

The Course of World War II

Class 4

William A. Reader

williamreader40@gmail.com

The Nazi-Soviet Pact

Hitler on Poland

On 28 March 1939, Hitler denounced the 1934 Non-Aggression Pact with Poland and had his military begin preparations for an invasion of Poland

Hitler had two problems with Poland

- Situated between Germany and Russia, Poland barred the invasion route into Russia
- Poland had a large German population and territories that Hitler felt belonged to Germany

To ensure the quiet eastern border that Hitler desired for his attack on France, Poland had to subordinate itself to Germany

Hitler on Poland - 2

To Hitler, Polish subordination meant

- Joining the Anti-Comintern Pact
- Ceding Danzig and predominantly-German areas to Germany
- Allowing Germany to build a highway across the Polish corridor

While Poland was willing to negotiate over Danzig and allow Germany to build a highway across the Polish Corridor, it would not cede territory to Germany nor join the Anti-Comintern Pact

This led Hitler to decide on an invasion of Poland

- It also led him to seek an agreement with Stalin

Stalin's View of Nazism

Stalin saw National Socialism as simply a nastier form of monopoly capitalism – more brutal than the capitalism of the Western democracies but essentially the same

- Stalin did not realize that Hitler and the Nazis were racist ideologues committed to expansion eastward and to the replacement of Russians by Germans as the population of Western Russia
- What Stalin did not understand was that, under Hitler, Germany's capitalist and economic elites had practically no influence on the formation and direction (as distinct from the implementation) of German policy

Stalin's View of Western Policy

Stalin saw British and French appeasement of Hitler as a way of bribing Hitler to attack eastward rather than westward

- Stalin was skeptical that Chamberlain meant it when he made a commitment to Poland on 31 March 1939 that Britain would go to war with Germany if it attacked Poland
- Stalin, like Hitler, believed that Chamberlain was bluffing – that Chamberlain was still committed to appeasement and had made the commitment only to mollify anti-Nazi sentiment at home and camouflage their policy of turning German aggression eastward

If the Western Powers were really committed to deterring Hitler, they would act quickly to try to negotiate a military alliance with Stalin

- This, however, was not done

Negotiations with Britain and France

It was not until the end of July that Chamberlain consented to the dispatch of a military mission to Moscow

- The mission went not by airplane but by a slow steamer which took 5 days to get to Leningrad
- The mission did not include Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax (who had urged Chamberlain to make the commitment to Poland) or a high-ranking General
- The mission was headed by VADM Sir Reginald Drax; the French by GEN Joseph Aime Doumenc
- While the French were instructed to come back with an agreement at all costs, Drax was instructed to proceed with caution, volunteer no military information, spin out the talks as long as possible, and not given the authority to make commitments

Negotiations with Britain and France - 2

The opening session began on August 12th

- Marshal Voroshilov produced a document giving him authority to sign a military agreement and asked to see the equivalent grants of authority from the British and French
- General Doumenc produced such a letter from Prime Minister Daladier; but Vice Admiral Drax had nothing to show.

Things got worse when Voroshilov started asking some very awkward questions

- What forces could Britain and France put into the field?
- What plans did they have to fight Germany?
- What part should Russia play if Germany invaded Poland?
- Would Poland admit the Red Army into Poland to fight the Wehrmacht?

Negotiations with Britain and France - 3

The Western delegations could not answer Voroshilov's questions nor could they hide the fact that the Polish government, fearful of another partition, refused to admit the Red Army even if its purpose was to repel the Wehrmacht

- French attempts to persuade the Poles to grant transit rights failed

By 17 August, the talks had stalled

The failure to reach a military agreement confirmed to Stalin his suspicions of the West - that Britain and France were not serious about stopping Hitler

Negotiations with Germany - 1

This now left open the possibility of deal with Hitler

- Ever since the dismissal of Foreign Commissar Maxim Litvinov on 3 May 1939 Germany had been making secret overtures to Moscow
- The German Ambassador to Moscow conveyed a message that the ideological barriers between Nazism and Communism could be broken down and that no issue between the Baltic and the Black Sea stood in the way of the “restoration of friendly cooperation” between them
 - This overture had a decisive impact on both Molotov and Stalin

Stalin knew that a deal with Hitler meant that Germany would go to war, but that this would be a war between Germany and the Western powers, not a war between Germany and the Soviet Union

Negotiations with Germany - 2

Stalin assumed that a war between Germany and the Western powers would result in a stalemate like World War I, and that such a stalemate would exhaust all concerned, creating the possibility for a future expansion of Soviet power westward

Thus a deal with Hitler was possible provided that Germany met three conditions

- That Germany was serious about getting a non-aggression agreement
- That Germany would not support the Japanese if a general war between the Soviet Union and Japan broke out over Nomonhan
- That Germany would make the desired territorial concessions – allow Russia to annex the Baltic states, eastern Poland, and Bessarabia.

