

# Course of World War II

## Class 6

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Towards Stalingrad

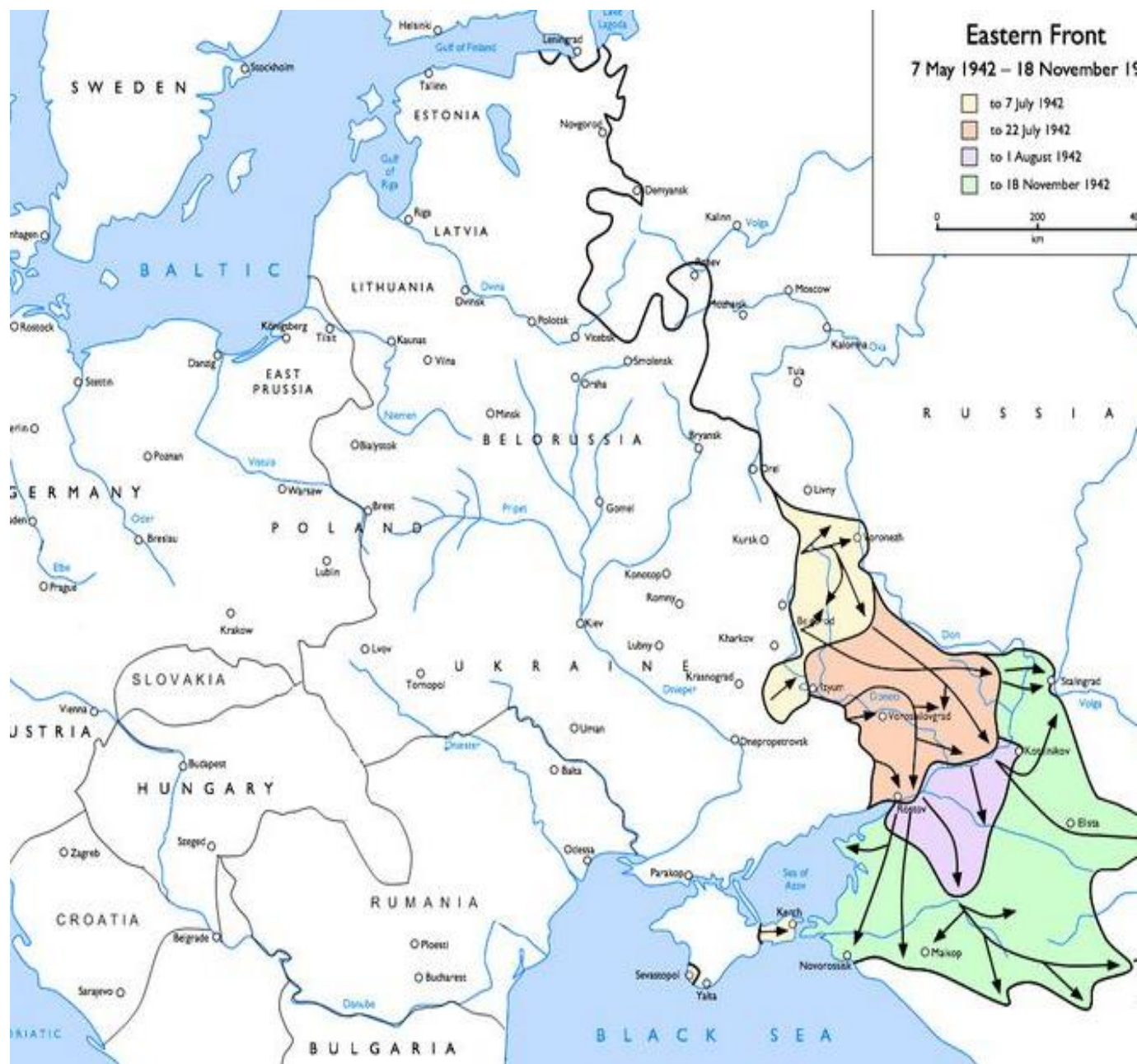
# Towards Stalingrad & the Caucasus

Initially, the German southern campaign went well

- The First Panzer Army linked with the Sixth Army around Kharkov to capture 239,000 Russian prisoners and destroy 1,240 Russian tanks and then breakthrough to the steppe east of the Don River.
- The Sixth Army aided by a part of the Fourth Panzer Army then drove toward Stalingrad while other German Armies drove into the area between the Black and Caspian Seas, heading toward Maikop, Grozny, and Baku – the heart of the Russian oil industry
  - In August, they captured Maikop and Mt Elbrus, the highest peak in the Caucasus mountains
  - On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Sixth Army began to attack Stalingrad

# German Advance 1942

## German advance towards Stalingrad and the Caucasus



# Stalingrad

Stalingrad was a 20-mile long city of modern factories and wooden buildings along the west bank of the Volga.

