

# Defense of the Baltics - WWII

COL Chris Wilbeck

Air War College

Department of Leadership & Warfighting

## WW2 Bloodiest Battles

1. Battle of Stalingrad (1,250,000 – 1,798,619 casualties)
2. Battle of Berlin (1,298,75 casualties)
3. Battle of Moscow (1,000,000 casualties)
- 4. Battle of Narva (550,000 casualties)**
5. Battle of France (469,000 casualties)
6. Battle of Luzon (332,330 – 345,330 casualties)
7. Second Battle of Kharkov (300,000 casualties)
8. Battle of Kursk (257,125 – 388,000 casualties)
9. Battle of the Bulge (186,369 casualties)
10. Battle of Monte Cassino (185,000 casualties)

Source: "The Internet" so it must be accurate



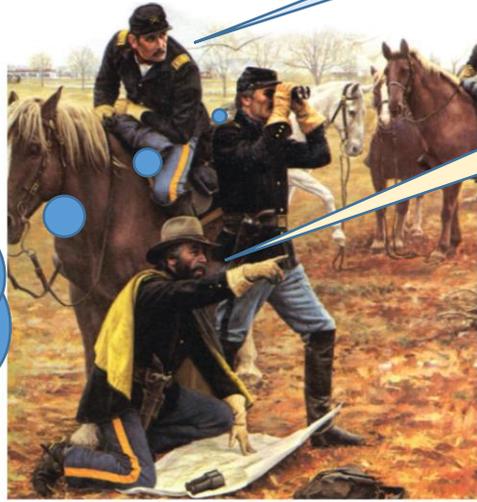
# Purpose of a Staff Ride

UNITED STATES ARMY CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

## THE STAFF RIDE

by

William G. Robertson



Where are we?

We're at the lecture

That's only part of the preliminary study!

A staff ride consists of (1) systematic preliminary study of a selected campaign (**lecture**, individual study, group discussion), (2) an extensive visit to the actual sites associated with that campaign, and (3) an opportunity to integrate the lessons derived from each campaign.

Figure out what happened – figure out why and how events occurred – figure out what the cause and effect mean

***“To be successful, officers must become actively involved in the exercise. They must not lapse into passive spectators”***

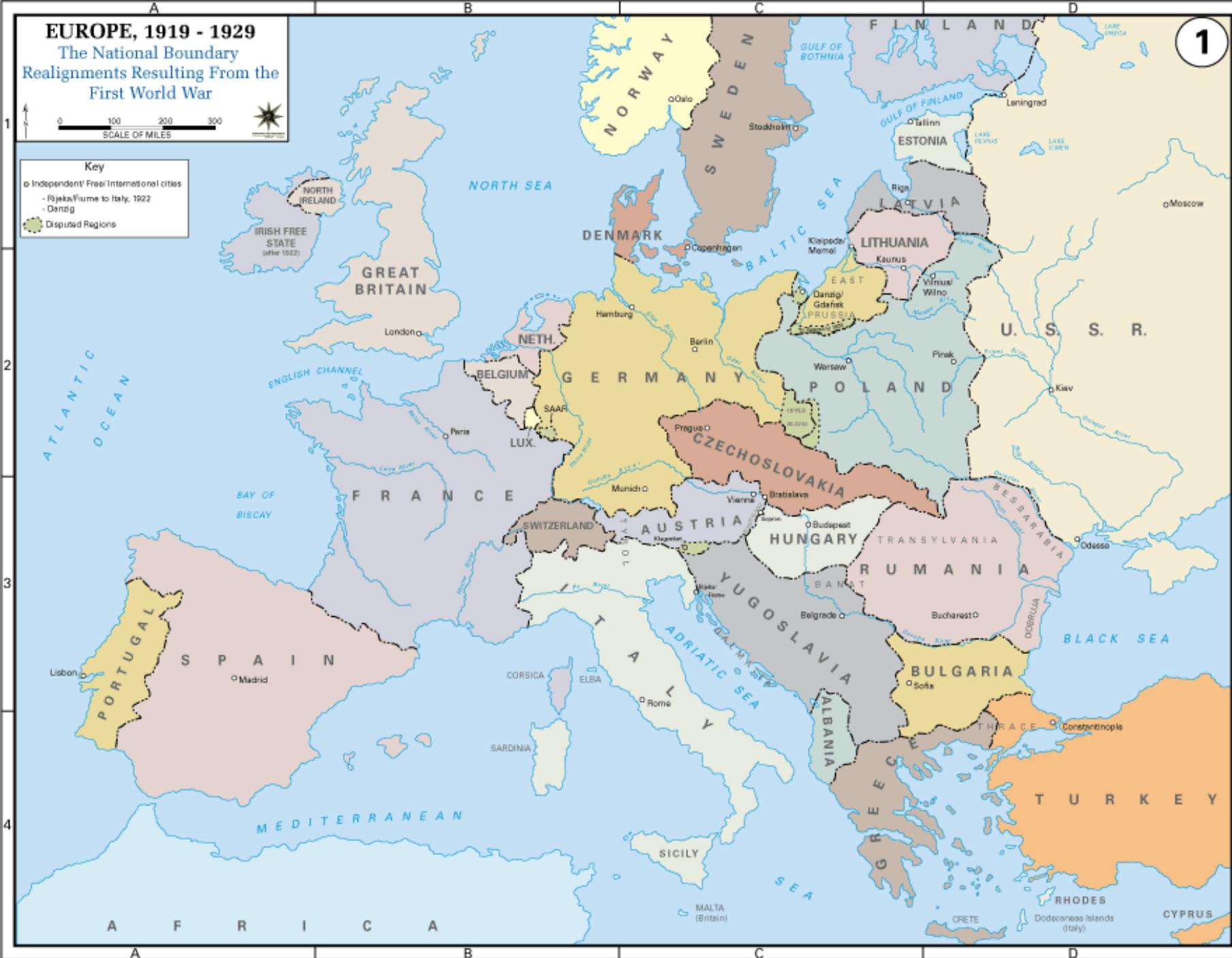
- To expose officers to the **dynamics of battle**, especially those factors which interact to produce victory and defeat
- To expose officers to the **“face of battle,”** the timeless human dimensions of warfare
- To provide case studies in the **operational art**
- To provide case studies in **combined arms operations and joint operations**
- To provide case studies in the **relationship between technology and doctrine**
- To provide case studies in **leadership**, at any level.
- To provide case studies in **unit cohesion**
- To provide case studies in how logistical considerations affect operations
- To show how the **effects of terrain** upon plans and their implementation
- To provide an **analytical framework for the systematic study of campaigns and battles**
- To encourage officers to study their profession through the use of military history

# Terrain Appreciation

1242 – 1700 – 1944 – Today?

- Terrain impacts operations significantly around Narva. The elevation above sea level rarely rises above 100 meters in the area and the land is cut by numerous waterways, including the Narva and Plyussa Rivers. The bulk of the land in the region is forested and large swamps inundate areas of low elevation. The effect of the terrain on operations is one of channelization; because of the swamps, only certain areas are suitable for large-scale troop movement.
- Strategically, Narva is a natural choke point between the northern shore of Lake Peipus and the Gulf of Finland. The 45 kilometer wide strip of land is entirely bisected by the Narva River and has large areas of wilderness. The primary transportation routes, from Narva to Tallinn, run on an east-west axis near and parallel to the coastline. There are no other east-west transportation routes capable of sustaining troop movement on a large scale in the region

# Terrain Orientation



- Strategic:
  - Baltic Sea
  - East Prussia and the Baltic States
  - Finland / Gulf of Finland
- Operational
  - Leningrad and Kronstadt
  - Karelian Isthmus / Lake Ladoga / Neva River
  - Pskov
  - Kurland / Courland / Kurzeme
  - Lake Peipus
- Tactical
  - Narva / Narva River
    - Narva-Joesuu (Hungerburg)
  - Kravasoo Swamp
  - Ivanograd
  - Tallinn (Reval)
    - Tallinn – Narva Highway & Railroad
    - Rakvere (Wesenburg)
  - Auvere
  - Blue Hills / Grenadier Hill / Children's Home Position
  - Tartu (Dorpat) / Emajogi (Embach) River / Lake Vortsjarv (Wirzsee)
  - Merekula

# Terrain Orientation



## Strategic:

- Baltic Sea
- East Prussia and the Baltic States
- Finland / Gulf of Finland

## Operational

- Leningrad and Kronstadt
- Karel'ian Isthmus / Lake Ladoga / Neva River
- Pskov
- Kurland / Courland / Kurzeme
- Lake Peipus

## Tactical

- Narva / Narva River
  - Narva-Joesuu (Hungerburg)
- Krivasoo Swamp
- Ivanograd
- Tallinn (Reval)
  - Tallinn – Narva Highway & Railroad
  - Rakvere (Wesenburg)
- Auvere
- Blue Hills / Grenadier Hill / Children's Home Position
- Tartu (Dorpat) / Emajogi (Embach) River / Lake Vortsjarv (Wirzsee)
- Merekula

# Terrain Orientation



- ❑ Strategic:
  - ❑ Baltic Sea
  - ❑ East Prussia and the Baltic States
  - ❑ Finland / Gulf of Finland
- ❑ Operational
  - ❑ Leningrad and Kronstadt
  - ❑ Karelian Isthmus / Lake Ladoga / Neva River
  - ❑ Pskov
  - ❑ Kurland / Courland / Kurzeme
  - ❑ Lake Peipus
- ❑ Tactical
  - ❑ Narva / Narva River
    - ❑ Narva-Joesuu (Hungerburg)
  - ❑ Kravasoo Swamp
  - ❑ Ivanograd
  - ❑ Tallinn (Reval)
    - ❑ Tallinn – Narva Highway & Railroad
    - ❑ Rakvere (Wesenburg)
  - ❑ Auvere
  - ❑ Blue Hills / Grenadier Hill / Children’s Home Position
  - ❑ Tartu (Dorpat) / Emajogi (Embach) River / Lake Vortsjarv (Wirzsee)
  - ❑ Merekula

# Terrain Orientation

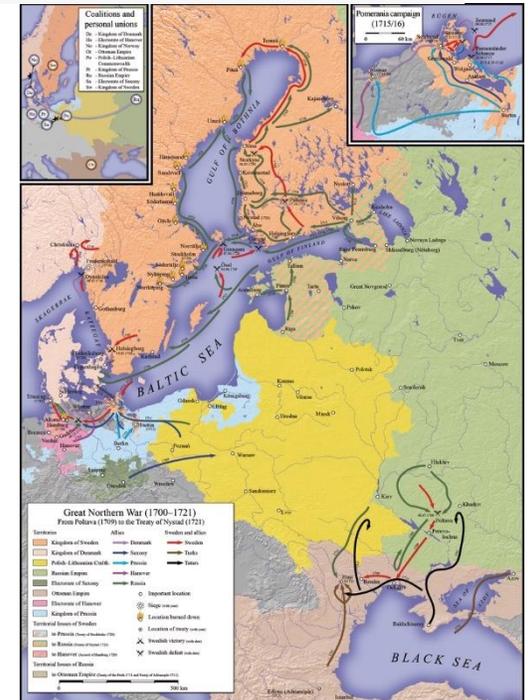
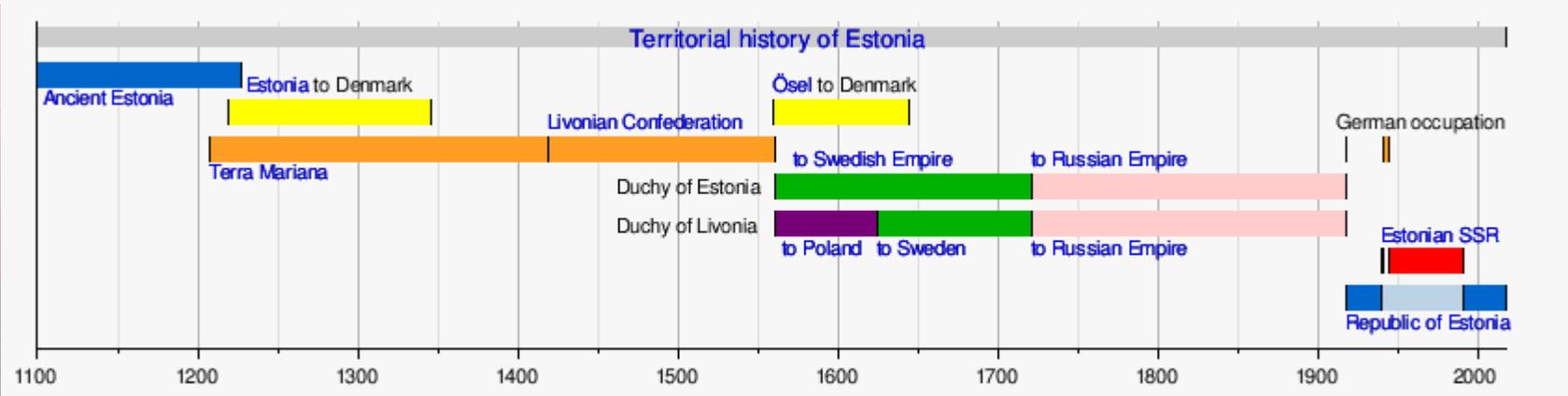


- Strategic:
  - Baltic Sea
  - East Prussia and the Baltic States
  - Finland / Gulf of Finland
- Operational
  - Leningrad and Kronstadt
  - Karelian Isthmus / Lake Ladoga / Neva River
  - Pskov
  - Kurland / Courland / Kurzeme
  - Lake Peipus
- Tactical
  - Narva / Narva River
    - Narva-Joesuu (Hungerburg)
  - Kravasoo Swamp
  - Ivanograd
  - Tallinn (Reval)
    - Tallinn – Narva Highway & Railroad
    - Rakvere (Wesenburg)
  - Auvere
  - Blue Hills / Grenadier Hill / Children's Home Position
  - Tartu (Dorpat) / Emajogi (Embach) River / Lake Vortsjarv (Wirzsee)
  - Merekula



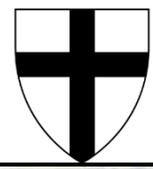
# 700 Years of Conflict in 10 Minutes

## 1242-1944



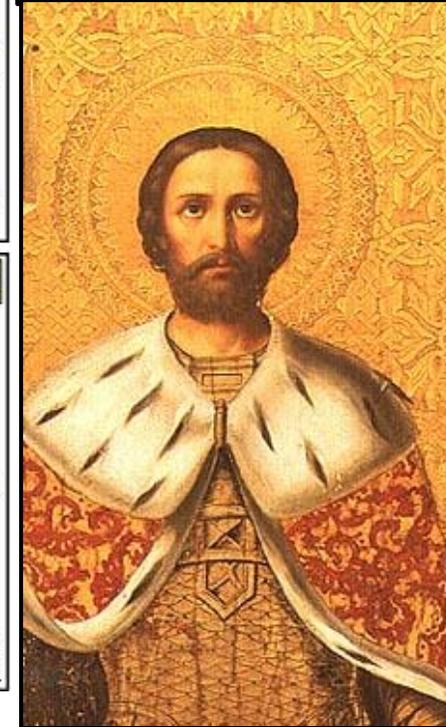
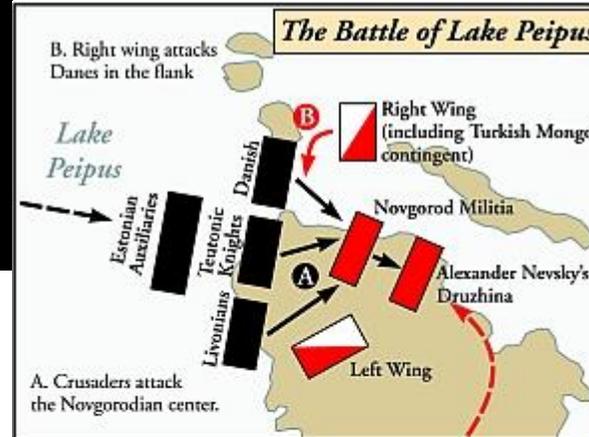


# The Battle on the Ice – Alexander Nevsky

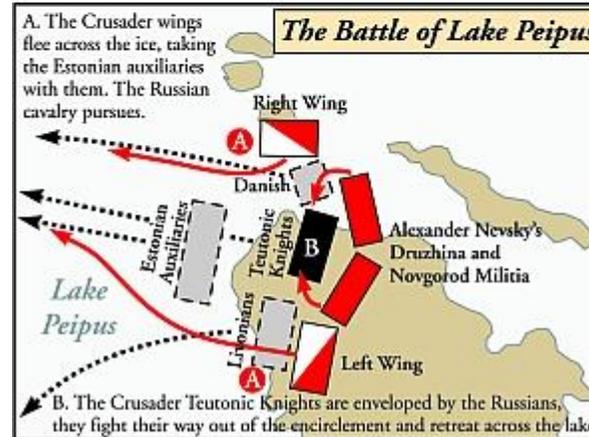


5 АПРЕЛЯ  
1242 г.

- Mongols
- Battle with the Swedes
- Trafficability Issues
- Crusade “credit”

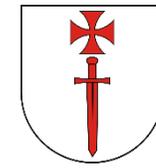


Order of Alexander Nevsky





# The Siege of Narva - 1558



- Russians captured Narva from the Livonian Order (Knights) in July 1558 after 2-3 month siege
- Remained in Russian control as a trading center and port for Pskov and Novgorod
- Captured by the Swedes in 1581.