When Germany agreed to these conditions, the Hitler-Stalin Pact was made

Consequences

The Pact gave Germany a green light to attack Poland

- Hitler felt that an agreement with Stalin that divided eastern Europe would either discourage the Western powers from going to war over Poland, or, if war came, dramatically weaken their ability to blockade Germany (which it did)

Hitler felt that the Nazi-Soviet Pact would reassure his generals by removing their fear of a two-front war (which it did)so

The Pact isolated Poland militarily and ensured its quick defeat

By allowing Germany to attack its enemies one front at a time, it allowed Germany to sweep the Western allies out of northern and western Europe

- This ensured that when Germany turned and attacked the Soviet Union, she would face the Wehrmacht alone

Hitler's Wars – 1939-1941

The Invasion of Poland

Preparations for War

Once Hitler had determined to attack Poland, several things followed

- Poland had to be attacked by the Fall of 1939 so that there would be enough time to defeat her before the autumn rains turned the unpaved roads and runways to mud
- Given the German people's lack of enthusiasm for war, a massive propaganda campaign centered on alleged mistreatment of Germans in Poland would be launched
- An agreement with the Soviet Union to divide Eastern Europe between them would be sought – This led to the Nazi-Soviet Pact
- There would be no negotiations with Poland
 - To avoid becoming entangled in diplomatic negotiations, the German Ambassadors were recalled from their posts in London and Warsaw

British Policy Re Poland

Britain assumed that any war in Europe would, as in 1914, spread to the whole continent

- Thus it made little difference whether Germany attacked in the East or the West
- Thus, it made sense to announce firm support of Poland in the hope that this would deter Germany

After the seizure of all of Czechoslovakia, Britain saw propaganda about mistreatment of Germans in Poland as simply a pretext for war

Britain needed French support if it went to war with Germany

- To secure it, Britain needed to assure France that there would be a large British army fighting with her against Germany
 - First British peacetime conscription law is enacted in the Spring of 1939

Poland's Strategic Problems

Poland lacked modern military equipment

- Poland lacked the industrial base to produce modern tanks, planes, and artillery
- Poland lacked the necessary cash and credit to buy them from someone else

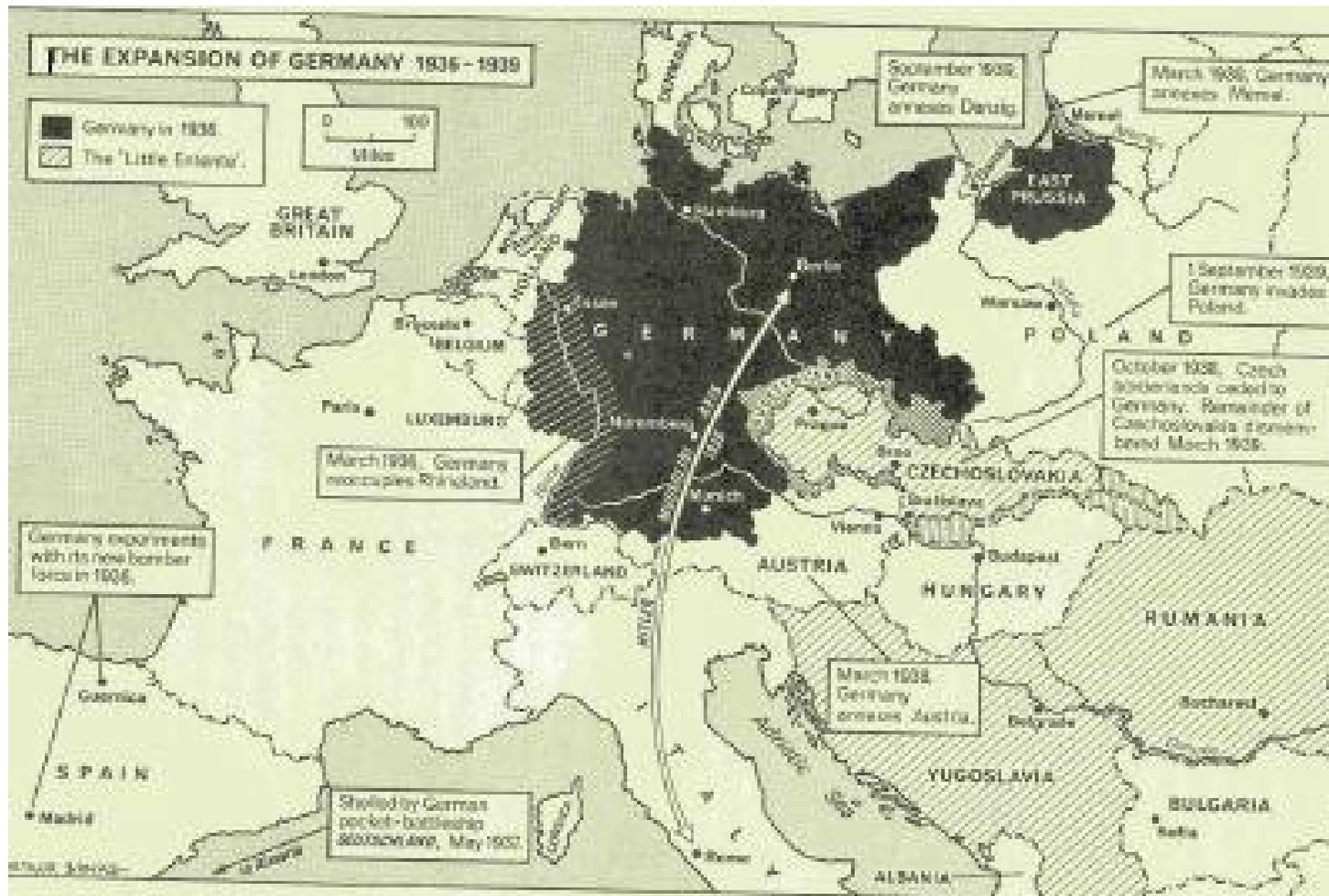
Given the fact that Germany could attack from the West, the North, and/or the South,

- Where should Poland station its forces?
- Should it concentrate them, and if so, where?

When should Poland mobilize?

