

TIMELINE OF WWII ON THE RUSSIAN FRONT

July 31, 1940

Hitler told his assembled military leaders: "The sooner we smash Russia the better. The operation makes sense only if the Russian state is shattered in one blow. A gain of territory is not enough. To have to halt during the winter is questionable business. Therefore it is better to wait [until 1941], but the decision to dispose of Russia is definite."

December 18, 1940

Hitler decided to proceed with the invasion of Russia even though Britain had not been knocked out of the war, and the German armed forces were directed to begin planning for the effort. With incredible

foresight and brilliant timing, the U.S. naval attache in Berlin, Commander A.E. Schrader, on this same day warned Washington that Germany would now attack the Soviet Union and annex the Ukraine and the Caucasus region.

June 18, 1941

The Soviet embassy in London cabled Moscow: "As of now Cripps [the British ambassador to Moscow who had returned to London] is deeply convinced of the inevitability of

armed conflict between Germany and the SSR; which will begin not later than the middle of June. According to Cripps, the Germans have now concentrated 147 divisions



(including air force and service units) along the *Soviet* borders..."

June 23, 1941

German forces in Russia drove across the Bug River, using rubber dinghies until a bridge could be built. XVII Corps made nine miles in the first day of fighting. German Army Group North advanced through Lithuania along the Baltic coast and reached Latvia.

The Russians lost more than 500 planes while destroying only a dozen or so German aircrafts, leading to the suicide of Lieutenant General Kopets, commander of the Russian bomber group.

June 24, 1941

Roosevelt promised aid to the Soviet Union and ordered release of all Russian assets in the U.S.

Vilna and Kaunas in Lithuania fell to the Germans. The Russians introduced their giant Klim Voroshilov tanks into action near Raeseiniai (Raseynyay). Models weighing 43 and 52 tons surprised the Germans who found the KVs nearly unstoppable. One of these Russian tanks took 70 direct hits but none penetrated its armor.

About 2,000 Soviet planes had now been destroyed. In just seventy-two hours the largest air force in the world had been reduced to an ineffectual remnant.

June 29, 1941

The Soviet Union formed an overall defense committee consisting of Stalin, Georgi Malenkov, Marshall Kliment Voroshilov, and Lavrenti Beria. Rumormongering, spreading panic, and cowardice were decreed to be crimes punishable by death.

Russia's Moving Miracle

In an unprecedented relocation of industry, the Soviet Union physically moved its production strength out of the combat areas almost as fast as the German panzers could strike eastward.

Beginning in July 1941 the Russians employed their vast manpower and sorely strained transport system to haul industrial cargoes on the equivalent of million-and-a half rail cars to safer areas stretching to the farther reaches of the Soviet Union. By November a total of 1,523 complete factories had been relocated. Most importantly, 1,360 of these were major facilities directly involved in arms production. The number of plants placed back in operation was relocated to the following places:

Volga area	226
Urals	667
Western Siberia	244
Eastern Siberia	78
Central Asia and Kazakhstan	308

Source: Alexander Werth, Russia at War, 1941-1945.

July 16, 1941

Smolensk fell to the Germans. About 600,000 Russians were trapped. It was a military disaster, but Soviet resistance now began to stiffen for the first time since the invasion. Shortly there - after Hitler ordered a temporary halt in the drive toward Moscow, more



than 200 miles away, and sent panzer units to, help Army Group South in its efforts to defeat the Russian forces in Ukraine under Marshal Semyon Budenny.

July 21, 1941

German aircraft bombed Moscow. Hitler goaded Goehring into ordering the raid by



disparaging the Luftwaffe for its failure to attack the Russian capital. A total of 127 Ju-88s and He-111s dropped 100 tons of high-explosive bombs and 45,000 incendiaries. (Raids of diminishing intensity continued through the

rest of 1941, but German losses were heavy as the Russians assembled the most powerful anti-aircraft defenses of the war.)

July 30, 1941

In a fateful decision, Hitler ordered Field Marshal Fedor von Bock's Army Group Center to halt the drive on Moscow. The German strategy was to concentrate on the Ukraine and the capture of Leningrad.

Harry Hopkins, representing President Roosevelt, arrived in Moscow. The visit proved important because Hopkins concluded at the end of his stay that Russia could somehow survive the German onslaught, a view not widely held by observers who saw the Red Army on the brink of collapse. He reported his optimism to Roosevelt who came to the same conclusion.

August 2, 1941

Washington and Moscow reached agreement on an aid program, which would dramatically increase Russia's ability to replace war weapons lost thus far in the war.