As the Sixth Army prepared to attack, Stalin sent the 62<sup>nd</sup> Army under GEN Vasiliy Chuikov to defend the city

With most of the city reduced to rubble by artillery fire and aerial bombing, the Germans had to fight in a face-to-face combat environment where their tanks were largely useless and casualties extremely high

- The Battle of Stalingrad lasted from 19 August 1942 to 2 February 1943

# The Russian Counterstroke

In September, the Russians began planning a pincer operation that would strike from the Don in the North and the steppe in the South to surround the German forces attacking Stalingrad

On 11 November, the Germans broke through to the Volga south of the city

On 19 November, the pincer attacks began

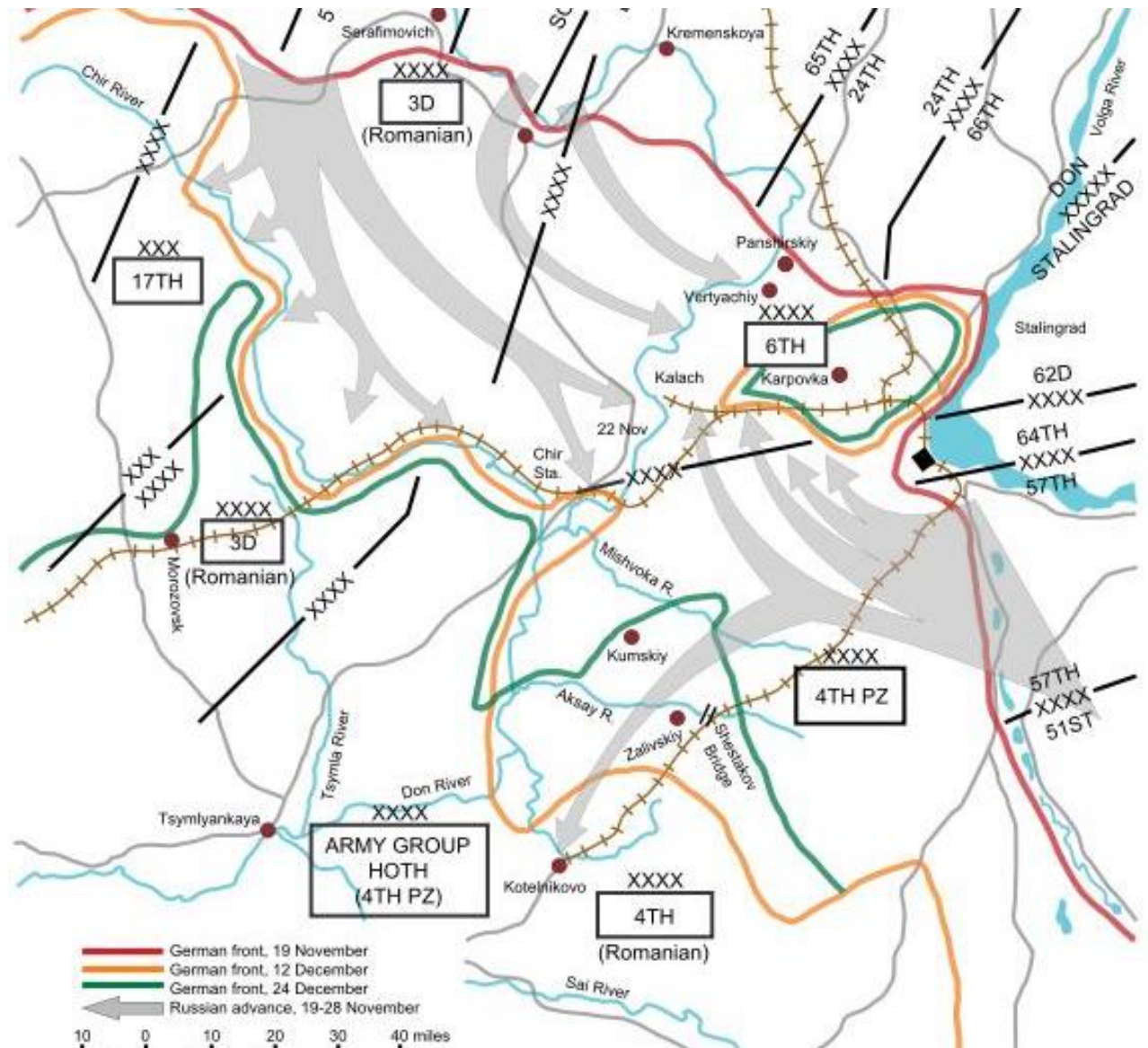
- They devastated the Third and Fourth Romanian Armies

On 23 November, the pincers met at Kalach on the Don west of Stalingrad

- This left the German Sixth Army surrounded

# Stalingrad

## Map showing Soviet encirclement attack



# Hitler Decisions that Led to Disaster

Once the Soviet forces linked, they formed two defensive fronts – one facing toward Stalingrad to prevent a breakout and one facing westward to prevent a relief force from breaking through

Hitler rejected advice that the Sixth Army should be ordered to attempt to break out of the encirclement

- Instead he ordered the Luftwaffe to supply the army by air and a relief force to pry open the encirclement – Both failed
- Hitler's decision doomed the Sixth Army

A subsequent Russian offensive on 16 December both captured the airfields from which Stalingrad was being supplied and threatened the encirclement of Army Group Don – the Stalingrad relief force