- Too early would damage Poland's fragile economy and allow Germany to blame Poland for increasing tensions and the outbreak of war
- Too late created the risk of being attacked before being fully mobilized

Map – Central Europe



Why Poland Lost the War

Poland chose to disperse its forces so that all avenues of attack and all population and industrial centers were covered

- This guaranteed defeat at those points that the Germans chose to attack in force

Poland mobilized at the last minute so that Polish forces suffered attack before they were fully mobilized

Neither the British nor French launched any offensive in the West to divert German troops from Poland

- Without Belgium willing to allow British & French troops to attack Germany thorough Belgium, the only avenue of attack was against the Siegfried Line
 - The French believed the Siegfried Line, like the Maginot Line, was impenetrable

Map – Partition of Poland



Soviet Occupation of Eastern Poland

The Soviets delayed their entry into Poland until 17 September for several reasons

- There was a need to mobilize Soviet forces for the attack and move many of them from sites in the interior of the USSR to the Polish border
- Stalin wanted to time the invasion so that it appeared to be merely a recovery of lands that were once Russian at a time when the Polish state had effectively ceased to exist rather than as an act of aggression
- The fighting at Nomonhan between Russian and Japanese troops was still going on

The Soviet invasion eliminated any possibility that Polish forces could organize continued resistance in the dense forests and swamps of eastern Poland

It forced the Polish government and some 200,000 Polish troops to cross the borders into Lithuania and Romania

War in the West

Hitler's Initial Plan

Hitler's initial plans to attack in the West had a target date of early November

- Bad weather, however, forced successive postponements since the Luftwaffe needed clear weather for its operations
- Initially the plan was to invade Holland and Belgium and then head into northern France to defeat the British and seize coastal sea and air bases
 - It differed from both the Schlieffen Plan of World War I and the von Manstein Plan that was eventually adopted

His plans, however, provoked a lot of opposition from many of the German military leaders

- A few opposed attacking neutral countries
- Many believed it made more sense to await a French offensive
- Most were not especially confident that the Wehrmacht could defeat the French

Hitler's Initial Plan - 2

Bad weather postponements pushed the invasion date from November 1939 to May 1940. This had a whole series of repercussions:

- They gave the Wehrmacht additional time to assimilate the lessons of the Polish Campaign
 - This led to increasing the number of Panzer divisions from 6 to 10
- The Allies had warnings of the German intention to attack, but the repeated successive warnings and alerts obscured the significance of the final warnings in May 1940
- It allowed German military planners to shift the main thrust of the offensive from the Low Countries to the Ardennes followed by a drive from there to the coast
- They turned the focus of German attacks from the Low Countries and France to Denmark and Norway

The Invasion of Denmark & Norway

Norway - 1

Norway had a coastline of a thousand miles, punctuated by islands and fjords.

- Norway's coast could provide valuable bases for either a British blockade of Germany or for a German offensive against Allied shipping in the Atlantic
- The Swedish iron ore fields were near the Norwegian port of Narvik which is ice-free in the Winter

German Grand Admiral Raeder pressed Hitler to invade Norway in order to ensure continued German access to Swedish iron ore

On 9 April 1940, Hitler invaded Denmark and Norway

Norway - 2

The Germans caught the Royal Navy and the Norwegians by surprise

- German naval forces seized key ports such as Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen, and Trondheim
- German airborne troops seized key airfields which permitted the Germans to bring land-based aircraft to Norway

Although the British and French landed in Norway, the land-based airpower of the Germans was dominant over the sea power and landing forces of the Allies

- By the end of May, the Allies had been forced out of southern and central Norway. On 8 June, the British were forced out of their last foothold at Narvik in northern Norway

Consequences of the Conquest of Norway

Although the Germans conquered Norway, they lost a good chunk of their surface navy

Control of Denmark and Norway allowed the Germans to extort from Sweden anything they wanted

Allied defeat in Norway led to the fall of the Neville Chamberlain government in Britain and his replacement by Winston Churchill

Control of Norway meant that German submarines and surface ships could use Norwegian ports to attack British shipping and later to attack Allied ships supplying the Soviets via the Murmansk run

The Fall of France

Allied Weaknesses - 1

The combined Dutch, Belgian, French, and British armies outnumbered the Germans in manpower, tanks, and artillery BUT

- The Germans had a much better military doctrine for employing tanks than did the Allies
 - The Germans put their tanks in Panzer divisions and gave them close air support from Stuka dive bombers
 - The Allies saw the tank as an infantry support vehicle and scattered their tanks among all of their infantry divisions
- Allied war planning was deficient and made assumptions that proved to be false

Allied Weaknesses - 2

Given their commitment to neutrality, the Belgians and the Dutch had not coordinated their war plans with the British and French

- The Dutch withdrawal plan isolated the Dutch army from any contact with, or assistance from, the other Allied forces

British and French war plans sent the best French units and virtually the whole British force into Belgium to counter what they thought would be the main thrust of the German attack

- With half the French army committed to the Maginot Line, the area of the Front facing the Ardennes was lightly defended with no reserve force available if the Germans broke through

The Main German Attack

The main German attack went through Luxembourg, southeastern Belgium, and the Ardennes forest

- The line of French forces holding this sector was quickly pierced
- On 13 May, the Germans crossed the Meuse River
- BY 20-21 May, they reached the Channel coast near Abbeville

The Allies had no substantial reserve force to either plug the gap or attack the flanks of the German spearhead

- Efforts of the French to cut off the armored spearhead before the German infantry could catch up failed

Map – German Invasion of France, Belgium & Holland



The Road to Dunkirk

With the Allied forces in Belgium cut off from those in France and unable to break through the tier of German forces separating them

- The Allied forces in Belgium (which included most of the British Expeditionary Force) decided to retreat to the Coast where they could be evacuated by sea
- Thanks to stubborn fighting (which kept Dunkirk in Allied hands), a German decision to halt their advance up the coast, and the Royal Air Force, the bulk of the British and some of the French armies were evacuated