Arctic Convoys to Russia

The first of the convoys to the Arctic ports of the Soviet Union in August 1941 marked the beginning of a four-year effort to supply Russia under the most difficult of conditions. German surface ships, submarines, and aircraft posed constant threats. Appalling weather conditions prevailed much of the time, making navigation and simple existence difficult in the extreme. A total of 1,528 ships sailed in convoys in and out of Arctic ports. Of the 811 going to Archangel and Murmansk, 720 arrived safely. Thirty-three (4.1 percent) were forced to turn back and 58 (7.2 percent) were sunk. The Arctic convoys carried a total of four million tons of equipment and supplies to Russia; of which 300,000 tons were lost (including 5,000 tanks and 7,000 aircraft) en route.

Source: S.W. Roskill, White Ensign: The British Navy at War, 1939-1945.

September 3, 1941

The Germans used poison gas for the “extermination” of prisoners at Auschwitz, apparently the first case of this particular form of Nazi criminality. Russian POW’s were the first victims.

All Russian men born in 1922 were called up for military service and all previous deferments were canceled.

September 8, 1941

German tank columns completed the land encirclement of Leningrad by seizing Petrokrepost (Schlusselburg).

September 15, 1941

Leningrad came under full siege by German Army Group North.

September 16, 1941

In the single greatest capitulation of the war, more than half a million Russians in the area of Kiev surrendered to the Germans. (The precise figure is disputed. German records put the number at 665,000.

The Russians admitted to 527,000 men captured and wounded during the previous weeks’ fighting. By Moscow’s account a total of 677,085 Red Army troops were committed on the entire southwest front. However, large numbers of the “People’s Army,” an inferior militia type force pressed into service in desperation, were involved in the Kiev fighting, and together with armed civilians, lend credence to the higher German figure.) Collapse of the Kiev front represented the nadir of the war for the Russians.

General Keitel responded to growing Russian partisan warfare by ordering the execution of as many as 100 hostages for every German soldier killed by the civilian irregulars.

September 19, 1941

Kiev fell to the Germans. The battle for the city was disastrous to the Russians who suffered 350,000 casualties and lost 3,718 guns and 884 armored vehicles. Five armies were eliminated. Stalin had ordered a “stand and die” defense.

September 22, 1941

German troops cut off Leningrad from the rest of the Soviet Union by reaching the southern shore of Lake Ladoga.

September 28-29, 1941

SS troops massacred nearly 34,000 Jews from the Kiev area in the nearby Babi Yar ravine. In its official report, Einsatzgruppe C related:



“The Jewish population was invited by poster to present themselves for resettle

ment. Although initially we had only counted on 5,000 - 6,000 Jews reporting more than 30,000 Jews appeared; by a remark



ably efficient piece of organization they were led to believe in the resettlement story until shortly before their execution.” It had been suggested that the Jews were killed in reprisal for the bombing of a Kiev hotel used as a German headquarters, but the SS had been systematically killing Jews in Russia in the wake of the advancing Wehrmacht. Babi Yar stands as perhaps the most horrible single example of vengeful genocide.

October 14, 1941

All resistance ended in the Vyazma pocket, between Smolensk and Moscow. Panzer units captured Kalinin, 93 miles northwest of Moscow, cut the Moscow-Leningrad rail line, and captured a bridge intact across the Volga River. Advance units reached a point 60 miles from Moscow.

October 16, 1941

The Soviet government left Moscow for Kuibyshev, 525 miles to the east. Stalin was the only high official who remained in Moscow. “A condition approaching panic developed in the city when it was learned that Lenin’s coffin had been removed from Red Square. Odessa fell to the Germans.

Russia suffered another military disaster as the battles of Bryansk and Vyazma ended with overwhelming German victories. Nine armies (up to eighty divisions) were destroyed. The Germans took 663,000 prisoners and knocked out or captured 1,242 tanks and 5,412 artillery pieces.

More than half a million children, women, and old men working day and night completed the defenses around Moscow, 60 miles of antitank ditches, 5,000 miles of troop trenches, and 177 miles of barbed wire.

October 21, 1941

General Georgi Zhukov was named commander of all Russian forces defending Moscow.

October 30, 1941

Roosevelt offered the Soviet Union a one billion dollar interest-free loan for the purchase of Lend-Lease equipment. Repayment was to begin 5 years after the end of the war and be completed in ten years. German Army Group



Center launched an assault on Moscow from the north-west. The closest German forces were concentrated within 50 miles of the Russian capital.

December 3, 1941

German units — some suffering 40 percent frostbite casualties — began pulling back from the suburbs of Moscow. High winds from the Arctic coupled with minus 38 degree centigrade temperatures reduced some battalions to fewer than 100 men.