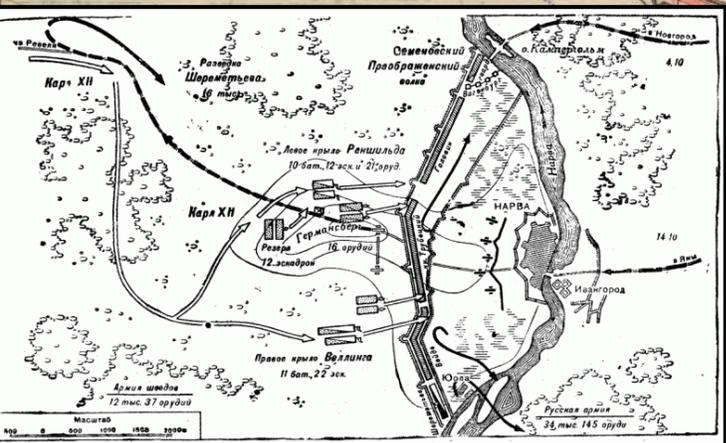
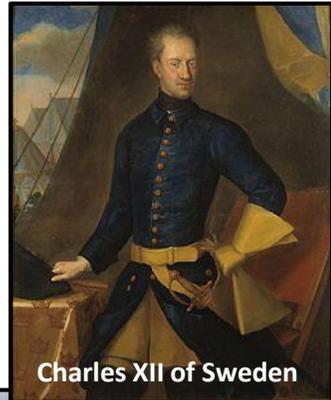
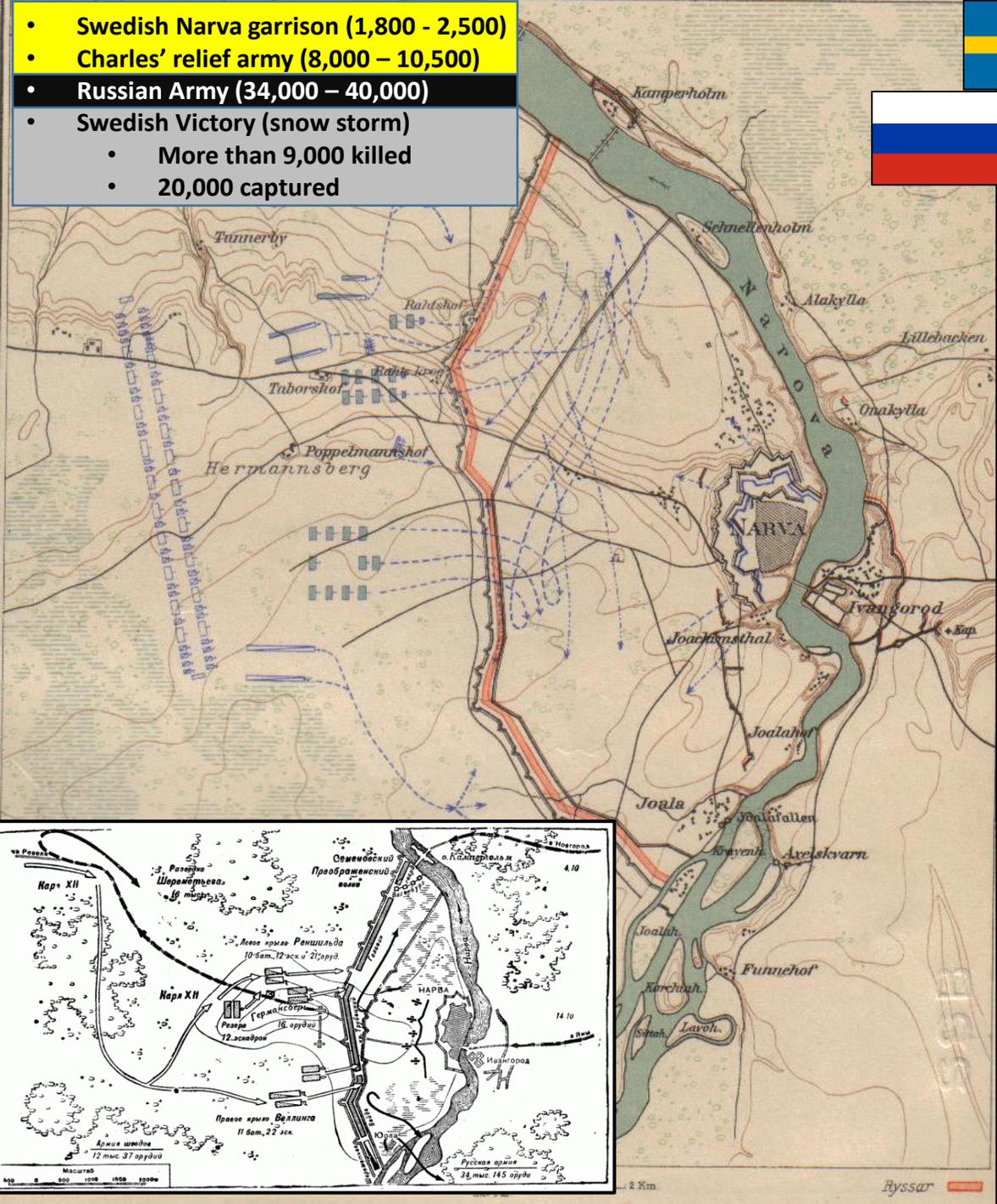




# The Battle of Narva - 1700

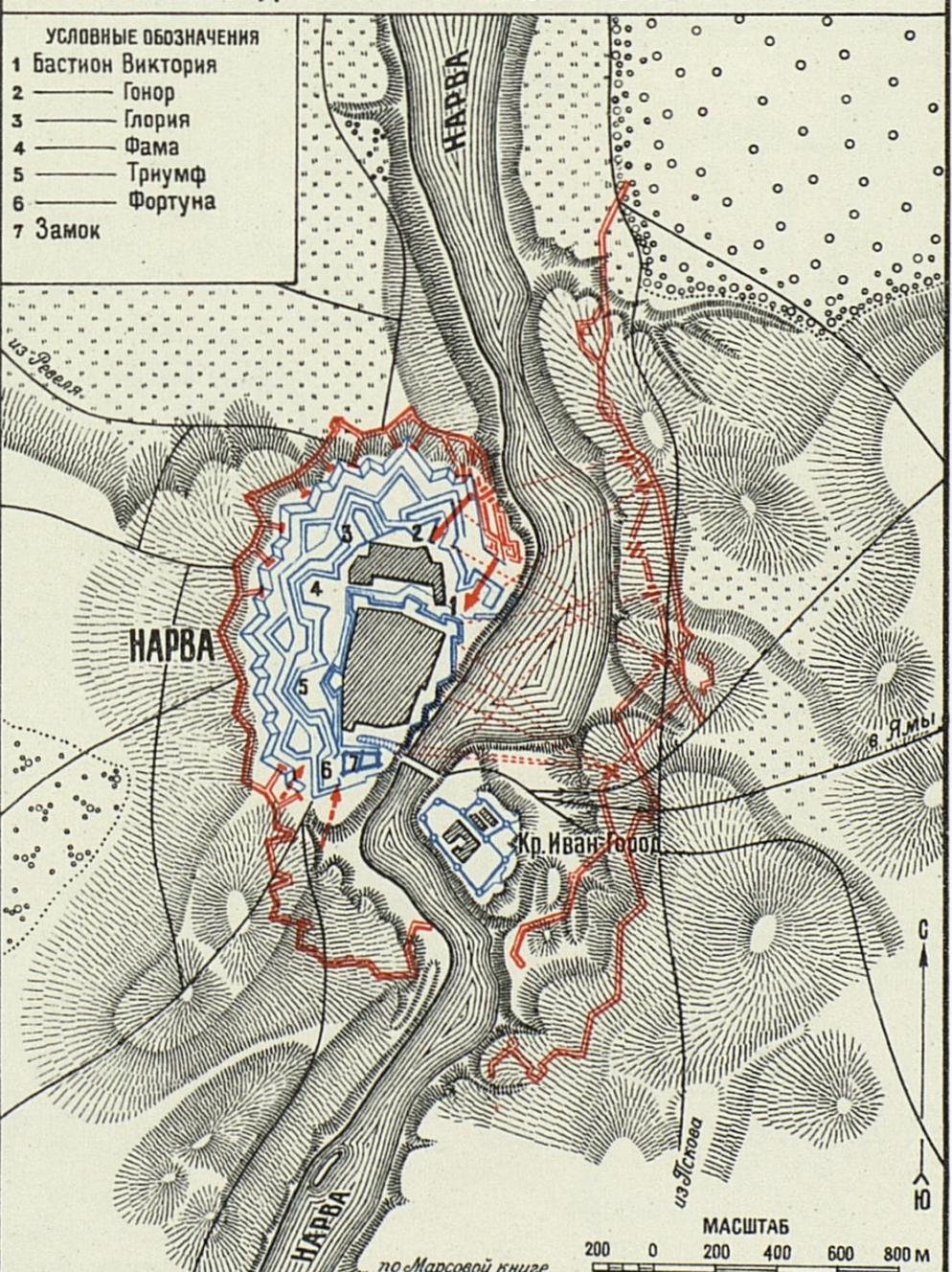


- Swedish Narva garrison (1,800 - 2,500)
- Charles' relief army (8,000 - 10,500)
- Russian Army (34,000 - 40,000)
- Swedish Victory (snow storm)
  - More than 9,000 killed
  - 20,000 captured



# ОСАДА и ШТУРМ НАРВЫ в 1704 г.

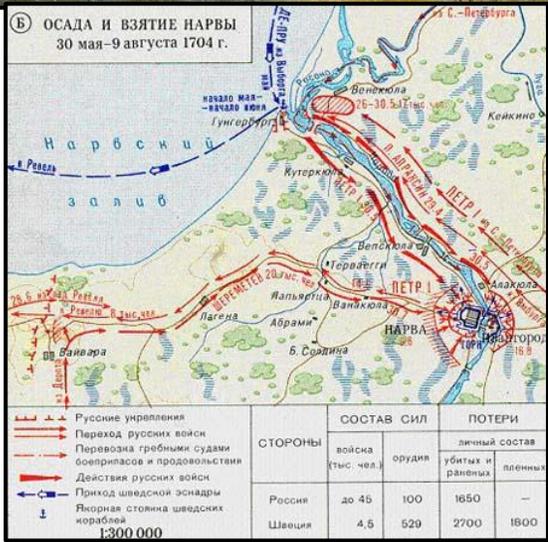
- УСЛОВНЫЕ ОБОЗНАЧЕНИЯ
- 1 Бастион Виктория
  - 2 Гонор
  - 3 Глория
  - 4 Фама
  - 5 Трнумф
  - 6 Фортуна
  - 7 Замок



# The Battle of Narva - 1704

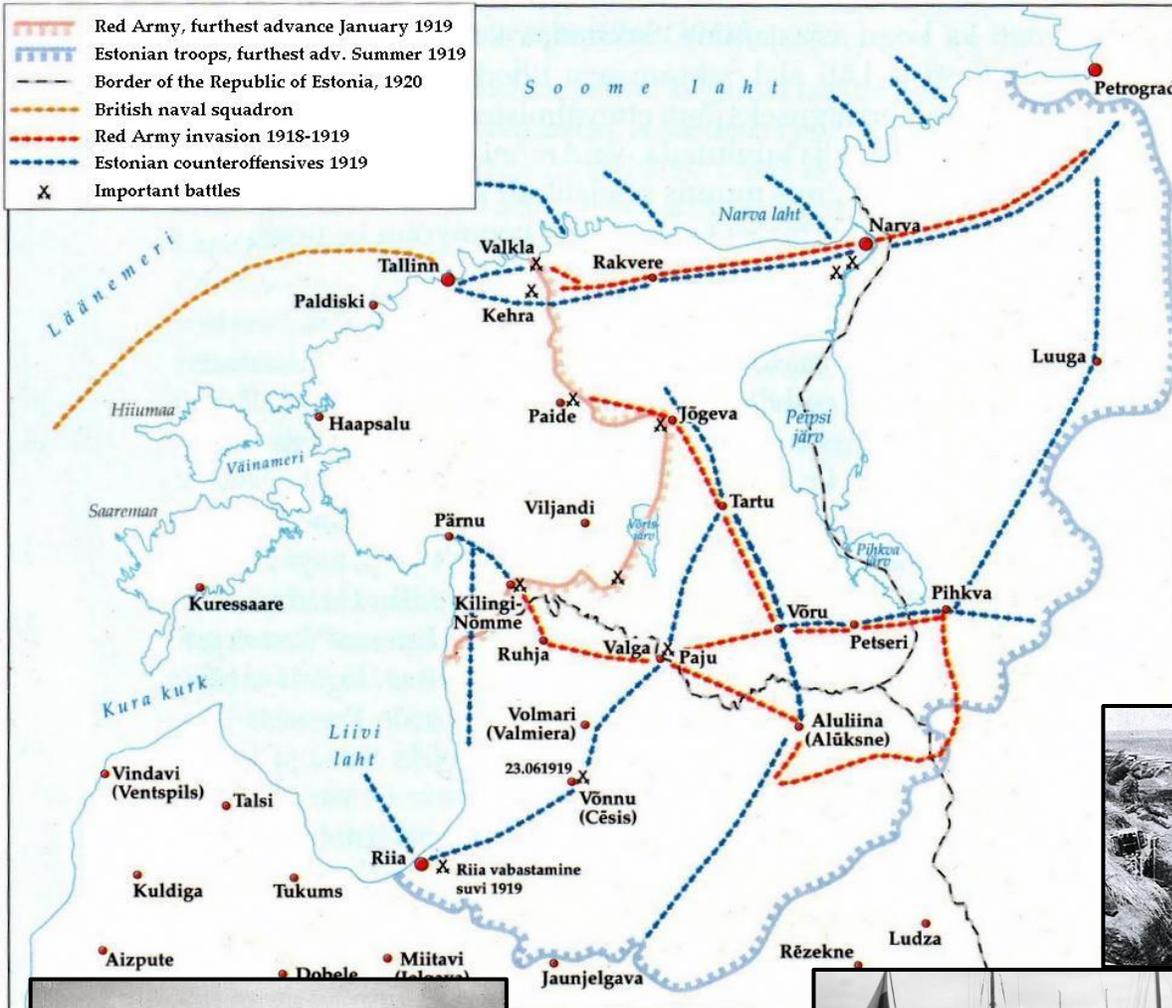


- Russian Army (20,000) seized Dorpat/Tartu and then besieged Narva (Swedes - 3,800 Infantry and 1,300 Cavalry)
- Russian capture and massacre (~ 3,000 Swedish Soldiers)
- 1721 Treaty of Nystad
  - Ended Sweden's control of the Baltic
  - Made Russia a European Power



- Established St. Petersburg as the capital of the Russian Empire (the Bolsheviks moved back to Moscow in 1917)

# Estonian Independence – 1919-1920



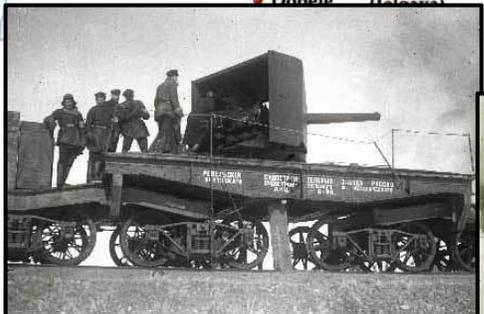
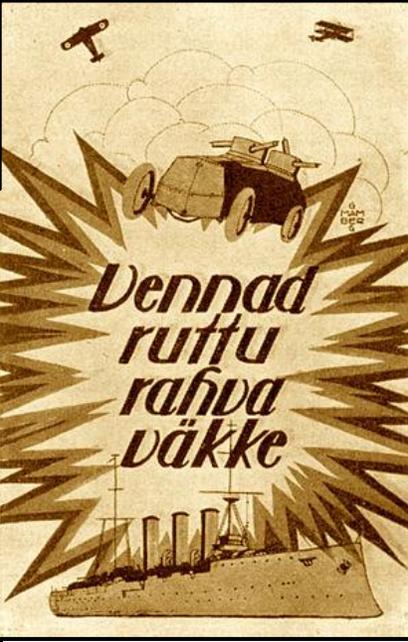
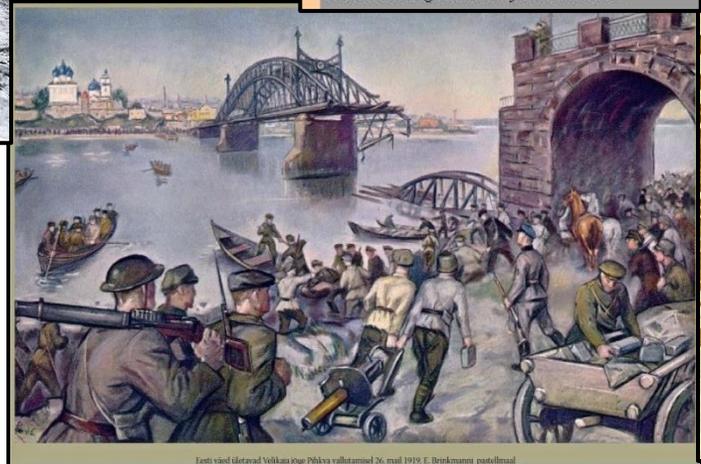
- Part of the Russian Civil War
- 3 Estonians Divisions formed
- Support to White Russian Army
- Supported by England (weapons and navy) (Joint/Combined Ops)
- German Freikorps involvement
- Finnish, Latvian support
- Final battle line – Narva River
  - Battle of Krivasoo - Red Army attempt to force Estonia to negotiate