With the Allied forces in Belgium no longer in play, the Germans attacked the weakened French defensive line in the South on 5 June

- After tough fighting, the Germans broke through, entering Paris on 14 June and attacking the Maginot Line from the rear on the same day

The French Surrender

With the French army now disintegrating, Italy decided to enter the war on 10 June

17 June, the new French premier, Marshal Henri-Philippe Petain asked for an armistice

22 June, an armistice was signed at Compiegne in the same railroad car in which the 11 November 1918 armistice was signed

23 June, Hitler visits Paris

3 July – the Battle of Oran

Hitler in Paris



Consequences

The Fall of France alarmed the United States, leading to an expansion of the Army (by means of the first peacetime draft) and the authorization for the building of a two-ocean Navy

It changed the strategic equation for Japan in East Asia by

- It suggested that Japan might get control of French Indo-China
 - Japanese control of northern Vietnam and Laos would help the Japanese cut China off from the outside world
 - Japanese bases in southern Vietnam and Cambodia could be used as jumping off points for the seizure of British and Dutch possessions in southeast Asia
- Raising the question of the future of the Dutch East Indies
- It opened the door to the British possessions in South and Southeast Asia

The Battle of Britain

German Strategy

After the fall of France, Hitler hoped that Britain would make peace

- On 19 July, he made a peace feeler to Britain which Churchill rejected

Hitler saw two possible ways for Germany to defeat Britain

- One was a naval blockade involving submarines, mines, and surface ships
- The other was an air offensive that would either pound Britain into submission or clear the way for invasion by destroying the Royal Air Force

In mid-1940, however, neither way could work

- Germany had too few submarines and while she began constructing large numbers of subs after the war began, and especially after fall of France , it would be a while before they could play a role

Notes on the Battle of Britain

Initially, the Luftwaffe confined its bombing operations to daylight bombing of military-related targets – especially those related to the Royal Air Force

In June through August 1940, this involved extensive aerial combat with heavy losses of fighters on both sides and heavy losses of bombers on the German side

At the end of August 1940, the Germans switched to night bombing of cities

- While this caused great damage and many civilian casualties, it had virtually no effect on either British war production or on the Royal Air Force's ability to maintain air superiority over Britain

Why Germany Lost

The German attempt to bomb Britain into submission and destroy the Royal Air Force failed for the following reasons:

- The Luftwaffe lacked both heavy bombers and long-range fighters
 - This meant light bomb loads and no fighter protection beyond southeast England
- By mid-1940, British fighter production was beginning to exceed that of Germany
- Since aerial combat took place over England, it meant that British pilots who were shot down could fight again while German pilots who were shot down became POWs
- British radar alerted the Royal Air Force to German bombing raids so that the Germans could not catch British fighters on the ground

The War Moves East and South

Romania

On 28 June, the Russians demanded that Romania cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina

These cessions led to a coup which overthrew King Carol and made pro-Nazi General Ion Antonescu dictator on 5 September

On 8 October, German troops entered Romania to “protect” the oil fields

On 22 November, Romania joined the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Pact

Italian Offensives

Germany, while involved in the Battle of Britain, encouraged Italy to attack British positions in the Mediterranean

This led to Italian invasions of British Somaliland in August, Egypt in September, and Greece in October 1940

- If the Italians had succeeded, they would have greatly aided Hitler by:
 - Sealing off the Balkans from the South,
 - Ousting the British from the Mediterranean
 - Placing Axis forces close to Palestine, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the Russian oil fields of the Caucasus

Italian Debacles

The Italians, however, did not succeed in any of their endeavors

- British forces from Kenya and the sea invaded and captured all of Italian-occupied East Africa in November
- After initially advancing into Egypt, a British attack in December destroyed the Italian 10th Army (taking 115,000 prisoners in the process) and captured Cyrenaica (the area around Benghazi)
- The Greeks halted the Italian invasion from Albania and in their counter-attack captured about a quarter of Albania.

This had several major consequences

- It ended Mussolini's dream of creating a new Roman Empire
- It forced Hitler to come to the aid of his Italian ally

Why Hitler Went to Mussolini's Aid

From Hitler's perspective, Italian defeats opened up a series of dangers to Germany

- Defeat in Greece could open up a second front in Germany's rear once Germany had invaded Russia
- British bombers in Greece could attack the Romanian oil fields from which Germany got the bulk of its oil
- The loss of Libya would open Italy to attack from the South and possibly lead to the defection of the Vichy-controlled French colonies in North and West Africa to De Gaulle
- Italian defeats, if allowed to stand, could bring down the Mussolini regime

Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia joined the Tripartite Pact on 25 March 1941 in the hope of getting the Aegean port of Salonika

This precipitated a coup on 26-28 March with the new government disavowing the pact and proclaiming neutrality

As a result, Hitler decided to invade Yugoslavia as well as Greece

The conquered Yugoslavia was partitioned into an Italian-controlled area, a German-occupied area, a Croatian puppet state ruled by a genocidal Croatian nationalist, and a Serbian puppet state administered by the Germans, with portions ceded to Bulgaria and Hungary

Greece

The Italian setback in Greece offered the British an opportunity to create a Balkan front from which the Romanian oil fields could be bombed

When the Greeks saw that the Germans would attack through Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, the Greeks requested British aid

Unfortunately, the Germans could bring much more military power to Greece than could the British. As a result:

- Greece was conquered by the Germans and the British were forced to evacuate, losing many soldiers and all their equipment in the process
- Enabled the Germans under Rommel to halt the British advance and drive them out of Libya
 - This made Rommel a hero and catapulted him into the public limelight