# The December Offensive

## The 16 December offensive

- Halted the Stalingrad relief effort and ended all hope that the Sixth Army at Stalingrad could be saved
- Forced the partial withdrawal of Army Group A from its positions in the Caucasus

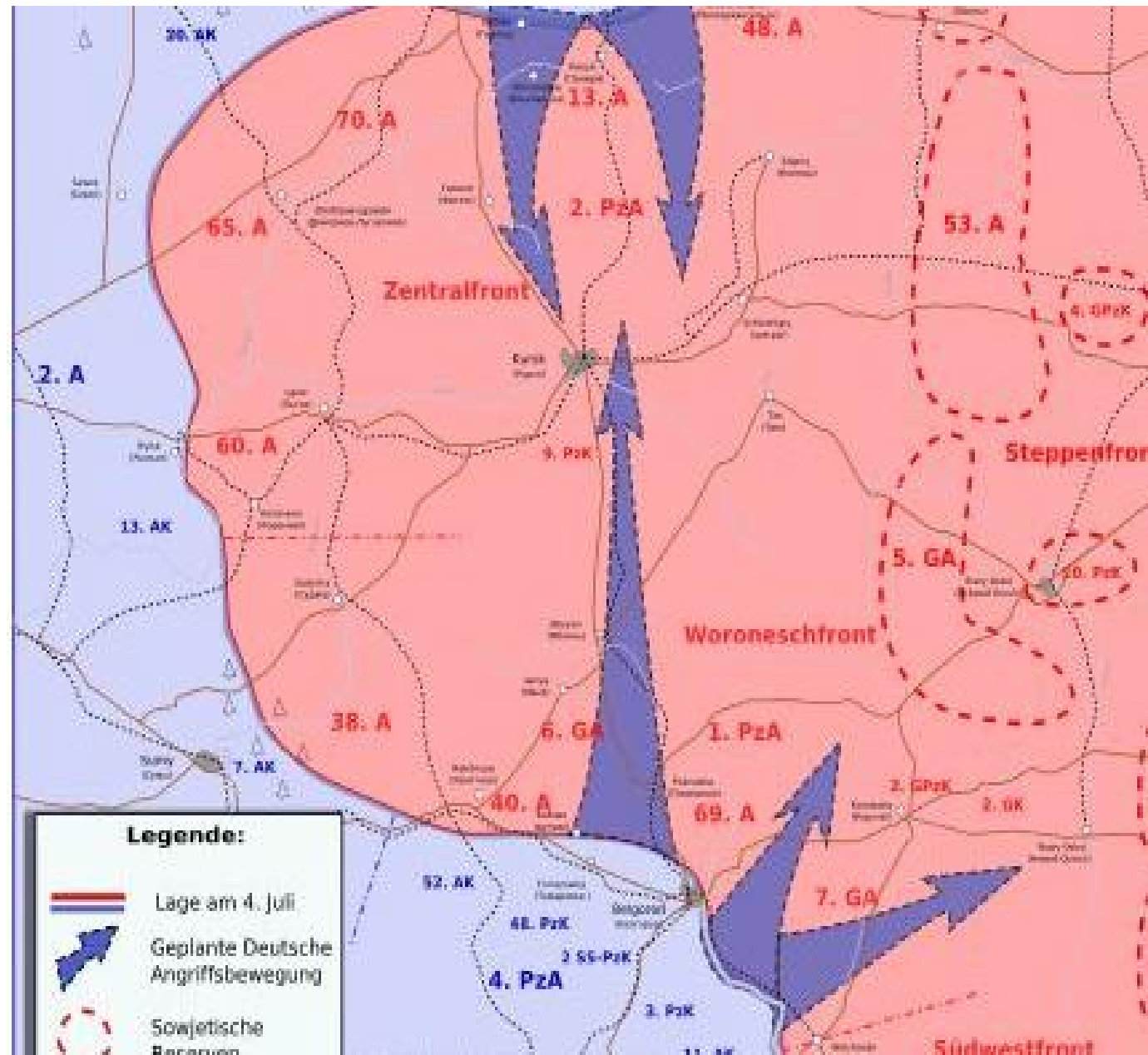
After all of the fighting that took place in the Winter of 1942-43, the front that remained was basically the front that existed before the German advances in the Summer-Fall of 1942 except for a bulge around Kursk

# German POWs at Stalingrad



# Kursk Salient

Arrows indicated  
proposed lines of the  
German attack



# Eastern Front -- 1943

The map shows the  
gains made by the  
Germans in the Kursk  
Offensive



# Kursk - 1

With the spring thaw, fighting ground to a halt as dirt roads turned to quagmires and the surrounding steppe turned to swamp

- The spring lull in the fighting gave both armies time to lick their wounds and replace their losses, at least partially, in men and equipment
- It also created pressure for the *Ostheer* to attack before the Red Army had trained its latest cohort of conscripts and begun to receive the massive output of its relocated factories and the large donations of Lend-lease
- The question was where to attack
  - The German generals decided on the Kursk salient
  - The Russians anticipated that Kursk was where the attack would come