*Brothers, Hurry to Join the Nation's Army!*

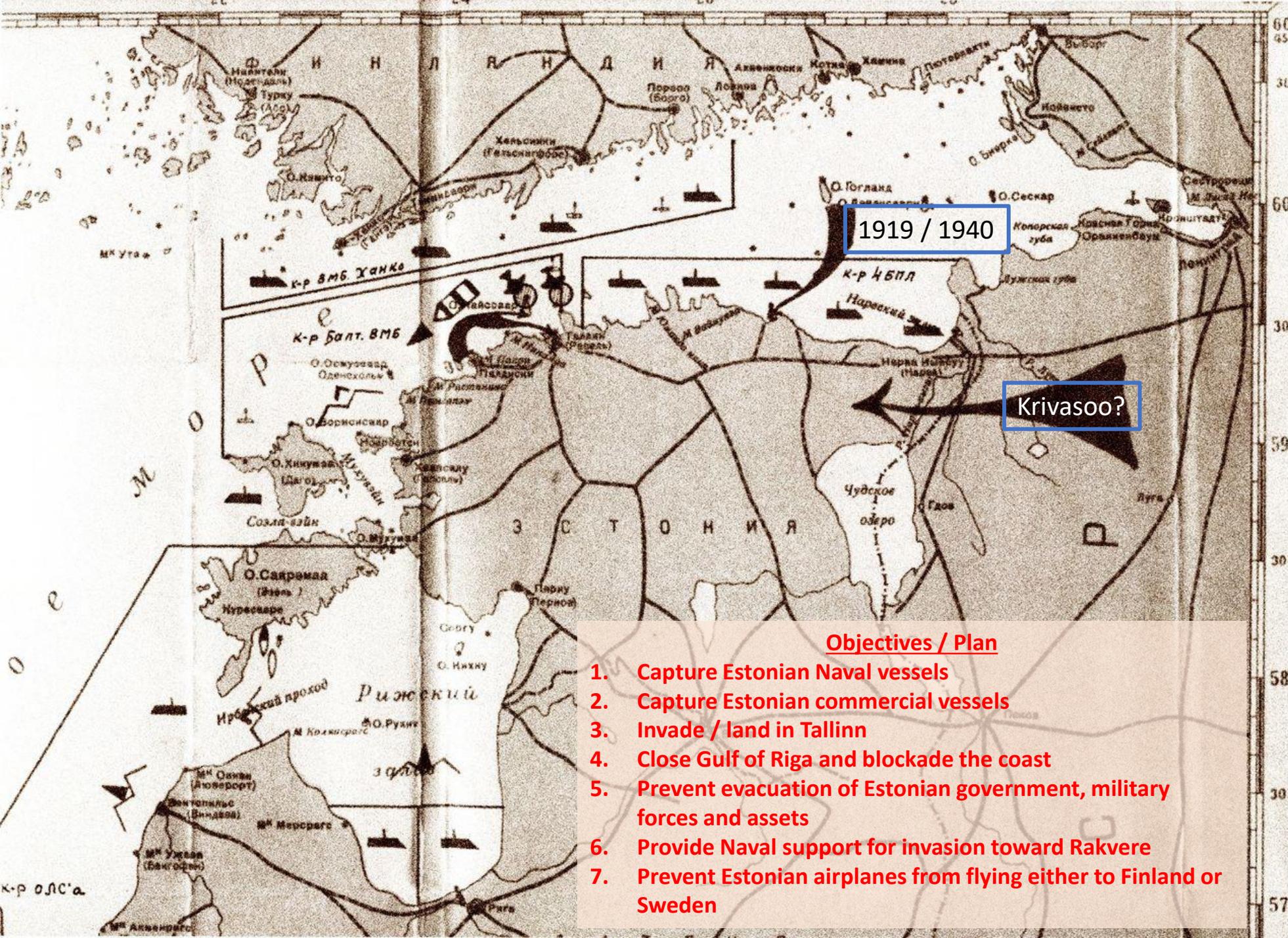


Erna Brinkmann, *Defensive Night Battle by Narva*, Pastel



# Soviet Take Over 1940

- Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact
- Polish Submarine incident
- Soviet Demand: Treaty on Mutual Assistance
  - 25,000 Soldiers – Estonian Islands and port of Paldiski
- Accused of conspiracy against the Soviet Union – Ultimatum issued
- 16 JUN 1940 – USSR invaded
  - Estonian international isolation and overwhelming Soviet forces – resistance was futile
  - 500,000 Soviet Troops in a few days in all Baltic States
- Led to mass deportations and rigged elections
- “People’s Parliament” requested to join the Soviet Union



1919 / 1940

Krivasoo?

## Objectives / Plan

1. Capture Estonian Naval vessels
2. Capture Estonian commercial vessels
3. Invade / land in Tallinn
4. Close Gulf of Riga and blockade the coast
5. Prevent evacuation of Estonian government, military forces and assets
6. Provide Naval support for invasion toward Rakvere
7. Prevent Estonian airplanes from flying either to Finland or Sweden

# Operation Barbarossa - 1941

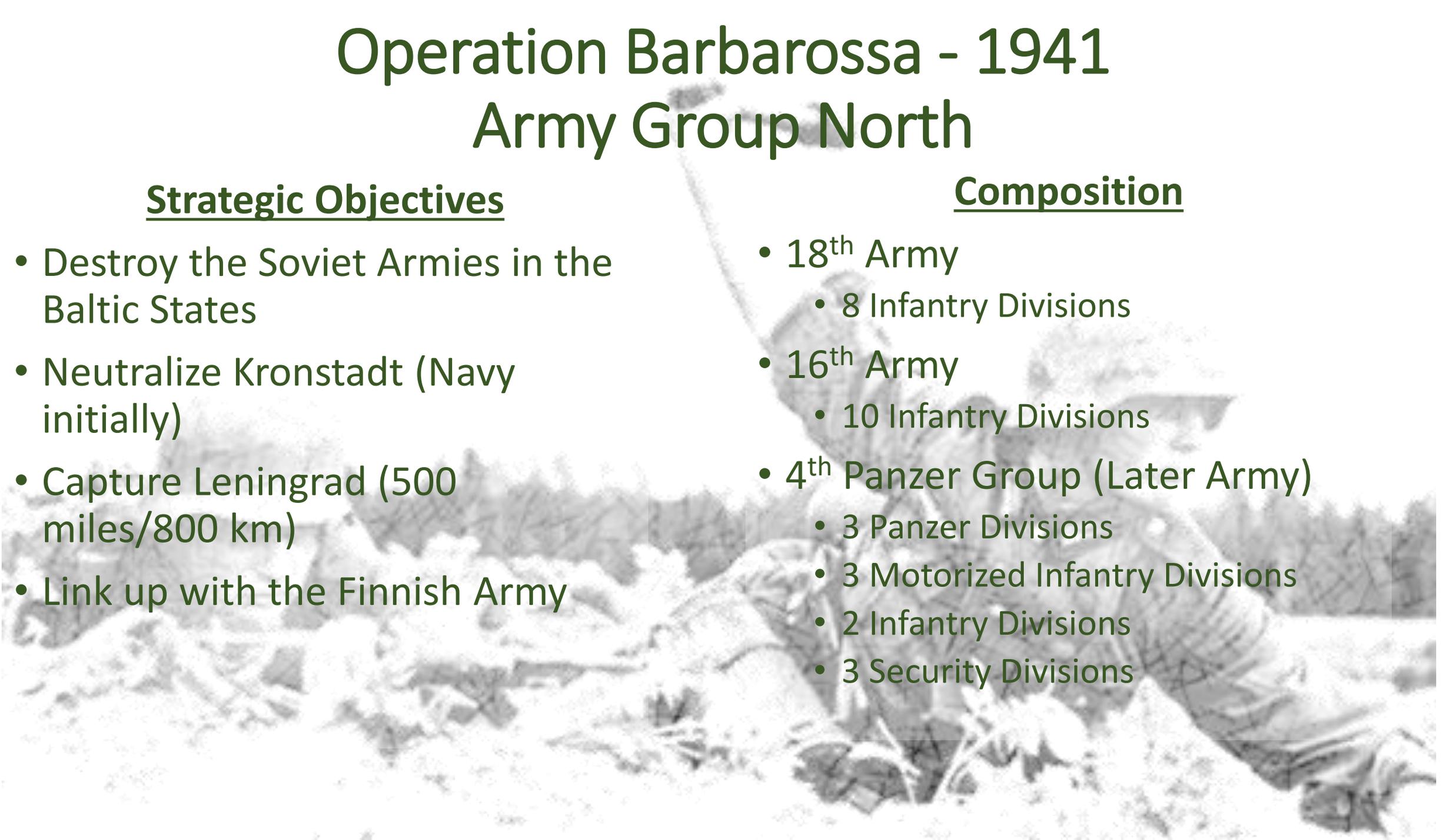
## Army Group North

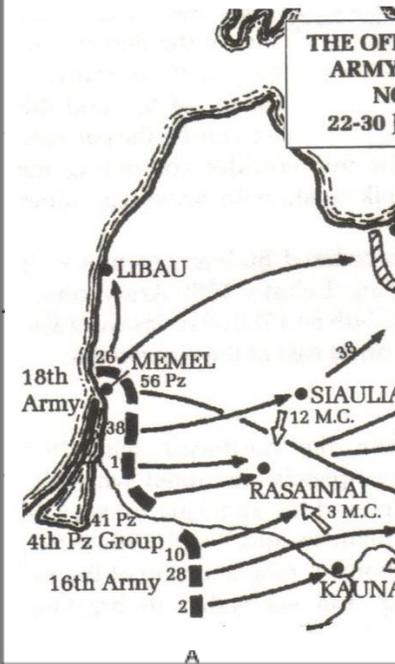
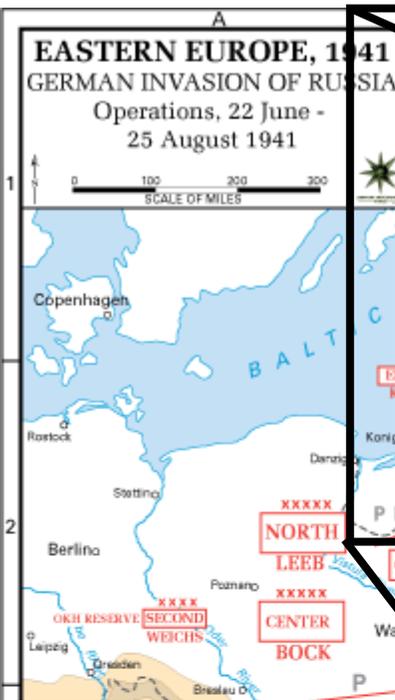
### Strategic Objectives

- Destroy the Soviet Armies in the Baltic States
- Neutralize Kronstadt (Navy initially)
- Capture Leningrad (500 miles/800 km)
- Link up with the Finnish Army

### Composition

- 18<sup>th</sup> Army
  - 8 Infantry Divisions
- 16<sup>th</sup> Army
  - 10 Infantry Divisions
- 4<sup>th</sup> Panzer Group (Later Army)
  - 3 Panzer Divisions
  - 3 Motorized Infantry Divisions
  - 2 Infantry Divisions
  - 3 Security Divisions

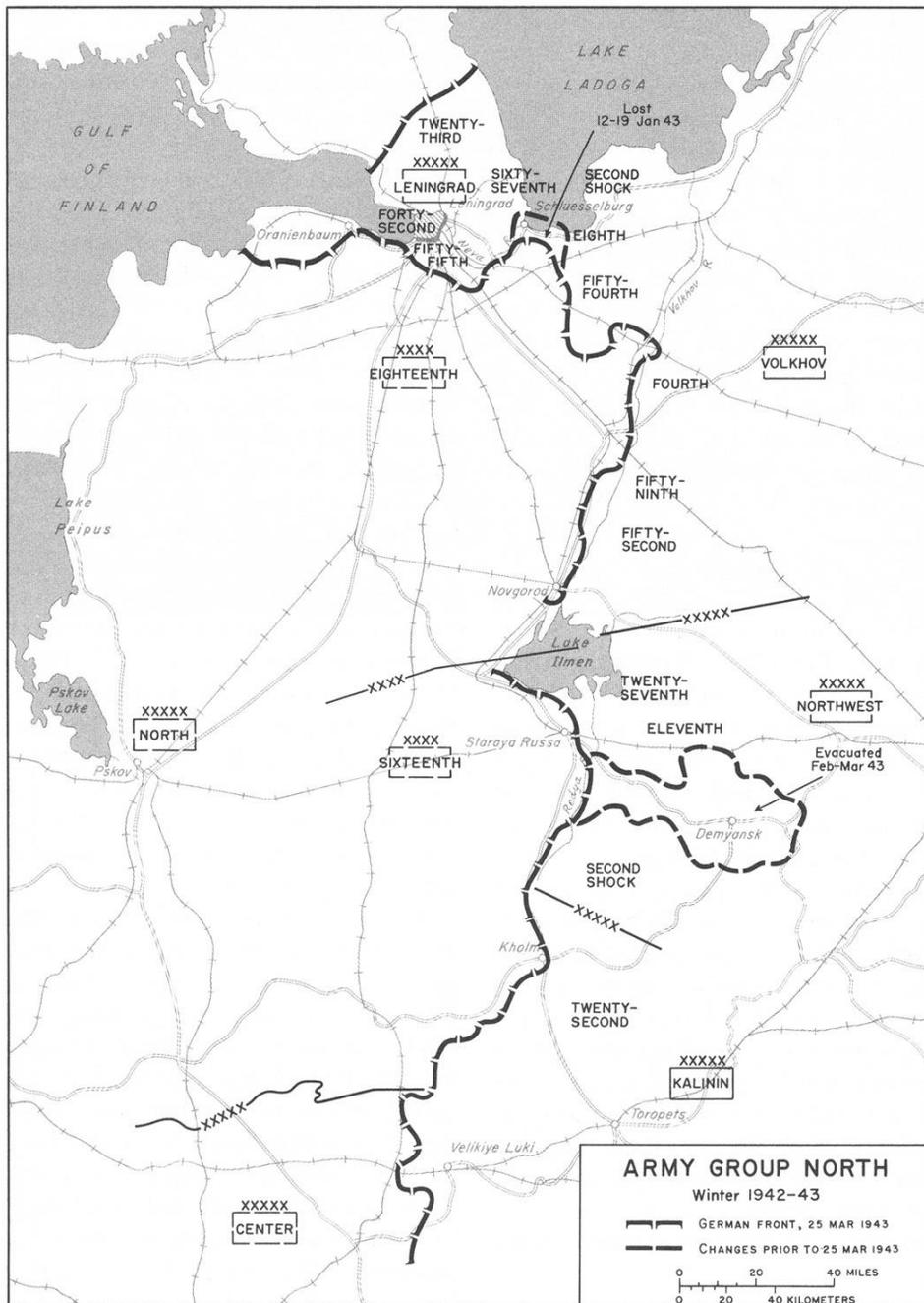




July  
 XXXX  
**RAKUTIN**  
 XXXX  
 28 KACHALOV  
 XXXX

# Army Group North Late 1941 – Early 1944

- Challenges
  - Maintaining contact with Army Group Center
  - Maintaining “siege” of Leningrad
- Finland – Co-belligerent (not Ally)
  - Shifting Soviet forces
- Oranienbaum / Lake Ladoga
- Soviet fleet neutralized effectively
- Main lines of supply (Pskov – Luga; Reval – Kingisepp - Gatchina)