Fighting in the Desert

In North Africa, fighting took place in a 1,200 mile long coastal strip between Alexandria and Tripoli that was mostly 40-miles wide, bounded by the Mediterranean and either high ground or marshy depression

- In this strip, the chain of small ports was the only but essential points of military value
- The goal of each side was to seize the ports and thereby deprive the enemy of water, fuel, ammunition, food, and reinforcements

As the Axis moved into Egypt or the British into Libya, supply lines became stretched and subject to both supply difficulties and aerial bombardment

- The Axis got their supplies via ships sailing from Sicily to Tripoli while the British got their supplies via ships coming through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal

Temporary Stalemate in North Africa

By May 1941, a temporary stalemate had been reached in North Africa

- Rommel could not advance because of the impending attack on the Soviet Union
- The British 8th Army could not advance because of the need to send forces to Crete, Syria, and Iraq

The German conquests of Yugoslavia and Greece, and the reconquest of Cyrenaica, seriously altered the military situation and saved Mussolini's regime in Italy

However, the German decision to invade Russia in June 1941 prevented the Axis from securing victory in the Mediterranean theater

A Note on Iraq

On 2 April 1941, pro-Axis members of the Iraq Army staged a coup which brought to power Rashid Ail al-Gaylani

- This led the British to move troops into Iraq
- The Germans sent a Luftwaffe squadron, but it was not enough to turn back the British invasion

On 30 May 1941, the British captured Baghdad and restored the rule of the Iraqi regent

One of the officers participating in the coup was Khairallah Talfah who was dismissed from the Iraqi officer corps and spent 6 years in prison

- After prison, his nephew (who had lived with him prior to prison) moved in with him. Khairallah imbued his nephew with his hatred of the British, his Nazi views, and his hatred of Jews

Crete

After conquering Greece, the Germans debated whether to invade Crete or Malta

- Crete won out because its possession would protect Italian tanker traffic between Italy and Romania

The Germans used parachute troops to seize a major airfield at which they could fly in reinforcements and base aircraft

The Germans underestimated the Allied defenses and suffered casualties so heavy that they wrecked the German airborne forces and put an end to Hitler's willingness to use them

The Allies lost 4,000 KIA and had 12,000 taken prisoner

The attempt of the Royal Navy to supply and then later evacuate troops led to heavy ship losses

- Crete demonstrated that warships could not operate in waters controlled by enemy land-based aircraft

The Invasion of Russia

June 1941- December 1941

The Problem of Britain Still in the War

By late-1940, Hitler realized that Great Britain would not make peace

In his eyes, Britain stayed in the war in the expectation that the Soviet Union and the United States would eventually ally with Britain

There were two ways to deal with the British problem

- Get the Soviet Union to invade India and the Persian Gulf OR
- Invade the Soviet Union

When Molotov in his visit of 12-13 November 1940 ruled out the first
Hitler decided on the second

12-13 November 1940

On 12 November 1940, Molotov visited Berlin to talk with Hitler and other German leaders

- Hitler while never abandoning his goal of conquering land in Russia nevertheless was willing to allow the Soviets to join the Tripartite Pact provided the Soviet Union attack towards the Persian Gulf and India
- Molotov, in principle, was willing to join the Tripartite Pact, provided that the Germans agree to the Soviet annexation of Finland and Soviet seizure of the straits linking the Black Sea and the Mediterranean
- The Germans, however, would not agree to either the Soviet annexation of Finland or Soviet seizure of the Straits & the Russians were unwilling to invade Iran or India.

On the same days, British carrier aircraft staged a surprise night-time raid on the Italian naval base at Taranto with carrier-launched torpedo planes, damaging 3 battleships and other vessels as well

German War Plans - 1

Hitler issued a general directive concerning the invasion of Russia on 18 December 1940

- The idea was to trap and destroy the Red Army close to the border via panzer pincer movements to prevent trading of space for time
- The goal of the operation was a line running from Archangel on the Arctic Ocean to Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea
- It was expected that the Wehrmacht would complete the operation in two or three months
 - This was to prove a disastrous assumption given the weakness of German logistics

German War Plans - 2

The decision to invade Russia led to the following:

- Timing – The invasion would take place in late spring after the Spring thaws
- The decision to make allies of Romania and Finland
- The decision to avoid U-boat attacks on American shipping while also promising Japan support if it got involved in a war with the U.S.

Plan for the Invasion of Russia



Warnings Disregarded

Stalin had many prior warnings that Hitler was about to attack the Soviet Union

- From Roosevelt & Churchill
- From Russian spies in Germany (including the Rote Kappel)
- From German Communist defectors from the Wehrmacht
- From Richard Sorge, a Russian spy in Tokyo who was privy to the dispatches of the German Ambassador
- From the large number of reconnaissance overflights by German aircraft

The Russians had excellent intelligence but because it was not believed and acted upon, it was useless

Early German Successes

The attack on the Soviet Union was launched in the early hours of 22 June and achieved total surprise

- Over 4,000 Soviet planes were destroyed in the first week, giving the Luftwaffe total air superiority for the next few months
- In the first two weeks, Army Group Center completed two major encirclements of Soviet forces, capturing over 300,000 soldiers in each encirclement, and also capturing Smolensk
- Army Group North reached Estonia and the outer defenses of Leningrad
- Army Group South captured Kiev

This led to early German overconfidence

Things Were Not What They Seem

Despite the impressive German victories, the Russians were maintaining a continuous front

A steady stream of new units were appearing in the Russian order of battle

Instead of surrendering, the Russians were fighting hard

The Red Air Force was beginning to revive

The Germans began running into logistic problems

- Consequently, they had to pause in late-July and early-August for refurbishing of their tanks and resupply of their units

