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## EDITORIAL THE CRUCIAL TURNING POINT



The heroic victory of the Soviet people over the Nazi invaders in the Battle of Stalingrad marked the beginning of a radical turning point not only in the Great Patriotic War, but in the Second World War in general.

Stalingrad became an insurmountable obstacle to the advance of the Germans in the south direction and dispelled the myth of the great combat capability of the Wehrmacht, just as in 1812 the Battle of Borodino dispelled the legend of the invincibility of Napoleon's army. History repeats itself...

It is known that Hitler ordered to take Stalingrad at any cost – not

only because of its strategic position: he saw a special symbolic meaning in capturing the city that bore the name of the Supreme Commander. But the Nazi troops and air force suffered a catastrophic defeat, from which they could never recover. The German diplomat Ulrich von Hassel had to state: 'A crisis has hit all of Germany. It is symbolized by one word – Stalingrad.'

The crushing defeat of the Nazis on the Volga River gave a powerful impetus to the fight against Nazism in European countries and forced Japan and Turkey to abandon their plans to attack the Soviet Union.



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# THE BATTLE THAT DETERMINED THE COURSE OF HISTORY

**On November 19, 1942, the counteroffensive of the Soviet troops at Stalingrad began, which marked the turning point in the war conducted by the Soviet people against the German invaders**

In every war there are certain milestones – battles that determine not only the course of the war itself, but in many respects the entire world history. It was the truly epic Battle of Stalingrad, that became a turning point in the Great Patriotic War predetermining the victory over fascism. Fierce fighting continued for 200 days and nights – from July 17, 1942 to February 2, 1943. Severe fights reached their peak in the autumn of 1942: on November 19, the counteroffensive of the Soviet troops began, which marked the turning point in the war conducted by the Soviet people against the German invaders.

Many prominent politicians, military men, historians, public figures and writers highly appreciated the historical significance of the Battle of Stalingrad.

**Winston Churchill,**  
*Prime Minister of Great Britain in 1940 1945 and 1951 1955:*

“Stalingrad itself became a symbol of courage, the steadfastness of the Russian people and at the same time a symbol of the greatest human suffering. This symbol will be preserved in the centuries. It is necessary that future generations can see and feel with their own eyes all the greatness of the victory won by the Volga and all the horrors of the de-

structive war raging there. It would be nice to leave untouched the terrible ruins of this legendary city, and next to build a new, modern city. The ruins of Stalingrad, like the ruins of Carthage, would forever remain a kind of monument of human fortitude and suffering. They would attract pilgrims from all parts of the world and serve as a warning to future generations...”

**Franklin Delano Roosevelt,**  
*32<sup>nd</sup> President of the United States:*

“In the name of the people of the United States of America, I present this scroll to the City of Stalingrad to commemorate our admiration for its gallant defenders whose courage, fortitude and devotion... will inspire forever the hearts of all free people. Their glorious victory stemmed the tide of invasion and marked the turning point in the war of the Allied Nations against the forces of aggression.”

**Charles de Gaulle**  
*President of France (1959–1969):*

“There is no single honest Frenchman who would not welcome the victory of Russia. While the power of Germany, its prestige are shaken, the sun of Russian glory is rising to its zenith.”

**Mao Zedong,**  
*1st Chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party:*

“The Red Army’s defence of Stalingrad in these forty-eight days has a certain similarity to the defence of Moscow last year. That is to say, Hitler’s plan for this year has been foiled just as was his plan for last year... once its offensive stops its very life stops too...”

Napoleon’s political life ended at Waterloo, but the decisive turning point was his defeat at Moscow. Hitler today is treading Napoleon’s road, and it is the Battle of Stalingrad that has sealed his doom... All those who take a pessimistic view of the world situation should change their point of view.”

**Georgy Zhukov,**  
*Marshal of the Soviet Union:*

“The victory of our troops at Stalingrad marked the beginning of a turning point in the war in favour of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the expulsion of enemy troops from our territory.

It was a long-awaited and joyful victory, not only for the troops directly carrying out the defeat of the enemy, but also for the entire Soviet people, who worked hard day and night to provide the army with everything necessary.”

**Andrei Eremenko**  
*Marshal of the Soviet Union:*

“The Battle of Stalingrad was the greatest event in the history of the last war, which marked the turning point in the course of the Great Patriotic War and the entire Second World War. As a result, the final seizure of the strategic initiative and the turning point in the war occurred as a result of our victory at Stalingrad, and later it was strengthened in the Battle of Kursk and on the Dnieper.”

**Aleksander Vasilevsky,**  
*Marshal of the Soviet Union:*

“The Battle of Stalingrad is rightfully defined as the largest military and political event of the entire Second World War. It was the victory at Stalingrad that predetermined the beginning of the collapse of the fascist bloc, increased the scope of the liberation movement in countries that fell under the yoke of Nazi occupation.”

**Leonid Brezhnev,**  
*Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (1977–1982):*

“The victory at Stalingrad was not just a victory, it was a historical feat. Stones live longer than people. But it is people, only people who attach immortality to everything that their feat touches. The feat of heroes made the stones of Mamayev Kurgan immortal. Years and decades will pass. New generations of people will replace us. But grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the heroes will come here, to the foot of the majestic Victory Monument. They will bring flowers and guide their children. Here, thinking about the past and dreaming about the future, people will remember those who died defending the eternal flame of life.”



*Mamayev Kurgan in Volgograd (former Stalingrad)*

**Geoffrey Barraclough,**  
*British historian:*

“It was the Russian victory at Stalingrad in 1943 that made a total revision of European history imperative... If we needed the shock of Stalingrad to understand the narrowness of our Western historiography, it was only because the political prejudices underlying our Western historical science blinded us regarding the true balance of power in 1943.”

**Rockwell Kent,**  
*American artist and social activist:*

“As an American, I am convinced, and I think that all the peoples of the world should be convinced of this: we all owe a great debt to the Soviet people, in one word – for Stalingrad.”

**Thomas Mann,**  
*German writer:*

“The victorious defence of Stalingrad is one of the feats that history will always tell with the greatest reverence...”

**Konstantin Simonov,**  
*Soviet writer:*

“Remembering now the great battle on the Volga, we do not have either a feeling of hatred or a feeling of gloating. But we consider Stalingrad a lesson, which, unfortunately, still has to be reminded. Whoever was here will never forget it. When, after many years, we will begin to remember, and our lips pronounce the word “War”, then STALINGRAD will arise in our minds.”

HISTORY

# THE STAGES OF THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD

*The Battle of Stalingrad marked the beginning of a radical turning point not only in the course of the Great Patriotic War, but of the Second World War in general*

By SERGEI APTREIKIN,

*Master of History, Associate Professor, Leading Researcher of the Research Institute (Military History) of the Military Academy of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia*

The military history of Russia has seen many examples of courage, heroism, military valour of soldiers on the battlefield and the strategic genius of military leaders. The Battle of Stalingrad stands out against their background.

**The period of defence:  
17 July – 18 November 1942**

This brutal battle went on for 200 days and nights on the banks of the Don and the Volga, and then at the walls of Stalingrad and in the city itself. It unfolded over a vast territory of about 100,000 square kilometres with a front length of 400 to 850 kilometres. Over 2.1 million people were involved in this grandiose battle on both sides at different stages of hostilities. In terms of goals, scope and intensity of hostilities, the Battle of Stalingrad surpassed all previous battles in world history.

While planning operations for the summer and autumn of 1942, the German High Command was guided by Directive no. 41 signed by A. Hitler on 5 April 1942, in which the stated military and political goals were actually a development of the ideas of *Operation Barbarossa*. The main conditions for the final defeat of the

USSR, according to the Wehrmacht top leaders, were the capture of the Caucasus with its large oil deposits, the fertile agricultural regions of the Don, Kuban, the North Caucasus and the Lower Volga region, along with the capture of the water artery – the River Volga.

By the end of June 1942, the enemy had concentrated about 900,000 soldiers and officers, 1,260 tanks, 17,000 guns and mortars, and 1,640 combat aircraft in the area from Kursk to Taganrog at a front of 600–650 kilometres. These forces amounted to 35% of infantry and over 50% of tank and motorised divisions of the total number of troops on the Soviet-German front.

In accordance with the Wehrmacht High Command's Directive no. 45 of 23 July 1942, Army Group South was split into two groups in preparation for the offensive: Army Group A and Army Group B. Army Group A (under Field Marshal V. List) was tasked with capturing the Caucasus. As prescribed by the directive, "... Along with the equipment of defensive lines on the Don River, the task of Army Group B is to strike at Stalingrad and defeat the enemy forces concentrated there, capture the city, block the isthmus between the Don and the Volga and disrupt transportation down the

river. Following this, tank and mechanised troops should strike along the Volga with the aim of reaching Astrakhan and paralysing traffic along the main channel of the Volga..." Army Group B (under Colonel General, from 1 February 1943, Field Marshal M. Weichs) contained: the German 4th Panzer, the 2nd and the 6th Hungarian Armies.

The 6th Army (under Colonel General F. Paulus) was composed of the troops of Army Group B and appointed to capture Stalingrad. The German Command was so confident in the quick capture of Stalingrad that between 1 and 16 July the 6th Army was reduced from twenty to fourteen divisions. In total, by the beginning of the offensive, the 6th Army had 270,000 soldiers and officers, about 3,000 guns and mortars and about 500 tanks, and from the air it was supported by 1,200 combat aircraft of Air Fleet 4.

