



Oil matters. Ever since mankind has used oil to fuel planes, cars, trucks and other vehicles, oil has been vital to growing economies.

Oil mattered to Adolf Hitler. When he and his senior staff created "Operation Blue," Hitler focused his attention on oil fields located in the southwestern region of the USSR. He wanted that oil.

We can simplify Hitler's strategy by highlighting two main points:

1. If the Soviet Army did not have enough fuel, it would collapse.
2. If Germany's military had access to Soviet oil, it would prosper.

"Operation Blue" was Hitler's plan of attack to capture the Soviet oil fields. His military would advance on Grozny (in the Caucasus) and Maikop (near the Black Sea).

Hitler was single-minded in this objective, as we learn from General Paulus (during the Nuremberg war-crimes trial). On the 1st of June, 1942, Hitler told his High Commanders:

*Either I get the oil of Maikop and Grozny, or I must put an end to this war.* (See the transcript of the 56th day of trial when General Rudenko is putting questions to General Paulus on February 11, 1946. The image below, from a Russian-language postcard, pictures some of the 1500 oil wells near Grozny by the 1970s.)



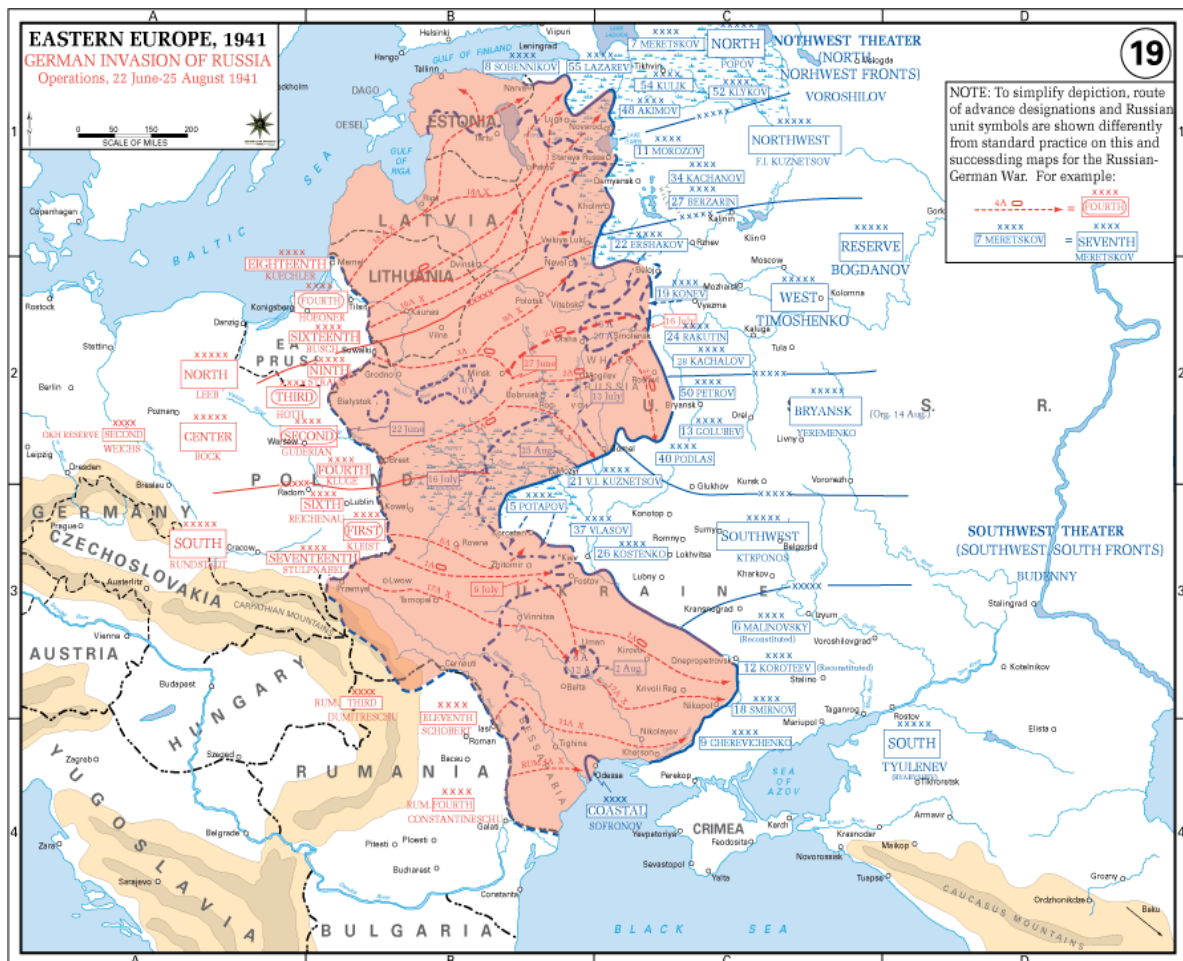
Нефтяные вышки - Старые промысла

Hitler's actual plans, to capture the Soviet-controlled oil fields, ended-up in Stalin's hands (although he didn't believe they were real). We learn [more about that incident](#) from the UK's History Learning Site:

*Operation Blue began on June 22nd 1942, exactly a year to the day of the start of Operation Barbarossa [code name for Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union]. However, it was very nearly delayed when an army major was shot down while flying over and surveying the Russian lines.*

*He had taken a briefcase with him containing the plans for Operation Blue for that sector and it fell into the hands of Russian troops. The briefcase was immediately sent to Moscow and its contents studied.*

*Stalin decided that its contents were a deliberate ploy to fool the commanders of the Red Army that the attack was going to be in the south when actually it was going to be against Moscow. Therefore he refused to order the movement of troops away from Moscow to the south. No one in the Red Army's hierarchy was willing to argue with Stalin.*



Hitler, meanwhile, made an interesting discovery. As he was looking-over maps, plotting the direction his troops would take as they moved south to the oil fields, he noticed the name of a city: Stalingrad.

What if the German military were to capture the city named after the Soviet leader? Wouldn't that be a triumphant coup for Hitler?