Success Then Stalemate

With Army Group Center pausing to refurbish and resupply, Hitler diverted major units from that Group to Army Group North and Army Group South

- This allowed Army Group North to reach Lake Ladoga and cut off land communications to Leningrad, putting the city under siege
- It allowed Army Group South to encircle and capture over 600,000 prisoners and thousands of artillery pieces, and also capture Kharkov and Rostov-on-the-Don
- But it delayed the German thrust toward Moscow until the end of October

The renewed offensive of Army Group Center envelope two Soviet armies which led to the capture of another 600,000 prisoners and brought Army Group Center to within 50 miles of Moscow, where it was finally halted

The Russian *Rasputitsa*



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-B15500
Foto: Britting | November 1941

The Failure to Capture Moscow

Although Army Group Center was only 50 miles from Moscow, the situation now called for a major decision, especially since winter was now fast approaching

- Try to capture Moscow OR Halt and go on the defensive until next summer

The Germans tried to capture Moscow; but they were hampered first by the heavy November rains and then by the late-November and early-December snows and freezing temperatures

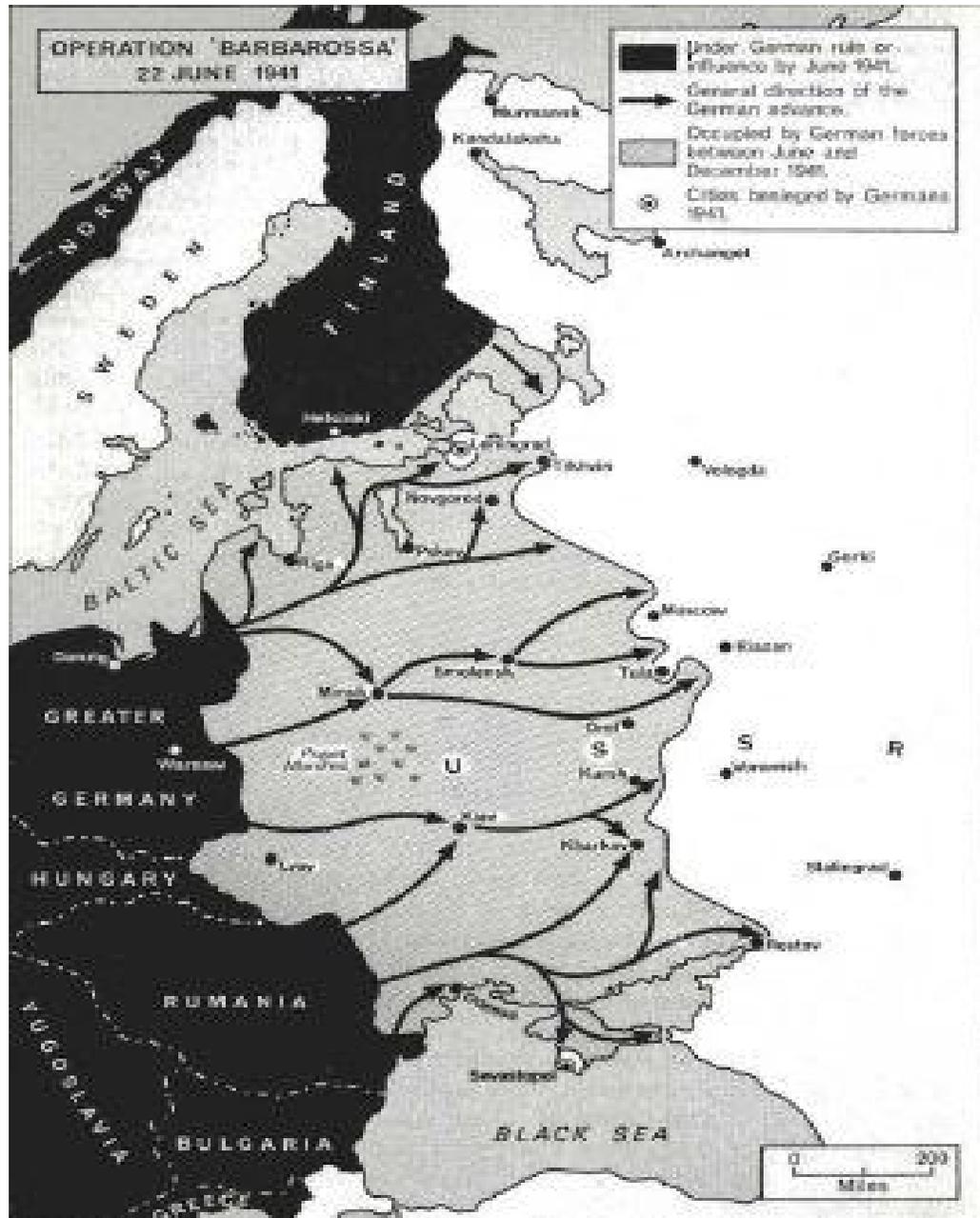
- It was now that the chickens of German overconfidence and inadequate logistics came home to roost
- The combination of inadequate supplies and Russian resistance halted the Germans 20 miles from Moscow and the attempt to capture Moscow was abandoned

Map – Operation Barbarossa

Black – Area controlled by Germany and its allies prior to the invasion of Russia

Gray – Area occupied by Germany between 22 June and 6 December 1941

Arrow Lines – encircling movements of German armies



The Soviet Counter-attack

- The Russian counter-offensive not only surprised the Germans but also the Western Allies
- The Soviet offensive of 6-15 December 1941 forced the German line back, inflicted great losses of men and equipment, and created panic among many German soldiers
- Concurrent Soviet counterattacks elsewhere meant that the stretched out German forces in Army Group Center could not count on reinforcements from the other Army Groups.
- The presence of a large number of T-34 tanks against which German tanks were overmatched and anti-tank weapons ineffective induced panic among German troops

