

# IGA-677 / RusNatSecPol / Lecture 15

## Barbarossa to Moscow

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## Today's objectives

1. *Probe*: what explains the Soviets' great intelligence failure
2. *Consider*: how ideology affects the way states fight  
(and how their enemies respond)
3. *Analyze*: whether Germany could have captured Moscow

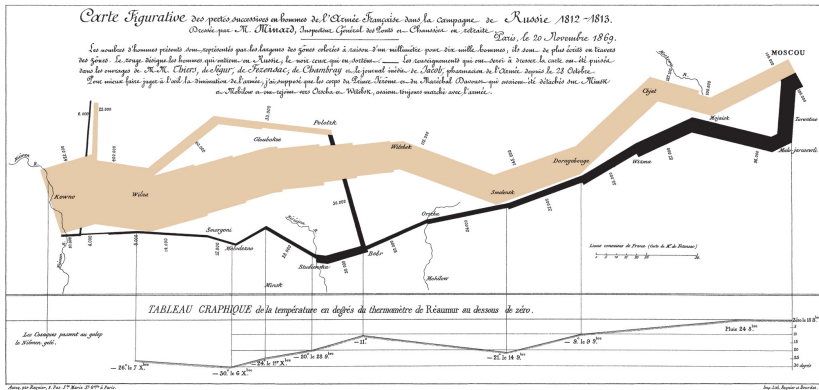


Figure 1: What is this?

## Operation Barbarossa, 22 June 1941

### Assumptions

1. Quick victory is possible
2. After 1941:  
Victory still possible in long war



Figure 2: Into the dark

## Early German successes

Balance of power	Force employment	Geography	Information	Chance
numbers	doctrine	distance	surprise	weather
replacement of losses	strategy	terrain	intelligence	timing
industry/production	training	climate	analysis	luck
logistics	officer quality	roads	communication	
natural resources	technology	fortifications		

## Germans lose momentum

Balance of power	Force employment	Geography	Information	Chance
numbers	doctrine	distance	surprise	weather
replacement of losses	strategy	terrain	intelligence	timing
industry/production	training	climate	analysis	luck
logistics	officer quality	roads	communication	
natural resources	technology	fortifications		

# Biggest. War. Ever.

## World War II in Europe

Country	Casualties
USSR	28 million
Germany	9 million
Poland	5.8 million
France	550,000
Italy	454,000
UK	450,000
USA	214,000



Figure 3: Hard won

## Great Patriotic War (Eastern Front)

1. 93% of European casualties in WWII
2. 80% of German casualties in WWII
3. 18 of 25 costliest battles of all time
4. almost every concentration camp, Jewish ghetto



## Sizing Up the Titans

## Order of Battle, June 1941

### Germany

1. Numbers
  - a) 3.8-4.9M troops
  - b) 3,500-4,617 tanks
  - c) 2,500-4,873 aircraft
  - d) 600,000 vehicles
2. Force structure (157 divisions)
  - a) 12 armored divisions
  - b) 6 airborne divisions
  - c) 12 mechanized divisions
  - d) 7 cavalry divisions
  - e) 120 infantry divisions
  - f) org. into 3 Army Groups:
    - North (→ Leningrad)
    - Center (→ Moscow)
    - South (→ Ukraine)

### Soviet Union

1. Numbers
  - a) 2.9-3.4M troops
  - b) 13,981-15,000 tanks
  - c) 7,758-9,000 aircraft
  - d) 272,600 vehicles
2. Force structure (174 divisions)
  - a) 40 armored divisions
  - b) 12 airborne divisions
  - c) 18 mechanized divisions
  - d) 7 cavalry divisions
  - e) 97 infantry divisions
  - f) organized into 5 Fronts
    - North (Murmansk)
    - Northwest (Leningrad)
    - West (Belarus)
    - Southwest (Ukraine)
    - South (Ukraine)

## Command & control

1. Germany
  - a) commanding officers well trained
  - b) mission-oriented command system (Auftragstaktik)
  - c) operational experience
  - d) decentralized C2
2. Soviet Union
  - a) Stalin's officer purges
  - b) unstable command structure
  - c) lack of command experience
  - d) limited freedom of action on battlefield
  - e) centralized C2



Figure 4: Lonely at the top

## Military doctrine

1. Offensive
  - a) combined-arms offensive
  - b) “deep battle” concept
  - c) mismatch between doctrine & capability
2. Defensive
  - a) political constraints on defensive planning, doctrine
  - b) further complications due to border expansion
  - c) Stalin Line → Molotov Line

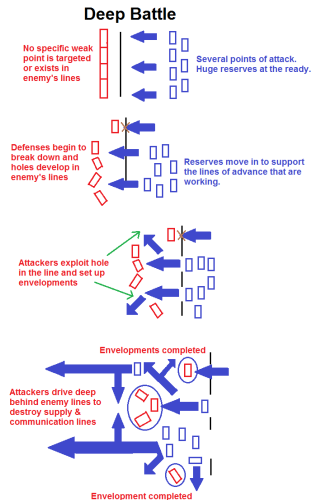


Figure 5: Deep battle

## Ideology:

total war against “Judeo-Bolshevism”