# Kursk - 2

The attack was delayed to July by two factors

- The northern face of the Kursk salient was attacked by the German Ninth Army and the southern by the Fourth Panzer Army

After initial success, the Russians attacked the flanks of the two German armies, precipitating the largest tank battle in history

- Over 900 tanks on each side took part , with the Russians losing over 450 and the Germans losing over 300
- While Russian losses were heavier, the German offensive was halted

Kursk deprived the Germans of the ability to go on the offensive in the future and gave the initiative permanently to the Russians

# German soldiers at Kursk



# Knocked-out Panther Tank





# Consequences of Kursk

For the first time, a major German offensive was stopped before achieving a breakthrough

Though the location, plan of attack, and timing were determined by Hitler, he blamed the defeat on the General Staff

- This led Hitler to progressively involve himself more and more in military operations
- One consequence of this was Hitler's orders to the German Army to attempt to hold every inch of ground they had captured rather than a mobile defense which involved retreat followed by counterattack

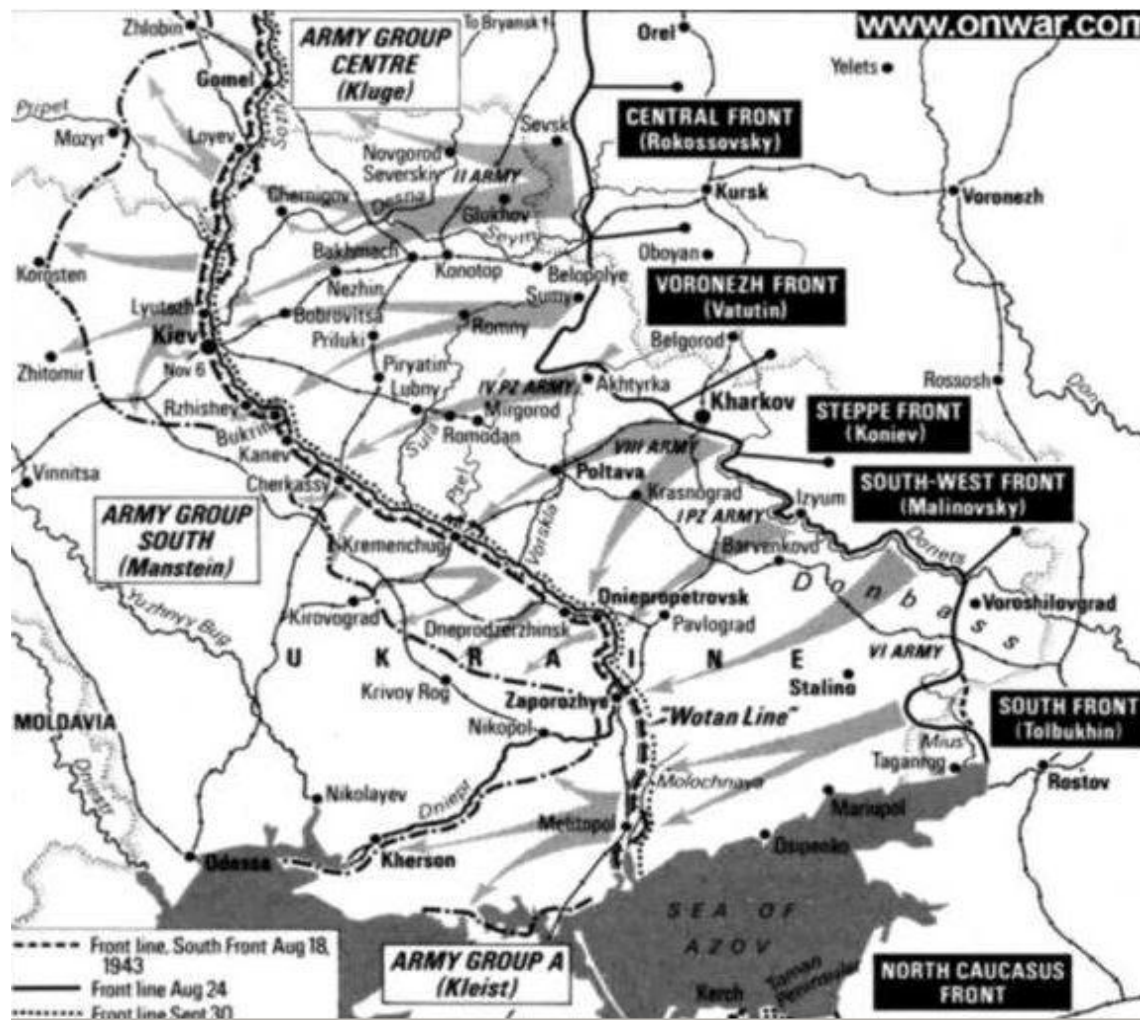
For the rest of the war, the German army was on the defensive, limited to reacting to Soviet initiatives and gradually being pushed back

# 1943 Russian Advances

From July to December 1943, the Russians

- 11 July 1943 – Recaptured Orel and Belgorod
- 23 August 1943 -- Retook Kharkov
- 30 August 1943 – Retook Taganrog
- 25 September 1943 -- Retook Smolensk
- October 1943 -- Reached the Dnieper at several points
- 5 November 1943 – Retook Kiev
- 31 December 1943 – Reconquered Zhitomir

