General Friedrich Paulus (23 Sep 42 1890 – 1 February 1957) was an officer in the German Army from 1910 to 1945. After leaving college without a degree, Paulus joined the 111th Infantry Regiment as an officer cadet in February 1910. When World War I began, Paulus's regiment was part of the thrust into France and he saw action in the Vosges and around Arras in the autumn of 1914. After a leave of absence due to illness, he joined the Alpenkorps as a staff officer, serving in Macedonia, France, Romania and Serbia. By the end of the war, he was a captain.

After the Armistice, Paulus was a brigade adjutant with the Freikorps. He was chosen as one of only 4,000 officers to serve in the Reichswehr, the defensive army that the Treaty of Versailles had limited to 100,000 men. He was assigned to the 13th Infantry Regiment at Stuttgart as a company commander. He served in various staff positions for over a decade (1921–1933) and then briefly commanded a motorized battalion (1934–1935) before being named chief of staff for the panzer headquarters in October 1935. This was a new formation under the direction of Oswald Lutz that directed the training and development of the tank forces of the German army.

In February 1938 Paulus was appointed Chief of Staff to Heinz Guderian's new XVI Army Corps which replaced Lutz's command. Guderian described him as ‘brilliantly clever, conscientious, hardworking, original and talented,’ but already had doubts about his decisiveness, toughness and lack of command experience. He remained in that post until May 1939, when he was promoted to major general and became chief of staff for the German Tenth Army, with which he saw service in Poland. The unit was renamed the Sixth Army, and engaged in the spring offensives of 1940 through the Netherlands and Belgium. Paulus was promoted to lieutenant general in August 1940. The following month he was named deputy chief of the German General Staff. In that role he helped draft the plans for the invasion of the Soviet Union.
On 5 January 1942, after German Sixth Army's commander Field Marshal Walther von Reichenau, Paulus' patron, became commander of the entire Army Group South. Paulus, who had never commanded a larger unit than a battalion prior to this time, was promoted to General der Panzertruppe and became commander of the Sixth Army.

Paulus led the drive on Stalingrad during that summer. His troops fought the defending Soviet troops holding Stalingrad over three months in increasingly brutal urban warfare. In November 1942, when the Soviet Red Army launched a massive counter-offensive, code named Operation URANUS, Paulus found himself surrounded by an entire Soviet Army Group. Paulus followed Adolf Hitler's orders to hold his forces' position in Stalingrad under all circumstances, despite the fact that he was completely surrounded by strong Soviet formations. Operation WINTER STORM, a relief effort by Army Group Don under Field Marshal Erich von Manstein was launched in December. Following his orders, Paulus prepared to cooperate with the offensive by trying to break out of Stalingrad. In the meantime, he kept his entire army in fixed defensive positions. Manstein told Paulus that the relief would need assistance from the Sixth Army, but the order to initiate the breakout never came. Paulus remained absolutely firm in obeying the orders he had been given. Manstein's forces were unable to reach Stalingrad on their own and their efforts were eventually halted due to Soviet offensives elsewhere on the front. For the next two months, Paulus and his men fought on. However, the lack of food, ammunition, and equipment, and attrition and the deteriorating physical condition of the German troops gradually wore down the German defenses.

On 7 January 1943, General Konstantin Rokossovsky, Don Front commander, called a cease-fire and offered Paulus' men generous surrender terms: normal rations, medical treatment for the ill and wounded, permission to retain their badges, decorations, uniforms and personal effects. Paulus requested permission from Hitler to surrender. Even though it was obvious the Sixth Army was in an untenable position, the German Army High Command rejected Paulus' request.

