; n, stationed in the Balkans as an occupation ce. After the shift in the front following 9 Sep 44, the Bulgarian tank brigade changed sides and ved with the Soviet Third Ukrainian Front under ulinovsky, against the German Second Panzer my in western Hungary, northwest Yugoslavia d southern Austria.

nada

e Canadian field army was in process of forma- until 1944 and had 653,769 men. By 31 Dec 4, 60% of the forces, including two armored di- ons and two independent armored brigades, had n shipped abroad. Canadian armored units took t in the ill-fated Dieppe Landing of 19 Aug 1942 , after that, in the invasion of Sicily, the fighting taly, the Normandy Invasion (as part of the First adian Army), and in Belgium, Holland and Ger- ny.

na (Kuomintang: Nationalist forces)

941 the Chinese army had approximately 6 mil- men who fought against the Japanese army. In tion, some 850,000 partisans operated behind ny lines. Beginning in 1942, the Kuomintang y was equipped with US-supplied light tanks.

a (Mao Tse Tung)

Chinese Red Army operated in areas the Com- ist Chinese claimed to have "liberated." In 1942 mbered approximately 2 million men and had nd 100 captured Japanese tanks.

nark

target) strength of the army was 150,000 men, ding two tank platoons controlled by the cav- nd motorized troops. Operations: Because of verwhelming German odds, offered only token ance to German troops who invaded on 8/9 940. 13 killed, 24 wounded.

nd

) Nov 1939, the army's strength was 175,000 One Finnish armored company and one ar- car company took part in the Finnish-Soviet er War." In 1943 an armored division was set d fought on the side of the German Wehr- along the Eastern Front. Beginning in Sep- 1944, the Finnish armored force fought on viet side against the Germans in northern Fin-

France

The strength of the French Army in France and its colonies on 1 Mar 1940 was (excluding native colonial troops) about 4.4 million men. On 10 May 1940, there were inside France 4 armored divisions of 55 tanks (DCRs, or *divisions cuirassées de réserve*), 3 mechanized divisions of 580 tanks, 27 independent armored battalions of 1,215 tanks; plus, supplementary and reserve forces including four mechanized divisions of 200 tanks; two Polish battalions of 100 tanks; 100 tanks built for Rumania and Turkey; 600 antiquated Renault FT prototype tanks; and about 180 replacement tanks being held in reserve. In its North African colonies, France had four battalions of 200 tanks, and in Syria one battalion of 50 tanks. Operations: France 1940; North Africa 1941–43; Italy and France 1943–45. When the "Free French" troops were combined with the French North Africa Army on 1 Sep 1944, three armored divisions were formed and deployed in Italy, France and Germany. The US Army supplied the French with their armored equipment: 651 light and 755 medium tanks.

Greece

In autumn 1940 before the start of the war against Italy, the Greek army numbered about 430,000 men. The 19th Motorized Division had command of three companies of 9–11 light Vickers and Renault tanks each. In 1940–41 the Greeks captured about 30 light Italian tanks and used them in their own operations. On 7 Mar 1941, the British Expeditionary Force entered Greece bringing an armored brigade and other forces. In 1941–42 a Greek brigade that included one tank battalion was set up in Egypt; it fought in North Africa and later in Italy.

Hungary

In 1939 the army had two motorized brigades which had not yet received their full complement of troops and vehicles. In June 1941, 215,000 men were mobilized, and, among other units, three motorized brigades were sent to the Eastern Front where they fought on the German side. In September 1941 an armored brigade was armed with German tanks. In summer 1943 eight army corps were set up, each of which had an armored detachment. After German troops occupied Hungary in March 1944 [to counteract an anticipated rebellion], plans were made to form two armored divisions, but these were only partially realized. Later, several armored units fought in cooperation with the Hungarian First Army in the western Ukraine.

India

In 1940 the field army numbered approximately 325,000 men. The 31st Indian Armoured Division was formed in autumn 1940. The British also had eight armored companies in India. In May 1941 part of the Indian 31st Armoured Division was transferred to Iraq. In 1942 the Indian 32nd Armoured Division was set up and fought in the war against Japan.

Iraq

In 1941 the Iraqi forces numbered 35,000 men, with one company of tanks and one of tankettes. Both units fought against the British 2–30 May 1941 and, after that, were "neutralized" until the end of the war along with the rest of the Iraqi army.