As a result of the unsuccessful outcome of operations for the Soviet troops near Kharkov, in the Voronezh direction and in the Donbass, coupled with the advance of large enemy forces towards a big bend of the Don, a real threat of an enemy breakthrough to the Volga was created. This could have led to a break

ko), which, in addition to the mentioned armies, contained the 21st and the 8th Air Armies from the disbanded Southwestern Front. The Stalingrad Front was appointed to create a strong defence along the left bank of the Don in the strip from Pavlovsk to Kletskaya and further along the defensive line from Kletskaya, then to Surovikino and Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya. The 51st Army of the North Caucasian Front was advanced to the sector from Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya to Azov (over 300 kilometres long) along the left bank of the Don. Together with the Southern Front's retreating troops, it was supposed to cover the Caucasian direction. Soon, the Headquarters added the 28th, 38th and 57th Armies, which had retreated with heavy losses, to the Stalingrad Front. Ten aviation regiments (a total of 200 aircraft) were sent to reinforce the Stalingrad region.

It should be noted that the tardy revelation of the enemy's intentions to capture Stalingrad in the summer of 1942 resulted in the Supreme Command Headquarters not having enough time to transfer reserves in time to create a new defence front. In mid-July, twelve divisions of the 63rd and the 62nd Armies (166, 000 people, 2,200 guns and mortars and about 400 tanks) could really resist the enemy in the Stalingrad direction. The aviation of the front consisted of about 600 aircraft, including



*The Battle of Stalingrad. Defensive operation (17 July – 18 November 1942)*

in the front of the Soviet troops and the loss of communications linking the country's central regions with the Caucasus.

The troops of the Southwestern Front suffered heavy losses and could not stop the advance of the Nazi troops to the east. The troops of the Southern Front, repelling the attacks of the formations of the German 1st Panzer and the 17th Armies of the Southwestern and Southern Fronts. On 12 July, a new Stalingrad Front was formed (under Marshal of the Soviet Union S. K. Timoshen-

defensive region with heavy fighting. Urgent, decisive measures were needed to organise a repulse of the enemy in the Stalingrad and Caucasus directions.

For this purpose, by decision of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command the 62nd, 63rd and 64th Armies were deployed in the rear of the Southwestern and Southern Fronts. On 12 July, a new Stalingrad Front was formed (under Marshal of the Soviet Union S. K. Timoshen-

150–200 long-range bombers and sixty air defence fighters. On the outskirts of Stalingrad four defensive lines were built: the outer, middle, inner and urban ones. Though it was impossible to equip them fully by the beginning of the defensive operation, they played a significant role in the defence of the city. From among the people of Stalingrad, people's militia battalions were formed.

The general leadership and coordination of actions of the fronts near Stalingrad, on behalf of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, was carried out by the Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief, General of the Army G.K. Zhukov and the Chief of the General Staff, Colonel-General A.M. Vasilevsky.

Given the tasks to be solved, the distinctive characteristics of the conduct of hostilities by the parties, the spatial and temporal scales, along with the results, the Battle of Stalingrad is divided into two periods: the defensive (17 July – 18 November 1942) and the offensive (19 November 1942–2 February 1943).

The strategic defensive operation in the Stalingrad direction lasted 125 days and nights and had two stages. The first stage was the conduct of defensive combat operations by troops of the fronts on the distant approaches to Stalingrad (17 July – 12 September). The second stage was the conduct of defensive operations to hold Stalingrad (13 September – 18 November 1942).

The German Command delivered the main blow with the 6th Army forces in the Stalingrad direction along the shortest path through the large bend of the Don from the west and southwest, right in the defence areas of the 62nd (under Major General V. Ya. Kolpakchi, from 3 August – Lieutenant General A.I. Lopatin, from 6 September – Major General N.I. Krylov, from 10 September – Lieutenant General V.I. Chuikov) and the 64th (under Lieutenant General V.I. Chuikov, from 4 August – Lieutenant General M.S. Shumilov)

Armies. The operational initiative was in the hands of the German High Command with almost a twofold superiority of numbers and resources.

### **Defensive combat operations by the troops of the fronts on the distant approaches to Stalingrad (17 July – 12 September)**

The first stage of the operation began on 17 July 1942, in a large bend of the Don, with combat contact between units of the 62nd Army and the advance detachments of German troops. Fierce fighting ensued. The enemy had to deploy five divisions out of fourteen and spend six days to approach the main line of defence of the troops of the Stalingrad Front. However, under the onslaught of superior enemy forces, Soviet troops were forced to retreat to new, poorly equipped or even unequipped lines. But even under these conditions, they inflicted significant losses on the enemy.

By the end of July the situation in the Stalingrad direction continued to be very tense. German troops surrounded both flanks of the 62nd Army, reached the Don in the Nizhne-Chirskaya area, where the 64th Army held defence, and created the threat of a breakthrough to Stalingrad from the southwest.

Under these conditions, on 28 July 1942, Order no. 227 of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command was given to the troops of the Stalingrad and other fronts. The order outspokenly showed a very hard situation not in favour of the USSR, particularly in the Stalingrad direction. Here are excerpts from the order:

*“...The German invaders penetrate towards Stalingrad and the Volga and want to take the Kuban and the North Caucasus with their oil and grain at any cost. The enemy has already captured Voroshilovgrad, Starobelsk, Rossosh, Kupyansk, Valuyki, Novocherkassk, Rostov-on-Don, half of Voronezh...*

*We have lost over 70 million people, over 800 million pounds of grain annually and over 10 million tons of metal annually. We no longer have predominance over the Germans in human reserves and in reserves of grain. To retreat further means to waste ourselves and at the same time waste our Motherland. Each new piece of land left by us will strengthen the enemy and weaken our defence and our Motherland to the utmost...*

*It follows from this that it is time to finish retreating. NOT ONE STEP BACK! This should now be our main slogan. From now on, iron discipline must be demanded of every commander, Red Army soldier and political officer: NOT A STEP BACK WITHOUT BEING ORDERED BY THE HIGH COMMAND...*

*This order must be read in all companies, cavalry squadrons, batteries, squadrons, commands and headquarters.*

*The People's Commissar of Defence, I. Stalin.”*

In connection with the increased width of the defence zone (about 700 kilometres), by the decision of the Supreme Command Headquarters, the Stalingrad Front, commanded by Lieutenant General V.N. Gordov from 23 July, on 5 August was divided into the Stalingrad and the South-Eastern Fronts. To achieve closer cooperation between the troops of both fronts, from 9 August the Stalingrad Front was put under the commander of the troops of the South-Eastern Front, Colonel General A.I. Eremenko.

On 30 July, the German High Command decided to turn the 4th Panzer Army from the Caucasian direction to Stalingrad. As a result, two armies were operating in the Stalingrad direction: the 6th from the west and the 4th Tank Regiment from the south-west. On 5 August, the advance formations of the 4th Panzer Army reached the outer Stalingrad line. The enemy attempts to break through this line on the move were repulsed by well-organised counter-attacks of the formations of the 64th and the 57th Armies.

Despite the stubborn resistance of the Soviet troops, on 23 August the enemy managed to break through the defences of the 62nd Army and approach the city's middle defensive line, and the advance detachments of the German 14th Panzer Corps managed to reach the Volga north of Stalingrad in the Yerzovka area. At the same time, the Germans threw an armada of bombers on the city – over 2,000 sorties in one day. Throughout the war air raids were not as intensive. The huge city, stretching fifty kilometres, was engulfed in flames.

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command's representative A.M. Vasilevsky recalled: “The unforgettable tragic morning of 23 August found me in the troops of the 62nd Army. On that day, the Nazi troops managed to reach the Volga with their tank units and cut off the 62nd Army from the main forces of the Stalingrad Front. Simultaneously with the breakthrough of our defence, the enemy bombed the city heavily on 23 and 24 August, for which almost all the forces of his 4th Air Force were involved. The city was reduced to ruins. Telephone and telegraph communications were broken, and on 23 August I had to conduct short talks with the Supreme Commander-in-Chief openly over the radio twice.”

On 23 August alone, 120 enemy aircraft were shot down by air defence systems, of which ninety were shot down by fighter aircraft, and thirty by anti-aircraft artillery. At the same time, anti-aircraft artillery regiments in front of the city repelled repeated attacks by German tanks and infantry, inflicting damage on them. The fighting outside the city walls was extremely intense and violent.

In those days the city defence committee, headed by the First Secretary of the Stalingrad Regional Committee of the Communist Party A.S. Chuyanov, addressed the city residents with an appeal:

*“Dear comrades! Native Stalingraders! Again, like twenty-four years ago,*

*our city is going through hard days. The bloody Nazis are rushing towards sunny Stalingrad to the great Russian River Volga. Stalingraders! Let us not allow the Germans to devastate our native city. Let us all stand as one to protect our beloved city, our home, our family. Let us barricade all the streets. Let us transform every house, every block and every street into an impregnable fortress. Everybody go and build barricades! In the terrible year 1918 our fathers defended Tsaritsyn. Let us also defend red-bannered Stalingrad in 1942!*

*Everyone go and build barricades! All who are able to carry arms, go and protect your native city and home!”*

The people of the city were the most important source of replenishment of the ranks of the defenders of Stalingrad. Thousands of Stalingraders joined the units of the 62nd and the 64th Armies, entrusted with the defence of the city.

In the first days of September the enemy broke through the city's inner defensive line and captured some areas in its northern part. The Nazis went on to rush to the city centre stubbornly in order to cut off the Volga completely – the most important means of communication. All attempts to break through to the Volga on a broad front cost the enemy heavy losses. So, in just ten days of September, at the walls of Stalingrad the Germans lost 24,000 people in killed, and about 500 tanks and 185 guns were destroyed. Between 18 August and 12 September over 600 enemy aircraft were shot down on the near approaches to the city.

On 12 September, the commander of Army Group B and the commander of the 6th Army were summoned to the Fuhrer's headquarters near Vinnitsa. Hitler was extremely disappointed that Stalingrad had not yet been taken by the German troops and ordered to capture the city as soon as possible.

The enemy forces were constantly growing. In total, about fifty divisions were already operating in the Stalingrad direction in the first half of September. The Nazis had air su-

premacry, making between 1,500 and 2,000 sorties a day. Methodically destroying the city, the enemy tried to undermine the morale of the troops and the population.