MAP 10

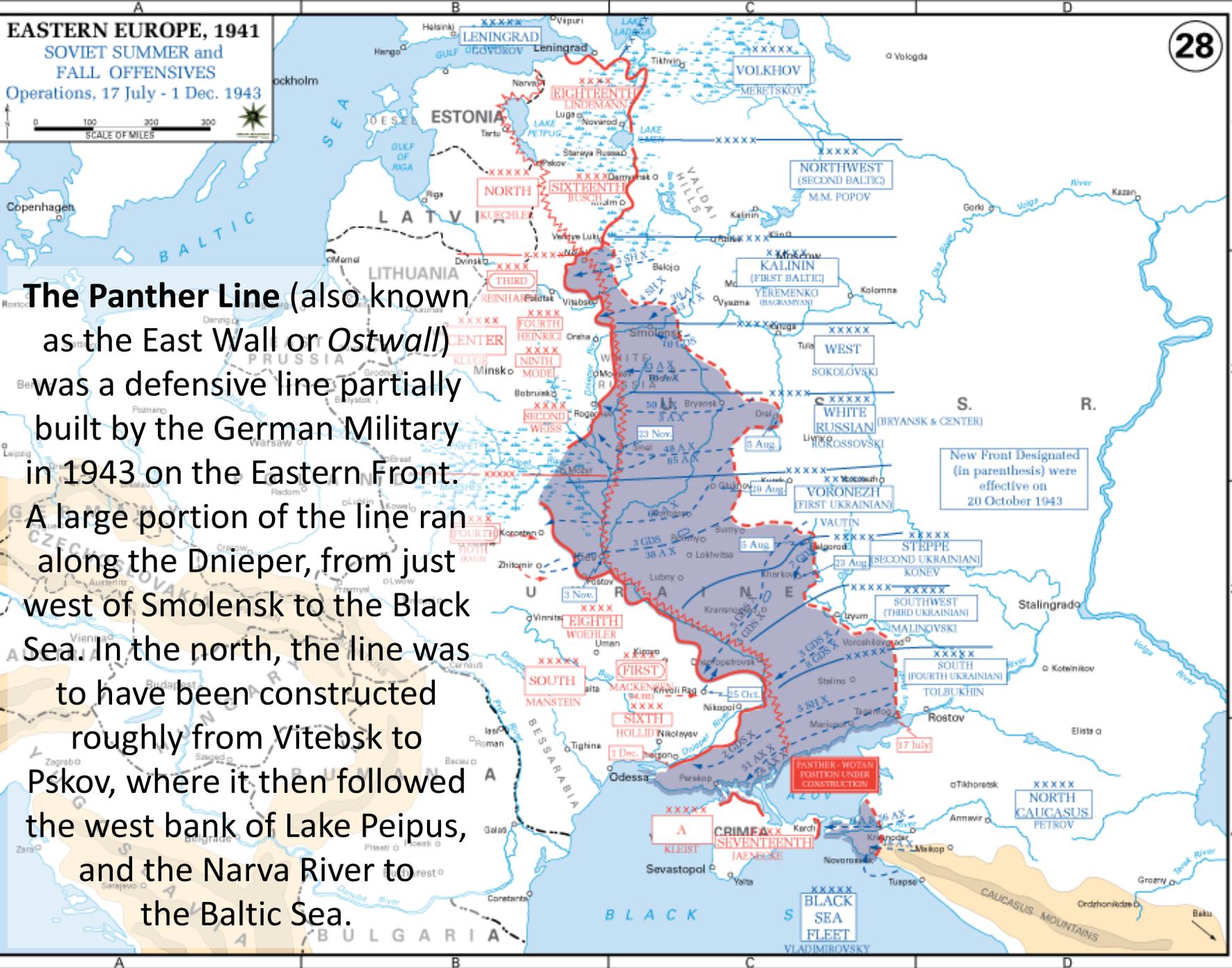


**EASTERN EUROPE, 1941**  
**SOVIET SUMMER and**  
**FALL OFFENSIVES**  
**Operations, 17 July - 1 Dec. 1943**

**The Panther Line** (also known as the East Wall or *Ostwall*) was a defensive line partially built by the German Military in 1943 on the Eastern Front. A large portion of the line ran along the Dnieper, from just west of Smolensk to the Black Sea. In the north, the line was to have been constructed roughly from Vitebsk to Pskov, where it then followed the west bank of Lake Peipus, and the Narva River to the Baltic Sea.

**What's Going on Elsewhere: 1941-1943**

- Winter 1941/Spring 1942: Army Group Center
- Summer – Winter 1942: Army Group South
- Summer 1943 – Kursk (Operation Citadel) and Soviet Counter-Offensive





# The Battle of Narva - 1944



**EASTERN EUROPE, 1941**  
**RUSSIAN LENINGRAD and**  
**UKRAINE OFFENSIVES**  
 Operations, 2 Dec. 1943 - 30 Apr. 1944

29

# The Soviet Leningrad-Novgorod Offensive

- **14 JAN – 01 MAR 1944**
- **Soviets – 822,000**
  - **Leningrad Front (417,600)**
    - **2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army**
  - **Volkhov Front (260,000)**
    - **1<sup>st</sup> Shock Army**
  - **2d Baltic Front**
- **Germans – (500,000)**
  - **Single echelon**
    - Multiple echelons of positions
    - Least prepared - Oranienbaum
  - **Reserves (18A – One Infantry Division; 16A – Three Infantry Divisions)**
    - Anti-Partisan employment

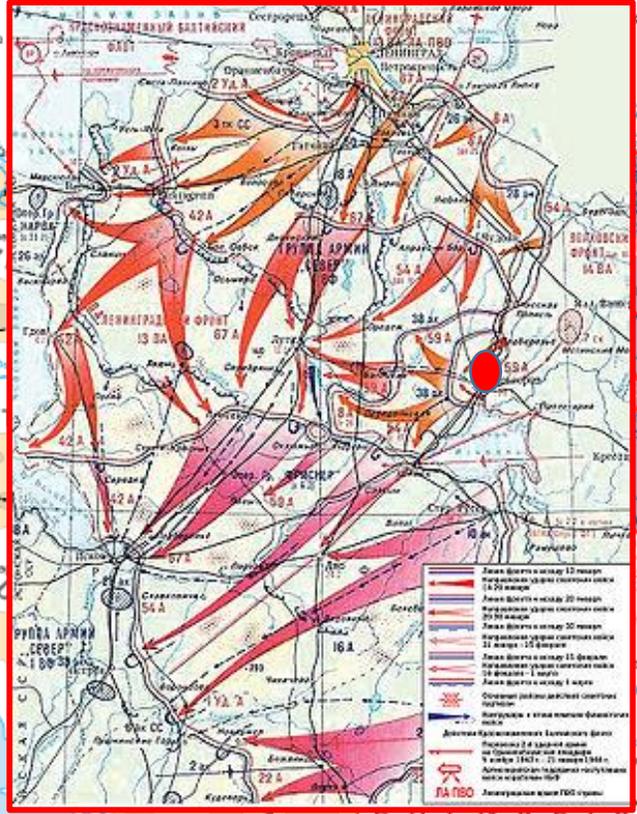
**LENINGRAD FRONT**

- XXXX
- 2 SH FEDYUNINSKY
- XXXX
- 42 MASLANNIKOV
- XXXX
- 67 SVIREDOV

**Strategic (STAVKA) Objectives**

- Clear enemy forces from all Soviet territory
  - Begin the liberation of Nazi-occupied Europe
- Operational Objectives**

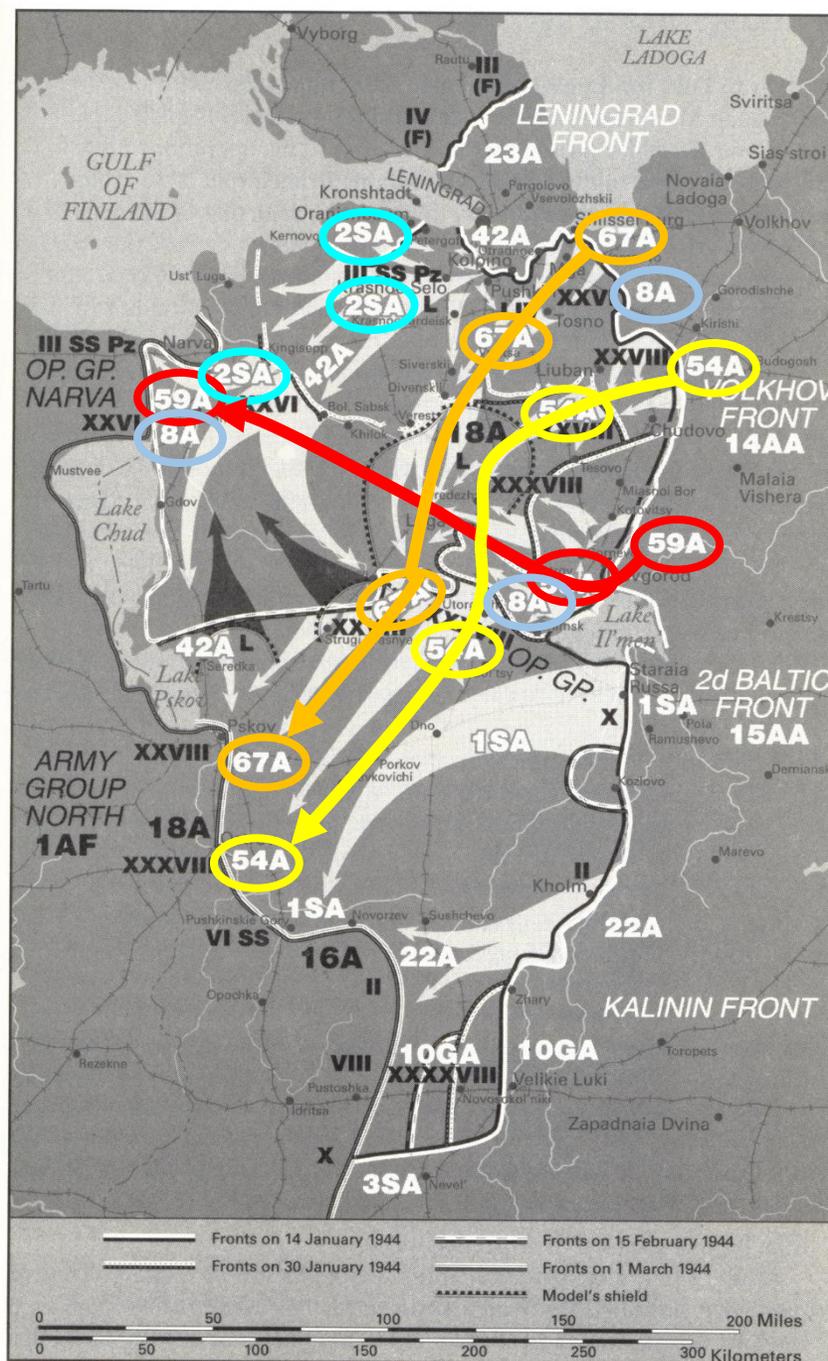
- Fully lift the siege of Leningrad and Kronstadt
- Encircle enemy forces West of Novgorod
- Encircle enemy forces South of Leningrad
- Seize Pskov and Narva



# The Soviet Leningrad-Novgorod Offensive

14 JAN – 01 MAR 1944

- III SS Panzer Corps
- Hitler Hold Fast Order
  - Model's "Sword and Shield"
- German "Fighting" retreat
  - Majority of the 18<sup>th</sup> Army – Luga and Luga River Line
  - III SS Panzer Corps and other elements occupy Narva River Line (Panther Line) by end of January / beginning of February
- Soviet Operational Art and Flexibility



Map 17. The Soviet Leningrad-Novgorod Offensive, January–April 1944



# German Strategic Objectives and Assumptions Defense of the Baltics

## Objectives

- Keep Finland in the war (or bad things would happen)
  - Entrapment of the German 20<sup>th</sup> Mountain Army in Northern Finland
  - Loss of the nickel supply from Finland
  - Breakout of the Soviet Baltic Fleet from Kronstadt, endangering German Naval control of the Baltic and jeopardizing the transport of iron ore and finished products from Sweden
  - Threat to the German submarine training areas
- Prevent Swedish intervention in the war on the side of the Allies (or bad things would happen)
  - End transit of troops through Sweden
  - End import of iron ore
  - Threaten German control of Norway
  - Strategically outflank Germany from the North
- Protect Estonian oil fields

## Assumptions

- Holding “fortified places” would slow the Soviet advance and frustrate their drive toward Germany
- More forces are required to encircle and destroy a “fortified place” than to defend it (economy of force)

**Wave Breaker Concept**



# Soviet Strategic Objectives and Assumptions “Liberation” of the Baltics

## Objectives

- “Liberate” Estonia
  - Allow Soviet Baltic Fleet to operate in the Baltic
- Knock Finland out of the War
- Threaten / Seize East Prussia

## Assumptions

- Threatening Finland from Estonian Air & Sea bases would force them to surrender.
- The threat or seizure of German territory would bring German resistance to a collapse.

25 JUL 1944 – Germans evacuate Narva

*“It is mandatory that our forces seize Narva **no later than 17 February 1944.** This is required for military as well as political reasons. It is the most important thing right now. I demand that you undertake all necessary measures to liberate Narva no later than the period indicated.”*

**Joseph Stalin**

Order to the Leningrad Front, 14 February 1944

# Defense of Narva

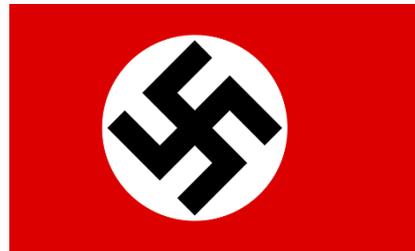
## Estonian Objectives

- Prevent the restoration of Soviet control over Estonia
- Restore Estonia's independence after the war (by having an armed force)



## German Operational Objs

- Protect Army Group North's Northern flank
- Defeat Soviet forces using defensible terrain
- !? Maintain "bridgehead" to conduct future offensive operations !? (Ivangorod Bridgehead)



## Soviet Operational Objs

- (T) Establish bridgehead  
..... **in order to**
- (O) Encircle and destroy enemy forces IVO Narva  
..... **in order to**
- (S) Outflank / Encircle enemy forces defending (a) East of Lake Peipus (initially), (b) (subsequently) IVO Pskov

LAGE OST  
30 JAN 1944

Defeat Soviet forces  
using defensible terrain

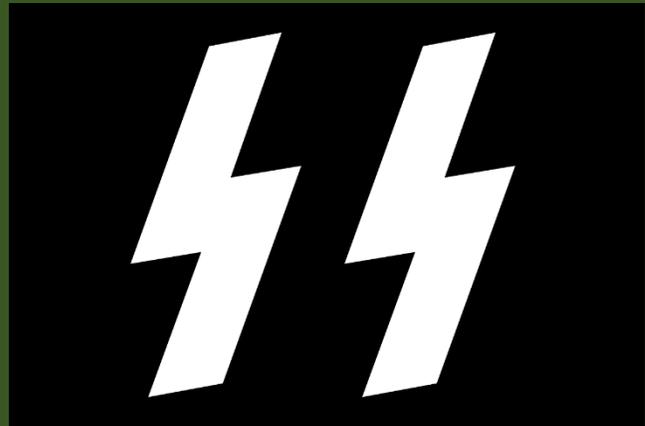
Protect Army Group  
North's Northern flank

German Map

## Soviet Operational Objs

- Establish bridgehead . .  
... **in order to**
- Encircle and destroy  
enemy forces IVO Narva  
..... **in order to**
- Outflank / Encircle  
enemy forces defending  
(a) East of Lake Peipus  
(initially), (b) South of  
Lake Peipus IVO Pskov

- SS Units
- Estonian conscripts/volunteers
- Luftwaffe Field Divisions
- Tiger Tanks!





- Shock Army
- Estonian conscripts/volunteers
- C2 – Initiative
- Women in Combat
- Russian “smuta”