# Russian Advances - 1943



# 1944 Russian Advances - 1

20 January 1944 – Recaptured Novgorod

February 1944 – Penetrated into Estonia and reached the borders of Pre-war Poland

26 March 1944 – Reached the Romanian border

10 April 1944 – Recaptured Odessa

15 April 1944 – Retook Tarnopol

May 1944 – Recaptured Sevastopol and the Crimea

3 July 1944 – Recaptured Minsk

# 1944 Russian Advances - 2

23 July 1944 – Capture of Lublin, Poland

23 July 1944 – Capture of Majdanek, the easternmost of the larger labor and extermination camps

24 August 1944 – Reached the mouth of the Danube and forced the surrender of the Romanian government

31 August 1944 – Reached the borders of East Prussia and had invaded Poland and Romania

20 September 1944 – Captured Sofia, Bulgaria

22 September 1944 – Captured Tallinn, Estonia

13 October 1944 – Captured Riga, Latvia

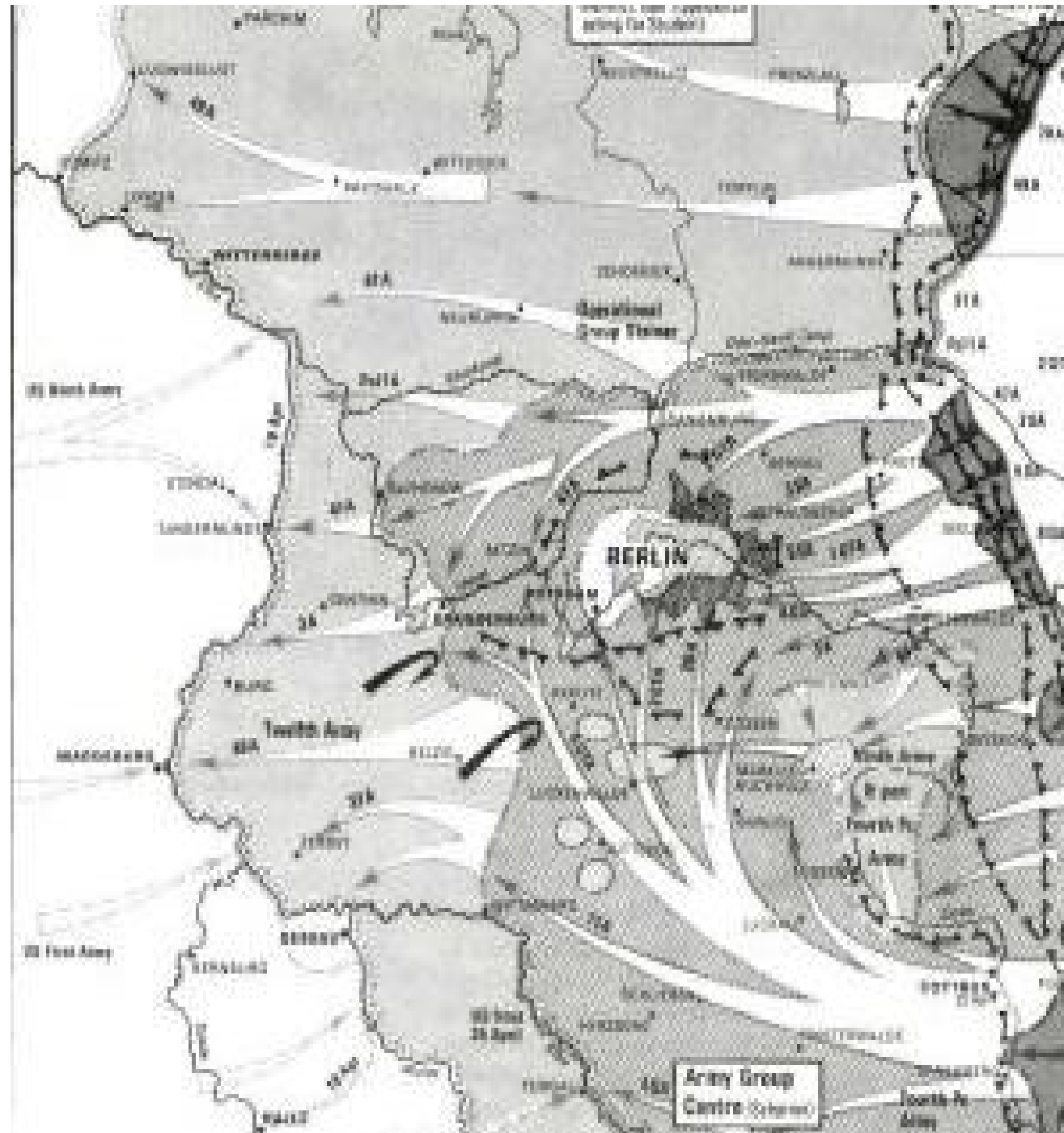
# Russian Advances July 1943 to June 1944