### **Defensive actions to hold Stalingrad (13 September – 18 November 1942)**

The second stage of the Soviet troops' defensive operation to hold Stalingrad began on 13 September and lasted seventy-five days and nights. At this stage of the operation the enemy went over to storm the city four times, trying to capture it on the move.

The first assault on the city began on 13 September with a powerful artillery preparation supported by aviation. The enemy outnumbered the 62nd and the 64th Armies in numbers and resources by about 1.5–2 times and in tanks by six times. His main efforts were aimed at capturing the city centre with access to the Volga in the area opposite the central crossing.

The fighting in the city was extremely violent and intense and continued almost round the clock in Stalingrad's streets and squares. Even the Wehrmacht generals were amazed at the stamina and perseverance of the Soviet troops. A participant in the Battle of Stalingrad, German General G. Derr later wrote: “A fierce struggle was waged for every single house, workshop, water tower, embankment, wall, basement, and even heap of rubbish, which had no equal even during the First World War with its gigantic expenditure of ammunition. The distance between our troops and the enemy was extremely small. Despite our massive air and artillery assault, we could not leave the close combat area. The Russians were superior to the Germans in terms of terrain and camouflage and were more experienced in barricade fighting behind individual houses: they took up a solid defence.”

The day of 14 September went down in history as one of the critical days of the heroic defence in the Battle of Stalingrad. Particularly fierce battles were fought in the area of the grain elevator and the Stalingrad-2 Station. At the cost of heavy losses, on 15 September, the enemy captured the dominant height in the central part of the city called Mamayev Kurgan (Mamai's Tumulus), also known as Height 102.

However, the next day units of the 13th Guards and the 112th Rifle Divisions as a result of violent fighting recaptured the height from the enemy.

Between 13 and 26 September, the enemy managed to push the formations and units of the 62nd Army and break into the city centre, and where the two armies (the 62nd and the 64th) met – to move to the Volga. But the enemy did not succeed in taking control of the entire bank of the Volga near Stalingrad. The fighting for control of the railway station was particularly fierce, and it passed from hand to hand thirteen times.

The headquarters of the Supreme High Command constantly reinforced the defending troops with reserves from the depths of the country. Thus, between 23 July and 1 October, fifty-five rifle divisions, nine rifle brigades, seven tank corps and thirty tank brigades arrived in the Stalingrad Front. In connection with the increased com-



*Urban combat in Stalingrad. Autumn 1942*

position of the fronts and the great length of their zones, on 28 September the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command abolished the unified command of the South-Eastern and the Stalingrad Fronts and renamed the Stalingrad Front to the Don Front (under Lieutenant General K. K. Rokossovsky), and the

South-Eastern Front to the Stalingrad Front (under Colonel General A. I. Eremenko).

The second assault on Stalingrad was undertaken by the enemy from 28 September to 8 October. The German High Command demanded that Paulus take Stalingrad at any cost and in the coming days. Speaking in the

Reichstag on 30 September 1942, Hitler declared: "We will storm Stalingrad and take it – you can count on it... If we have occupied something, we cannot be moved from there."

The fighting at the walls of Stalingrad raged with unrelenting force. Between 27 September and 4 October, deadly fighting took place on the

northern outskirts of the city for the workers' settlements of Krasny Oktyabr and Barrikada. At the same time, the enemy was attacking in the city centre in the Mamayev Kurgan area (he managed to take a foothold on the western slope) and on the right flank of the 62nd Army in the Orlovka area. The pace of German units'

advance during the day ranged from 100 to 300 metres.

In the first days of October 1942, the formations and units of the 62nd Army took defensive positions along the right bank of the Volga in a strip twenty-five kilometres wide. Meanwhile, the distance between the front edge and the water's edge was no more than 200 metres in some sections. Though the territory of five out of seven city districts was in enemy hands, the Nazis did not manage to take the central embankment with crossings through which the city received troops, weapons, food and fuel and the wounded were sent.

The German High Command was extremely displeased with the actions of the 6th Army in Stalingrad and hurried its commander to capture the entire city as quickly as possible. During the first half of October, it transferred additional forces from Germany to reinforce the 6th Army: 200,000 reinforcements, thirty artillery battalions (about 1,000 guns), thirty engineering assault battalions designed to storm the city and conduct street fighting. Numbers and resources were four or five times greater than those of the 62nd Army.

The third and most fierce assault on the city began on 14 October, using a large amount of firepower. Formations and units of the 62nd Army, even separated from each other by the enemy, continued to defend the strip stretched along the embankment of the Volga. The 138th Rifle Division (under Colonel I. I. Lyudnikov), cut off from the main forces of the army, held the strip along the coast – 700 metres along the front and 400 metres deep. The division consisted of only 500 personnel.

The enemy managed to take the summit and the northern and southern slopes of Mamayev Kurgan. From 28 September 1942 to 26 January 1943, its eastern slope was defended by units of the 284th Infantry Division (under Colonel N. F. Batyuk), repulsing several enemy attacks a day in October and November.

The violence of the confrontation reached its culmination. Fighting went on for every quarter, lane, house and metre of land. In one house Soviet and German units could occupy different floors. The feats of the fighters of the Pavlov's House residential building, who held it for fifty-eight days, gained worldwide fame. The enemy attacked the house with aircraft, conducted artillery and mortar fire, but the defenders did not retreat a single step. There were representatives of many nationalities among the defenders of Pavlov's House: eleven Russians, six Ukrainians, a Georgian, a Kazakh, an Uzbek, a Jew and a Tatar.

All the personnel from soldier to generals were filled with one desire – to destroy the enemy who was encroaching on the freedom and independence of their Motherland. The words of the sniper V. G. Zaitsev became the motto for all Soviet soldiers: “For us, the 62nd Army soldiers and commanders, there is no land beyond the Volga. We have stood and will stand to death!” After the Battle of Stalingrad V. G. Zaitsev was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

For a whole month, intense fighting went on throughout the defence zone of the 62nd and the 64th Armies, but the enemy did not manage to break through the defences of the Soviet troops. Only in some areas, advancing a few hundred metres, did the Nazis move to the Volga. Having suffered heavy losses, despite a significant superiority in numbers and firepower, the German troops did not manage to take the whole city, including its coastal area.

However, unwilling to recognise obvious failure of their plans to capture Stalingrad, Hitler and his entourage continued to demand a new offensive from the troops.

The fourth assault on Stalingrad began on 11 November. Five infantry and two tank divisions were thrown into the battle against the 62nd Army. The position and con-

ditions of the 62nd Army were extremely hard. It consisted of 47,000 troops, about 800 guns and mortars and nineteen tanks. By this time, its line of defence had been divided into three parts.

This is how a German officer and a battalion commander saw the picture of fierce offensive action: “...Volleyers are falling on Russian positions one after another. There should no longer be anyone alive. Heavy guns are firing permanently. Bombers with black crosses are rushing towards the first rays of the rising sun in the brightening sky... They dive and drop their bomb loads on the target with thunder... Some twenty more metres, and they (German infantry) will occupy advanced Russian positions! And suddenly they lie down under a hurricane of fire. To the left, machine guns are firing in short bursts. Russian infantry (which we believed to be destroyed) appears in shell-holes and firing points. We can see Russian soldiers' helmets. Every moment we see our advancing soldiers fall on the ground never to get up, with rifles and machine guns falling from their hands.”

There were no long pauses or lulls in combat on the territory of Stalingrad – it went on continuously. For the Germans Stalingrad was a ‘mill’, which ‘ground down’ hundreds and thousands of German soldiers and officers, destroying tanks and planes. Some German soldiers' letters describe the situation of combat in the city figuratively yet realistically: “Stalingrad is hell on earth or another Verdun – Red Verdun with new weapons. We make daily attacks. If we manage to occupy twenty metres in the morning, the Russians will push us back in the evening.” In another letter, a German lance corporal informs his mother: “You will have to wait a long time for a special message that Stalingrad is ours. The Russians are not going to give up – they are fighting to the last man.”

By mid-November, the advance of the German troops had been

stopped all over the front. The enemy was finally forced to go on the defensive. This was the end of the strategic defensive operation of the Battle of Stalingrad. The troops of the Stalingrad, South-Eastern and Don Fronts fulfilled their tasks, holding back the powerful offensive of the enemy in the Stalingrad direction, creating the prerequisites for a counteroffensive.

During the defensive battles the Wehrmacht suffered huge losses. In the fight for Stalingrad the enemy lost about 700,000 in killed and wounded, over 2,000 guns and mortars, over 1,000 tanks and assault guns, and over 1,400 combat and transport aircraft. Instead of a non-stop advance towards the Volga, the enemy troops were drawn into protracted, exhausting battles in the Stalingrad region. The plan of the German High Command for the summer of 1942 was frustrated. At the same time, the Soviet troops also suffered heavy losses in personnel – 644,000 people, of which 324,000 irretrievable, and 320,000 sanitary. The losses of weapons amounted to about 1,400 tanks, over 12,000 guns and mortars and over 2,000 aircraft.