December 5, 1941

Hitler ordered a halt to German offensive operations aimed at Moscow. Of the 3,500,000 men committed to Russia by the Axis, 750,000 were killed, wounded, or missing by this date.

December 6, 1941

Russian forces under General Zhukov began their counteroffensive from Moscow. Three fresh Soviet armies (made up of more than a million men) were thrown against the now exhausted and overextended German forces, which were caught by surprise. Zhukov's strategy was the salvation of Moscow.

January 5, 1942

Stalin directed Russian units to launch an all-out offensive along the entire front.

January 9, 1942

Russian forces cracked German defenses and reentered Smolensk Province.

February 26, 1942

Soviet leaders forcibly pressed the British and Americans to launch a "second front" against Germany

March 1942

Germany began collecting church bells to be melted down. The bronze and copper were needed for airplane engine production. By now, all one and two pfennig copper coins had been collected. Copper, chromium, tungsten, and vanadium were the metals in shortest supply.

May 19, 1942

German troops completed capture of the Kerch Peninsula in the Crimea, taking 100,000 Russian prisoners.

May 26, 1942

The Soviet Union and Britain signed a 20-year mutual aid agreement. Foreign Minister Molotov, who was in London, signed the pact for the Soviet Union. Molotov pressed for a second front. Churchill would not commit Britain to such an effort until it was “sound and sensible,” adding, “Wars are not won by unsuccessful operations.”

June 18, 1942

Churchill arrived in the U.S. for conferences with Roosevelt with emphasis on opening a second front.

German forces — after 12 days of intense fighting — knocked out all but one of the 13 fortifications defending Sevastopol.

July 17, 1942

Churchill informed Stalin the British would no longer sail convoys along the northern route to Murmansk and Archangel because of heavy losses suffered by PQ-17. Churchill told the Soviet leader a continuation of the shipping effort “would bring no benefit to you and would only involve dear loss to the common cause.” (Stalin protested the cancellation of the shipping.)

August 5, 1942

Russian forces suffered heavy losses near Stalingrad. Kotelnikovo was occupied. German troops moved across the Kuban River.

August 23, 1942

The Russians launched a major offensive south of Lake Ladoga.

On the Stalingrad front, German units reached the Volga River; 200 Luftwaffe planes bombed Stalingrad.

The town of Elbrus on the east coast of the Black Sea fell to the Germans.

August 26, 1942

The Battle of Stalingrad intensified with an estimated million German troops attacking the Russian defenders. The Red Army attempted to ease the pressures on Stalingrad by launching diversionary attacks in the areas of the Rzhev and Vyasma.

August 30, 1942

German and Russian forces continued battling in a costly stalemate at Stalingrad. Soviet planes bombed Berlin, Danzig, Stettin and Königsberg.





August 31, 1942

Soviet airplanes launched a series of small raids during the month on Budapest, Bucharest and Vienna.

They were more for psychological than military value.

September 5, 1942

German troops entered Novorossiysk on the Black Sea, which had

served as the base of the Soviet fleet in those waters since the fall of Sevastopol. Russian planes bombed Budapest, Vienna and Breslau.

September 6, 1942

Violent fighting continued at Stalingrad. German troops completed the occupation of the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk.

October 1942

The German offensive in Russia bogged down during this month. Its forces were suffering extremely heavy casualties and fuel shortages were becoming critical. The Red Army was also fighting valiantly at Stalingrad and around the vital Grozny oil fields, but suffering incredible casualties.

October 6, 1942

The city of Malgobek, in the oil-producing region of the Soviet Union, fell to the Germans. The Beginnings of Lend-Lease from the United States

The U.S. signed the second protocol with the Soviet Union, which formalized a massive aid program to the Russians, consisting of military equipment, munitions, and raw materials.

Through July 1, 1943, the Russians were to receive 3.3 million tons of supplies.

November 6, 1942

Stalin again deplored the lack of a second front. He said the Russians were facing 240 Axis divisions (179 German, 22 Rumanian, 14 Finnish, 13 Hungarian, 10 Italian, one Slovak and one Spanish) while the Allied forces were facing only 15 German and Italian divisions in North Africa.

November 8, 1942

Hitler stated he still intended German forces to take Stalingrad despite the staggering losses. He said the city was of immense strategic value: ...there, 30 million tons of traffic (on the Volga) can be cut off, including 9 million of oil shipments. There, all the wheat pours in from those enormous territories of the Ukraine, of the Kuban territory, there to be transported to the north. From there, manganese ore was shipped. A gigantic terminal was there.