When the Soviet's KOLTSO offensive overran the last airstrip supporting Stalingrad on 25 January 1943, the Soviets again offered Paulus a chance to surrender. Paulus radioed Hitler once again for permission to surrender. Paulus stressed that his men were without ammunition or food, and that 18,000 men were wounded and were in immediate need of medical attention. Once again, Hitler ordered Paulus to hold Stalingrad to the death. On 30 January 1943, Paulus informed Hitler that his men were only hours from collapse. Hitler responded by promoting Paulus to Generalfeldmarschall. In deciding to promote Paulus, Hitler noted that there was no known record of a Prussian or German field marshal ever having surrendered. The implication was clear: Paulus was to commit suicide. Paulus, a Roman Catholic, was opposed to suicide and said of Hitler's expectation: "I have no intention of shooting myself for this Bohemian corporal." Paulus and his staff were captured on the morning of 31 January 1943. The remainder of the Sixth Army capitulated two days later.

At first Paulus refused to collaborate with the Soviets. However, after the attempted assassination of Hitler on 20 July 1944, he became a vocal critic of the Nazi regime while in Soviet captivity, joining the Soviet-sponsored National Committee for a Free Germany appealing to Germans to surrender. He later
General Friedrich Paulus
CG, Sixth Army
(Continued)

acted as a witness for the prosecution at the Nuremberg Trials. He was allowed to move to the German Democratic Republic in 1953, two years before the repatriation of the remaining German POWs. He died in Dresden on 1 February 1957.
Sixth Army Chronology

5 Jan 42: Paulus appointed commander of the Sixth Army.

28 Jun 42 Operation BLAU (also known as “Case Blue”) begins.

7 Aug 42 The Sixth Army begins crossing the Don River at Kalach.

19 Aug 42 The Sixth Army is ordered to capture Stalingrad.

23 Aug 42 The VIII Fliegerkorps conducts a German massive air raid on Stalingrad. The 16th Panzer Division, LI Corps, reaches the Volga River at Rynok.

25 Aug 42 Paulus replaces Wietersheim with Hube as commander of the XIV Panzer Corps.

31 Aug 42 The XLVIII Panzer Corps reaches the Stalingrad–Morozovsk Railroad.

2 Sep 42 The Sixth Army’s LI Corps meets elements of the Fourth Panzer Army completing the encirclement of Stalingrad against the Volga River.

12 Sep 42 Paulus meets with Hitler at Vinnitsa.

3 Sep 42 The battle of Stalingrad begins. Units of the XXXXVIII Panzer Corps make their first assaults on Mamaev Kurgan and succeed in gaining part of the hill.

10 Sep 42 The 29th Motorized Infantry Division reaches the Volga River between the 62nd and 64th Armies, effectively splitting the Stalingrad defenses in two.

13 Sep 42 The LI Corps attacks to seize the rest of Mamaev Kurgan and Railroad Station #1.

17 Sep 42 The XLVIII attacks into the southern portion of Stalingrad south of the Tsaritsa River.

18 Sep 42 Heavy fighting takes place around the grain elevator in Stalingrad; the Germans are beaten back.

19 Sep 42 The Soviets counterattack at Mamaev Kurgan and Railroad Station #1. The attack on Mamaev Kurgan succeeds in gaining some ground, but the latter attack fails.

22 Sep 42 The Germans succeed in taking the grain elevator.

26 Sep 42 The areas of Stalingrad south of the Tsaritsa River are secured. Paulus orders the raising of the Nazi flag over the city’s Red Square at the Univermag Department Store, his HQ.

27 Sep 42 The Sixth Army succeeds in occupying an 8 km stretch of the Volga’s east bank. Germans conduct an assault on Mamaev Kurgan to clear remaining Soviet troops and advance about 2 km. Attacks begin in the northern factory workers’ village districts.
30 Sep 42  The Germans attack to clear and seize Orlovka, Stalingrad suburb on the northwest side. The Germans reduce the salient but the Soviets hold the area.

2 Oct 42  Fighting reaches the Barrikady Factory area.

3 Oct 42  Fighting reaches the Red October Factory area.

7 Oct 42  Orlovka is captured. The Germans mount a heavy attacks against the Tractor Factory.

8 Oct 42  Paulus directs a tactical pause to reorganize and prepare for renewed attacks into the three main factory complexes. Many battalions are down to 100 men.

14 Oct 42  The Sixth Army launches a major attack along a 4 km front using 3 infantry and 2 panzer divisions. The focus of the attack is the Tractor Factory.