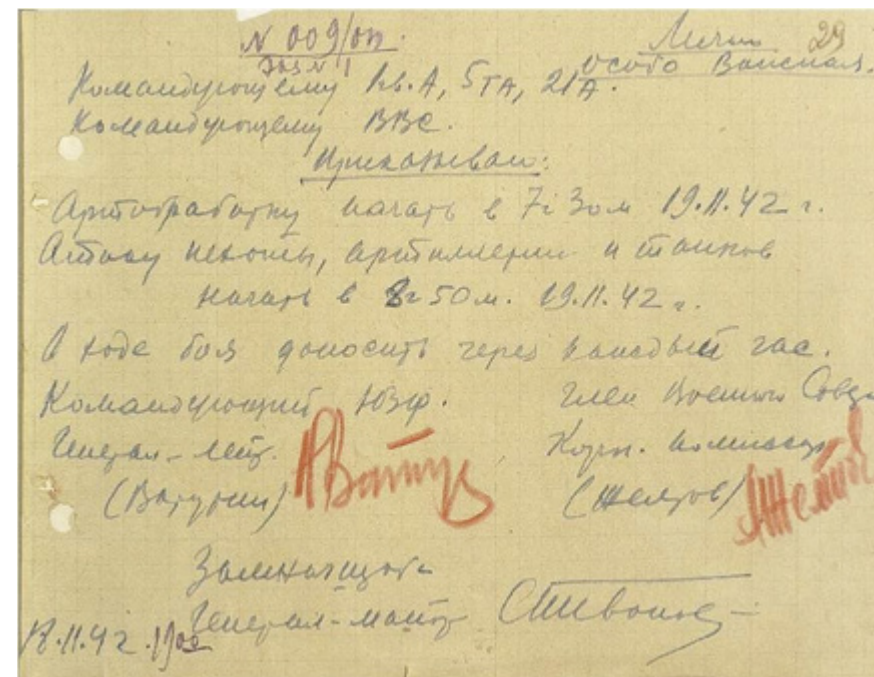
On 14 October 1942, the Wehrmacht High Command decided to switch to strategic defence on the entire Soviet-German front with the task of holding the lines reached at all costs and creating the prerequisites to continue the offensive in 1943. In *Operations Order no. 1*, instructing the troops to switch to strategic defence, Hitler, in fact, admitted the failure of the summer offensive in the east!

The Stalingrad strategic defensive operation prepared the ground for the Red Army to launch a decisive counteroffensive with the aim of defeating the enemy near Stalingrad. In this situation the Soviet Supreme High Command concluded that it was on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front, in the autumn of 1942, that the most favourable conditions were created for conducting offensive operations.

### The counter-offensive of the Soviet troops near Stalingrad (19 November 1942–2 February 1943)

The strategic offensive operation (the counter-offensive near Stalingrad) was carried out under the code name *Operation Uranus* from 19 November 1942 to 2 February 1943 by the troops of the Southwestern Front, Don Front, Stalingrad Front and the left wing of the Voronezh Front with the participation of the Volga Military Flotilla. Its plan was to defeat the troops defending the flanks of the enemy strike force, by attacking from the bridgeheads on the Don (on the Serafimovich and Kletskaya sectors) and from the Sarpinsky Lakes area (to the south of Stalingrad), and, developing the offensive in converging directions toward Kalach-on-Don and Sovetsky, to encircle and destroy main enemy forces directly at Stalingrad. The development of the counter-offensive plan was led by Army General G. K. Zhukov and Colonel-General A. M. Vasilevsky.

In a relatively short period of time (from 1 October to 18 November), four tank, two mechanised and two cavalry corps, 17 separate tank brigades and regiments, 10 rifle divisions and 6 brigades, 230 artillery and mortar regiments were transferred from the General Headquarters reserve for the purpose of strengthening the fronts of the Stalingrad direction. The Soviet troops included about 1,135,000 people, about 15,000 guns and mortars, over 1,500 tanks and self-propelled artillery pieces. The composition of the air forces at the fronts was increased up to 25 aviation divisions, which managed over 1,900 battleplanes. The total number of operating divisions at three fronts reached 75. However, this powerful grouping of the Soviet troops was specific: about 60% of the personnel of the troops were young reinforcements who did not yet have combat experience.



Order of the commander of the Southwestern Front on the timing of the launch of artillery preparation for the transition to the offensive (18 November 1942). Central Archives of the Ministry of Defence. Fond 232. Opis' 599. Delo 2. List 29

They were opposed by the German 6th Army and 4th Panzer Army, the Romanian 3rd Army and 4th Army of Army Group B, numbering more than 1,011,000 people, about 10,300 guns and mortars, 675 tanks and assault guns, over 1,200 battleplanes. The most combat-ready German formations were concentrated directly near Stalingrad. Their flanks were covered by the Romanian and Italian troops defending on a wide front. The enemy defence on the Middle Don and to the south of Stalingrad did not have sufficient depth. As a result of the concentration of forces and means in the directions of the main attacks of the Southwestern Front and Stalingrad Front, a significant superiority of the Soviet troops over the enemy was established: 2–2.5 times in people, and 4–5 times or more in artillery and tanks.

The offensive of the troops of the Southwestern Front (commanded by Lieutenant General, then from 7 December 1942, Colonel General N. F. Vatutin) and the 65th Army of the Don Front began on 19 November after an 80-minute artillery

preparation. By the end of the day, the troops of the Southwestern Front achieved the greatest success advancing 25–35 km: they broke through the defences of the Romanian 3rd Army in two sectors: southwest of Serafimovich and on the Kletskaya sector. The Romanian 2nd and 4th Army corps were defeated, and their remnants together with the 5th Army corps located in the Raspopinskaya area, were flanked. Formations of the 65th Army (commanded by Lieutenant General P. I. Batov), having met fierce resistance, advanced 3–5 km by the end of the day, but could not completely break through the enemy's first line of defence.

On 20 November, the troops of the Stalingrad Front went on the offensive. “The Katyushas launched the attack,” Colonel General A. I. Yeryomenko wrote. “After that artillery and mortars joined them. It is difficult to convey in words the feelings that you experience while listening to the many-voiced choir before the start of the offensive, but the main thing in them is pride in the power of your motherland and faith in victory.

It was just yesterday that we clenched our teeth tightly and said to ourselves: “Not a step back!”, but today our motherland ordered us to go forward...” During the first day, the rifle divisions broke through the defences of the Romanian 4th Army and wedged 20–30 km into the enemy defence line toward the southwest.

It became known at Hitler’s headquarters about the breakthrough in the defence to the north and south of Stalingrad and the defeat of the Romanian troops on both flanks. But there were practically no reserves in Army Group B. It was necessary to withdraw divisions from other sectors of the front. The Soviet troops stubbornly continued to advance, more and more covering Paulus’s grouping from the southwest.

In 2 days of fighting, the troops of the fronts inflicted a heavy defeat on the Romanian 3rd Army and 4th Army. On 21 November, the 26th and 4th Tank Corps of the Southwestern Front reached the Manoilin sector and, turning east, rushed along the shortest path to the Don, to the Kalach area. The 26th Tank Corps,

having captured the bridge across the Don, occupied Kalach on 22 November. The mobile formations of the Stalingrad Front advanced towards the mobile formations of the Southwestern Front.

On 23 November, units of the 26th Tank Corps quickly reached Sovetsky and connected with the formations of the 4th Mechanised Corps. The mobile formations of the Southwestern Front and Stalingrad Front, having reached the Kalach, Sovetsky, Marinovka areas, completed the encirclement of the German troops. The cauldron contained 22 divisions and more than 160 separate units that were part of the 6th Army and 4th Panzer Army, with a total strength of about 300,000 people. There has never been such an encirclement of the German troops during the entire period of World War II.

On the same day, the Raspopinskaya enemy group capitulated. That was the first capitulation of a large enemy group to the Soviet troops in the Great Patriotic War. In total, over 27,000 soldiers and officers of two

Romanian corps were taken prisoner near the village of Raspopinskaya.

Here is how an officer of the reconnaissance department of the German army corps assessed the emerging situation at that time: “Stunned and confused, we did not take our eyes off our staff maps – bold red lines and arrows applied to them indicated the directions of numerous enemy attacks, their detour maneuvers, breakthrough areas. With all our forebodings, we did not even in our thoughts allow the possibility of such a monstrous catastrophe!”

On 30 November, the operation to encircle and block the German group was completed. As a result of the rapid offensive of tank, cavalry and rifle formations, the Soviet troops created two fronts of encirclement – external and internal. The total length of the outer front of encirclement was about 450 km. The maximum distance between the outer and inner fronts of encirclement on the Southwestern Front reached 100 km, and on the Stalingrad Front it was between 20 and 80 km. After 12 days of the operation, the depth of advance of the Soviet troops ranged from 40 to 120 km, with an average advance rate of 6 to 20 km per day for rifle formations and up to 35 km per day for mobile groups. However, it was not possible to immediately dissect the German troops encircled by the cauldron. One of the reasons for that included an error in estimating the size of the encircled enemy group which was 80,000 to 90,000 people. Accordingly, data on its weapons were also underestimated.

The High Command of the Wehrmacht made an attempt to rescue the formations and units that were surrounded. A special operation which received the code name *Operation Winter Thunderstorm*, was planned to release them. For its implementation, a special Army Group Don was created, which included up to 30 divisions. The general management of the operation was entrusted to General Field Marshal E. von Manstein,

and its direct leadership and implementation were assigned to Colonel General G. Goth.

On the morning of 12 December, the implementation of *Operation Winter Thunderstorm* began. With a powerful blow from the Kotelnikovsky area (Kotelnikovo town), the enemy managed to break through the defences of the Soviet troops and advance 25 km by the end of the day. Exceptionally fierce battles unfolded with the use of a large number of tanks. The onslaught of the German troops continued with increasing force and with the active support of aviation. By the end of 19 December, General Goth’s tanks had only 35–40 km to reach the encircled grouping. Radio messages were already aired to the 6th Army headquarters: “Hold on, the liberation is near!”, “Hold on, we will come!”. Manstein reached Hitler with a request to allow Paulus to make a breakthrough towards Goth’s group. But Hitler set a condition: “Stalingrad must be retained!” In a response radiogram, Paulus reported that his army was not able to solve two tasks at the same time.

On the way of the German Panzer divisions, the 2nd Guards Army (commanded by Lieutenant General R. Ya. Malinovsky), urgently advanced from the reserve of the Supreme High Command General Headquarters, became an insurmountable obstacle. It was a powerful combined-arms unit fully equipped with personnel and weapons (122,000 people, 2,000 guns and mortars, 470 tanks). In a fierce battle that unfolded on the banks of the Myshkova River on 20–23 December, the enemy suffered heavy losses and completely exhausted their offensive capabilities. By the end of 23 December, the enemy was forced to go on the defensive.