# Russian Advances June 1944 to January 1945



## Map shows the Russian encirclement of Berlin





# War in the Pacific

From Guadalcanal to Saipan

# American Strategy

After Midway, the Americans went on the offensive

There were two routes to the ultimate objective – the home islands of Japan

- The Southern Route along the New Guinea coast to the Palau Islands to the Philippines to Okinawa to Japan
- The Northern Route across the coral atolls of the Marshalls and the islands of the Marianas to Iwo Jima to Japan

While it was decided to go both routes, the primary emphasis was on the Southern Route, with the area divided to allot part to ADM Nimitz and the Navy and part to GEN MacArthur and the Army



# Guadalcanal

One thing that precipitated the decision to invade Guadalcanal was the discovery that the Japanese were building an airfield from which planes could interdict American supply routes to Australia

The 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division landed on 7 August 1942 and quickly captured and finished constructing the airfield

The arrival of the Marines provoked the Japanese to make a major effort to retake the island

The struggle for Guadalcanal led to 6 major naval battles

After months of intense fighting, the Americans finally secured the island on 9 February 1943

# Solomon Islands & Guadalcanal



# Consequences

With Guadalcanal, the Japanese found themselves in a battle of attrition that was not only costly in men, ships, and planes (along with their experienced aircrews) that precluded Japanese action in the Indian Ocean to cut Allied supply lines to Russia and North Africa

Once secured, Guadalcanal provided a base for advancing up the Solomon Islands and eventually encircling the major Japanese naval and air base at Rabaul

During the battle, both American and Japanese troops suffered much more from disease than from battle casualties

- This led MacArthur and Halsey to place major efforts on malaria control and later DDT spraying

# Island Hopping

As Halsey's forces advanced up the Solomons and MacArthur's advanced westward on the northern coast of New Guinea, they both soon realized that they need not attack every Japanese held island or every Japanese base on New Guinea

Instead, if they seized just key islands or sites with air bases (or on which air bases could easily be constructed), they could use land-based air power to neutralize Japanese-held island or sites and let the troops there "wither on the vine."

- In order to supply these by-passed garrisons, the Japanese had to divert a major portion of their submarine fleet to garrison supply operations. This precluded the use of such submarines to interdict Allied supply lines in the Indian Ocean and between the U.S. and Australia

# Cargo Cults



# Cargo Cults - 1

A cargo cult is a religious movement that emerges in technologically-primitive tribal and isolated societies after they have had an encounter with a foreign and technologically-advanced society

- One aspect is a focus on magical thinking and a variety of intricate rituals designed to obtain the material wealth or “cargo” of the technologically-advanced culture that they encountered

Cargo cults exemplify the third law of Arthur C. Clarke: that any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

# Cargo Cults - 2

American (and Australian) military operations in the South Pacific and New Guinea brought GIs with 20<sup>th</sup> century technology into contact with island natives who were still living in the Stone Age

- The Americans built bases on South Pacific islands and recruited the natives to help construct airfields, hospitals, jetties, roads, bridges, and Quonset huts – all of which were strange and wondrous to the natives
- The natives also observed aircraft descending from the sky and delivering crates full of clothing, tents, weapons, tools, canned goods, and other goods – the likes of which they had never seen before
- The natives learned that the Americans referred to this stuff as “cargo”

# The Cargo Cults - 3

In exchange for the help provided to them, the Americans gave some of this “cargo” – radios, watches, iceboxes, Coca-cola, SPAM, canned goods, and candy -- to the natives

In many cases, some of the natives got to know individual Americans who had a key role in summoning and distributing the cargo

The natives also observed the Americans engaging in certain behaviors that seemed to summon the cargo

- Putting on radio headsets and erecting antennas
- Engaging in marching around with rifles on their shoulders

# The Cargo Cults - 4

Then, all of a sudden, the Americans left – as their bases moved closer to Japan or when the war ended

The South Pacific and New Guinea natives had beliefs that, in interaction with American GIs, their cargo, and their technology, generated the new cargo cult religions

- That their dead ancestors could influence the well-being of the living
- That their ancestors would one day come back to life and distribute to them unimaginable wealth
- Consequently, the American GIs had connections to their own ancestors since they had this wondrous cargo – that they, like their ancestors, were gods

# The Cargo Cults - 5

To facilitate and inspire John Frum and his fellow GI “gods” to return with planeloads and shiploads of cargo, the natives created the “cargo cults” which engage in such ritualistic behavior as military-style parades, building landing strips and figurines of American airplanes and airfield-related equipment, hoisting the American flag, and eating ritual meals.

