

After initial success the German troops got stuck in Russia - Why?

The weather - Heavy rain in October blocked German advance with seas of mud, and heavy frosts in November exposed them to all the horrors of a winter campaign in Russia.

Increased resistance - The German forces encountered astonishing resistance from military and civilians alike. Reinforced by the fear of being shot by their own side and the NKVD if they fled from the battlefield, the Russian military fought until they died.

The resistance was also a manifestation of intense patriotism, of reaction to ill-advised German behavior in the territories they occupied, and an acute awareness of the nature of the German threat.

A lot of things were overseen by the German Wehrmacht in terms of equipment and supplies. While Hitler estimated that the Wehrmacht would break the Red Army within weeks because of its lack of experience and equipment, the complete opposite happened. Being that Russia is a large country and was still in a modernizing state, the rail- and dirt roads were both primitive and for the mechanized German army, useless. The German army marched right ahead of its line of supplies, making it much harder for themselves to be able to keep advancing

Weather - The most known element to have cost the Germans their victory against the USSR was the awful Russian cold. This, even throughout the summer caused the German advance to stall only 2 miles from Moscow, the Russian capital. Unfortunately for the Germans, the Russian weather was not what the army was accustomed to. During the summer rain and mud destroyed the roads, making them almost impossible to transport tanks on. In the winter it wasn't only tanks and trucks that got stalled, but the Germans who were deep in Russian territory were now in summer uniforms, dying of cold. Their Russian counterparts were wearing fur hats and wool uniforms which kept them warm. The German winter equipment along with winter weapons were all stuck in the back of the line because of Hitler who kept on pushing for ammunition and fuel to reach the front. The little fuel the men received was to preserve some kind of heat and to keep the machines working. This weather led to a complete standstill during the march for Moscow which gave the Russians time to recuperate and swiftly break their tired flanks apart so that they could drive them back. Moscow had been opened from every direction with their flanks exposed but because the German army was unable to move, the opportunity to seize the city was lost.

Logistics - As the Soviets seemed to turn out horrible in combat during the first month of Operation Barbarossa, Hitler decided to continue his offensive without waiting for supplies to catch up, so as to win a quick battle over the USSR. As it turned out, this was a horrible plan. The German High Command had already advised Hitler not to order a massive offensive without having supplies catching up but their opinions were disregarded — the plan was set in motion. For the next months, Hitler's army lost over 700,000 men and were stalled outside of Moscow with the famous "stand or die"-order. Because of the early winnings, the Soviets were now seen as weak, especially because of the terrible performance against the Finns during the Winter War which ended a year earlier. Here, the Soviets were stopped by the small nation of Finland for nearly 2 months without being able to budge them. Also, with the great purges of 1937 in mind, Hitler believed that the army was lacking experience and, more importantly, experienced leadership. The Red Army was ridiculed for running from combat, but when the winter came they set their T-34s onto their tracks and rolled out in the snow,

faster than ever. Because they had wider tracks they were a lot easier to maneuver around in the snow, unlike the German panzers that were stuck on the front. The German winter equipment along with winter weapons were all stuck in the back of the line because of Hitler who kept on pushing for ammunition and fuel to reach the front. The little fuel the men received was to preserve some kind of heat and to keep the machines working.

What were the main reasons behind the German collapse at Stalingrad 1942/1943?

- **Inferior forces** - much of the German flanks were made up of Hungarian, Romanian, and Italian troops, who lacked the equipment and training of the German forces.
- **Lack of mobility** - one of the strongest assets to the German army was its mobility, its capability to move and amass forces too quickly for the enemy to react. This didn't work in Stalingrad, as most of the fighting took place within an urban environment.
- **Weather** - Russian fall/winter struck the German troops as they were only wearing light clothing in juxtaposition to the Russian troops' heavy clothing.
- **Germany was stretched too thin** - the German air force was vital to its success early in the war, but as more and more territory was claimed they began to spread too thinly, greatly reducing their effectiveness.
- **Scarcity of supplies** - Stalingrad lay at the end of a very long supply line. While Germany was able to reach the city, it wasn't able to funnel enough troops or supplies to the city to finish pushing out the Soviets. Instead, the Soviets were able to gather enough troops to counterattack and cut off the 300,000 or so Germans in the city of Stalingrad. Additionally, the Russians burned almost every town that the Germans came upon in Russia so that they could not get any supplies and food from the town(s).
- **Hitler's stand and hold order.** If the Germans had bypassed the city, cutting it off on the vine and retaining mobility, then the German Army could have dealt with the city later. As it was, by standing in a sloggy contest, they allowed just this to happen to them, as the Russian reinforcements bypassed the city and cut off 6th panzer army.
- **The interference of Hitler** - The generals wanted to pull back from Stalingrad once they felt the strength of the Russian resistance as they did not want to be caught there fighting a winter war far from their supply bases. Hitler was obsessed with taking Stalingrad at all costs since it was named after Stalin and he thought it would be a significant boost to German morale. The outcome was that the Russians were too brave and smart to be defeated in the city and eventually Russian troops encircled the city from north and south cutting off the Germans from being resupplied, which led to the surrender of the Germans on February 2, 1943.
- **The Germans did not know the land as the Russians did** - The terrain and scale of the attack hindered the German's ability to take Stalingrad. Their offense stretched across 500 miles and if they gained the land that would come with Stalingrad, including the Caucasus Mountains, they would gain 1,300 miles of territory. The Caucasus Mountains caused trouble for the Germans from the beginning. The mountains were heavily reinforced with Soviet troops who knew the land much better than the Germans because it was their home (Showalter). There were not enough troops in the Caucasus because the majorities were stationed at Stalingrad; Hitler believed that Stalingrad was so vital to their campaign that he would not let troops from other countries take the lead in the fighting.
- **NKVD...**