Soviet Graphic

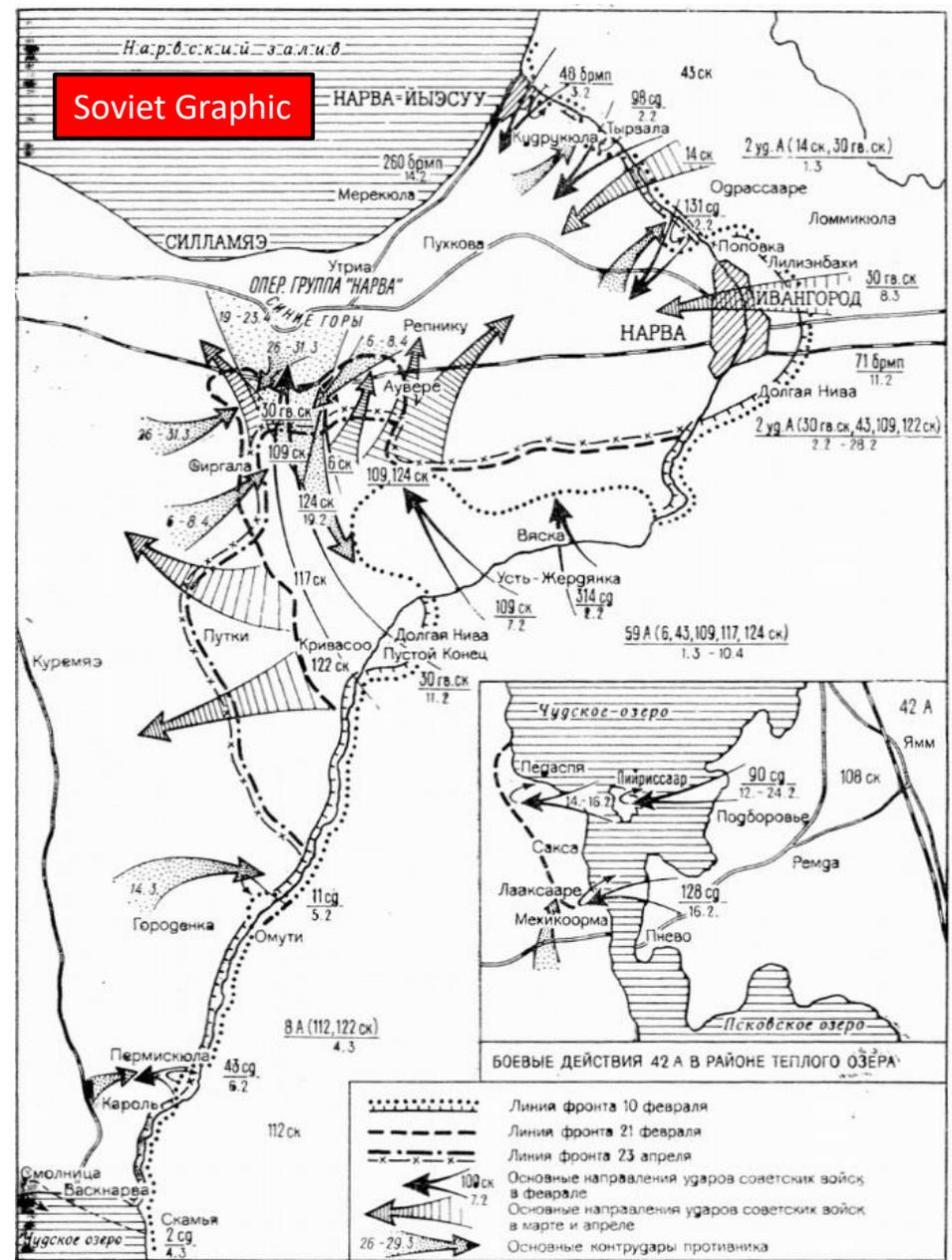
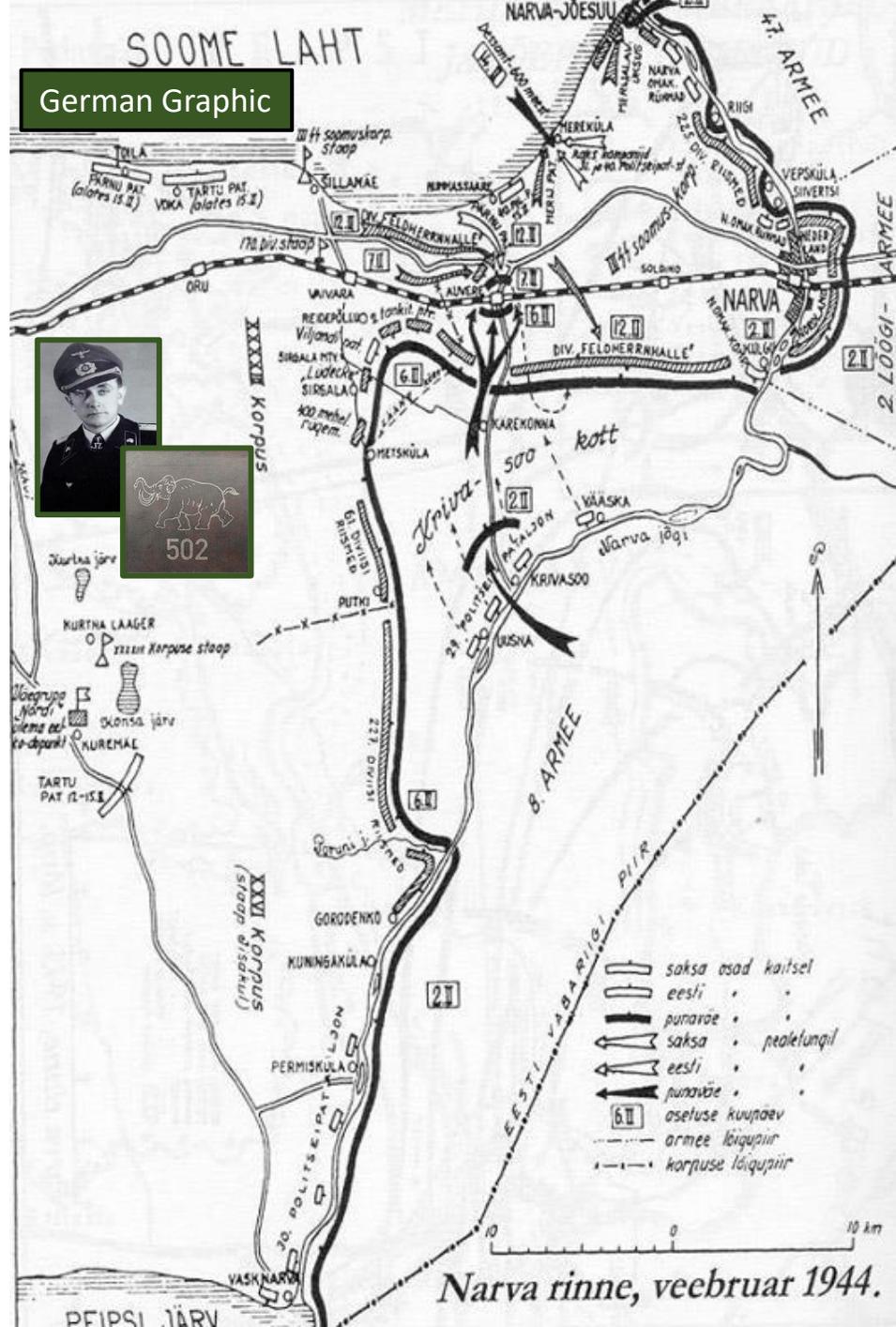


Схема 1.

Начало освобождения Эстонской ССР (февраль—апрель 1944 г.)

German Graphic



# Battle of Narva Feb - Apr

- Ivangorod Bridgehead
- Initial Soviet Attempts to Establish Bridgeheads / Breakout / Encircle (06 FEB – 24 MAR 1944)
  - Krivasoo Bridgehead (06 Feb – Apr)
    - 15-28 FEB Offensive
      - Auvere Station
    - Strachwitz I (15 MAR)
    - Strachwitz II (06 APR)
    - Strachwitz III (19 APR)
  - Siivertsi Bridehead (12 Feb)
    - 21 FEB-06 MAR - Clearing
  - Meerapalu Landing (12-17 Feb)
  - Merekula Landing (14 Feb)

# German Footage - Narva



# Soviet Footage - Narva



# The BIG Picture: Soviet Offensives and German Counter-Actions

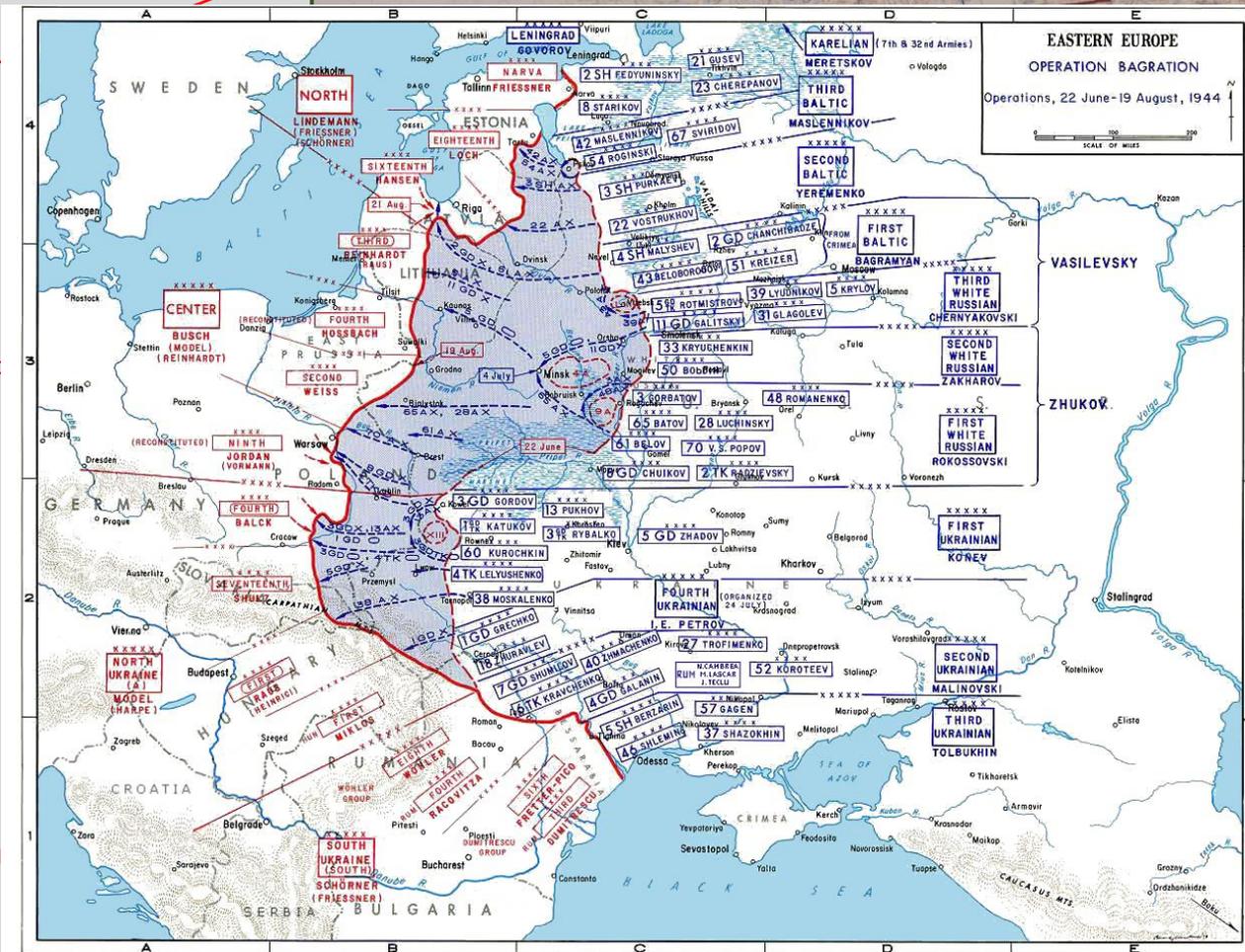
- 10 JUN 1944: Vyborg – Petrozavodsk Offensive (Finland) Begins
- 22 JUN 1944: Operation Bagration
  - 10 JUL 1944: Army Group North and Army Group Center lose contact
  - 05-31 JUL 1944: Phase III – Siauliai Offensive
- 12 JUL 1944: STAVKA orders Leningrad Front to transfer offensive units from Finnish Front
- 23-25 JUL 1944: Evacuation of Narva
- 24 JUL 1944: Soviet Offensive IVO Narva
- 27-29 JUL 1944: Battle of the Tannenberg Line
- 30 JUL 1944: Soviets reach the Baltic Sea at Tukums, Latvia (south of Riga)
  - 15 AUG – 27 AUG 1944: Operation Doppelkopf
- 10 AUG 1944: Tartu Offensive
  - 10 AUG – 06 SEP 1944: Defense of Tartu and Emajogi (Embach) River Line
    - 23 AUG 1944: Battle of Noo (German covering forces)
    - 25 AUG 1944: Soviet Bridgeheads across the Emajogi (Embach) established and Tartu seized
    - 30 AUG 1944: Karevere Bridge Recaptured
    - 4-6 SEP 1944: Attempt to recapture Tartu
- 04 SEP 1944: Finland signs armistice with Soviet Union
- 14-16 SEP 1944: Riga Offensive
- 16 SEP 1944: Hitler agrees to withdraw units from Estonia
- 17 SEP 1944: Tallinn Offensive
  - 17 SEP - Operation Aster Begins
  - 22 SEP 1944: Seizure of Tallinn (Reval)
  - 26 SEP 1944: Seizure of mainland Estonia
  - 29 SEP – 24 NOV 1944: Moonsund Landing Operation
- 05 OCT 1944: Battle of Memel – Army Group North cut off from Army Group Center
- 13 OCT 1944: Riga seized



# The BIG Picture: Soviet Offensives and German Counter-Actions

- 10 JUN 1944: Vyborg – Petrozavodsk Offensive (Finland) Begins
- 22 JUN 1944: Operation Bagration
  - 10 JUL 1944: Army Group North and Army Group Center lose contact
  - 05-31 JUL 1944: Phase III – Siauliai Offensive
- 12 JUL 1944: STAVKA orders Leningrad Front to transfer offensive units from Finnish Front
- 23-25 JUL 1944: Evacuation of Narva
- 24 JUL 1944: Soviet Offensive IVO Narva
- 27-29 JUL 1944: Battle of the Tannenberg Line
- 30 JUL 1944: Soviets reach the Baltic Sea at Tukums, Latvia (south of Riga)
  - 15 AUG – 27 AUG 1944: Operation Doppelkopf
- 10 AUG 1944: Tartu Offensive
  - 10 AUG – 06 SEP 1944: Defense of Tartu and Emajogi (Embach) River Line
    - 23 AUG 1944: Battle of Noo (German covering forces)
    - 25 AUG 1944: Soviet Bridgeheads across the Emajogi (Embach) established and Tartu seized
    - 30 AUG 1944: Karevere Bridge Recaptured
    - 4-6 SEP 1944: Attempt to recapture Tartu
- 04 SEP 1944: Finland signs armistice with Soviet Union
- 14-16 SEP 1944: Riga Offensive
- 16 SEP 1944: Hitler agrees to withdraw units from Estonia
- 17 SEP 1944: Tallinn Offensive
  - 17 SEP - Operation Aster Begins
  - 22 SEP 1944: Seizure of Tallinn (Reval)
  - 26 SEP 1944: Seizure of mainland Estonia
  - 29 SEP – 24 NOV 1944: Moonsund Landing Operation
- 05 OCT 1944: Battle of Memel – Army Group North cut off from Army Group Center
- 13 OCT 1944: Riga seized

19 AUG 44



# The BIG Picture: Soviet Offensives and German Counter-Actions

- 10 JUN 1944: Vyborg – Petrozavodsk Offensive (Finland) Begins
- 22 JUN 1944: Operation Bagration
  - 10 JUL 1944: Army Group North and Army Group Center lose contact
  - 05-31 JUL 1944: Phase III – Siauliai Offensive
- 12 JUL 1944: STAVKA orders Leningrad Front to transfer offensive units from Finnish Front
- 23-25 JUL 1944: Evacuation of Narva
- 24 JUL 1944: Soviet Offensive IVO Narva
- 27-29 JUL 1944: Battle of the Tannenberg Line
- 30 JUL 1944: Soviets reach the Baltic Sea at Tukums, Latvia (south of Riga)
  - 15 AUG – 27 AUG 1944: Operation Doppelkopf
- 10 AUG 1944: Tartu Offensive
  - 10 AUG – 06 SEP 1944: Defense of Tartu and Emajogi (Embach) River Line
    - 23 AUG 1944: Battle of Noo (German covering forces)
    - 25 AUG 1944: Soviet Bridgeheads across the Emajogi (Embach) established and Tartu seized
    - 30 AUG 1944: Karevere Bridge Recaptured
    - 4-6 SEP 1944: Attempt to recapture Tartu
- 04 SEP 1944: Finland signs armistice with Soviet Union
- 14-16 SEP 1944: Riga Offensive
- 16 SEP 1944: Hitler agrees to withdraw units from Estonia
- 17 SEP 1944: Tallinn Offensive
  - 17 SEP - Operation Aster Begins
  - 22 SEP 1944: Seizure of Tallinn (Reval)
  - 26 SEP 1944: Seizure of mainland Estonia
  - 29 SEP – 24 NOV 1944: Moonsund Landing Operation
- 05 OCT 1944: Battle of Memel – Army Group North cut off from Army Group Center
- 13 OCT 1944: Riga seized





Estn. Selbstschutz

785 Sich

Küstenverteidigung West  
(280 Sich)

Küstenverteidigung Ost  
(200 Sich)

Armee-Grp  
**Narwa**  
(LIV)

Div. z. B. V. 300  
(1. Inf. Div. 1.3 v. 5)

8 COOLSK

2. S. W.

207 Sich

Korück 583

207 Sich  
Gr. 5. Reg. 5  
(1. Inf. Div. 1.3 v. 5)

LAGE OST  
25 JUL 1944

German Map

# The Battle of the Tannenberg Line

## Battle of the Sinimaed Hills

25 Jul – 10 Aug 1944

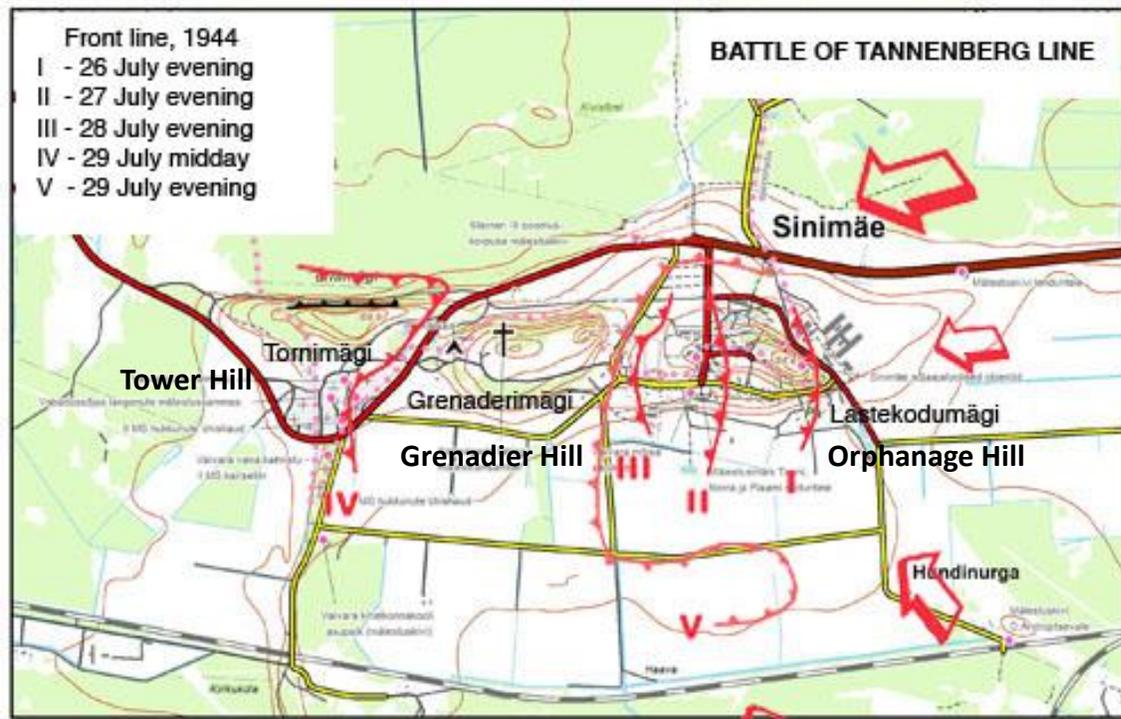


### Operational Objectives

- Quick seizure of Estonia (from the march)