The Soviet Counter-attack - 2

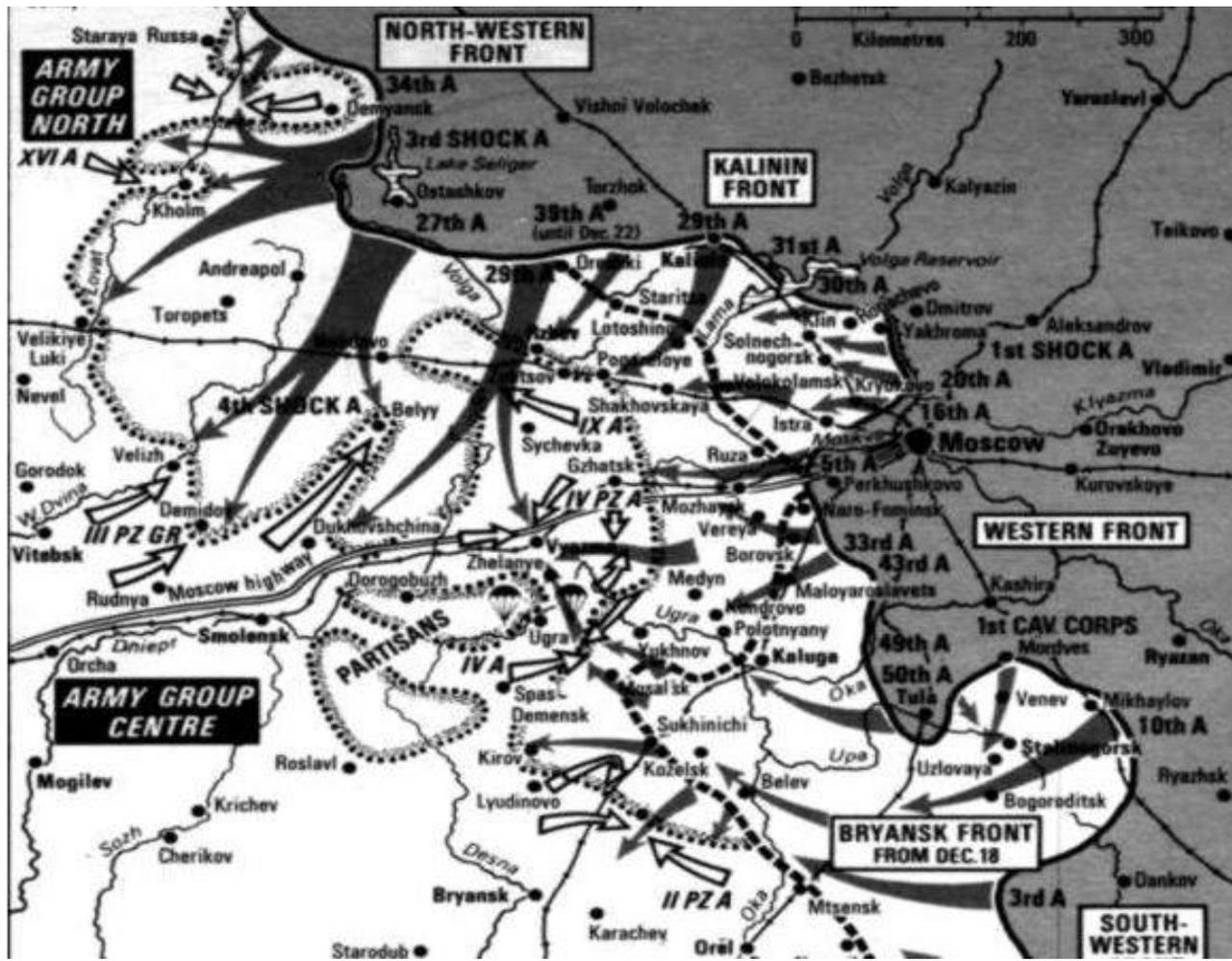
Several factors made possible the major Soviet counter-offensive which began on 6 December 1941

- The Soviets still had a major war production capability which had begun turning out large number of T-34 tanks and Katyusha multiple rocket launchers.
- Japan's decision to go South allowed Stalin to move the Siberian divisions that had defeated the Japanese at Nomonhan to the Moscow Front.
- German intelligence had NOT picked up that the Siberian reserves were now available for a counterattack. This made the Germans extremely vulnerable.
- The facts that
 - The Germans were operating in an environment in which their men lacked proper winter boots and clothing
 - The cold froze their tanks and mechanical equipment

Russian Counter-offensive



Russian Counteroffensive – December 1941



Effects of the Soviet Counterattack

On the German side, the prospect of Army Group Center being routed and driven into a Napoleonic-style retreat led Hitler to order Army Group Center to hold

- Army Group Center held but at a very heavy cost

The attack led Hitler to institute a whole series of changes in the Army Command

It ended German hopes for a quick victory over Russia and signaled the beginning of a war of attrition

It revealed in the newly-liberated areas the brutality of Nazi rule

It led Stalin to order a January offensive on all fronts that was largely unsuccessful

Total War

The failure of Germany to knock Russia out of the war and American entry into the war had two major effects:

- It led Hitler to finally order total mobilization of the German economy and systematic exploitation of Nazi-ruled Europe
 - Hundreds of thousands of Germans were released from war industries and inducted into the Army
 - Civilians from conquered territories and Russian POWs were brought into the Reich to perform industrial and agricultural labor
- It led Hitler to apply the “Final Solution” of the “Jewish problem” to the Jews in that part of Europe outside the Soviet Union