November 19, 1942

Russian forces, with relief of the Stalingrad defenders as the immediate objective, launched the winter offensive. With the temperature minus 30 degrees centigrad artillery boomed across the Don front for nearly eight hours before 60 Red Army divisions went on



the attack. The Rumanian Third and Fourth armies bore the brunt of the assault and soon retreated in full flight.

Only the intervention of the German 22nd Panzer Division saved the Rumanians from annihilation.

November 20, 1942

Soviet Forces forged through German positions south of Stalingrad.

November 21, 1942

Soviet forces scored major breakthroughs in their counteroffensive in the Stalingrad area. The German Sixth Army (270,000 men) was surrounded as Red Army units from the Don and Stalingrad fronts linked up at Kalach, 50 miles west of Stalingrad.

November 23, 1942

Hitler issued orders for the German forces at Stalingrad to dig in and await relief.

January 3, 1943

Red Army troops pursued the retreating German armies northward from the Caucasus, occupying Mozdok and Malgobek.

January 5, 1943

Morozovsk, the major German air base supplying Stalingrad, fell to the Russians.

January 10, 1943

Paulus refused to surrender, and Red Army forces launched the final offensive at Stalingrad, with seven armies of 281,000 men closing the ring around the trapped Germans.

January 11, 1943

Russian troops occupied large chunks of territory in the Caucasus evacuated by the Germans.

An offensive was launched by the Russians to relieve Leningrad. It was concentrated against positions held by the Hungarian Second Army and Italian and Rumanian forces.

January 18, 1943

Moscow announced that the 900-day siege of Leningrad had been lifted. A corridor ten miles wide was opened south of Lake Ladoga.

Leningrad's population was now dying at the rate of 20,000 a day. Had the city not been relieved, the rest of the winter "would have been cataclysmic beyond imagination.

January 19, 1943

Novgorod, south of Leningrad, was occupied by the Russian Fiftyninth Army, forcing the German Army Group North to fall back or risk entrapment east of Lake Peipus (Chudskoye) Red Army forces pressed forward in massive waves along the central and southern fronts. Valuyki and Kamensk were liberated.

January 20, 1943

With the German Sixth Army now destroyed or about to be captured, Russian forces began to move out from the Stalingrad front to the mouth of the Donets River.

February 15, 1943

Contrary to Hitler's orders to stand and fight, the II SS Panzer Corps withdrew from Kharkov.

February 16, 1943

The Russian Fortieth and Third Tank armies reoccupied Kharkov. Hitler equated the loss of Kharkov to Stalingrad and vowed to retake Russia's fourth largest city. The Russians had now advanced 375 miles west of Stalingrad

**March 9, 1943**

The Russian people were told for the first time, in a radio broadcast, that the Soviet Union was receiving supplies from Britain and the U.S.

SS panzer corps units reached the western outskirts of Kharkov.

March 13, 1943

The first of two attempts to assassinate Hitler by his own generals failed.

March 14, 1943

Two German SS divisions recaptured Kharkov. Russian resistance west of the Donets River collapsed.

March 20, 1943

The second attempt to kill Hitler failed as the perpetrators were themselves killed.

March 26, 1943

In one of the major misreading of history Mussolini wrote to Hitler that Russia was so weakened after Stalingrad ...cannot hope at any rate for a long time to come, to constitute a serious menace.



April 7, 1943

Mussolini met with Hitler at Klessheim Castle near Salzburg. Mussolini had been urged by aides to press Hitler to end the war in Russia.

The subject never was raised. Hitler did all of the talking about a new offensive in Russia.

June 21, 1943

Himmler ordered the liquidation of Jewish Ghettos in German-occupied Russia. Simultaneously, German execution teams began carrying out the murder of Jews in the Lvov ghetto.

Through the 27th, 20,000 Jews were murdered.

July 5, 1943

German forces launched a major offensive against the Kursk salient which turned out to be their last such effort on the central front. The battle was decisive since the initiative passed to the Russians. Three German armies were involved in the push from Orel and Belgorod.

They met with some success in the south at first but were quickly blocked by the strength and depth of the Russian defenses. The Soviets managed to establish a comfortable superiority of numbers in armor and manpower. Kursk, like Stalingrad, was a major turning point in the Russian War.

July 7, 1943

Russian forces began counterattacking at Kursk.

July 12, 1943

Russian troops began their massive counteroffensive around the Kursk salient. The largest tank battle in history was fought near the village of Prochorovka. The Germans alone lost more than 400 tanks.

The two sides in this vicious clash of armor deployed about 3,000 tanks.