Japan

In 1941 land forces numbered some 2,025,000 men. The armored units and small independent tank brigades were used as a tactical support weapon on a number of Pacific islands and after the Japanese invasion of southeast Asia; but Japanese armor was never used on operational missions. In 1945 23 tanks saw action on the island of Iwojima, and an armored regiment of 13 light and 14 medium tanks, on Okinawa.

Netherlands

On 1 May 1940, the Dutch army numbered 435,000 men, plus 35,000 colonial troops that included 28,000 native soldiers. There were two armored reconnaissance-car platoons on Dutch soil. In 1941 the Dutch 1st Armored Brigade ("Prinses Irene") was formed in Great Britain. It landed in Normandy on 8 Aug 1944 and fought in northern France, Belgium and Holland.

Poland

The (target) strength of the army, approximately 3,600,000 men. Armored and motorized troops were divided into 9 companies of light tanks and 29 companies of light armored scout cars. The German assault totally disrupted Polish efforts to mobilize, so on 1 Sep 1939, the army numbered only 540,000 men and only 160 tanks. In 1943 the exiled Polish 1st Armored Division was set up in Great Britain; it began operations in Normandy on 30 July 1944 and later fought in Belgium, Holland and Germany.

Rumania

At the end of August 1939, the army numbered 500,000 men. In the winter of 1940–41 the German military mission in Rumania began to set up a Rumanian tank brigade equipped with confiscated French, Polish and Czech tanks. On 22 June 1941 the tank brigade began to fight on Germany's side on the Eastern Front. Later, the Rumanian 1st Armored Division was formed and armed exclusively with captured Soviet and French tanks. After Rumania switched to the Soviet side on 25 Oct 1944, one armored division fought against the Germans.

Yugoslavia (Kingdom of)

At the start of April 1941, the field army had about 1 million men and two armored battalions with French (Renault) and Czech (Skoda) tanks.

Yugoslavia (Partisan Army of occupied Yugoslavia)

By the start of 1945, Tito's partisan army numbered about 429,000 men with two tank brigades of 65 Soviet T-34 medium tanks, plus light Italian and captured German tanks.

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Brazil

1939: one armored company. Operations: Italy 1943–45 (one infantry division of approximately 75 tanks).

Bulgaria

Starting in 1941, the Bulgarian army (with German aid) armed the 21st Infantry Division, 2nd Cavalry Division and a tank brigade of 60 German tanks. Operations: 1941 against Yugoslavia and Greece; then, stationed in the Balkans as an occupation force. After the shift in the front following 9 Sep 1944, the Bulgarian tank brigade changed sides and served with the Soviet Third Ukrainian Front under Malinovsky, against the German Second Panzer Army in western Hungary, northwest Yugoslavia and southern Austria.

Canada

The Canadian field army was in process of formation until 1944 and had 653,769 men. By 31 Dec 1944, 60% of the forces, including two armored divisions and two independent armored brigades, had been shipped abroad. Canadian armored units took part in the ill-fated Dieppe Landing of 19 Aug 1942 and, after that, in the invasion of Sicily, the fighting in Italy, the Normandy Invasion (as part of the First Canadian Army), and in Belgium, Holland and Germany.

China (Kuomintang: Nationalist forces)

In 1941 the Chinese army had approximately 6 million men who fought against the Japanese army. In addition, some 850,000 partisans operated behind enemy lines. Beginning in 1942, the Kuomintang Army was equipped with US-supplied light tanks.

China (Mao Tse Tung)

The Chinese Red Army operated in areas the Communist Chinese claimed to have "liberated." In 1942 it numbered approximately 2 million men and had around 100 captured Japanese tanks.

Denmark

The (target) strength of the army was 150,000 men, including two tank platoons controlled by the cavalry and motorized troops. Operations: Because of the overwhelming German odds, offered only token resistance to German troops who invaded on 8/9 Apr 1940. 13 killed, 24 wounded.

Finland

On 30 Nov 1939, the army's strength was 175,000 men. One Finnish armored company and one armored car company took part in the Finnish-Soviet "Winter War." In 1943 an armored division was set up and fought on the side of the German Wehrmacht along the Eastern Front. Beginning in September 1944, the Finnish armored force fought on the Soviet side against the Germans in northern Finland.