At the same time, following the decision of the Supreme High Command General Headquarters, from 25 November to 20 December, the troops of the Western Front (commanded by Colonel General I. S. Konev) and

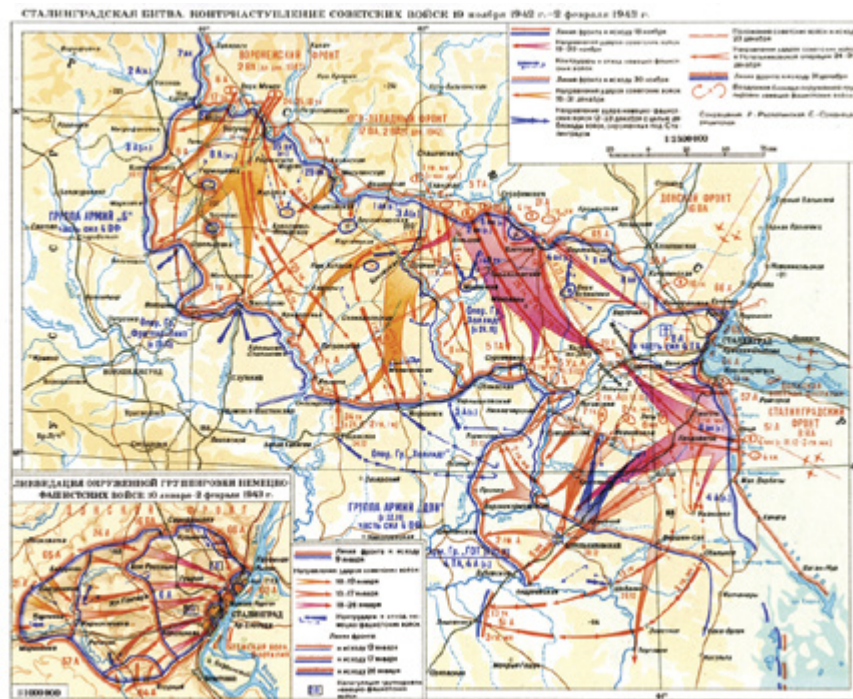
Kalinin Front (commanded by Colonel General M. A. Purkayev) carried out an offensive operation under the code name *Operation Mars*. Despite the fact that the Soviet troops failed to defeat the main forces of the German 9th Army (commanded by Colonel-General W. Model) after counter attacks from the west and east and eliminate the Rzhev ledge, they blocked up to 30 enemy divisions with active offensive actions, not allowing the German command to transfer the troops from this sector of the front to Stalingrad, where the main events unfolded at that time. Moreover, the enemy was forced to send four more tank and one motorised divisions here from the reserves of their High Command and Army Group Centre.

After the encirclement of the German troops near Stalingrad, the Supreme High Command General Headquarters decided, simultaneously with the liquidation of the encircled grouping, to conduct an operation on the Middle Don (the code name *Operation Saturn*) in order to defeat the main forces of the Italian 8th Army, Army Group HOLLIDT, the remnants of the Romanian 3rd Army, and to develop a counter-offensive in the Stalingrad-Rostov direction. However, the German offensive that began on 12 December from the Kotelnikovsky area in order to release the 6th Army forced the Supreme High Command General Headquarters to adjust the plan. Instead of an offensive to the south, the main blow was now directed to the southeast towards Nizhny Ashtakhov with access to Morozovsk (*Operation Little Saturn*), with the aim of defeating the Italian 8th Army and the German-Romanian troops operating at the front from Veshenskaya to Nizhnechirskaya, and exclude the possibility of releasing the German 6th Army with a blow from the west. It was decided to postpone the operation to eliminate the enemy group surrounded near Stalingrad.

During the offensive which began on the morning of 16 December, the Soviet troops broke through the enemy defences in a zone up to 340 km wide in 8 days, advanced 150–200 km and went to the rear of Army Group Don. On the Middle Don, 72 enemy divisions were defeated. The enemy lost 120,000 people (including 60,500 prisoners). The losses of the Soviet troops were also significant – 95,700 people (20,300 of which were lost irretrievably). But most importantly, the enemy used up the reserves intended for the attack on Stalingrad, and abandoned further attempts to unblock the grouping encircled there, which sealed its fate and led to a radical change in the situation in the Stalingrad-Rostov direction. The defeat of the Italian troops on the Don caused literally a shock in Rome. Relations between Rome and Berlin deteriorated sharply. Italy actually ceased to be Germany’s ally.

By this time, formations and units of the German 6th Army were reliably blocked on the ground and from the air. The total area occupied by them was more than 1,500 square kilometers, length along the perimeter – 174 km, north-south distance – 35 km, west-east distance – 43 km. The outer front was 170–250 km away from the encirclement.

The air blockade organised by the Soviet troops over the encircled German group actually cancelled the delivery of food, ammunition, fuel and other resources to the cauldron. The German troops experienced hardship from the cold (the temperature in late December and January reached 20–30 degrees Celsius below zero) and hunger. Horse meat became a luxury in the soldier’s diet; the Germans hunted dogs, cats, and ravens. Here is how Colonel Dinger describes the disasters of the 6th Army: “...Until Christmas 1942 (26 December), the troops were given 100 grams of bread per person per day, and after Christmas this ration was reduced to 50 grams. Later, even



The Battle of Stalingrad. The counter-offensive of the Soviet troops (19 November 1942–2 February 1943)

these 50 grams of bread were received only by those units that directly fought; in the headquarters, from the regiment and above, they did not give out bread at all. The rest ate a liquid soup, which they tried to make stronger by boiling horse bones.”

German historian F. Mellenthin gives a description of the death of the 6th Army in his book *Panzer Battles 1939–1945*: “The Sixth Army was doomed, and now nothing could save Paulus. Even if, by some miracle, Hitler had been able to agree to an attempt to break out of the encirclement, the exhausted and half-starved troops would not have been able to break the Russian circle,

they would not have had vehicles to retreat to Rostov along the ice-crust-ed steppe. The army would have died during the march, like the soldiers of Napoleon during the retreat from Moscow to the Berezina River.”

Despite the catastrophic situation of the 6th Army, its commander continued to fulfill the Fuhrer’s categorical demands. “The fact that we will not leave here must become a fanatical principle,” Hitler said. In order No. 2 of 28 December 1942, when it was already clear that the Wehrmacht had no strength to liberate the encircled grouping in Stalingrad, he stated: “...As before, my intention remains to keep the 6th Army in its fortress (in Stalingrad) and predetermine its release.”

The Supreme High Command General Headquarters developed a plan of the operation to eliminate the encircled group, which received the code name *Operation Ring*. The operation was envisaged in three stages: the first – to cut off and destroy the



Command post of the 62nd Army. From left to right: Chief of Staff of the Army, Major General N.I. Krylov; Army Commander, Lieutenant General V.I. Chuikov; member of the Military Council, Lieutenant General K.A. Gurov; commander of the 13th Guards Division, Major General A.I. Rodimtsev. December 1942

enemy in the western and northeastern parts of the encirclement area; the second – to destruct the enemy troops at the close approaches to the city; the third – to eliminate the remaining enemy groups in the city. On 4 January 1943, the operation plan was approved by the Supreme High Command General Headquarters.

The liquidation of the encircled enemy was entrusted to the troops of the Don Front (commanded by Lieutenant General, then from 15 January 1943, Colonel General K.K. Rokossovsky). At the beginning of the operation, the troops of the front included 212,000 personnel, 257 tanks, 6,860 guns and mortars, and 300 battleplanes.

The encircled German grouping still retained combat readiness and had the following composition before the start of the operation: 250,000 personnel, 4,130 guns and mortars, 300 tanks and 100 battleplanes. However, the moral, psychological and physical condition of

the encircled troops was extremely difficult. Despite the hopelessness of the situation, Berlin continued to send telegrams calling to “Stand to the end!”

On 8 January, the command of the Don Front issued an ultimatum to the command of the encircled group, demanding that they stop senseless resistance and accept the terms of surrender. The ultimatum signed by the representative of the Supreme High Command General Headquarters N.N. Voronov and the commander of the Don Front K.K. Rokossovsky, was transmitted by radio to the Paulus’s headquarters and delivered by the truce envoys. However, the commander of the German 6th Army rejected the proposal of the Soviet command in writing.

The troops of the Don Front went on the offensive on the morning of 10 January 1943 almost simultaneously from all directions, gradually squeezing the encirclement. With

the despair of the doomed, the enemy demonstrated stubborn resistance, repelling the attacks of the Soviet troops. On 21 January, despite the deterioration in the position of the encircled grouping due to the loss of the airfield in the Pitomnik area, through which the enemy mainly supplied their troops, the German command again rejected the offer of surrender.

On 24 January, F. Paulus reported to the Fuhrer’s headquarters by radio (cited in shorthand form): “...On the southern, northern and western fronts, phenomena of degradation of discipline were noted. Unified command and control of the troops is impossible... 18,000 wounded are not getting the most basic medical care... the front has been torn apart... further defence is meaningless. A disaster is inevitable. In order to save the people who are still alive, I ask you to immediately give permission for surrender. Paulus.”

Hitler replied with a short telegram in an irritated manner: “I forbid capitulation! The army must hold its ground to the last man and to the last bullet!”

By the end of 26 January, units of the 21st Army (commanded by Lieutenant General I.M. Chistyakov) allied near the village of Krasny Oktyabr and on Mamayev Kurgan with the units of the 62nd Army advancing from Stalingrad. The enemy was divided into two parts in the city – the southern group (the remnants of nine divisions) led by F. Paulus and the northern group (the remnants of twelve divisions) in the area of the Tractor Plant and the *Barrikady* Gun factory.