America Before Pearl Harbor

Nye Committee

Officially known as the Special Committee on Investigation of the Munitions Industry

- Headed by Senator Gerald Nye of ND
- Set up in 1934 to investigate the causes of U.S. involvement in World War I

The report concluded that wartime loans and sales to the Allies was a major factor in getting the U.S. into World War I

Documented the huge profits that arms factories had made during World War I & implied that the “merchants of death” not only profited from the war but got us into it

Led to the various Neutrality Acts

America Isolationism & Pacifism

In 1935, historian Walter Millis published his best-selling *Road to War: America, 1914-1917*

- Gave rise to a demonology that “merchants of death,” aided by false Allied propaganda, had tricked America into war in order to make money

On 6 April 1935, 50,000 WWI veterans held a peace march on Washington

On 12 April 1935, some 175,000 college students staged a 1-hour anti-war strike

A 1935 Gallop Poll found that 70 percent of the respondents agreed that intervention in the Great War had been a mistake

Neutrality Act of 1935

Imposed an embargo on arms and war materials to all parties in a war

Declared that American citizens traveling on ships of warring nations do so at their own risk

Set to expire after 6 months

Invoked in the Italy-Ethiopia War

Neutrality Act of 1936

Renewed the provisions of the Neutrality Act of 1935

Forbade all loans or credits to belligerents

Did not cover civil wars, such as the one in Spain from 1936 to 1939

Did not cover oil or dual-use civilian-military items like trucks

Loophole enabled U.S. companies to sell more than \$100 million to Franco

Neutrality Act of 1937

Reiterated the provisions of the earlier acts

Extended them to include civil wars as well

Had no expiration date

Forbade U.S. ships from transporting any passengers or goods to belligerent nations

Forbade U.S. citizens from traveling on the ships of belligerent nations

Allowed the President to permit on a 'cash and carry' basis the sale of materials and supplies to belligerents in Europe as long as the recipients paid in cash and transported the goods themselves

Neutrality Act of 1939

Allowed the sales of arms to belligerents on a 'cash and carry' basis

Repealed the Neutrality Acts of 1935 and 1937

Barred American citizens and ships from entering war zones designated by the President as such

Charged the National Munitions Control Board with issuing licenses for all arms imports and exports

Reactions to World War II

Americans greeted the outbreak of war in Europe with the following emotions”

- A strong desire for the U.S. to stay out of the war
 - 90% opposed U.S. entry into the war
- A desire that the Allies would win the war
 - 80% expressed a wish that the Allies win the war
 - Only 1% expressed a desire for a German victory
- A fear that that neither desire would be fulfilled

The War led to two distinct lobbies which advocated opposite policies concerning the conflict

Fall of France

The Fall of France in June 1940 came as a great shock to the American people

- Provoked a fear that the U.S. was now vulnerable to attack
- Led to U.S. rearmament
 - The Two-Ocean Navy
 - 50,000 planes
 - Large-scale expansion of the Army
 - First peacetime draft
- Led Roosevelt to seek a third term
- Led the Republicans to nominate Wendell Willkie over Robert Taft for President
- Led Roosevelt to propose Lend-Lease

Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies

Organizational Notes

- Formed in May 1940
- Included 125 local chapters with regional offices in Chicago, Chapel Hill, San Francisco, and Boston
- Held numerous rallies and distributed 2 million copies of printed matter
- Included a whole host of eminent Americans

Policy positions:

- Advocated U.S. military materiel support for Britain as the best way to keep the U.S. out of the war
- Opposed the Neutrality Acts
- Supported the destroyer deal & the draft
- Supported Lend-Lease

America First Committee

Organizational Notes

- Established in September 1940 by Yale Law student R. Douglas Stuart & Yale undergraduate Kingman Brewster
- Had 800,000 at its peak in 650 chapters
 - Was a collection of pacifists, anti-Semites, German-Americans, Communists, and Roosevelt-haters
- Headquartered in Chicago
- Headed by Sears executive Robert E. Wood
- Had many celebrity members, including several U.S. senators

America First Committee - 2

Policy positions:

- Supported the Neutrality Acts
- Opposed Lend Lease on grounds that it weakened U.S. defenses at home and threatened to involve the U.S. in war abroad
- Believed the U.S. Navy and two oceans could protect the U.S. from invasion
- Believed that a large scale military buildup and intervention in World War II would create a garrison state that would be destructive of American liberty and lead to future subsequent wars

The End of Neutrality

The Lend-Lease Act of March 11, 1941

- Allowed the U.S. to sell, lend, or give war materials to allied nations fighting the Axis
- Was considered by Hitler an act of war
- Led to German submarine attacks on U.S. merchant ships in war zones
- Eventually led to an undeclared naval war between U.S. destroyers and German submarines

The End of Neutrality - 2

April 1941 – U.S. forces occupy Greenland

April 1941 – U.S. Navy begins patrolling the Western Atlantic

July 1941 – U.S. forces occupy Iceland

July 24, 1941 – In response to the Japanese occupation of Indochina, Roosevelt:

- Freezes all Japanese assets and credits
- Embargoes the sale of scrap iron and petroleum to Japan

The End of Neutrality - 3

Following the attack on the USS *Greer* on September 4, 1941, Roosevelt:

- Sought virtual repeal of the Neutrality Acts
- Declared that U.S. naval forces would “shoot-on-sight” any German submarines

On October 17, 1941, the USS *Kearny* was hit by a German torpedo with 11 KIA and 22 wounded

Following the sinking USS *Reuben James* on October 31, 1941, most of the provisions of the Neutrality Acts were repealed in November 1941

- U.S. merchant ships were armed and allowed to enter belligerent ports