France

The strength of the French Army in France and its colonies on 1 Mar 1940 was (excluding native colonial troops) about 4.4 million men. On 10 May 1940, there were inside France 4 armored divisions of 55 tanks (DCRs, or *divisions cuirassées de réserve*), 3 mechanized divisions of 580 tanks, 27 independent armored battalions of 1,215 tanks; plus, supplementary and reserve forces including four mechanized divisions of 200 tanks; two Polish battalions of 100 tanks; 100 tanks built for Rumania and Turkey; 600 antiquated Renault FT prototype tanks; and about 180 replacement tanks being held in reserve. In its North African colonies, France had four battalions of 200 tanks, and in Syria one battalion of 50 tanks. Operations: France 1940; North Africa 1941–43; Italy and France 1943–45. When the "Free French" troops were combined with the French North Africa Army on 1 Sep 1944, three armored divisions were formed and deployed in Italy, France and Germany. The US Army supplied the French with their armored equipment: 651 light and 755 medium tanks.

Greece

In autumn 1940 before the start of the war against Italy, the Greek army numbered about 430,000 men. The 19th Motorized Division had command of three companies of 9–11 light Vickers and Renault tanks each. In 1940–41 the Greeks captured about 30 light Italian tanks and used them in their own operations. On 7 Mar 1941, the British Expeditionary Force entered Greece bringing an armored brigade and other forces. In 1941–42 a Greek brigade that included one tank battalion was set up in Egypt; it fought in North Africa and later in Italy.

Hungary

In 1939 the army had two motorized brigades which had not yet received their full complement of troops and vehicles. In June 1941, 215,000 men were mobilized, and, among other units, three motorized brigades were sent to the Eastern Front where they fought on the German side. In September 1941 an armored brigade was armed with German tanks. In summer 1943 eight army corps were set up, each of which had an armored detachment. After German troops occupied Hungary in March 1944 [to counteract an anticipated rebellion], plans were made to form two armored divisions, but these were only partially realized. Later, several armored units fought in cooperation with the Hungarian First Army in the western Ukraine.

India

In 1940 the field army numbered approximately 325,000 men. The 31st Indian Armoured Division was formed in autumn 1940. The British also had eight armored companies in India. In May 1941 part of the Indian 31st Armoured Division was transferred to Iraq. In 1942 the Indian 32nd Armoured Division was set up and fought in the war against Japan.

Iraq

In 1941 the Iraqi forces numbered 35,000 men, with one company of tanks and one of tankettes. Both units fought against the British 2–30 May 1941 and, after that, were "neutralized" until the end of the war along with the rest of the Iraqi army.

Japan

In 1941 land forces numbered some 2,025,000 men. The armored units and small independent tank brigades were used as a tactical support weapon on a number of Pacific islands and after the Japanese invasion of southeast Asia; but Japanese armor was never used on operational missions. In 1945 23 tanks saw action on the island of Iwojima, and an armored regiment of 13 light and 14 medium tanks, on Okinawa.

Netherlands

On 1 May 1940, the Dutch army numbered 435,000 men, plus 35,000 colonial troops that included 28,000 native soldiers. There were two armored reconnaissance-car platoons on Dutch soil. In 1941 the Dutch 1st Armored Brigade ("Prinses Irene") was formed in Great Britain. It landed in Normandy on 8 Aug 1944 and fought in northern France, Belgium and Holland.

Poland

The (target) strength of the army, approximately 3,600,000 men. Armored and motorized troops were divided into 9 companies of light tanks and 29 companies of light armored scout cars. The German assault totally disrupted Polish efforts to mobilize, so on 1 Sep 1939, the army numbered only 540,000 men and only 160 tanks. In 1943 the exiled Polish 1st Armored Division was set up in Great Britain; it began operations in Normandy on 30 July 1944 and later fought in Belgium, Holland and Germany.

Rumania

At the end of August 1939, the army numbered 500,000 men. In the winter of 1940–41 the German military mission in Rumania began to set up a Rumanian tank brigade equipped with confiscated French, Polish and Czech tanks. On 22 June 1941, the tank brigade began to fight on Germany's side on the Eastern Front. Later, the Rumanian 1st Armored Division was formed and armed exclusively with captured Soviet and French tanks. After Rumania switched to the Soviet side on 25 Oct 1944, one armored division fought against the Germans.

Yugoslavia (Kingdom of)

At the start of April 1941, the field army had about 1 million men and two armored battalions with French (Renault) and Czech (Skoda) tanks.

Yugoslavia (Partisan Army of occupied Yugoslavia)

By the start of 1945, Tito's partisan army numbered about 429,000 men with two tank brigades of 65 Soviet T-34 medium tanks, plus light Italian and captured German tanks.

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