July 13, 1943

Hitler ordered a halt to German offensive operations around Kursk and began pulling troops out for redeployment to Italy because of the invasion of Sicily.

July 25, 1943

Mussolini was overthrown.

August 3, 1943

Red Army forces broadened their offensive as they opened a drive toward Kharkov in the northern Ukraine and closed in on Orel from three sides.

August 5, 1943

The Soviets captured Orel and Belgorod.

The German Second Panzer Arm was almost destroyed at Orel. Hitler ordered a withdrawal to the Desna River in order to free more troops for redeployment to Italy.

**August 23, 1943**

Kharkov was re-occupied for the second time by the Russians.

September 7, 1943

Berlin announced that Stalino (Donetsk) had been abandoned.

September 8, 1943

Hitler belatedly approved a withdrawal from the Ukraine. The decimated German forces were permitted to fall back to the Dnepr River, the final natural buffer before the Carpathian Mountains.

September 16, 1943

Red Army troops recaptured Novorossiysk and other cities and towns along a broad front. The Germans abandoned Bryansk.

September 17, 1943

The Red Army occupied Bryansk.

September 25, 1943

Smolensk and Roslavl were reoccupied by the Russians.

October 20, 1943

Britain, Russia and the U.S. agreed to establish a U.N. commission to investigate war crimes, establishing the basis for the Nuremberg war crimes trials.

November 6, 1943

Russian forces recaptured Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, after the Germans withdrew. Under the Germans occupation since September 19, 1941, the third largest city in the Soviet Union was almost totally ruined during the fighting.

November 28 - December 1, 1943

Stalin met for the first time with Churchill and Roosevelt at the Tehran Conference. It was agreed that the invasion of France (Operation OVER-LORD and ANVIL) would receive highest U.S. and British priority.

Stalin restated Russia's intention to fight against Japan once Germany surrendered.

December 2, 1943

Hitler called on younger Germans to enlist in the military, with the minimum age eventually reduced to 15 years.

December 29, 1943



The Russian first Ukrainian Front under Marshal Vatutin, began a spectacular break through along a 185-mile front west of Kiev. Twenty-two German divisions were hurled back toward the Polish

border.

January 11, 1944

Moscow announced that the Soviet-Polish border established by the 1939 Russian-German partition would remain.

Russia thus reclaimed permanent possession of the western Ukraine and western Byelorussia.

February 17, 1944

Soviet forces completed the liquidation of ten German divisions trapped in the Ukraine. Moscow announced that 55,000 Germans were killed and 18,200 were taken prisoner in the Kanyev pocket.

April 8, 1944

Russia launched its final drive to oust the Germans from the Crimea. Red Army troops on the central front were approaching the Czech border

Stalin was told the date of the Normandy invasion. Almost simultaneously, the Japanese told the Soviets they were willing to mediate a peace between Germany and Russia. The initiative was Tokyo's not Berlin's, and the Russians rejected the offer.

April 10, 1944

Soviet forces recaptured the Black Seaport of Odessa. It had been under German control since October 1941.

May 8, 1944

Eisenhower designated D-Day, the cross-Channel invasion, as June 5th. It had originally been set for an unspecified day in May.

May 9, 1944

Soviet forces recaptured Sevastopol after a 24-day siege.

May 12, 1944

The last German troops were evacuated from the Crimea.

June 18, 1944

Russian forces breached the Mannerheim line in Finland.

July 3, 1944

Minsk was recaptured by the Russians, which Moscow heralded as one of the decisive victories of the war.

July 20, 1944

The third attempt to kill Hitler fails. The Red Army reaches the Bug River on a 40-mile front.

July 24, 1944

Russian troops reach Maidanek concentration camp, occupying Lublin.

July 25, 1944

Russian forces advanced to the Vistula River east of Radom. Narva in Estonia was captured.

August 17, 1944

Red Army units reached the East Prussian border along the Sesupe River, bringing the ground war to prewar

German soil for the first time. The Germans launched a counterattack in Lithuania to reopen lines to their Baltic forces.

August 19, 1944

Russian forces launched their major offensive to clear the Balkans.

August 20, 1944

Red Army troops crossed the Danube into Rumania. Nearly a million Red Army troops were involved.

August 31, 1944

Since D-Day, German losses had been staggering. In a three-month period total losses on the eastern and western fronts were 1.2 million dead, wounded and missing. Fifty divisions were destroyed in the east and 28 in the west. In addition, 230,000 German troops were surrounded in pockets in France. Together with the defection of two Rumanian



armies and the Bulgarians to the Russians, the German high command faced its bleakest outlook of the war. Berlin was further vexed by the presence of 55 Soviet divisions advancing from the east.