- One symbol of the John Frum cargo cult was a Red Cross, adopted from the Red Cross emblem on wartime ambulances

Some of these cults have persisted, despite the efforts of Christian missionaries and Western-educated politicians to wean the natives away from the cargo cults

In some cases, the cult has persisted but the beliefs have changed

# John Frum Cult Altar



# John Frum Cult Marching





# John Frum Cult Flag Raising





# The Central Pacific -1

While MacArthur's soldiers and Halsey's marines were island- and site-hopping in the South Pacific and New Guinea, Nimitz's forces were island-hopping in the Central Pacific

- Makin and Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands – November 1943
- Eniwetok and Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands – February 1944
- Saipan, Guam, and Tinian in the Mariana Islands – June-August 1944
  - Saipan – Invaded 15 June 1944

The invasion of Saipan led the Japanese to send their First Mobile Fleet (carriers and escort ships) to attack the American Task Force supporting the landing on Saipan

# The Central Pacific – 2

## Battle of the Philippine Sea – 19-20 June 1944

- The battle saw 15 carriers commanded by ADM Marc Mitscher against 9 carriers commanded by ADM Jisaburo Ozawa
- While the Japanese discovered Mitscher's carriers first, his fleet's fire control radar, fighter control, and superior F6F Hellcat fighters enable the Americans to shoot down 243 out of the 373 attacking Japanese planes at the cost of only 29 American planes – the “Great Marianas Turkey Shoot”
- Later, American submarines and aircraft sank 3 Japanese carriers, damaged 2 others, and sank 2 cruisers
  - The sunk carriers included the *Taiho* (Japan's newest and largest carrier) and the *Shokaku* (veteran of Pearl Harbor)

# Conquest of the Marianas

The Battle of the Philippine Sea basically destroyed Japan as a major naval air power

- It prevented Japan from reinforcing the garrisons it had on Saipan, Tinian, and Guam

The conquest of Saipan and Tinian (and the liberation of Guam) provided bases from which the new B-29s could engage in strategic bombing of Japan

- These islands also provided a base for attacking Iwo Jima

Saipan was the first conquered island with a large Japanese civilian population

- 2/3rds of the non-combatants (mostly women and children) committed suicide

# Invading the Philippines

Having decided to invade Luzon rather than Formosa, the next step was Leyte

- The conquest of Leyte would provide land-based air support for the invasion of Mindoro and then Luzon
- From Luzon, amphibious landings could be made in the Bonin Islands (Iwo Jima) and the Ryuku Islands (Okinawa)

The Japanese saw retention of the Philippines as vital to protect their lines of communication with Southeast Asia

- This was to precipitate the largest set of naval battles in history in which the remainder of the Japanese Navy was sunk

# The Philippines Campaign

The Philippines Campaign was long and costly for several reasons

- First, the Japanese resisted with fierce determination, especially on the island of Luzon (where there were 280,000 Japanese troops) and in the city of Manila which saw fighting on a destructive scale reminiscent of Stalingrad and Berlin
- Second, MacArthur's decision to use the 8<sup>th</sup> Army to liberate the islands of the Central and Southern Philippines liberated the Philippines from Japanese rule, but prevented the 8<sup>th</sup> Army from supporting the 6<sup>th</sup> Army fighting on Luzon
  - As a result, fighting went on in Luzon until the final surrender of Japan
  - The campaign in the central and southern Philippines involved 50 amphibious operations
- Third, the Japanese began using kamikaze tactics en masse

# Strategic Bombing

After the capture of Saipan, Tinian, and Guam, strategic bombing of the Japanese home islands began in the Fall of 1944

Initially, strategic bombing, even with the new B-29s, was ineffective due to the need to bomb from high altitudes

Two factors later made strategic bombing much more effective

- First, the seizure of Iwo Jima allowed bombers to fly a direct path to Japan and also have fighter protection
- Second, B-29s began dropping incendiary bombs from low altitudes rather than explosive bombs from high altitudes
  - Fire, not explosives, proved to be the great destroyer of Japanese factories and cities

Raising the flag on Mt  
Suribachi on Iwo Jima

Of the six men in the  
picture, only three  
survived the battle.



# Okinawa

Okinawa had large airfields, an excellent harbor, and was within easy range of the Japanese home islands

The Japanese had over 100,000 men to defend the island

- They established their defense lines in the mountainous southern portion of the island where they expected to hold the Americans while kamikaze attacks on their ship-borne supply system was expected to drive off the American Navy, leaving the Americans without supplies and vulnerable to a Japanese counterattack

Fighting on Okinawa lasted from 1 April to 22 June 1945

- There were 75,000 American casualties
- The Japanese launched 2,000 kamikaze attack sorties



# Japanese Surrender

Despite having its cities destroyed by incendiaries and its islands blockaded by American ships, Japanese leaders were determined to continue the war

Two factors led to the surrender

- The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- The entry of the Soviet Union into the war

Only then did Japan decide to surrender, provided the imperial system remain, and even then it almost did not happen

# The War in the Atlantic

# The British Merchant Marine

In 1939, Britain needed to import 55 million tons of goods by sea to support its way of life

- She depended on her ocean trade for half her food, most of her raw material and all of her oil and gasoline

It had a merchant marine of 3,000 ocean-going vessels and 1,000 large coastal ships – a total of 21 million gross-register tons

Merchant marine manpower totaled 160,000

The Germans estimated that if they could sink 700,000 tons a month they could force Britain out of the war