On 28 January, the enemy’s southern group was divided into

two more parts. Now three isolated groups had formed in Stalingrad, which continued to wage a hopeless struggle. On the night of 31 January, the chief of staff of the 6th Army, Lieutenant General A. Schmidt, entered Paulus’s room, which was located in the basement of a department store, and handed him a sheet of paper with the words: “Congratulations on your promotion to the general field marshal position.” It was the last radiogram from Hitler received in the “cauldron”. On 31 January, the southern group was forced to stop their senseless resistance. On the same day, the commander of the 6th Army along with the generals and staff officers also surrendered.

The northern group of the 6th Army commanded by General of the Infantry K. Strecker, continued their senseless bloody resistance. Hitler’s headquarters transmitted the following order to this group: fight to the last bullet, die, but do not surrender. The Soviet command decided to inflict a powerful fire strike on this group. Up to 1,000 guns and mortars were concentrated on a 6-kilometer section. On 1 February, massive fire hit the enemy position.

The 65th Army commander, Lieutenant General P.I. Batov, wrote in his memoirs about it: “...And now all this power rumbled. After 3–5 minutes, the Nazis began to jump out and creep out from the dugouts, cellars, from under the tanks. Some fled, others knelt down, mad, raised their hands to the sky. Some threw themselves back into cover and hid among pillars of smoke and jumped out again...” At the same time, aviation massively bombed the enemy. German soldiers and officers surrendered in droves, throwing down their weapons.

On 2 February, the northern group of enemy forces capitulated. Over 40,000 German soldiers and officers under the command of General K. Strecker laid down their arms. The fighting on the banks of the Volga River ceased. During the liquidation of the encircled German grouping (from 10 January to 2 February 1943) the troops of the Don Front defeated 22 divisions and 149 reinforcement and service units. 91,000 people were taken prisoner, including 2,500 officers and 24 generals. On the battlefield, after the liquidation of the encircled grouping, about



Capture of Field Marshal F. Paulus and his generals





The centre of Stalingrad after the liberation from the Nazi invaders. 2 February 1943

140,000 enemy personnel were picked up and buried.

In his report to the Supreme Commander I. V. Stalin, the representative of the Supreme High Command General Headquarters, Marshal of Artillery N. N. Voronov and the commander of the Don Front, Colonel-General K. K. Rokossovsky, reported: "Fulfilling your order, at 16:00 on 2 February 1943 the troops of the Don Front completed the defeat and destruction of the enemy's Stalingrad grouping.

Due to the total liquidation of the encircled enemy troops, the fighting

in the city of Stalingrad and near Stalingrad ceased."

### **The turning point in the entire Second World War**

The Battle of Stalingrad ended with a brilliant victory for the Soviet Armed Forces. It marked the beginning of a radical change not only in the course of the Great Patriotic War, but in the Second World War as a whole. During the Battle, the fascist bloc lost a fourth of its forces oper-

ating on the Soviet-German front. The German 6th Army and 4th Panzer Army, the Romanian 3rd, 4th and Italian 8th armies were defeated.

The total losses of the enemy amounted to about 1,500,000 people in killed, wounded, captured and missing, due to which, for the first time during the war, national mourning was declared in Germany. The losses of the Red Army amounted to about 1,130,000 people (of which about 480,000 and were irretrievable). The strategic initiative firmly and definitively passed into the hands of the Soviet Supreme High

Command, and conditions were created for the deployment of the Red Army's general offensive and the mass expulsion of the invaders from the occupied territory of the USSR. The victory at Stalingrad raised the international prestige of the Soviet Union and its Armed Forces and strengthened the anti-Hitler coalition.

The defeat in the Battle of Stalingrad was a moral and political shock for the whole of Germany, shook its foreign policy positions, and undermined the confidence of the satellites: Japan was convinced of the inexpediency of starting hostilities against the USSR, while Turkey, despite Germany's pressure, sought to maintain neutrality.

German authors, who usually covered the events on the Soviet-German front in a tendentious manner, were forced to admit the real defeat of Germany. General S. West-

phal wrote: "The defeat at Stalingrad horrified both the German people and their army. Never before the entire history of Germany saw such a terrible loss of so many troops." The German historian W. Görlitz emphasised in his book *History of the Second World War*: "The catastrophe at Stalingrad was a great turning point not only in the domestic policy sense, but also in the foreign policy sense. It resulted in a severe shock to the entire sphere of German domination in Europe."

The victory in the Battle of Stalingrad showed the increased capa-

bilities of the Red Army and Soviet military art. In the Battle of Stalingrad, the strategic defensive and offensive operations of groups of the fronts were organically interconnected, culminating in the encirclement and destruction of the large enemy grouping. The victory at Stalingrad was the result of the unbending fortitude, courage and mass heroism of the Soviet forces. For military distinctions demonstrated during the Battle of Stalingrad, 44 formations and units were awarded the honorary names of Stalingrad, Abganer, Don, Basargin, Voropon, Zimovnikov, Kantemirov, Kotelnikov, Srednedon, Tatsin; 55 were awarded orders, 183 were converted into guards. Tens of thousands of soldiers and officers were awarded government awards. 112 most distinguished soldiers became Heroes of the Soviet Union.

On the 20th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War, the Hero City Volgograd was awarded the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star medal. In order to perpetuate the victory at Stalingrad, the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR dated 22 December 1942, even before the end of the battle, established the medal for the Defense of Stalingrad, which was awarded to more than 700,000 participants in the battle.

The victory of the Red Army at Stalingrad caused a huge political



Germans captured near Stalingrad

and labor upsurge of the entire Soviet people. It instilled faith in the speedy liberation of the territory of the USSR from fascism, strengthened the morale of the soldiers at the front, and directed the home front workers to further intensify the fight against the enemy and provide the front with everything necessary.

In accordance with the Federal Law No. 32-FZ of 13 March 1995 "On the Days of Military Glory and Memorable Dates of Russia", 2 February 1943 is celebrated as the day of military glory of Russia – the Day of the defeat of the German Nazi troops by the Soviet forces in the Battle of Stalingrad.



The red flag symbolising victory in Stalingrad

# SAINTS OF NOVEMBER

*On the 28th of November the Nativity Fast begins and lasts forty days*

AUGUSTINE SOKOLOVSKI,  
*Doctor of Theology, priest*

In November, the last month of autumn, when winter is about to come, and the year rushes to its end, the Church honours the memory of some wonderful saints. Among them are the great witnesses of the faith of Christ of the early Church, Sts George and Menas. Commemorating them, the Church, as God's people and the community of the faithful, prepares for the celebration of the Nativity of Christ. Indeed, in late November the Nativity Fast begins in Orthodoxy. It lasts exactly forty days and ends exactly on Christmas Day.

## *Saint George*

On the 16th of November – that is, in mid-November, the Church commemorates Saint George the Victorious. This autumn feast of St George is dedicated to the consecration of the church in honour of the saint, which took place in the fourth century under Emperor Constantine the Great in the Palestinian city of Lod. Previously, this city was called Lydda, Diospolis and Georgiopolis – that is, simply 'City of George'. Interestingly, today the Israeli Ben Gurion Airport is located near it. The ancient intersects with the modern in an amazing way and it becomes easy for us to remember it.

We should understand that the dedication of a church to one or another saint in ancient times meant an act of canonization. A similar act was the commemoration among the saints, and the uncovering or the translation of holy relics. This is why such an event attracted so much at-

tention, and, as a rule, was fixed in the liturgical calendar.

St George is unarguably one of the greatest saints in the history of Christianity. According to his Life, he suffered for his faith in Christ in 303 under Emperor Diocletian. In Eastern Orthodox tradition St George is called 'greatmartyr'. Such a title makes many people think that this word means special suffering endured. However, it is not the case.

We should know that the word 'martyr' in Greek means 'witness'. Thus, literally and without any translation, it was adopted into French, German and other European languages. So the Greek word 'martyr' translates only as 'witness', and has nothing to do with suffering. Antiquity, in general, was indifferent to people's suffering, not least when Christians suffered, endured torments and died. The pagans did not know what Christianity believes in and what it teaches. Listening to all kinds of slander, they mistakenly regarded Christians as atheists, enemies of society and its values.

Roman pagans considered themselves to be the only believers, and in the eyes of these 'believers' the readiness of Christians to die for their beliefs was surprising. Thus, Marcus Aurelius (121–180), the philosopher emperor, and, at the same time, a persecutor of Christians, in his notes could not find any explanation for this, except for 'fanaticism'. Interestingly, contemporary Christians forgave their persecutor, and, unlike other persecuting emperors, they wrote only good things about him. They forgave him, but did not forget their martyrs.

The faith of the Church is established on Biblical revelation. The source of its key ideas is the Bible. The search for the original meaning of things in the Scriptures is a true theological archeology of thought, enabling us to understand the essence of concepts better.

So, in accordance with the words of the Apocalypse, in its original and only unconditioned sense the word 'martyr' is used in relation to Jesus Christ: 'These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness [that is, literally: Martyr], the Beginning of the creation' (Rev. 3:14). According to the Scriptures, the Lord Jesus Christ is the true and first Martyr, Who testified to trust in God, faith in the Covenant and faithfulness to the commandments. There are infinite 'Yes' and 'Amen' to God and His Father in the Lord Jesus.

Little evidence of the life of the first apostolic communities and the life of the first Christians has come down to us. But one historical testimony of the Scriptures is extremely important. 'For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called' (1 Cor. 1:26). Christianity was originally the faith of ordinary people. There were few people of royal or noble origin among Christians of the first centuries.

This historical evidence is extremely important. The recognition of some holy martyrs (very few ones) as 'great', or 'greatmartyrs', didn't denote special suffering, but the nobility of their origin. The witness of Christian martyrs of the royal origin was great,

for it was universal. The Church, as the community of the faithful, called them 'greatmartyrs'.

