

# THE BATTLE FOR MOSCOW

Colonel T. discusses the military problems confronting Hitler's marauders. A lesson from Borodino, 1812. British and American obligations.

THE area about Moscow is a huge fortified zone which can absorb a vast army like a sponge. To the northwest it is protected by the great Volga "sea," an artificial lake some seventy-five miles long and several miles wide. Though there are no other serious natural barriers in the other sectors, the defense rests upon a deep belt of fortifications among which mobile troops can maneuver. These fortifications merge with the city itself and are integrated with it.

Moscow is the hub of some eleven railroads which are linked by a railroad "ring," along which armored trains with huge naval guns can circulate. The city's very shape and topographical location (a circle some ten miles in diameter, resting on gently undulating country) afford great latitude of entry and exit. The new system of canals would permit small naval vessels to take part in the defense of the city.

It is impossible to tell how long and how successful the defense of Moscow will be. We can judge by the examples of Leningrad and Odessa, both of which afford proof of the Red Army's incredible tenacity. These instances show us that the population simply goes and joins the Red Army. Moscow can provide at least 2,000,000 of such defenders. The great ring of new and huge apartment houses along the outer boulevards will provide a string of makeshift, but effective fortresses. Stalin has called for a fight to the end to save Moscow, and it is quite possible the Nazis may never succeed in taking the city.

We should anticipate that the defense of Moscow will be conducted as an individual operation by special defenders, without necessarily involving the bulk of the central Soviet armies, because these have to be preserved against a coming spring counter-offensive. We can assume, and we know from the facts already before us, that the assault of Moscow would mean terrific losses in Nazi manpower and material.

IN THIS RESPECT, I believe history has a great deal to teach us. Although comparisons are always dangerous, yet, in this instance, it is my firm opinion that the past has much to teach the present. I recall graphically my studies of the Napoleonic war.

In the middle of May 1811, the French ambassador in St. Petersburg, Armand de Caulaincourt, was received by Czar Alexander. The czar said to him: "Should Emperor Napoleon make war upon us, it is quite possible that he will inflict defeats upon us, but this will not give him peace. . . . We shall not compromise our position, we have great spaces in our rear, and we shall preserve a well organized army. Having all this, one can never be compelled to make peace, in spite of

## The Front

AS WE went to press it was nineteen days since the greatest German assault of the war had begun. Yet the panzer divisions were still being held well away from Moscow. At their nearest point, due west around Mozhaisk, they were still some sixty-five miles away. On the flanks of the city heavy fighting had been in progress continually, with towns like Kalinin to the northwest and Orel to the south changing hands several times. Moscow itself was in a state of siege, declared by Stalin as head of the defense committee; the government had removed hundreds of miles east to Kuibyshev.

It would seem that the workmen of Moscow themselves, fortified by special units of the army, were being entrusted with the defense of the capital. As in every instance of this war, the Soviet defenders are giving up positions only after extracting the heaviest price from the invaders. Moscow is equalling the epic of Leningrad.

On other sectors of the front it would appear that the Nazis are striking with force toward the Donets basin, threatening the important city of Rostov. But here also every inch of ground has been fiercely contested and it can be assumed that the Donets region itself is being defended by powerful aggregations of Soviet troops. This is an important, although not decisive region in Soviet economy, and it remains to be seen whether the Nazis can make much headway, so long as their flank at Orel and Tula is insecure.

In the north, around Leningrad, the invaders admit they cannot concentrate on this city at present. Heavy Soviet counter-attacks are driving them out of one village after another. If Marshal Voroshilov could break through at any point in the Moscow direction, this would seriously threaten the whole German flank trying to cut around Moscow from the northwest.

The Nazis seem to have paused for reorganization of their main drive, but the Soviet armies around Vyazma and Bryansk are giving them no rest. It is clear, however, that even bigger battles, representing a fierce German effort to out-pace the snow and blizzards which are coming over the plains, are to be expected any day.

all reverses. But the victor can be made to sue for peace."