# 4 Phases of the Sub War

1. From the outbreak of the war to the fall of France
  - U-boats operate only in the North Sea and around the British isles
2. After June 1940 to April 1941
  - U-boats operate in the Eastern Atlantic and along the African coast
3. From April 1941 to December 1941
  - U-boats operate in the Central and Western Atlantic and Arctic Atlantic (after June 1941)
4. After December 1941
  - U-boats begin to operate along the Atlantic coast of the U.S. and in the Gulf of Mexico

# German Subs

Submarines were not really true underwater ships

- When submerged they could go only 7.5 knots per hr and only for a limited time since they could only use battery power
  - They could be outrun by most surface ships
- On the surface, they could go 17.7 knots per hr
  - They had to spend most of their time on the surface so that their diesel engines could recharge their batteries and they could get to their designated attack areas in time

The most common German sub, the Type VII, had a radius of 8,000 miles and carried 11 torpedoes

In 1942, the newer Type IX, came on board. It had a radius of 13,450 miles and carried 22 torpedoes

# Sub Tactics

Since the German Navy had few reconnaissance planes, the Germans had to use submarine scouts to locate Allied convoys and then use radio signals to direct other subs to the convoy where they could attack as a wolf-pack

Typically, German subs would attack convoys at night, submerging only when they were being pursued by escort ships

- During the day, they would attack the convoy submerged

One thing that helped German subs locate convoys was the fact that the Germans had broken the British convoy codes

# Convoys

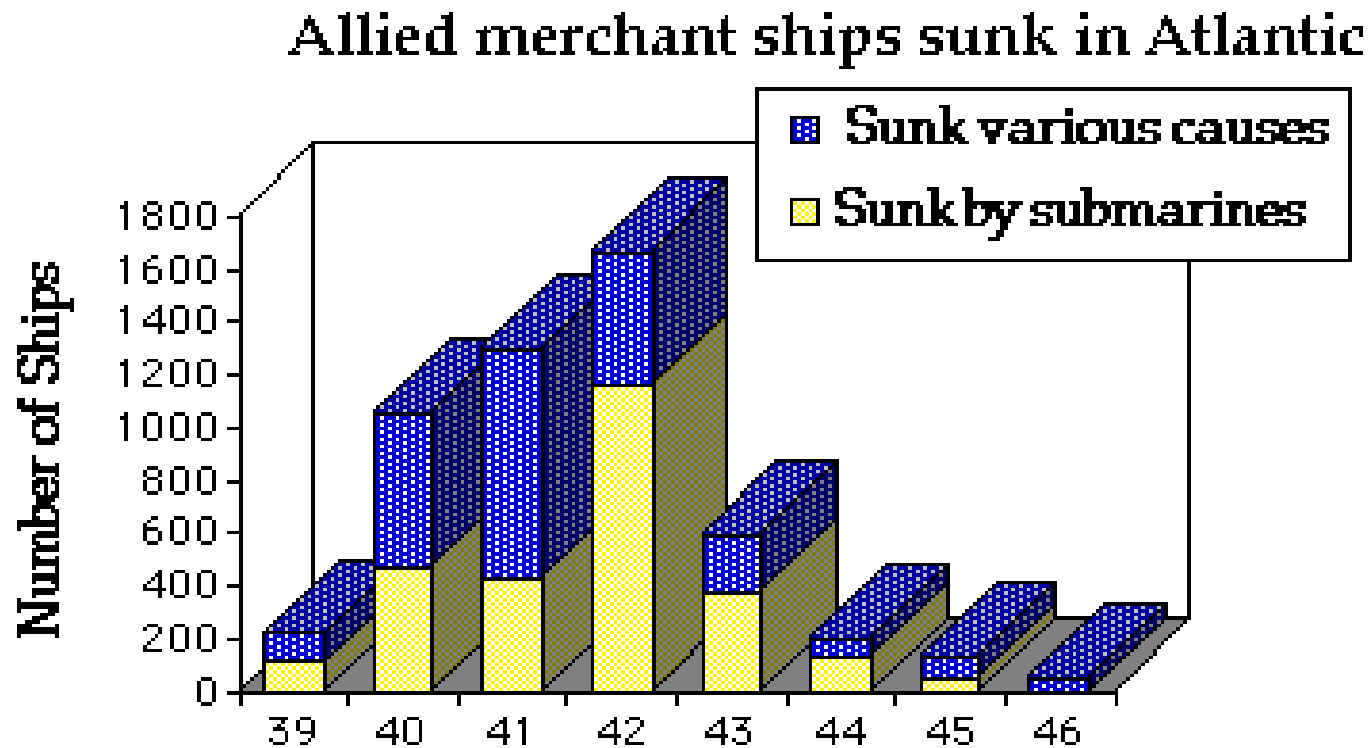
The best way of dealing with subs was to have the ships form convoys that were protected by destroyer escorts and overhead planes

- Merchant ships and tankers were helpless at sea if not in a convoy
  - About 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the ships sunk were out of convoy – these were either stragglers from the convoy or ships that had just left port

Despite convoys, the Allies suffered a heavy loss of ships until early 1943 as noted in the subsequent chart

After a series of Allied innovations, Allied shipping losses greatly declined while German submarine losses greatly increased

# Allied Merchant Ship Losses





# Ship Sinkings by Ocean Region