Paradoxical in the witness of the greatmartyrs was the fact that these richest and most influential people of their time didn't choose someone from the rich and famous of this world as the focus of their confession, but the Great Sufferer Jesus, Who was poor, lonely, and a Wanderer. 'And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head' (Mt. 8:20). Or, as the Holy Spirit sings about this in human voices of the Church on Holy Friday: 'Give me This Stranger, the Lord Jesus, Who hath not where to lay His head.' 'If your pillow is soft,' our prayer book says, 'put a stone under your head for the sake of Christ.'

Yet more surprising and paradoxical in the holiness of the greatmartyrs was the fact that many of them served in the Roman army and were imperial generals and soldiers. The Roman army did not need additional assessments, and it would have been logical that these 'soldiers to the end' should have chosen Alexander the Great, Hercules, or even some beast or dragon as their hero or patron. However, historical evidence and a huge number of soldier martyrs demonstrate the extreme popularity of Christ in the Roman Army and the amazing love of Roman soldiers for the Lord Jesus Christ.

This truly supernatural fact also has another explanation. The Romans of that time believed that the participation in suffering, especially the ability to endure it without one's guilt and consciously, which is beyond the capacity of most mortals, made sufferers partakers of the truth and great mysteries. In addition, and in connection with this, faith was not just a concept, but was considered Divine. The goddess faith lived on one's right hand – hence the gesture of an oath by means of a raised right hand – and woe to those who would lose faith at least by lying once.

So, many Roman soldiers turned their love, or, in simple terms, sincere human sympathy, to the Lamb of God, the Great Sufferer, our Lord Jesus. Thus, human Roman virtue was united with Divine Biblical one, and, thanks to the witness of the great martyrs, among whom was St George, the nations of the world (cf. Mt. 28:18) turned their gaze to the Gospel.

## *Saint Menas*

One of the most famous ancient images of the Lord Jesus, a sixth-century Coptic icon kept in the Louvres, depicts a very rare image of the Saviour. Our Lord is depicted next to a saint of the same height as Him, on whose shoulder He Himself, surprisingly humanly, lays His hand in a brotherly manner. This saint is Greatmartyr Menas of Egypt, whose feast the Church celebrates a week after St George, namely on the 24th of November. One of the most venerated saints of Christian antiquity and the Middle Ages, now St Menas is almost completely forgotten in Russian Orthodoxy.

The account of Menas' martyrdom is very brief. According to his Life, he was a high-ranking military dignitary. An Egyptian by birth, he was serving in Phrygia, an interior region of western Asia Minor, when Diocletian's persecution broke out in the Empire. At the same time in Palestine, St George suffered for Christ.

St Menas was already a Christian. He did not want to be a part of this terrible pagan persecution, so he resigned and then withdrew to a remote place to stay in seclusion.



*Saint George, circa 1130*

Since the practice of the early Church and even the holy canons prescribed Christians not to seek martyrdom themselves, and, if possible, move away and even flee in the event of persecution, there was nothing unusual in that. However, soon the saint changed his mind and returned from his hiding place. So, he openly preferred the witness in an open speech and public confession of faith in Christ to resignation and flight.

So, St Menas arrived in the city. At that time in a huge amphitheatre, roughly an analogue of modern sport stadiums, a pagan performance was taking place. Obviously, those in power still remembered the former dignitary well. They didn't know he was a Christian. They offered him an honorable place, from which he could not only see the spectacle, but also be seen by everyone. At this moment, the saint finally

chose the path of public confession. To do this, he decided to use an exclamation.

Yes, exactly an exclamation. Exclamations are solemnly uttered at the end of liturgical prayers. We should understand that the short doxologies (hymns of praise to God) we are used to – ‘Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit’, ‘Christ is Risen’, ‘Amen’, and many others – originally had a very special meaning.

Christians used to suddenly appear in front of pagan crowds, loudly proclaiming the Truth of the Faith in a short form in a loud voice and immediately disappear from the scene. Because to stay after a Christian exclamation meant consciously choosing bloody torments. But, as mentioned above, it was forbidden by the canons of the early Church to provoke persecutors – that is, potential killers of Christians.

St Menas publicly confessed Christ. He was seized and sent to prison. Apparently, the pagans hoped that this very authoritative person, whose witness was very weighty, would change his mind. But St Menas remained true to his beliefs: he was interrogated in detail, tortured, condemned to death and beheaded the following day.

His body was taken by the Christian eyewitnesses of the ‘birthday celebration’ (as Christians then called the days of martyrdom) in the city and secretly transferred to the saint’s birthplace in Egypt, where it rested until anti-Christian persecutions stopped completely. Then the Lord revealed the holiness of the witness of faith by numerous miracles.

The veneration of St Menas soon spread throughout the Empire and even beyond. The saint’s images discovered by archaeologists testify to his veneration even outside his native Egypt and Asia Minor: in Greece, Italy, southern France and even in Ancient Carphage. Pilgrims flocked to the tomb of the saint in Egypt from all over the world.

St Menas’ shrine was near the great Egyptian city of Alexandria. Together



*Saint Menas and Jesus. 6th-century Coptic icon*

with the Tomb of the Apostle Mark on the opposite end of the Capital (they were like two spiritual lungs of the Great City), it was the centre of universal Christian veneration up to the Arab conquest of Egypt in the 640s.

As a sign of the Churchwide canonization, as already mentioned in relation to St George, outside his native Egypt many churches were dedicated to St Menas. One of the first such churches was in Constantinople, founded by Emperor Constantine the Great, who through the prayers of St Menas had earlier been healed from an illness.

In an ancient painting in the Louvres, the Lord Jesus holds His hand

on St Menas’ shoulder in a brotherly manner. In the Holy Spirit, by the power of the grace of martyrdom, God made St Menas His friend. The Church recognised St Menas as a great martyr for his great witness, which became worldwide and universal. The Lord made him His brother, friend, and a protector of people.

### *The Nativity Fast*

On the 28th of November the Church enters the season of the Nativity Fast. It lasts exactly forty days. Forty is a Biblical number. The Na-

tivity Fast begins on the feast of the Apostle Philip. This Fast precedes the celebration of the Nativity.

The ancient tradition of preparing for the feast of the Birth of God Incarnate is still observed both by Christians living in the West and in the East. The period of the preparation for Christmas is called Advent in the West. While in the West Advent is a foretaste of the feast, in the East – that is, in Orthodoxy, this is a real period of fasting and repentance. However, the Nativity Fast differs from Lent. It doesn’t prescribe total abstinence from food and drink before sunset, as prescribed in the Bible, and, like Advent, is a time of anticipation.

The Nativity Fast is the time that advances the Day of Christmas. In the Russian Church the Nativity of Christ is celebrated on the 7th of January according to the Julian calendar (it corresponds to the 25th of December according to the Gregorian calendar), which is still observed by the Orthodox Churches of Russia, Serbia, Georgia, Jerusalem and Poland, and on Holy Mount Athos.

There is an opinion among Western Christians and secular people that Orthodox Christians do not celebrate Christmas but celebrate the Theophany, which they call ‘Epiphany’. This opinion is wrong. The Nativity as a separate feast is not celebrated in the Armenian, Coptic, Syrian and Ethiopian Churches, which in theological language are usually referred to as ‘Oriental’. The Russian and other Local Orthodox Churches view them as a separate denomination, or, rather, a family of Churches. We can say that they celebrate Christmas as part of the Epiphany on the 6th (19th according to the Gregorian calendar) of January.

There is an opinion among modern theologians that the date of the celebration of the Nativity was chosen for a good reason. The fact is that at the time of the Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ the Jews believed that the Righteous One, the Messiah, the



*The Apostle Philip by Anthony van Dyck; circa 1621*

Son of Man, the Saviour of the world, Christ was to die on the day of His Conception.

Scientists have managed to calculate the day on which the Lord was crucified. This is the 25th of March according to the modern calendar. On this very day the Church marks the ‘Conception’ of the Saviour – that is, the Annunciation of the Mother of God. From the Annunciation the date of the Nativity of Christ is counted, along with other festivals of the Christmas cycle: the Circumcision of the Lord and the Candlemas.

We should remember that for early Christians the period preceding Christmas was not that of remem-

brance, but of anticipation. The first Christians eagerly anticipated the return of the Lord. They would say, ‘Jesus is alive and is coming back soon.’ As if He had already announced His return, or, in our language, had already ‘knocked on the door’ or ‘crossed the threshold’. They lived in constant anticipation of the Coming of the Lord.

The knowledge of this significance of the days turns the Nativity Fast into a continuous daily approach, in which the countdown to Christmas, this wonderful ‘liturgical mathematical formula’, acquires a special meaning, dimension, symmetry and beauty.

CINEMA

# 10 FILMS ABOUT THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD

Dozens of films have been made about the decisive battle of World War II. We recall the most iconic of them.

## *Days and Nights* (1944)

The first Soviet movie about the Battle of Stalingrad was filmed in 1944 by Aleksandr Stolper at the Mosfilm Studio. The script is based on the story of the same name by Konstantin Simonov.

The film tells about an episode of the Battle of Stalingrad. The story is focused on the battalion commanded by Captain Saburov (Vladimir Solovyov). The soldiers are ordered to cross to the right bank of the Volga River and join the defenders of Stalingrad. Saburov's soldiers enter into a



fierce battle and knock out the Nazis from three buildings occupied by the Germans. This is how the multi-day defence of the Stalingrad houses begins, which the Soviet soldiers turn into real impregnable fortresses...

## *The Turning Point* (1945)

The film directed by Fridrikh Ermler (pseudonym of Vladimir Breslav) is contemporary to the Great Victory: it was completed in 1945 and released on 29 January 1946. Unlike the previous film, here the director focused not on ordinary soldiers, but on those who commanded the Soviet forces in 1942 during the Battle of Stalingrad. Every day they had to make dozens of difficult decisions,

and sometimes it seemed an impossible task to defend the city. But these people knew that surrendering Stalingrad to the enemy means losing not only this battle, but the entire war. It is worth noting that the film authors glorify the courage and determination of all defenders of the city, but not only of the upper echelon commanders.