September 5, 1944

Moscow broadcasts called on Poles in Warsaw to stage an uprising: Fight the Germans. No doubt Warsaw already hears the guns of the battle, which is soon to bring her liberation, joins battle with the Germans, this time for the decisive action.

October 1, 1944

Hungarian officials secretly arrived in Moscow to conclude an armistice

October 2, 1944



Germans crushed the Warsaw uprising. An estimated quarter million Poles were killed in two months of fighting. Poles insisted that the Russians intentionally delayed their advance to Warsaw so the Germans could annihilate the Anti-

Communist Polish Home Army, which they did.

October 3, 1944

German forces seized control of communications facilities in Hungary after learning of the secret peace talks in Moscow.

October 9 - 18, 1944

The Moscow conference of the three powers, with Churchill, Stalin and Ambassador Averil Harriman, (representing Roosevelt) was convened to consider Poland and the Balkans. No progress was made in regard to Poland but interests were established, with Britain to have a 100 percent interest in Greece, the Russians and Britain to have a 50 percent interest each in Yugoslavia, and the Russians with 75 or 80 percent interest in Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary.

October 13, 1944

Riga, the Latvian capital, was captured by Soviet troops, trapping a large German force in western Latvia.

October 20, 1944

Russian troops and Tito's Yugoslav army liberated Belgrade and Dubrovnik.

October 28, 1944

Russia and Bulgaria signed a formal armistice agreement in Moscow. The Bulgarian military was placed under Soviet control.

German troops began evacuating Albania.

Russian forces advanced to within 40 miles of Budapest.



Eisenhower issued orders for Allied troops to cross the Rhine and drive into the German heartland.

November 26, 1944

Himmler ordered the destruction of the crematoria at Auschwitz.

December 10, 1944

France and Russia signed a 20-year mutual

assistance pact in Moscow.

December 15, 1944

Russian troops crossed into Czechoslovakia at Sahy on the Ipel River.

December 16, 1944

In a carefully coordinated counteroffensive the Germans launched a massive attack on the U.S. First and Ninth armies along a 40 mile front in the Ardennes Forest of Luxembourg. It became famous as the Battle of the Bulge. There were about 300,000 German soldiers in the German Fifth and Sixth Panzer armies in a mighty blow, which caught the Americans by surprise. German paratroopers were landed behind the American lines, causing havoc and breaking communications. The Germans eventually retook Antwerp.

December 27, 1944

Budapest was totally blocked as Russian forces sealed the city on all sides.

Fighting broke out in the eastern and western suburbs.

January 4, 1945

German troops attempted to fight their way out of Budapest but failed.

January 12, 1945

Russian forces under Zhukov, and Marshal Ivan Konev, launched their greatest offensive of the war from Poland and East Prussia.

A total of 1,350,000 Russians went into action attacking a German force one-sixth their size. Stalin advanced the start of the offensive at the request of Churchill to relieve the pressure on the western front. The central eastern front was vulnerable, with the Germans isolated in the north in Latvia and in southern Hungary, incapable of being moved to the area of the major advance.

January 15, 1945

Russian forces in Poland wheeled south to the Carpathians southwest of Krakow, capturing Cielce. Hitler refused Army group Center permission to withdraw from the Warsaw area. Russian forces capture Radom in Poland.

Hitler moved his headquarters in East Prussia to the bunker under the Reich Chancellery in Berlin.

There he spent the remainder of his life. Hitler pulled the Sixth Panzer Army out of the western front and sent it to Hungary.

January 17, 1945

Warsaw was taken by forces of the First Belorussian Front under Marshal Zhukov and units of the Lublin Polish army. Units of Ukrainian front occupied Czestochowa.

January 18, 1945

Russian forces advanced rapidly toward German Silesia. Modlin in Poland was captured. All German forces were cleared from the east side of the Danube in Budapest. The Communist Lublin Committee arrived in Warsaw to assume control over liberated Poland.

January 20, 1945

East Prussia was almost encircled by Red Army forces advancing from the south and east. Tilsit fell.

Trapped Germans tried to break out of Budapest toward the Danube, Roosevelt inaugurated for his fourth term.

January 26, 1945

Auschwitz/Birkenau death camp was liberated by the Russian armed forces. Only 2819 inmates were there to be liberated. Red Army units reached a point 120 miles from Berlin.



U.S. Third Army units reached the border between Germany and Luxembourg.

January 30, 1945

Hitler marked the 12th anniversary of his accession to power in a speech still filled with defiance. It was his last radio broadcast.

Russian forces reached a point 70 miles from Berlin.