The preservation of the Russian army in 1812 and the preservation of the Red Army in 1941—this was and is the dominant strategy of the Russian forces of both epochs.

In August 1812, Marshal Kutuzov said:

"It is better to lose Moscow than to lose both the army and Russia." At the war council in the little village of Fili, after the battle of Borodino, the old field marshal listened to the arguments of his generals concerning the abandonment of Moscow. The argument went pro and con. It seemed that the nays had it. Kutuzov got up, and cutting the meeting short, said simply: "Orders to retreat." Moscow absorbed the victorious Grande Armée and spewed it out five weeks later. . . .

I cite this historical episode as background for our understanding of the problem today. As I say, history does not necessarily repeat itself. Moscow is being defended and will take a tremendous toll of the Nazis, no doubt. This is a fact already and will become more obvious as the days go on. But even should Moscow fall into the hands of the Nazi field marshals, what then? Let us flash back again to the nineteenth century. As a result of the Battle of Borodino, fought on the approaches to Moscow, Sept. 7, 1812, the French advanced and the Russians retired. But the French themselves were mortally wounded.

Napoleon had 130,000 men and 587 guns. The Russians had 121,000 men and 640 guns. The French lost over 50,000 men. The Russians lost 58,000 men. But there was no way of reinforcing the remaining 80,000 Frenchmen (and assorted troops) while the remaining 63,000 Russians had the entire country to draw upon.

The Russians had shorter communication lines. The French had lines stretched over many hundreds of miles, vulnerable to guerrilla attack. Napoleon's main objective was: peace before winter. He did not find it on the conquered field of Borodino, nor did he find it at the walls of the Kremlin. Both grand strategic objectives—the destruction of the Russian army and peace before winter remained outside Napoleon's reach. Yet, while the great battle now in progress in and around the historic site of Borodino bears practically no military resemblance to its famous forbear, there is a distinct parallel in strategy. Hitler's objectives are basically the same as Napoleon's. And his degree of achievement remains the same. His losses proportionately are even greater.

FROM A MILITARY STANDPOINT the basic difference between the two battles is that at Borodino (1812) practically the entire military might of both opponents was concentrated in that one battle, in a few square miles of space and in twenty-four hours of time. The "battle of Borodino" (1941) is an enormous operation which is being fought along an arc 350 miles long, marked by the cities of Kalinin, Rzhev, Vyazma, and Tula. Of this great arc, where well over 3,000,000 men are strug-

gling, the historic village of Borodino is nothing but the geographical, and shall we say, spiritual center. Borodino (1812) was a battle in which Napoleon strove for a final decision with all his forces, while Kutuzov with almost all his forces tried to avoid a decision. The former failed, the latter succeeded.

Borodino, 1941, is a battle where the Nazi High Command is sending its best troops in order to destroy the bulk of the Red Army and take Moscow. It will certainly fail in the former; the coming days and weeks will tell whether it will succeed in the latter. In any event the price of Moscow will be enormous in German men and equipment.

True, the loss of Moscow would create acute suffering to the Soviet people, but nothing can break their will and their resistance. The material loss would be great but not fatal. Communications would be impaired, because Soviet transportation with the loss of Moscow would have to fall back on a rather tortuous system of north-south lines running east of Moscow. But still the great railroads running from the East would continue to feed Soviet resistance.

Yes, Moscow today is the center of the Soviet Union, the hub of its transport system and together with its suburbs and surrounding towns an important industrial center in its own right. But thanks to the foresight of the political command, the Red Army will certainly be able and will, of course, continue to fight even if it is strategically wise to abandon Moscow.