### Operational Objectives

- Re-establish (shorter) defensive line along defensible terrain



### Tactical Objectives

- Break through defensive line at Orphanage Hill . . . . in order to allow the
- Seizure of the town of Johvi (Jewe) . . . . in order to allow the
- Seizure of Rakvere

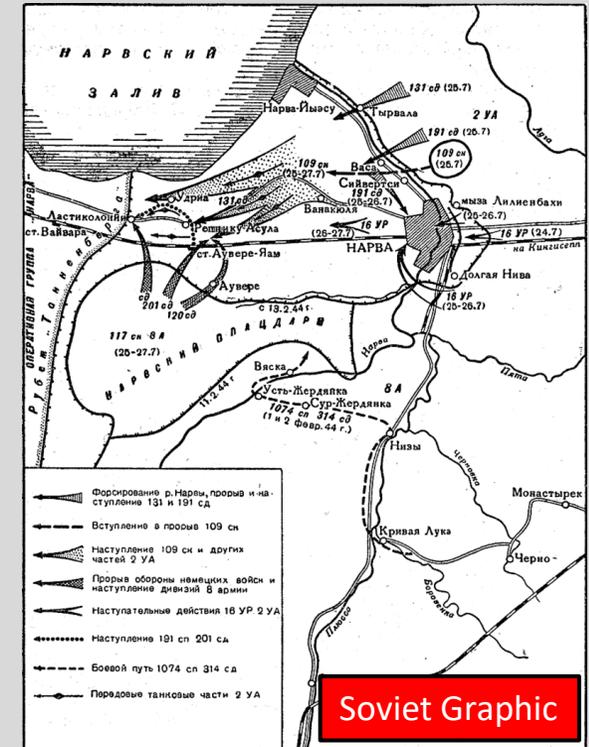


СХЕМА 4. НАРВСКАЯ ОПЕРАЦИЯ (С 25 ПО 27 ИЮЛЯ 1944 ГОДА),  
Элементы февральской операции 1944 года  
даны для главы 9-й.

# The Battle of the Tannenberg Line



# The BIG Picture: Soviet Offensives and German Counter-Actions

- 10 JUN 1944: Vyborg – Petrozavodsk Offensive (Finland) Begins
- 22 JUN 1944: Operation Bagration
  - 10 JUL 1944: Army Group North and Army Group Center lose contact
  - 05-31 JUL 1944: Phase III – Siauliai Offensive
- 12 JUL 1944: STAVKA orders Leningrad Front to transfer offensive units from Finnish Front
- 23-25 JUL 1944: Evacuation of Narva
- 24 JUL 1944: Soviet Offensive IVO Narva
- 27-29 JUL 1944: Battle of the Tannenberg Line
- 30 JUL 1944: Soviets reach the Baltic Sea at Tukums, Latvia (south of Riga)
  - 15 AUG – 27 AUG 1944: Operation Doppelkopf

- 10 AUG 1944: Tartu Offensive
  - 10 AUG – 06 SEP 1944: Defense of Tartu and Emajogi (Embach) River Line
    - 23 AUG 1944: Battle of Noo (German covering forces)
    - 25 AUG 1944: Soviet Bridgeheads across the Emajogi (Embach) established and Tartu seized
    - 30 AUG 1944: Karevere Bridge Recaptured
    - 4-6 SEP 1944: Attempt to recapture Tartu

- 04 SEP 1944: Finland signs armistice with Soviet Union
- 14-16 SEP 1944: Riga Offensive
- 16 SEP 1944: Hitler agrees to withdraw units from Estonia
- 17 SEP 1944: Tallinn Offensive
  - 17 SEP - Operation Aster Begins
  - 22 SEP 1944: Seizure of Tallinn (Reval)
  - 26 SEP 1944: Seizure of mainland Estonia
  - 29 SEP – 24 NOV 1944: Moonsund Landing Operation
- 05 OCT 1944: Battle of Memel – Army Group North cut off from Army Group Center
- 13 OCT 1944: Riga seized



German Map

# The Tartu Offensive

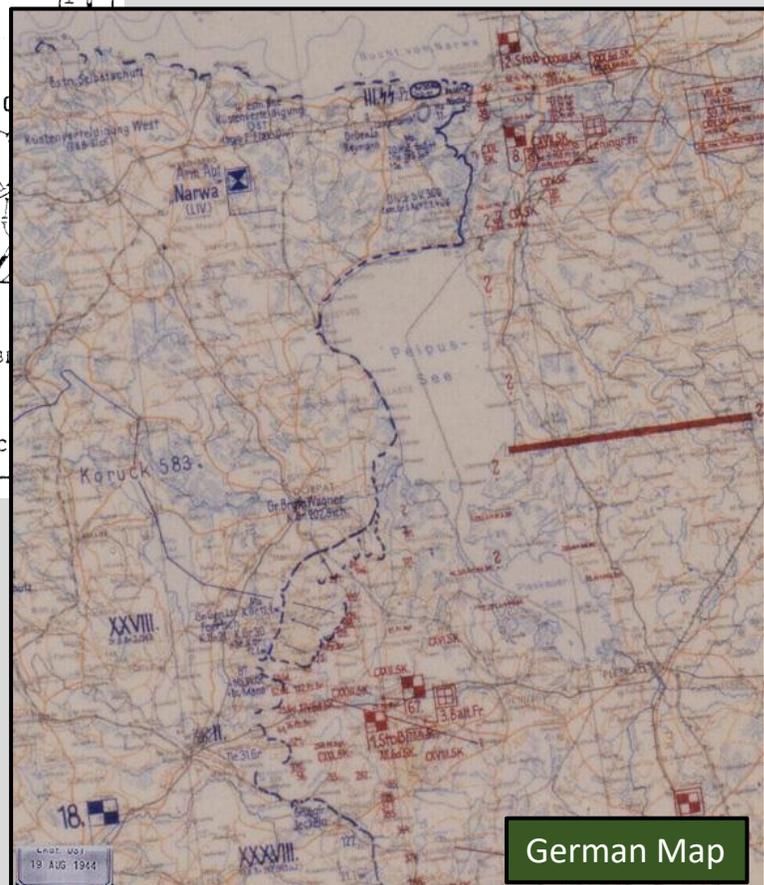
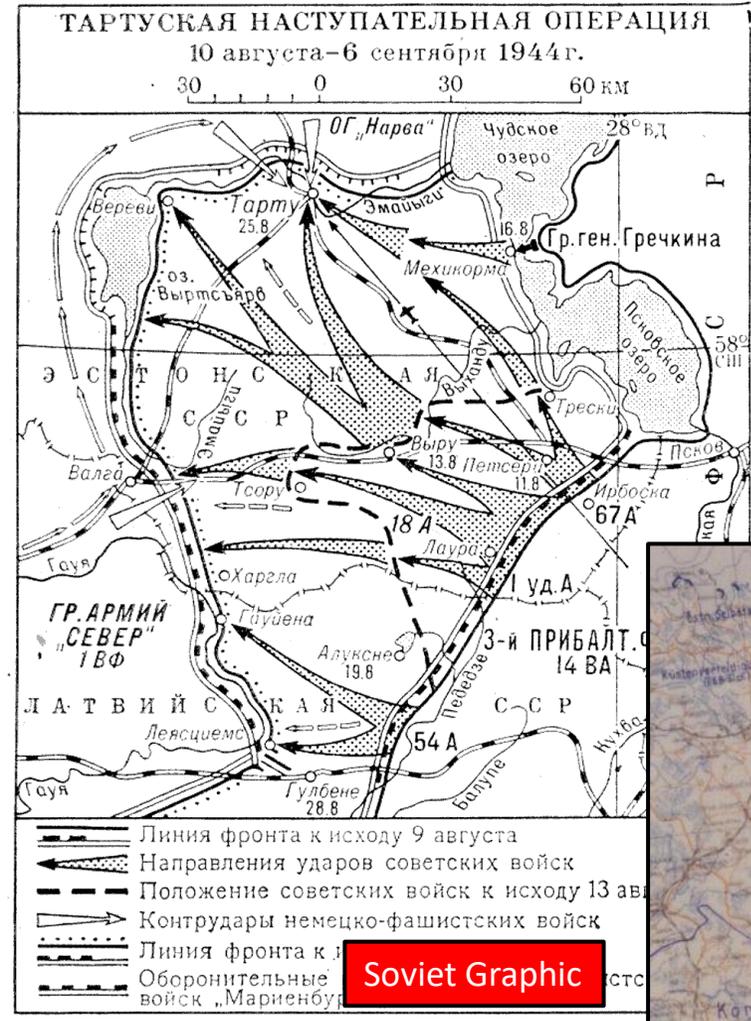
## The Battle of Tartu / Battle of the Emajogi 10 Aug – 06 Sep 1944

### Operational Objectives

### Operational Objectives

- Quick seizure of Estonia
- Encircle Army Detachment Narva
- Initial Tactical Objective – capture the city of Tartu (Dorpat)

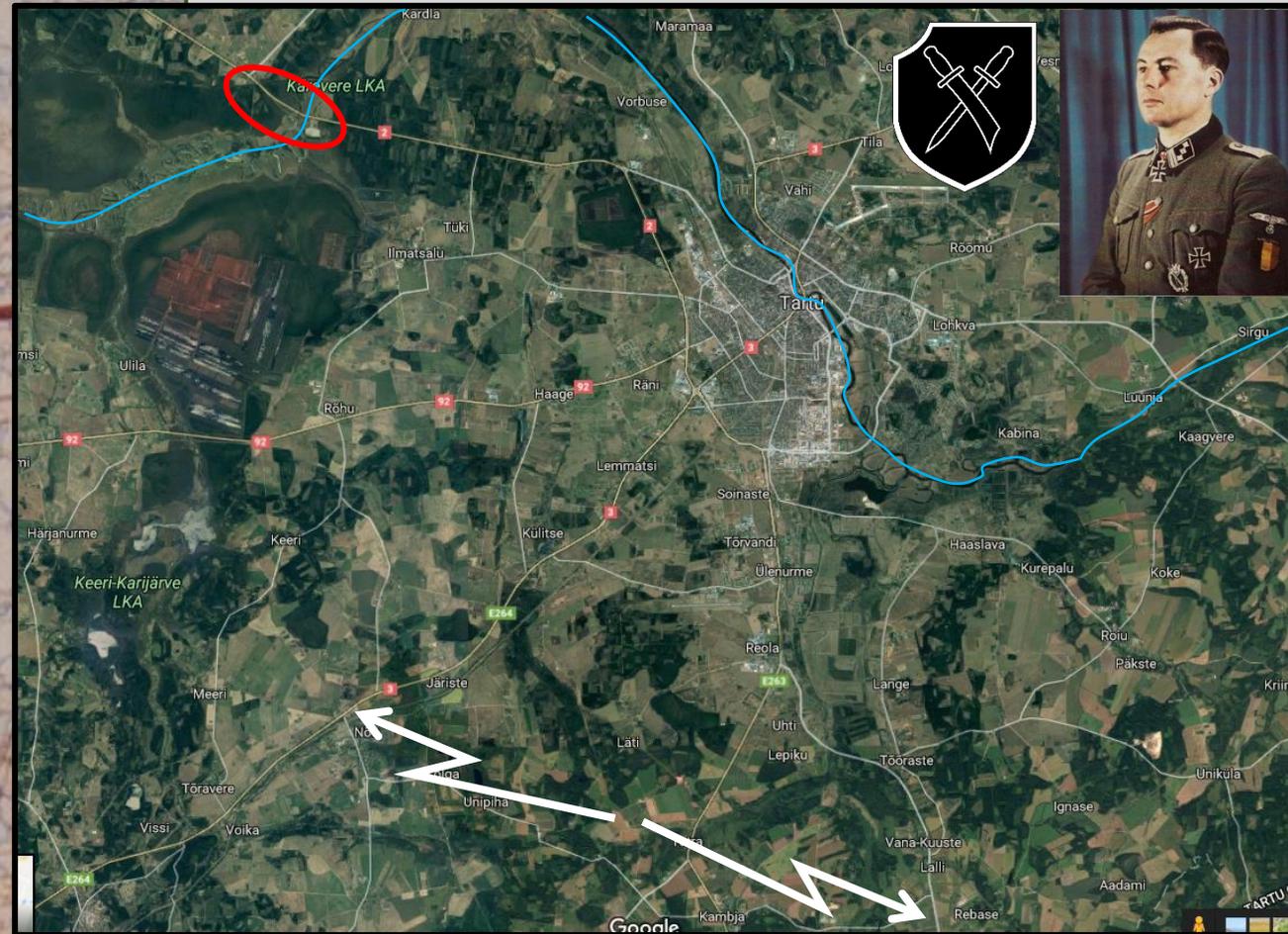
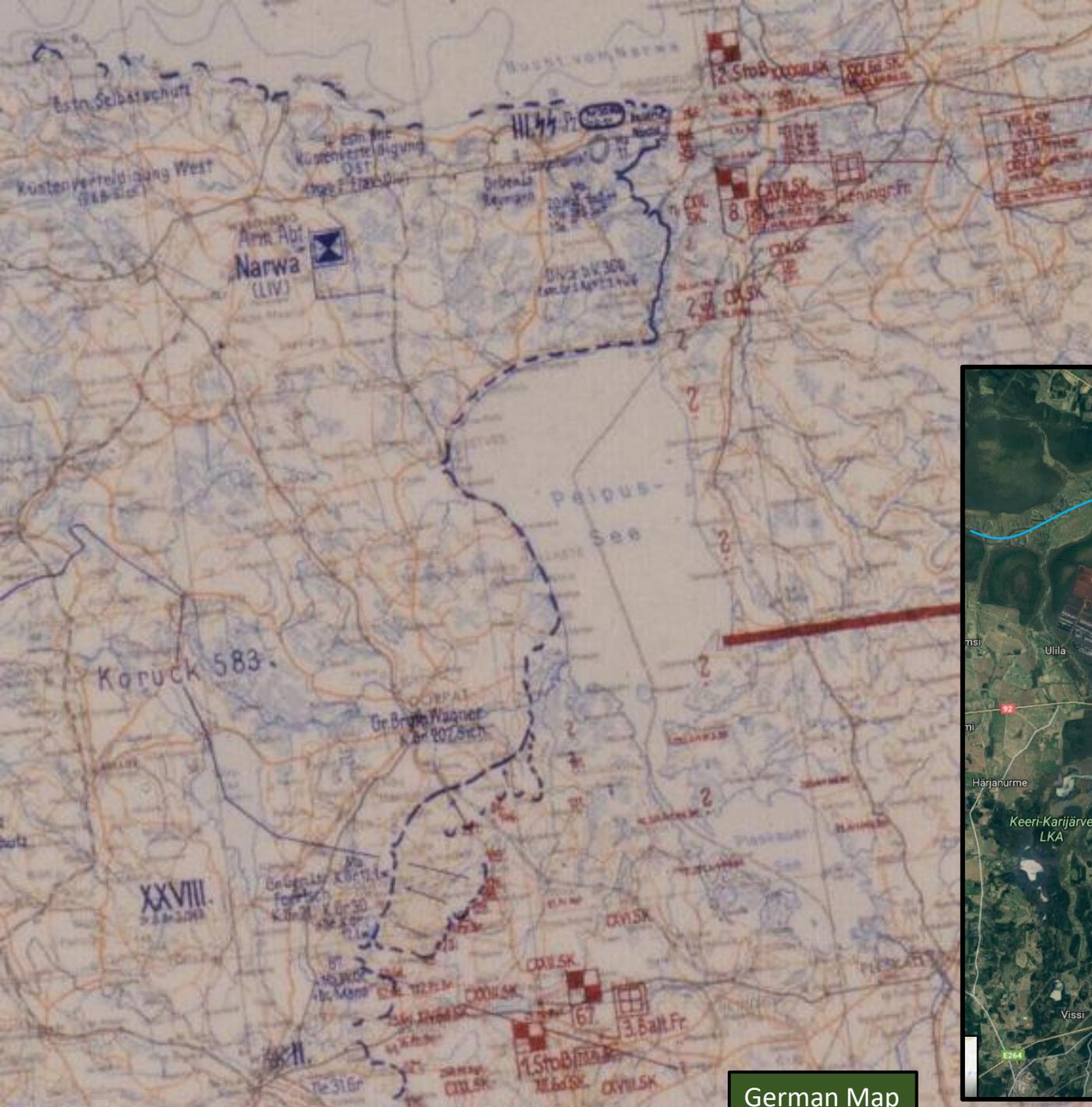
- Defeat Soviet Offensive
  - Establish covering force South of Tartu (Dorpat) in order to allow time to prepare defensive positions
  - Defend Emajogi (Embach) River
- Re-establish / maintain tie with 18<sup>th</sup> Army at Lake Wirzsee (Vortsjarv)