15 Oct 42  The 14th Panzer Division captures most of the Tractor Factory and reaches the Volga. The 62nd Army is cut in two.

23 Oct 42  The 79th Infantry Division, reinforced by tanks, attacks the Red October Factory and reaches the northwest corner of the complex.

24 Oct 42  The Germans begin a four-day battle for the Barrikady factory that ends with them in control of most of the complex, but not all.

25 Oct 42  The 79th Infantry Division breaks through the Soviet defenses in the Red October Factory and advances beyond it. A Soviet counterattack succeeds in driving the Germans back into the factory area.

29 Oct 42  With his available infantry force rapidly dwindling, Paulus suggests use of excess panzer crews to function as assault troops; his commanders convince him to not take that course of action.

1 Nov 42  Paulus and Richthofen meet at the Fliegerkorps VIII advanced air base at Razgulyayenka Rail Station to discuss Luftwaffe support to the 6th Army.

Richthofen sends message to the OKH at the Wolf’s Lair to recommend the use of 5 assault pioneer battalions to reinforce 6th Army.
Sixth Army Chronology
(Continued)

2 Nov 42  Hitler officially approves the transfer of 5 assault pioneer battalions to 6th Army. This was the genesis of Operation HUBERTUS as finalized.

3 Nov 42  Hitler disapproves the transfer of 2 infantry regiments to Paulus from the 29th Infantry Division to support Operation HUBERTUS.

11 Nov 42  Increasing ice flows on the Volga slow Soviet reinforcements to the east bank of Stalingrad. To take advantage of the fact, Paulus launches Operation HUBERTUS against the factory areas to eliminate remaining 62nd Army elements.

13 Nov 42  The Sixth Army attacks against the factory complexes culminate due to heavy casualties.

19 Nov 42  Operation URANUS, Soviet counter-offensive to destroy the Sixth Army and recapture Stalingrad, begins.

22 Nov 42  Red Army troops complete the encirclement of Stalingrad at Kalach. Manstein is appointed the commander of Army Group Don and given the mission to rescue the Sixth Army at Stalingrad.

23 Nov 42  Hitler orders Paulus not to retreat.

25 Nov 42  The Luftwaffe begins efforts to resupply the 6th Army via parachute drops.

12 Dec 42  Operation WINTER STORM, the Army Group Don attempt to relieve Stalingrad, begins.

16 Dec 42  The Soviet Army begins Operation LITTLE SATURN to liberate Rostov. The Italian Eighth Army retreats from the Soviet advance.

18 Dec 42  Army Group Don reaches a point within 48 km (30 mi) of Stalingrad but is stopped there.

20 Dec 42  Operation MARS offensive ends in failure.

23 Dec 42  Operation WINTER STORM ends. All further attempts to relieve Stalingrad are put on hold, indefinitely.

24 Dec 42  The Soviet Army launches a fresh attack at Kotelnikovo, routing its Romanian defenders and putting them into full retreat.
Sixth Army Chronology  
(Continued)

2 Jan 43    German Army begins its withdrawal from the Caucasus.

8 Jan 43    Soviet generals send in the formal request for surrender of the German 6th Army at Stalingrad, a request which is formally rejected.

10 Jan 43   The Soviets launch Operation KOLTSO (Ring), their final offensive against the German Sixth Army in Stalingrad.

12 Jan 43   Soviet troops make headway against the defensive lines at the Don River held by Hungarian and Italian troops.

16 Jan 43   Pitomnik Airfield is recaptured by the advancing Soviets.

21 Jan 43   Gumrak, the last airfield at Stalingrad in German hands, is taken by Red Army forces; the Luftwaffe can no longer evacuate wounded German troops from there. All resupply must be by parachute.

25 Jan 43   Soviet attacks at Stalingrad split the Sixth Army in two at Mamaev Kurgan.

31 Jan 43   Paulus and his staff surrender to Soviet troops at the Univermag Department Store.

2 Feb 43    The Battle of Stalingrad comes to an end when the final German troops in the north part of the city surrender. The German public is informed marking the first time the Nazi government has acknowledged a defeat.