It is interesting that the word "Stalingrad" is not pronounced even once during the film, and all the characters simply call it "the city". And only one of the scenes does a trophy map flash, where this toponym appears. In addition, all military leaders have fictitious surnames.

In 1946, Ermler's work was awarded Palme d'Or at the first Cannes International Film Festival.



## *The Battle of Stalingrad* (1949)

A two-part feature film by Vladimir Petrov tells about the decisive battle of the Great Patriotic War. The film shows Stalin, Malenkov, Khrushchev, Voroshilov, US President Franklin Roosevelt, Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill and other famous political figures of that time. However, in 1960, some amendments were introduced to the movie: several scenes with Beria were cut out from the first part.

The film takes place in the summer of 1942. The Nazis threaten to capture Stalingrad, and Stalin orders General Vasilevsky to defend the city at all costs. Malenkov, as a representative of the Headquarters, arrives in Stalingrad and calls on the locals to help the soldiers defend the city. General Rodimtsev comes to the aid of the besieged city with new units.

The film also highlights the famous feat of Sergeant Yakov Pavlov, who, with a group of fighters, heroically defended one of the Stalingrad houses for 58 days, preventing the Germans from approaching it.

The film ends with the complete defeat of the German army and the

capture of Field Marshal Paulus.

## *Soldiers* (1956)

Initially, the film by Aleksandr Ivanov was called *In the trenches of Stalingrad* – after the story of the same name written by Viktor Nekrasov, on the basis of which the film was made. The author himself acted as a screenwriter.

The film *Soldiers* was released in 1956, but after several years of distribution, the film was gathering dust for a long time because of the political views of the author. In the early 1970s, an unspoken

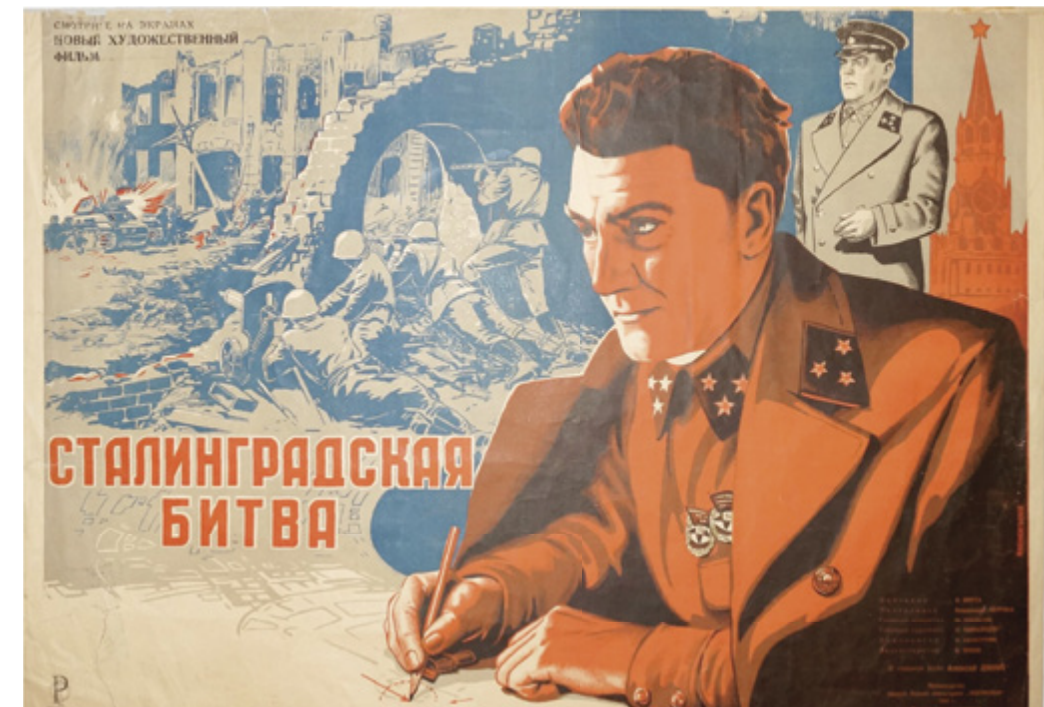
ban was imposed on the publication of Nekrasov's new books, and previously published works were withdrawn from libraries, after which the writer decided to emigrate to Europe. Thus, the film based on his most famous story, was not saved even by



a high award – in 1958, the picture was awarded for Best Director at the All-Union Film Festival.

Innokenty Smoktunovsky, as Lieutenant Farber, played one of his first major roles in the film *Soldiers*. In addition, this film work was the debut for Vsevolod Safonov and Nikolai Pogodin. The ban on distributing *Soldiers* was cancelled only in the 1990s: the film was shown again on 9 May 1991.

The film takes place in July 1942, on the eve of the Battle of Stalingrad. The main characters are three comrades-in-arms: 28-year-old Lieutenant Kerzhentsev, his contact Valega and regimental intelligence officer Ivan Sedykh. Together with a group of refugees, they are heading towards Stalingrad. For several days they find shelter in the house of a veter-



an builder of the Stalingrad Tractor Plant. Here Kerzhentsev meets his daughter Lyusya, and soon love occurs between them... In the book, Lyusya and Yuri talk about Blok, but in 1956 Yesenin, previously banned, was already returned to Soviet readers. Therefore, in the film, Kerzhentsev reads his poems.

### Retribution (1967)

*Retribution* is another work by Aleksandr Stolper on the theme of military Stalingrad. As in the case of the film *Days and Nights*, Konstantin Simonov again wrote the script. The film *Retribution* is based on his novel *Soldiers Are Made, Not Born*. The plot of the movie continues the story told in the film *The Alive and the Dead*, the heroes of which participate in the battles near Moscow.

Soviet viewers first watched *Retribution* in 1967. Many famous actors starred in the film: Kirill Lavrov, Anatoly Papanov, Lyudmila Krylova, Yuri Vizbor and others.



### Hot Snow (1972)

Director Gavriil Egiazarov based his film on Yuri Bondarev's novel of the same name. This novel is rightful-

ly considered one of the most famous and significant works about the Battle of Stalingrad. *Hot Snow* was distributed in 1972. This is the first film about the Battle of Stalingrad shot on color film. In the Soviet Union

alone, almost 23 million people had watched the film.

In the centre of the story is one of the episodes of the Kotelnikovskaya defensive operation, which was carried out on the outskirts of the besieged Stalingrad. December 1942, 330 thousand soldiers of Paulus's 6th Army are encircled in the Stalingrad cauldron. But Hitler intends to break the ring and sends selected tank troops led by Field Marshal Manstein, into battle. The task set before the Red Army was to stop the German advance at all costs.

### They Fought for Their Country (1976)

Sergei Bondarchuk's film *They Fought for Their Country*, based on the famous novel by Mikhail Sholokhov, was first shown in 1976.

A year later, the film was awarded the Vasilyev Brothers State Prize of the RSFSR, and also took first place as the best film work, ac-

ording to a survey by the magazine *Soviet Screen*.

This film was the last in the career of the outstanding Soviet actor Vasily Shukshin. He played the role of Piotr Lopakhin – one of the soldiers of the regiment retreating towards Stalingrad, who is the principal character of the work. However, Shukshin died during the filming, and he was replaced by Vladimir Solovyov in the remaining scenes.

*They Fought for Their Country* is the story of a Soviet rifle regiment that

lost most of its fighters and is now forced to retreat towards Stalingrad.

Over 40 million people had watched Bondarchuk's film during its release.

### Stalingrad (1989)

A series of films about the Second World War occupy an important place in the career of director Yuri Ozerov. Ozerov devoted one of his military epics entirely to Stalingrad



as a decisive battle that marked the beginning of a turning point in the course of the war. The film consists of two parts and completes the cycle of films about the Second World War. The roles in Ozerov's film are played by such wonderful actors as Archil Gomiashvili (as Joseph Stalin), Mikhail Ulyanov (as Marshal Georgy Zhukov), Vladimir Troshin (as Kliment Voroshilov) and many others. Also in the film you can see the young Fyodor Bondarchuk,

who played a small role as a sniper. The film premiered in 1989.

### Life and Fate (2012)

The premiere of the serial feature film *Life and Fate* by Russian film director Sergei Ursulyak took place in 2012. It is based on Vasily Grossman's novel of the same name. Despite the fact that this work was shown not in the cinema, but on television, the series became a significant event in the world of culture. According to the newspaper *Izvestia*, every fifth Muscovite over 18 had watched the first two episodes. And in 2013, Ursulyak's work was nominated for the International Emmy Award for the Best TV Movie or Mini-Series.

The primary figure in the series was played by Sergey Makovetsky, appearing as nuclear physicist Viktor Shtrum. The scientist is creating an atomic bomb in one of the Soviet research institutes, while his relatives remain imprisoned in German concentration camps, and someone was seized and thrown into jail by the NKVD. Persecution also begins on Shtrum, but Stalin himself was interested in his invention. Now his



scientific works can save his life, but the scientist will have to make a difficult choice...

### Stalingrad (2013)

Having played a minor role in the film about *Stalingrad*, Fyodor Bondarchuk took on this theme again, but as a director. 24 years after Ozerov's *Stalingrad*, Bondarchuk took up his own imagination of this heroic path in world history. Bondarchuk's *Stalingrad*, which premiered on 10 October 2013, was the first Russian

film shot in IMAX 3D format. The film grossed \$51.7 million at the box office. Also, *Stalingrad* was selected as the Russian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 86th Academy Awards, although it was not nominated.

Working on this movie, the director decided to show not only the horrors of war, but also love against the backdrop of the burning ruins of *Stalingrad*. The plot features a group of Red Army soldiers who managed to occupy one of the *Stalingrad* houses, and now they are holding the defence there.



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