**The Battle of Stalingrad**

The Battle of Stalingrad was one of the largest and deadliest battles in World War II. It was a turning point of the war in Eastern Europe. After losing the battle, the German army lost so many soldiers and took such a defeat that they never fully recovered.

Stalingrad was located in Southwest Russia. It was a major industrial and communications center for the Soviet Union in the south. Also, it was named after the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. This made the city important to Stalin and also important to Hitler, who hated Stalin.

The battle began with the German air force, the Luftwaffe, bombing the city of Stalingrad. They reduced much of the city to rubble. Soon the German army moved in and was able to take a large portion of the city, however the Soviet army was not ready to give up. German bombing had left much of the city in ruins, which created difficulties for the German tanks. Also, the heaps of destroyed buildings provided hiding places for the defending Soviets. The Soviets defended their city from still standing buildings, ruins, and even the sewers. The fighting was fierce, and it took a toll on the German army.

The Soviet army realized the German forces had their best soldiers at the center of the attack, leaving the less experience soldiers on both sides. The Soviet General out-flanked (overrun from the side) the Germans, eventually surrounding about 90,000 German soldiers. The German General could have fight through the surrounding Soviet lines, but that would have meant retreating from Stalingrad. Hitler refused to allow the Germans to retreat from the city. Ordered to stay and fight, the Germans eventually began to run out of supplies (they were surrounded) and the winter months caused freezing temperatures. Starving and freezing, the German General surrendered. Hitler was furious, believing the German General should have fought to the death, or committed suicide.

The Battle of Stalingrad was one of the bloodiest battles in history, with combined military and civilian casualties of nearly 2 million. The battle halted German advances into the Soviet Union. The Germans lost significant numbers of soldiers, supplies, and equipment. From the Battle of Stalingrad on, the Germans were on the defensive in Eastern Europe, retreating back towards Berlin.

1. Why was the Battle of Stalingrad significant?

2. Why was the rubble in Stalingrad such a problem for the German forces?

3. What kept the German soldiers from leaving the Stalingrad?

4. What caused the German General to finally surrender to the Soviet Union?