# The Tartu Offensive

## The Battle of Tartu / Battle of the Emajõgi

10 Aug – 06 Sep 1944



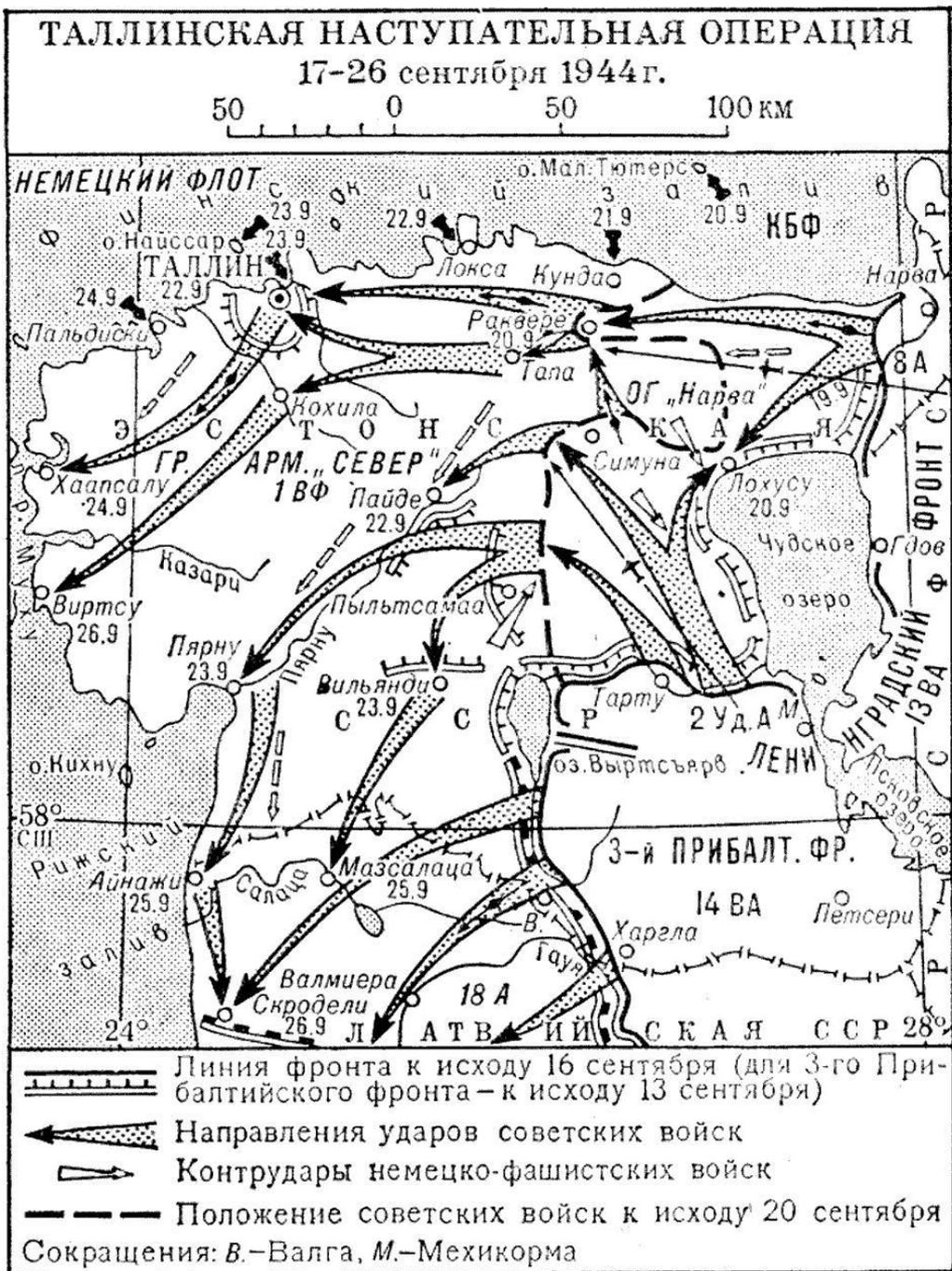
# The BIG Picture: Soviet Offensives and German Counter-Actions

- 10 JUN 1944: Vyborg – Petrozavodsk Offensive (Finland) Begins
  - 22 JUN 1944: Operation Bagration
    - 10 JUL 1944: Army Group North and Army Group Center lose contact
    - 05-31 JUL 1944: Phase III – Siauliai Offensive
  - 12 JUL 1944: STAVKA orders Leningrad Front to transfer offensive units from Finnish Front
  - 23-25 JUL 1944: Evacuation of Narva
  - 24 JUL 1944: Soviet Offensive IVO Narva
  - 27-29 JUL 1944: Battle of the Tannenberg Line
  - 30 JUL 1944: Soviets reach the Baltic Sea at Tukums, Latvia (south of Riga)
    - 15 AUG – 27 AUG 1944: Operation Doppelkopf
  - 10 AUG 1944: Tartu Offensive
    - 10 AUG – 06 SEP 1944: Defense of Tartu and Emajogi (Embach) River Line
      - 23 AUG 1944: Battle of Noo (German covering forces)
      - 25 AUG 1944: Soviet Bridgeheads across the Emajogi (Embach) established and Tartu seized
      - 30 AUG 1944: Karevere Bridge Recaptured
      - 4-6 SEP 1944: Attempt to recapture Tartu
- 04 SEP 1944: Finland signs armistice with Soviet Union
  - 14-16 SEP 1944: Riga Offensive
  - 16 SEP 1944: Hitler agrees to withdraw units from Estonia
  - 17 SEP 1944: Tallinn Offensive
    - 17 SEP - Operation Aster Begins
    - 22 SEP 1944: Seizure of Tallinn (Reval)
    - 26 SEP 1944: Seizure of mainland Estonia
    - 29 SEP – 24 NOV 1944: Moonsund Landing Operation
- 05 OCT 1944: Battle of Memel – Army Group North cut off from Army Group Center
  - 13 OCT 1944: Riga seized



# The Tallinn Offensive

## 17 – 26 Sep 1944



### Operational Objectives

- Quick seizure of Tallinn
- Trap Army Detachment Narva
- Initial Tactical Objective – Break through Emajogi front

### Operational Objectives

- Withdraw forces from Estonia
  - Two fronts – 90 degree and 180 degree wheeling movements
- Maintain tie with 18<sup>th</sup> Army at Lake Wirzsee (Vortsjarv)

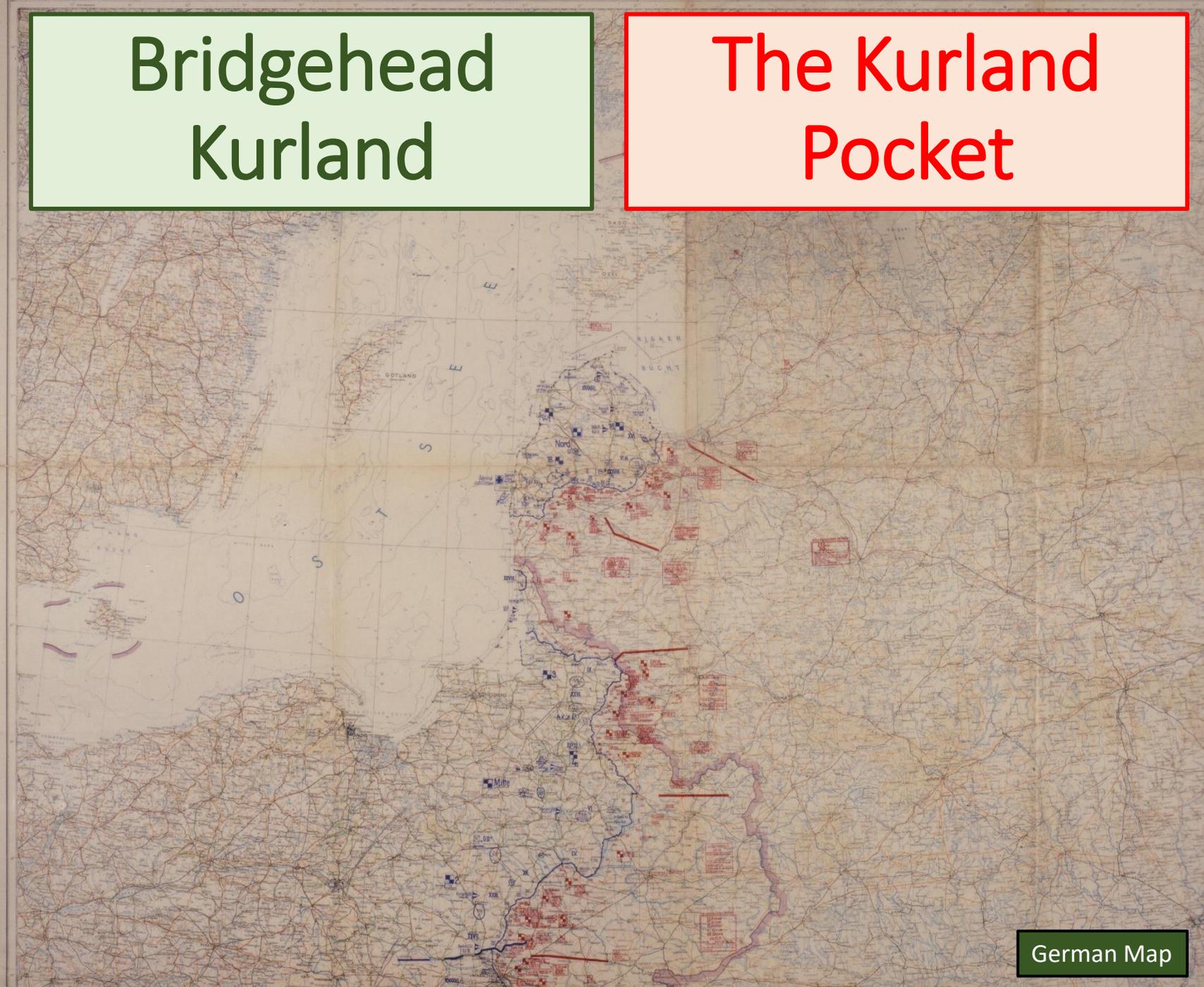
# The BIG Picture: Soviet Offensives and German Counter-Actions

- 10 JUN 1944: Vyborg – Petrozavodsk Offensive (Finland) Begins
  - 22 JUN 1944: Operation Bagration
    - 10 JUL 1944: Army Group North and Army Group Center lose contact
    - 05-31 JUL 1944: Phase III – Siauliai Offensive
  - 12 JUL 1944: STAVKA orders Leningrad Front to transfer offensive units from Finnish Front
  - 23-25 JUL 1944: Evacuation of Narva
  - 24 JUL 1944: Soviet Offensive IVO Narva
  - 27-29 JUL 1944: Battle of the Tannenberg Line
  - 30 JUL 1944: Soviets reach the Baltic Sea at Tukums, Latvia (south of Riga)
    - 15 AUG – 27 AUG 1944: Operation Doppelkopf
  - 10 AUG 1944: Tartu Offensive
    - 10 AUG – 06 SEP 1944: Defense of Tartu and Emajogi (Embach) River Line
      - 23 AUG 1944: Battle of Noo (German covering forces)
      - 25 AUG 1944: Soviet Bridgeheads across the Emajogi (Embach) established and Tartu seized
      - 30 AUG 1944: Karevere Bridge Recaptured
      - 4-6 SEP 1944: Attempt to recapture Tartu
  - 04 SEP 1944: Finland signs armistice with Soviet Union
  - 14-16 SEP 1944: Riga Offensive
  - 16 SEP 1944: Hitler agrees to withdraw units from Estonia
  - 17 SEP 1944: Tallinn Offensive
    - 17 SEP - Operation Aster Begins
    - 22 SEP 1944: Seizure of Tallinn (Reval)
    - 26 SEP 1944: Seizure of mainland Estonia
    - 29 SEP – 24 NOV 1944: Moonsund Landing Operation
- 05 OCT 1944: Battle of Memel – Army Group North cut off from Army Group Center
  - 13 OCT 1944: Riga seized



Bridgehead  
Kurland

The Kurland  
Pocket



German Map

# DEW Narva Battlefield Staff Ride

# Readings - All

## General Overview:

- The Battle of Narva (1944): [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Narva\\_\(1944\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Narva_(1944))
- Narva Offensives: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narva\\_Offensive\\_\(15%E2%80%9328\\_February\\_1944\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narva_Offensive_(15%E2%80%9328_February_1944)) & [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narva\\_Offensive\\_\(1%E2%80%9334\\_March\\_1944\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narva_Offensive_(1%E2%80%9334_March_1944)) & [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narva\\_Offensive\\_\(18%E2%80%9324\\_March\\_1944\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narva_Offensive_(18%E2%80%9324_March_1944))
- Battle of the Tannenberg Line: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Tannenberg\\_Line](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Tannenberg_Line) & [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narva\\_Offensive\\_\(July\\_1944\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narva_Offensive_(July_1944))
- Tartu Offensive: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tartu\\_Offensive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tartu_Offensive)
- Tallinn Offensive: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tallinn\\_Offensive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tallinn_Offensive)

## German Perspective (primary source):

- Reichelt, Paul; "The Battles of Armeeabteilung Narva, 2 February-31 May 1944" in Newton, Steven, *Retreat from Leningrad: Army Group North 1944/1945*. Atglen, PA: Schiffer Military History, 1995: 122-137.
- Reichelt, Paul; "The Battles of Armeeabteilung Narva, June-September 1944" in Newton, Steven, *Retreat from Leningrad: Army Group North 1944/1945*. Atglen, PA: Schiffer Military History, 1995: 140-173.

## Operational Level account of latter portion of Baltic fighting.

- Mitcham, Jr., Samuel; *Crumbling Empire: The German Defeat in the East, 1944*. London: Praeger, 2001: page 117-154.

## The Army University Press recommends other works for consideration:

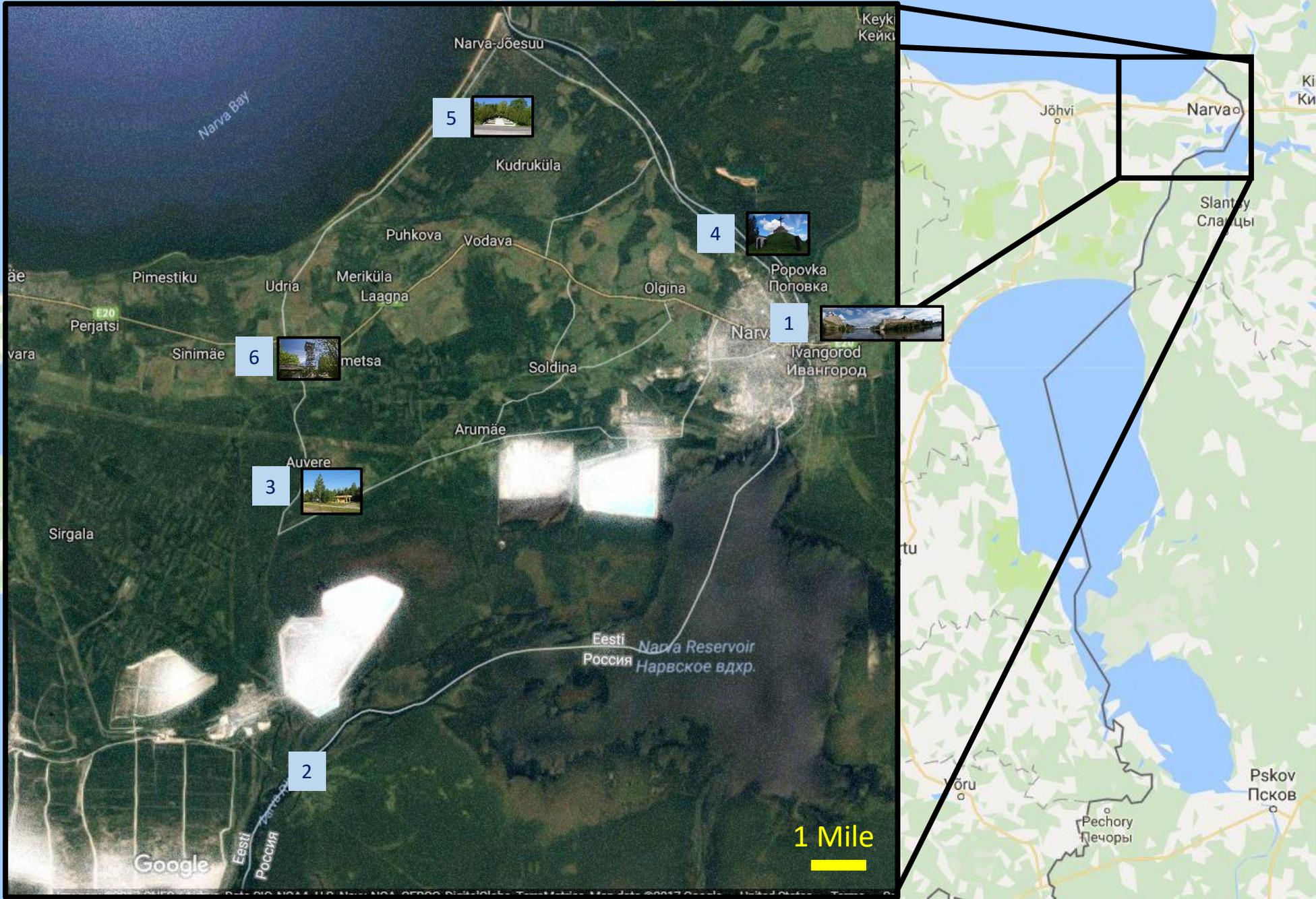
**Buttar, Prit. *Between Giants: The Battle for the Baltics in World War II*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013.**

**Baxter, Ian. *The Soviet Baltic Offensive, 1944-45*. Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2022.**

**Del Gaudio, Michael Andrew, MAJ (USMC). "Operational Art and the Narva Front 1944, Sinimaed and Campaign Planning," Dissertation, University of Liverpool, 2012. [PDF available online]**

**Disclaimer #1 on Readings:** There were a lot of SS units fighting in Army Group Narva – thus, there are more than a few books from the SS perspective. You'll get a full dose of "heroic fighting."