In his desire to humiliate Stalin, Hitler decided to expand "Operation Blue." En route to capturing the oil fields, his men would also subjugate Stalingrad.

General Ewald von Kleist commanded the First Panzer Army in the region. After the war, he said:

*The capture of Stalingrad was subsidiary to the main aim. At the start [of Operation Blue] Stalingrad was no more than a name on the map to us.*

As we can see on the map, depicted above, Hitler changed strategy by separating his men into two groups. The UK's History Learning Site tells us more:

*He ordered that Army Group South should be divided in two. Group A was to push for the oilfields of the Caucasus and Maikop before moving on to Baku. Group B was to engage the Russians in the region west of the River Don. Therefore the force that was to attack the oilfields was halved in terms of its strength.*

*Also the two-army groups were to act independently as opposed to supporting one another. The Sixth Army under Paulus, the largest formation in Group B, was stripped of the support of the 4th Panzer as this group was ordered to support Group A.*

*However, Hitler later reversed this decision such was the chaos that his leadership could cause. He had divided in two Army Group South, moved a Panzer formation away and then ordered its return to Group B.*

Oil mattered to Hitler but his plans, for the Soviet-controlled oil fields, were never realized.

### ISSUES AND QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

**If Hitler could not "get the oil of Maikop and Grozny" - which he could not because his military were unable to capture the oil fields - why didn't he end the war like he said he would ("or I must put an end to this war")?**

**Do you think it likely that Hitler realized he was not invincible, after all, when he was unable to capture (let alone control) the Soviet-held oil fields? Why do you think he was willing to continue the fighting, for so much longer, when ending the war early could have saved so many lives?**

**Do Hitler's actions in continuing the war, even when he could not capture the desired oil fields, give us evidence that Hitler cared (or did not care) about saving human lives? Explain your answer.**

## Credits:

Map image online, courtesy OnWar.com.

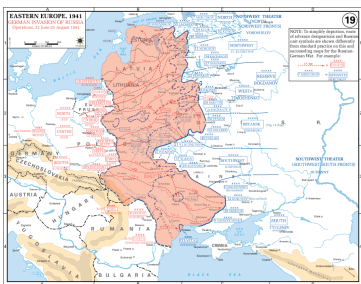
Maps linked in the description above, and displayed in the story itself, are online courtesy U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Quotes above, describing events during "Operation Blue," from [HistoryLearningSite.co.UK](http://HistoryLearningSite.co.UK).

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:  
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Oil-and-Operation-Blue-Hitler-Wants-Russian-Oil0>

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