February 4-9, 1945

In the last international war conference in which Roosevelt and Churchill would participate, the U.S. and British leaders met with Stalin at Yalta and agreed on the next phase of the war. Believing Germany would collapse around July 1, they planned a program to weaken Japan before actually invading the home islands. As a reward for its forthcoming

entry into the war against Japan, Russia was to receive parts of Manchuria. (This was not disclosed to China until later).

February 13, 1945

Budapest fell after a 45-day fight. About 35,000

Germans were captured.

Breslau's 150,000 garrison was threatened by encirclement. Summary courts were established by Germany in the combat area for Wehrmacht and Waffen SS troops, with death sentences to be carried out normally by firing squad, but in the case of particularly base scoundrels, by hanging.

February 22, 1945

Operation CLARION was launched to cut transportation lines and isolate the Western Front through massive bombing. The raids are credited with marking the end of the large-scale mobility of the German armed forces. General Eisenhower announced that the Allies were now holding 900,000 German prisoners.

February 23, 1945

Poznan was taken by the Russians after a month long siege. A German force of 23,000 men surrendered. Red Army forces fought their way into Breslau from the south.

March 13, 1945

The U.S. Congress voted 354-28 to extend the Lend-Lease act for one more year, but with the restriction that it not be used for postwar relief, rehabilitation or reconstruction.

March 20, 1945

Hitler makes his last public appearance, decorating children who had distinguished themselves in combat.

March 20, 1945

The Allied forces were within 20 miles of Berlin. Russian troops were 60 miles from Vienna.



Sixteen prominent anti-Communist Poles were invited to a conference with Russian officials on political matters. When they arrived they were arrested and imprisoned in Moscow ending all vestiges of political opposition in Poland.

March 28, 1945

Gdynia was occupied in the north.



Eisenhower confirmed plans for the final campaign to knock Germany out of the war, choosing Leipzig instead of Berlin as the ultimate objective. Russia was to occupy the German capital. The Decision had wide-ranging

implications. Churchill futilely tried to change the thrust of the final Allied push, continuing to express his concern over Russian political gains after their military conquests.

April 4, 1945

Hungary was cleared of all German troops, who retreated into Yugoslavia. Bratislava in Slovakia fell. Red army troops moved westward along the Polish Czech border toward the Moravian Gap.

The U.S. 4th Armored Division liberated the Ohrdruf concentration camp. Patton vomited at the sight of the struggling, dying inmates who had been shot by retreating Nazis, but still lived.

April, 1945

Moscow denounced the Russian-Japanese five-year neutrality pact signed on April 13, 1941.

April 11, 1945

Allied forces occupied Coburg. Survivors of the Buchenwald concentration camp were liberated. 5,000 French, 3,500 Poles, and Polish Jews, 2,200 Germans, 2,000 Russians, 2,000 Czechs, 2,000 Ukrainians,

600 Yugoslavs, 400 Dutch, 500 Austrians, 200 Italians, 200 Spaniards and 300 others.

American Seventh Army forces drove into Bavaria. The U.S. Ninth Army units reached the Elbe near Magdeburg. More than 300,000 Germans were taken prisoner during the past two weeks of fighting.

April 12, 1945

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States, died at his winter White House in Warm Springs, Georgia. Harry S Truman became the 33rd President.

U.S. 2nd and 5th Armored Division forces reached the Elbe at Wittenberge, Werben and Sandau. Units established a small bridgehead on the east side of the river.

April 13, 1945

Russian troops of the Second and the Third Ukrainian fronts completed the capture of Vienna.

April 16, 1945

Hitler ordered that he who gives the order to retreat is to be shot on the spot. Since the first of the month Allied forces on the western front captured 755,573 German troops.

A huge Russian force began its drive for Berlin along the Oder and Neisse Rivers, attacking the German Ninth and Fourth Panzer Armies.

Russian and RAF fighter planes joined forces from the east and the west for the first time while attacking a train near Dresden.

April 18, 1945

All resistance in the Ruhr pocket ended with the surrender of 325,000 German troops under the command of Field Marshal Model. Except for the Russian surrender around Kiev in September of 1941, this was the single largest capitulation of the war.

April 22, 1945

Hitler refused to leave Berlin although its encirclement was imminent. Units of the First White Russian Front continued to advance on the eastern suburbs.

April 23, 1945

Hitler stripped Goehring of authority because of his apparent assumption of power. Fighting developed in Berlin proper with the Russians penetrating from the east and south. British

troops entered Bremen.

April 23-24, 1945

SS Chief Himmler offered to surrender to Britain and the U.S. but not the Soviet Union. The offer was made through Count Bernadotte.