**Disclaimer #2 on Readings:** We're missing the Soviet perspective. Unfortunately, David Glantz has not written a book on Red Army operations in the Baltics (his *The Battle for Leningrad: 1941-1944* includes the initial portion of the fighting around Narva (from FEB – MAR/APR)). Unfortunately, the Soviet Union was a very closed society in terms of disclosing information and/or no one has translated what is available.



# DEW Narva Staff Ride Stands # 1-6

**Note:**  
Stands are Numbered  
Chronologically

# Stand #1 –Hermann Castle

## (on it, by it?)

Discussion Point 1A: Discuss German retreat from Leningrad and Soviet offensive

Readings:

- Glantz, David; *The Battle for Leningrad: 1941-1944*, Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002; Page 373-384, 388-391.

Discussion Point 1B: Discuss German defense of their “bridgehead” on the East side of the River in Ivangorad. Discuss tactical challenges. Discuss operational challenge of extended frontage based upon strategic requirement.

Readings:

The Army University Press Staff Ride Team recommends the following works for consideration as sources:

Buttar, Prit. *Between Giants: The Battle for the Baltics in World War II*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013.

Baxter, Ian. *The Soviet Baltic Offensive, 1944-45*. Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2022.

Del Gaudio, Michael Andrew, MAJ (USMC). "Operational Art and the Narva Front 1944, Sinimaed and Campaign Planning," Dissertation, University of Liverpool, 2012. [PDF available free online]

Discussion Point 1C: Discuss the historical importance of Narva.



# Stand #2 – Krivasoo Bridgehead

Discussion Point 2A: Initiative of the Soviets in searching for a weakly defended place to cross the “Panther Line.”

Readings:

- Glantz, David; *The Battle for Leningrad: 1941-1944*, Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002; Page 373-384, 388-391.

Discussion Point 2B: Engineering effort to construct a bridge capable of bearing tanks.

Discussion Point 2C: German efforts to destroy the crossing point



# Stand #3 – Auvere

## (somewhere by the rail line)

Discussion Point 3A: Oriented to the South. Discuss the initial defense of Narva and the “East Sack” and West Sack” from around 06 FEB to end of MAR 1944 and Soviet attempts to seize this key logistic/communications point.

Readings:

- Glantz, David; *The Battle for Leningrad: 1941-1944*, Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002; Page 373-384, 388-391, 401-405.
- Buttar, Prit. *Between Giants: The Battle for the Baltics in World War II*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013.
- Baxter, Ian. *The Soviet Baltic Offensive, 1944-45*. Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2022.
- Del Gaudio, Michael Andrew, MAJ (USMC). "Operational Art and the Narva Front 1944, Sinimaed and Campaign Planning," Dissertation, University of Liverpool, 2012. [PDF available free online]

Discussion Point 3B: Oriented to the South. Discuss German attempts to reduce the Soviet bridgehead. Otto Carius vignette discussion.

Readings:

- Carius, Otto; *Tigers in the Mud: The Combat Career of German Panzer Commander Otto Carius*; Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1992; page 61-136.

Discussion Point 3C: If possible and sight lines permit, orient back to the West and discuss the Battle of the Tannenburg Line from the Soviet perspective looking toward the Blue Hills / Sinimaed Hills.



# Stand #4 – Siivertsi

## (by the Russian 1700 monument)

Discussion Point 4A: Discuss Soviet attempts to cross the Narva River early in the Campaign (while frozen) to establish a bridgehead and German counter-actions.

Readings:

- Glantz, David; *The Battle for Leningrad: 1941-1944*, Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002; Page 373-384, 388-391

Discussion Point 4B: Discuss German actions to reduce the bridgehead.

Readings:

- Carius, Otto; *Tigers in the Mud: The Combat Career of German Panzer Commander Otto Carius*; Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1992; page 60.

Discussion Point 4C: Discuss the 1700 Battle and the Russian soldier's retreat across the river



# Stand #5 – Merikula Landing site (by the monument)

Discussion Point 5A: A2AD, Intel, Joint Forcible Entry Operations, Joint Operations

Readings:

- Carius, Otto; *Tigers in the Mud: The Combat Career of German Panzer Commander Otto Carius*; Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1992; page 95-96.
- Buttar, Prit. *Between Giants: The Battle for the Baltics in World War II*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013.
- Baxter, Ian. *The Soviet Baltic Offensive, 1944-45*. Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2022.
- Del Gaudio, Michael Andrew, MAJ (USMC). "Operational Art and the Narva Front 1944, Sinimaed and Campaign Planning," Dissertation, University of Liverpool, 2012. [PDF available free online]



# Stand #6 – Blue/Sinimaed Hills or Childrens Home Position

## (in or by the tower)

Discussion Point 6A: Oriented to the South/Southeast. Discuss the initial defense of Narva and the Soviet seizure of position on the west side of the Narva River (around 06 FEB 1944 to end of Mar 1944 (or even mid-July 1944))

Readings:

- Carius, Otto; *Tigers in the Mud: The Combat Career of German Panzer Commander Otto Carius*; Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1992; page 61-136.

Discussion Point 6B: Oriented to the East. Discuss the German withdrawal from Narva to the Tannenburg Line

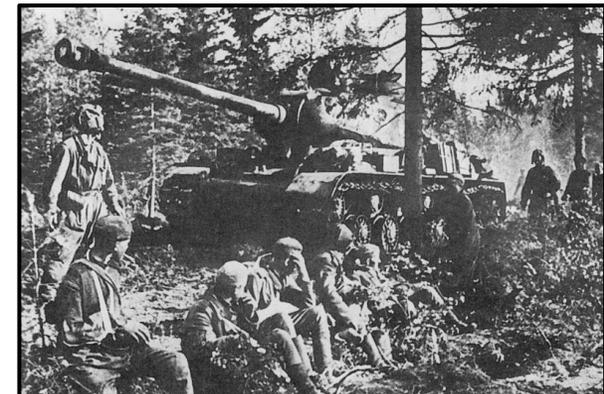
Readings:

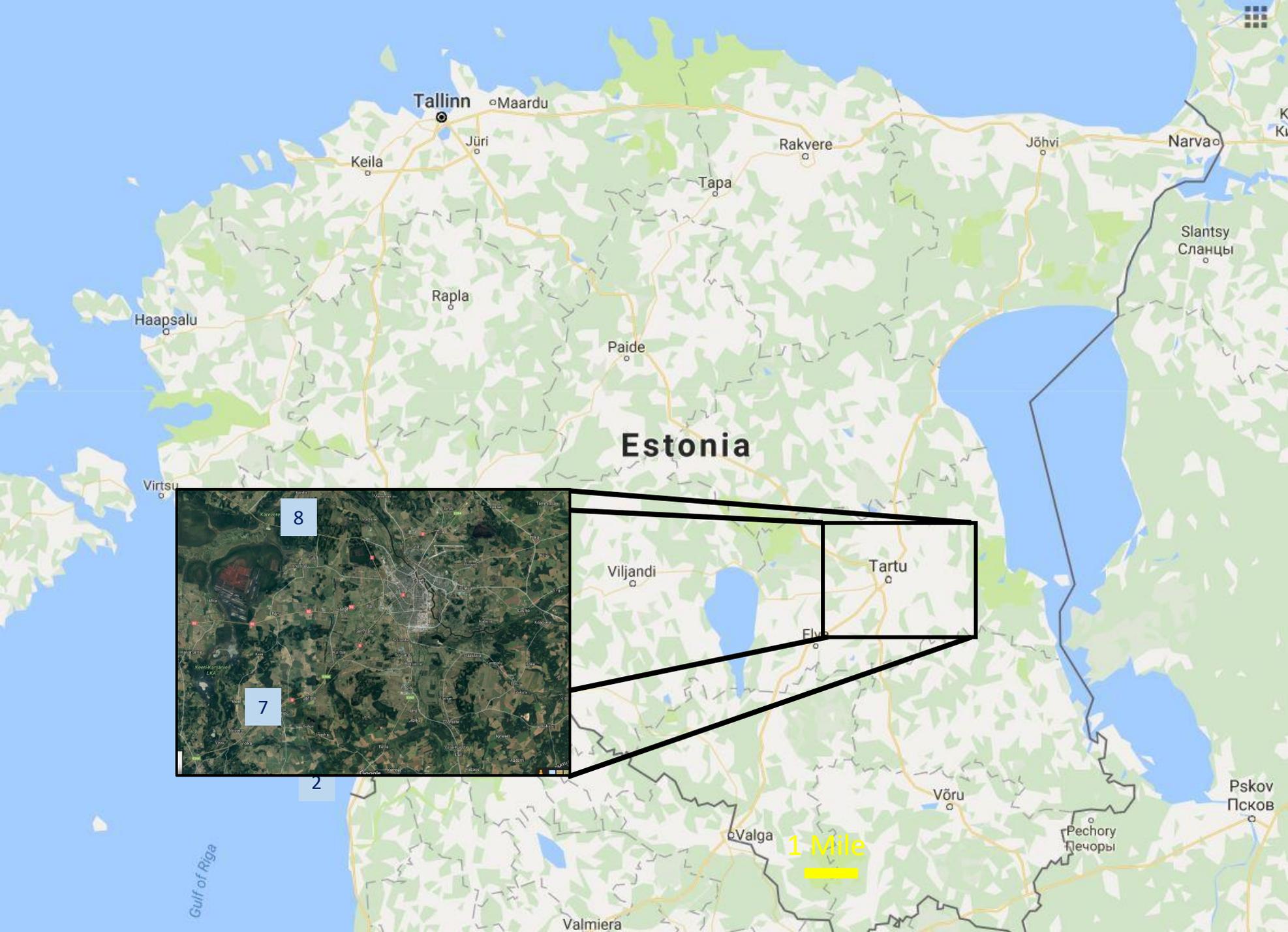
- Buttar, Prit. *Between Giants: The Battle for the Baltics in World War II*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013.
- Baxter, Ian. *The Soviet Baltic Offensive, 1944-45*. Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2022.

Discussion Point 6C: Oriented to the East. Discuss the Battle of the Tannenburg Line (25 JUL – 10 AUG 1944).

Readings:

- Buttar, Prit. *Between Giants: The Battle for the Baltics in World War II*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013.
- Baxter, Ian. *The Soviet Baltic Offensive, 1944-45*. Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2022.





DEW  
Narva  
Staff  
Ride  
Stands #  
7-8

**Note:**  
Stands are Numbered  
Chronologically



# Stand #7 – Noo

(South of the town, before the Elva Jogi River)

Discussion Point 7A: Soviet operational breakout from vicinity of Pskov

Discussion Point 7B: German operational challenges (18<sup>th</sup> Army and Army Detachment Narva) options

Discussion Point 7C: German Covering Force operations with Leon Degrelle vignette

Readings:

- Buttar, Prit. *Between Giants: The Battle for the Baltics in World War II*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013.
- Baxter, Ian. *The Soviet Baltic Offensive, 1944-45*. Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2022.
- Del Gaudio, Michael Andrew, MAJ (USMC). "Operational Art and the Narva Front 1944, Sinimaed and Campaign Planning," Dissertation, University of Liverpool, 2012. [PDF available free online]



# Stand #8 – Karevere Bridge and Crossroads

(By the Bridge and at the Crossroads)

Discussion Point 8A: German defensive line on Emajoji (Embach) River

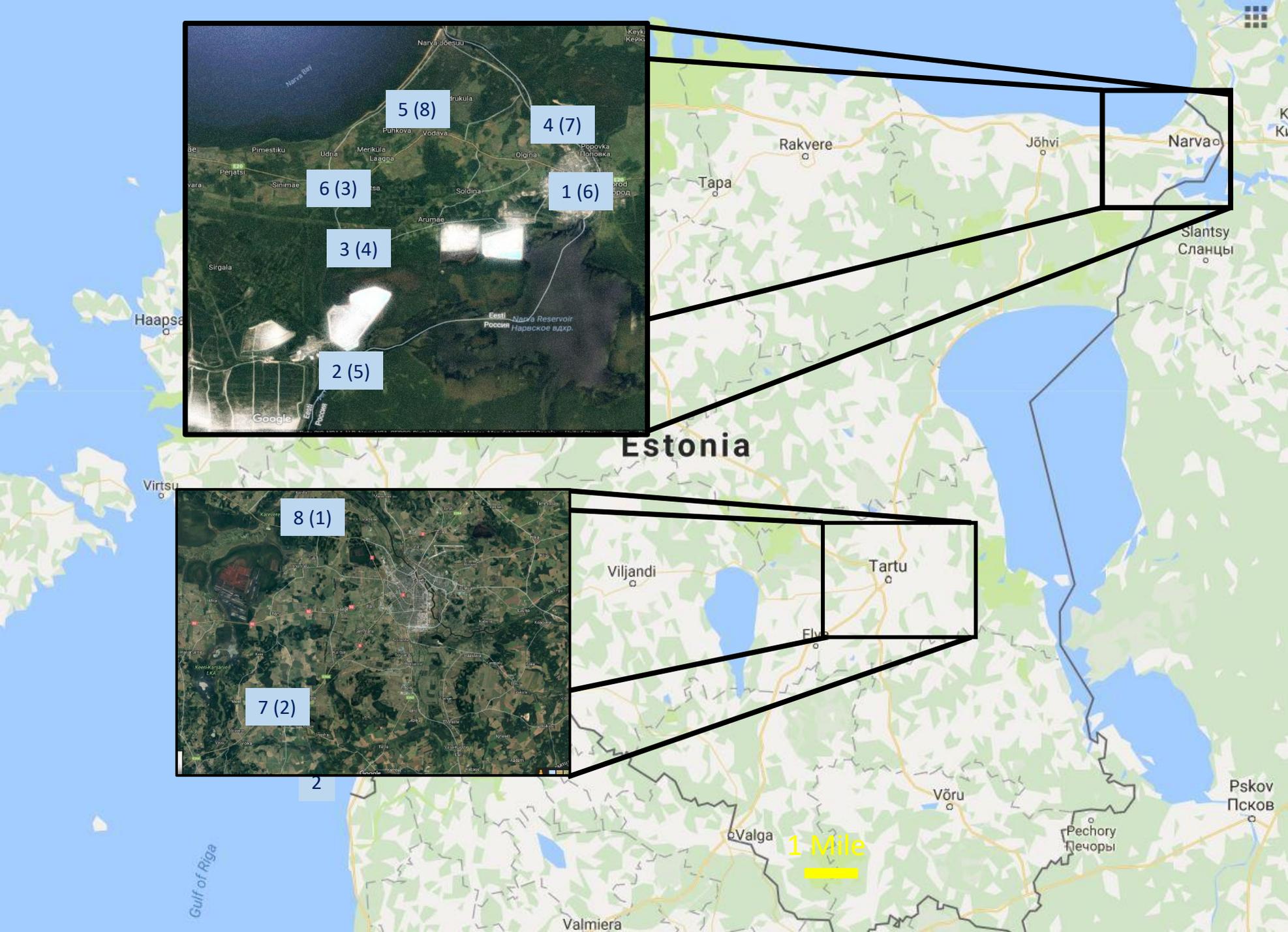
Discussion Point 8B: Soviet seizure of the Karevere Bridge and road crossroads

Discussion Point 8C: German attempts to reduce the bridgehead, recapture the bridge, and destroy the bridge with Leon Degrelle vignette

Readings:

- Buttar, Prit. *Between Giants: The Battle for the Baltics in World War II*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013.
- Baxter, Ian. *The Soviet Baltic Offensive, 1944-45*. Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2022.
- Del Gaudio, Michael Andrew, MAJ (USMC). "Operational Art and the Narva Front 1944, Sinimaed and Campaign Planning," Dissertation, University of Liverpool, 2012. [PDF available free online]





Probable  
Order of  
Stands for  
DEW Trip  
(in parenthesis)

# Questions?