Hitler to Reichstag, 30 January 1939:

*If international finance Jewry should succeed once more in plunging the peoples into a world war, then the consequences will not be the Bolshevization of the world, and therewith the victory of Jewry, but the **destruction of the Jewish race in Europe.***



Figure 6: Dead serious

## German directives to troops

1. Commissar Order
  - a) 'one cannot count on the enemy acting in accordance with principles of humanity or international law'
2. Severity Order
  - a) 'severe but just revenge on subhuman Jewry'
3. Guidelines to German Troops
  - a) 'ruthless and radical measures against Bolsheviks, agitators, guerrillas, saboteurs, Jews'
4. Hunger Plan
  - a) feed Germany by starving USSR
  - b) 'extinction of industry, good part of population in deficit regions'



Figure 7: Following orders



# Biggest. Operation. Ever.



## Operation Barbarossa

1. From ocean to sea
  - a) attack over broad front (750 miles)
  - b) fan out to Arkhangelsk-Astrakhan Line (1800 miles)
  - c) territory: 2,000,000 mi<sup>2</sup> (territory of France × 10)
2. Debate over objectives
  - a) destruction of Red Army ✓
  - b) seize Moscow
  - c) seize Ukraine

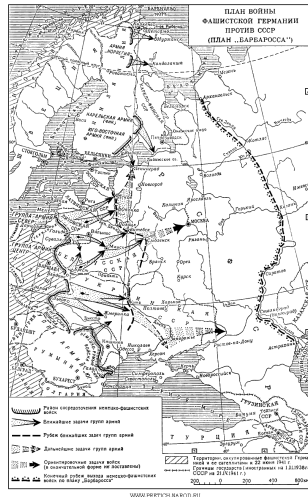
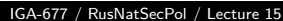


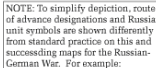
Figure 9: Campaign plan

# Plan Barbarossa Meets Reality

## First 60 Days Advance on Moscow



## First 60 Days





## German challenges

1. Logistics
  - a) frontline units outrunning supplies
  - b) underdeveloped road infrastructure
2. Behind-the-line attacks
  - a) regular ambushed by partisans, regular Soviet troops
  - b) few incentives for Soviets to surrender



Figure 14: Not yet victorious



Figure 15: Not yet defeated

## Fight or fight

in which scenario would you be *least* likely to surrender to the enemy, and why?

1. Scenario 1
  - a) Geneva Conventions honored in enemy's POW camps
2. Scenario 2
  - a) Geneva Conventions do not apply in enemy's POW camps
3. Scenario 3
  - a) Geneva Conventions do not apply in enemy's POW camps
  - b) at home: 'surrender = treason'



Figure 16: Your choice



## Problems of Germans' own making

1. Conditions in POW camps
  - a) high mortality
  - b) no food, medical care
  - c) human experiments
2. SS Einsatzgruppen
  - a) mass killings of civilians (esp. Jews) behind German lines
3. Reprisals for partisan attacks
  - a) thousands of villages burned to ground
  - b) public executions

→ strong incentives *against* civilians' cooperation & Soviet soldiers' surrender

