

Lesson #89 U. S. History Eastern Front 1939-1944

**August 1939 Germany and Soviet Union signed the Non-Aggression Pact
September 1, 1939 Germany invaded Poland**



September 17, 1939 Soviet Union enter Poland



Winter War - Finland

30 November 1939 – Finland invaded – Stalin’s worry of border protection

**Russians lost: 126,000 killed
300,000 injured
Finland lost: 48,243 killed
43,000 injured**

Winter War was over in March it was seen as a failure of the Red Army by West & Germans – Russian came out with reforms – weapon in Spain’s civil war by Franco was a glass bottle filled with kerosene turned into the Molotov Cocktail –

Military turned to the idea of “offensive war” from “defense in depth”

Russian Army soldiers were given uniform to keep and care for – underwear was not and had to be turned in and clean sets were issued – no socks were given – troops had to use strips of cloth called foot warps or footcloths –

Soviet Officers during the Winter War saw camouflage as a sign of cowardice

Troops were watched by political propagandist “politruks” – their job was to foster mutual trust and were obligated to inform on troops (conflict of interest) – political repression was always a factor in Russia – this undermined leadership in every part of Soviet life – leaders dodged limelight and passed responsibility to others “Pass the Buck” – there was fear of responsibility – Purging and denunciations always a factor.

Everything was in short supply – politruks were provided with better everything

Soviet army weakened after *purges* fear of standing out:

To survive:

- 1. Do nothing without orders**
- 2. Initiate no change**
- 3. Make no decisions**

June 1939 The Red Army moved into the Baltic States

May 1940 - NKVD marched 4,000 Polish Officers into Katyn Forest

Soviet Union Plans for war with Germany:

Three Echelon Plan:

- 1st resist and collapse**
- 2nd resist to death**
- 3rd attack - no retreat**

Soviets had better tanks – KV 1's and KV 2's (Kliment Voroshilov-designers name) these tanks were impervious to German tank fire and became the model for the German 1943 Tiger Tank. The T-34 was a lighter and more maneuverable tank and became the war's best field tank. This advantage was hurt because of the lack of spare parts. The Red Army lost more tanks to break downs than to German fire. The cost to the Red Army was 6-1 in tanks combat battles with Germans tanks.

June 22, 1941 @ 3 a.m. "Operation Barbarossa" The Invasion of Russia

Stalin and therefore everyone else refused to believe war with Germany had started – by midday Russia lost 1,200 planes – within days front line generals were arrested and shot for the failure - Molotov address the public on radio.

So far the Germans had defeated the opposition in four months. The myth of German power over powers the reality. The Germans were using 1917 maps of Russia and Hitler did not trust his officers.

3 July 1941 – Stalin spoke to public and used "brothers, sisters and friends" instead of the Party term Comrades.

German War Plans:

Army Group North – Leningrad (St. Petersburg)

Lasted 900 days food short supply – starvation

- 125 grams per day – size of a bar of soap**
- ate paste from wall paper and book bindings**
- ate petroleum jelly and lip stick**
- ate face powder as pancakes**
- ate boiled leather from belts and brief cases**
- fern leaf soup**
- 22 dishes from pig skin**
- pine needles for vitamin "C"**
- tobacco for vitamin "B"**
- 260 convicted for cannibalism**

City was saved by lake road in winter

As the Germans moved into the Soviet Union the mass murder of the Jewish populations did not cause much of an outrage. Jews seen as aliens by many and by others as part of Communist Party. The killings at time were viewed by local populations.

Army Group Center – Moscow

Hitler stop the movement to Moscow to take oil field in the south – then returned to Moscow - Germans 60 miles from Moscow when the rains hit turning the roads into mud. Then on December 5, 1941 Red Army counter attacked pushing Germans back. General Georgy Zhukov had move from Eastern Front to Moscow with fresh troops when a spy provided information that Japan was going to strike south instead of into Russian. NKVD stationed troops around Moscow to deal with defeatist. At Moscow Red Army had white camouflage while Germans still in summer uniforms.

Army Group South – Ukraine and Kiev oil fields

German General Rundstedt

Russian General Zhukov – defeated Japanese at Nomonham

Japanese saw little need for tanks and air ground cover

Cost of the 56,000 troops used 73% or 8,500 killed

Bushido = way of warrior

Iai = sword stroke from scabbard to enemy

Kami = spirit

Shinto = Shrine at Yasukuni – warrior worship – even today

45% of Russian population in German controlled territory

German problems:

Transportation: RR wide gage

One line east and west

Few in south

Only 2 to Moscow

During the campaign of 1941 the Germans had the support of the local populations in Republics outside Russia. Treatment of these quickly ended the support. Another factor to help the Red Army and the war effort was the German treatment of POW's

Soviet Union at War:

High Tech weapons:

Stalin's Organ pipes

Better Tanks T-34

Low Tech weapons:

Dog Bombs – feed under tanks then sent into battle with explosives on back.

Molotov Cocktail – bottle with gasoline

Soviets were under educated and had to use simple code for front line communications

October 1941 Stalin saw terror as ineffective for moral and pushed for persuasion and not violence – “Motherland” started to be used instead of Soviet Union and there was a relaxation on speech and religion

By December 1941 the Red Army had lost 3 million men. Three-man tribunals were set up for deserters and other who weakens the army. Death sentences had to notify Moscow and if no reply in 72 hours the sentence could be carried out.

By February 1942 Red Army had lost over 5 ½ million men – lost rate of 20-1

28 July 1942 Order #227 (Not made public until 1988)

“NOT a Step Back” panic mongers and cowards destroyed on the spot.

Order #270 Those that retreated, gave up, or were captured would be counted as a malicious deserter. Troops were reluctant to leave the front their family members would also be liable to arrest. A corpse not recovered was listed in the deserter column.

Soldiers went into battle yelling “Hoorah” there is some debate on this as it may have been Soviet post war propaganda. The uniforms shortages were fixed by collecting items from the dead. By October 9, 1942 Military decisions now made only by generals.

Medals were issued in large numbers some 11 million by 1945. In comparison the U.S. issued 1,400,409 medals in same time period.

Summer of 1942 Germany went back on the offense and Russian women were recruited for front line duty (shame men again?) 800,000 served at the front.

At Stalingrad – Germans lost an army – 91,545 POW’s

January 1943 Leningrad supplied by Lake Ladoga siege of 900 days

April 1943 Zhukov became Marshall of Soviet Union

July 1943 Battle of Kursk – largest tank battle of war

Germans - 600 tanks in battle and the Soviets had 850 tanks in the battle

The Germans had new Tiger I tanks (1,354 produced during the war) & Panther tanks (5,976 produced during the war) = 900,000

Russians – (produced 1,200 T-34 each month) = 1,300,000

22 June 1944 Operation Bagration

The Soviet drive to push Germans out of Byelorussia. This was as big as D-Day and Red Army had 320 artillery pieces for each mile of the front line.

Red Army did not recognize mental disorders from combat as a legitimate problem. To their idea of war fear and exhaustion required sleep.

“*To Berlog*” = Beast’s Lair – slogan as Red troops moved into west. Looting a major way of re-outfitting gear and getting items plus alcohol not available in Soviet Union. The exposure to western goods (capitalism) would worry Stalin.

August 1944 – Uprising in Warsaw – Soviets did not move to help

Black Market in every part of society from front line to civilian life – crime not reported because the reflection on leadership