April 24, 1945

Hitler ordered Goehring arrested.

Elements of the First Ukrainian front linked up inside Berlin. Potsdam was occupied.

April 25, 1945

U.S. 69th Division and Russian 59th Guards Division patrols made contact on the Elbe near Torgau, the first linkup of ground forces from east and west. Eisenhower ordered Allied forces not to advance beyond the Elbe and Mulde rivers. Berlin was completely surrounded by the Russians.

April 27, 1945

Count Bernadotte informed Himmler that the U.S. and Britain would not accept German armistice talks without the Russians.

Soviet troops controlled three fourths of Berlin.

Hitler sent his last message to Mussolini: the struggle for our survival is at its height.

Employing great masses and materials, Bolshevism and the armies of Jewry allied themselves to join their malignant forces in Europe in order to precipitate chaos in our continent.

April 29, 1945

Hitler designated Donitz as his successor and was married to Eva Braun in his Berlin bunker. The Reich Chancellery came under Russian artillery fire.

The U.S. Seventh Army units reached Munich.

April 30, 1945



Hitler committed suicide. Dressed in a new Nazi uniform and modestly bemedaled, Hitler took a cyanide capsule while seated in the bunker. So ended the Thousand Year Reich. His new wife, Eva Braun, also took poison. Their bodies were doused in gasoline and

burned. Only the Russians saw their remains and it is still not known what became of the final evidence

of Hitler's death, until this exhibit.

Goebbels and his wife killed themselves and their six children at the same time. Most of the world rejoiced at the news of Hitler's death, but it was by no means a universal feeling. In neutral Portugal, for example, the government ordered two days of national mourning and flags flew at half-staff.

The U.S. First Army units hooked up with the Russian troops at Eilenburg. Munich was occupied. More than 110,000 Allied POWs were liberated. Dauchau concentration camp was liberated and 32,000 prisoners freed.

May 2, 1945

Berlin was under complete Russian control.



May 5, 1945
German representatives arrived at Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), and a school building in Reims, to discuss final surrender terms.

Prague resistance forces battled the Germans inside the city. Hans Frank, governor general of German occupied Poland, was taken prisoner by the U.S. troops.

The U.S. Third Army occupied Linz in Austria.

May 6, 1945

The SS-sponsored Russian army of POWs under General Vlasov joined the fight against the Germans for Prague. American tanks penetrated to the suburbs. The Soviets requested the U.S. Third Army to withdraw to this point, which it did, falling back 60 miles from Prague. German Army Group G unconditionally surrendered, to the U.S. Sixth Army Group.



May 7, 1945

The Czechs rejected the Vlasov army. Vlasov fled Prague to reach U.S. lines.

May 8, 1945 - V-E Day

The war in Europe was declared over. Churchill and Truman

proclaimed V-E Day. All resistance ended in Latvia and the Eighteenth Armies surrendered along the Leningrad front.

Goehring surrendered near Fischhorn in Austria.

May 9, 1945

All fighting officially ended in Europe. The surrender was ratified by a ceremony in Berlin with Zhukov and Keitel signing the document.

Russian forces under Marshal Konev occupied Prague, the last of the European capitals to be liberated.

May 10, 1945

The U.S. announced that all 3.1 million American troops would be withdrawn from Europe.

May 21, 1945

Himmler was arrested in Bermervorde by a British patrol. He committed suicide on May 23, 1945 swallowing poison from a hidden vial while in British custody at Luneburg. Senior members of the German High Command were imprisoned at Flensburg.

July 16 - August 2, 1945

Leaders of the Big Three met Potsdam to draw up the surrender terms for Japanese surrender, marked the beginning of the Cold War, with suspicion and mistrust manifesting them.

November 14, 1945

The War Crimes Tribunal at Nuremberg commenced; it lasted for 216 days. The writing and judgment was accomplished in four weeks.

For the Soviet peoples the conflict lasted 1,418 days and nights.

Over 27 million Soviet people died in this war. The Soviet economy was devastated. The German Forces burned 1710 cities and towns completely or partially. More than 70,000 villages, six million buildings and houses and around 25 million people were left without housing.

Around 32,000 large and medium factories were destroyed. Over 65,000 km of railroad tracts was put out of commission. Over 98,000 collective farms, 1878 state farms, 2890 agriculture equipment parks were also destroyed.

This time line was edited from the valuable World War II Almanac 1931-1945; A Political and Military Record, by Robert Goralski. This summary is not intended to be a comprehensive record of the entire history of events of World War II.



Pictures for this article were selected from the Russian State Archives.