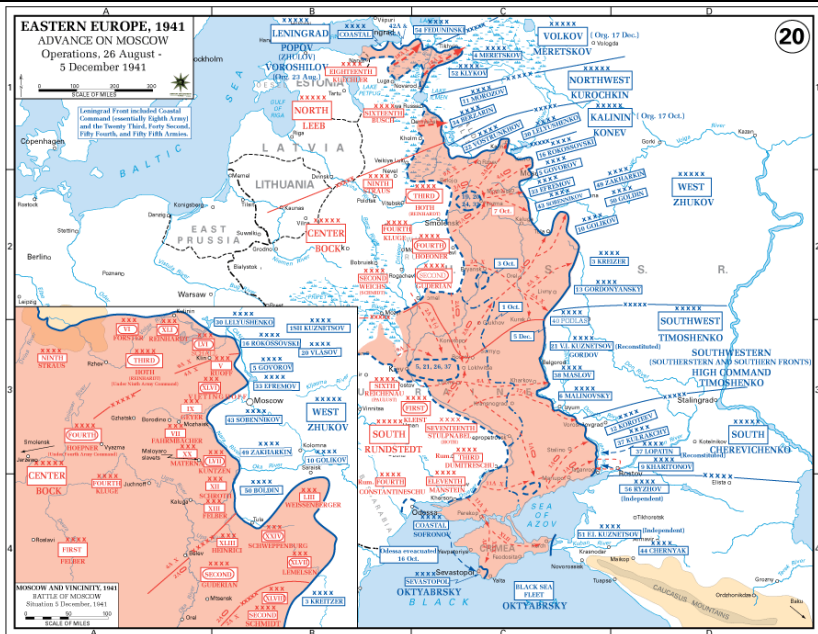


Figure 17: POW camp



Figure 18: Einsatzgruppe

## Advance on Moscow



## More German challenges

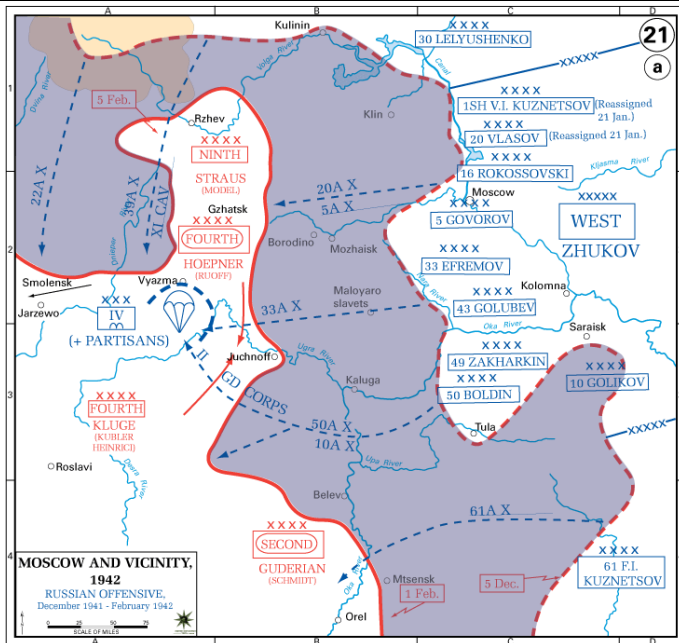
1. Mobility
  - a) forests, swamps, wooded steppe
  - b) limited roads
  - c) heavy rains in fall
  - d) snow & frost in November
  - e) no winter clothing
  - f) no antifreeze
2. Soviet defenses
  - a) civilians help dig fortifications
  - b) reserves arrive from Siberia
  - c) Zhukov takes over defense of city, launches major counter-offensive

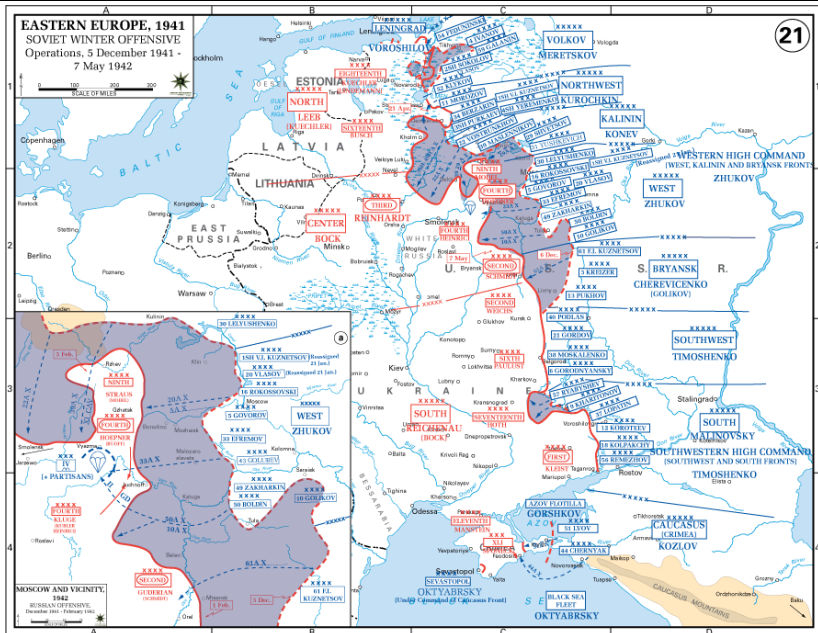


Figure 20: Rasputitsa



Figure 21: All hands on deck





## Costs of Barbarossa

1. Killed, wounded, captured
  - a) Germany: 790,000 - 803,000
  - b) USSR: 3,500,000 - 5,000,000
  - c) 4:1 - 6:1 loss-exchange ratio
2. but...
  - a) Red Army not destroyed
  - b) Moscow not seized
  - c) long war not avoided



Figure 24: So close, yet so far

*Discussion:* Could the Germans have taken Moscow?

## Scenarios

1. *Launch offensive in May*, assuming:
  - a) no Greece invasion by Italy
  - b) rainy spring would not slow advance
2. *Not divert Panzer groups from AG Center in August*, assuming:
  - a) Hitler's orders would be countermanded
  - b) no Soviet reserves
  - c) supply difficulties can be overcome
  - d) autumn rains would not slow advance

How realistic are these scenarios?



# NEXT MEETING

*USSR at War: Stalingrad to Berlin* (Th, Oct. 26)

- was Hitler's "southern strategy" fatally flawed?
- was Germany's defeat at Stalingrad avoidable?
- what are Stalingrad's lessons for urban warfare?