Consider these facts, bugaboos to Hitler: first of all there is plenty of room further east; second, there are distant highly developed industrial areas. Both of these factors will keep the Red Army going and *give its allies in Britain and the United States time to deliver the crucially important supplies they have promised*. There is plenty of land—for example, Kazan on the bend of the Volga is fully 500 miles east of Moscow, the distance that Hitler has taken four months to traverse. And that is still about 200 miles from the Urals themselves. In these great plains on both sides of the Volga lie important industrial towns like Gorky, Samara, and Saratov.

Furthermore, in the Urals we find a mighty network of industrial centers, from Perm in the north, connected by rail to Orenburg in the south. Here lies Magnitogorsk, the steel plant built on the fields of iron ore. Here are entire combines which produce materials from A to Z—drawing on nearby coal for coke and turning out finished steel manufactures. Big cities have grown up in the Urals in recent years, such as Sverdlovsk with 500,000, Ufa and Chelyabinsk with more than 250,000 inhabitants each.

To the southeast of the Urals lies the great and fabulous republic of the Kazakhs, with the big coal beds and industrial centers at Karaganda; to the northeast of that is the newly developed Kuznetsk basin—all of which is some 2,000 miles east of Moscow. Big steel mills operate here, for example, at Stalinsk, which had 3,000 inhabitants in 1936 and now

houses about 200,000. There is the Siberian metropolis of Novosibirsk with its 400,000 people. And all these regions—not reckoning the Far East—are beyond the range of modern bombers and continue their production night and day for the fighting front. Tremendous expansion took place here in the past few years as the clouds of war rolled toward the Soviet Union. It was clearly and statedly a great part of the defense program of the USSR.

NONETHELESS, there is no doubt that the situation before Moscow is grave. The loss of the industrial plant in that area, in the Ukraine area, is undoubtedly a great blow. I cite the above facts to show that the Red Army has the wherewithal to *continue large scale defensive operations*, but in the final analysis, the job of victory over Hitler is more than the job of the Soviet Union. It is simultaneously Great Britain's job; America's job. It requires the joint effort of these great anti-Hitler powers to achieve victory; remember that the Soviet Union is fighting Nazi Germany and its industrial loot from seventeen nations. At present the Red Army is bearing the brunt alone of this tremendous concentration of steel. True, the Soviet people will fight on as brilliantly as they have fought to date. The question is: how soon will the American and British peoples accept their full share of the historic obligation to smash Hitler? To answer that question is to resolve the issue of victory or defeat.

COLONEL T.



"No political machine will control me. . . ."  
O'Dwyer, Democratic nominee for mayor of  
New York speaks in Tammany Hall.



# NEW MASSES

ESTABLISHED 1911

Editors

BARBARA GILES, A. B. MAGIL, RUTH MCKENNEY,  
BRUCE MINTON, JOSEPH NORTH, JOSEPH STAROBIN,  
JOHN STUART

Business Manager  
CARL BRISTEL

## The Kearny Challenge

ON THE morning of October 17 the United States destroyer *Kearny* was torpedoed by a submarine—"undoubtedly German," the Navy Department announced—while on patrol duty in the American defense zone, 350 miles southwest of Iceland. Eleven members of the crew were reported missing and ten injured, one critically, another seriously. That same day, in far-off Tokyo, Lieut. Gen. Eiki Tojo formed a new Japanese Cabinet which was believed pledged to a more aggressive anti-American, anti-Chinese, anti-Soviet policy.

There is no way of knowing whether the torpedoing of the submarine was deliberately timed to coincide with the ascension of the new Cabinet in Japan. But certain it is that these two momentous events are closely related and arise out of a common strategy. Both are part of the gigantic pincers movement of the Axis powers against the United States. Both signalize the intensification of our country's peril. Both underline our vital, immediate stake in the Battle of Moscow and in the whole future course of the war on the Eastern Front.

How is America responding to this threat to its very existence? A few hours after the attack on the *Kearny* the House voted, 259 to 138, to amend the Neutrality Act in order to permit the arming of American merchant ships. A step forward, but how small a step! The Nazis are waging all-out war, and we are still struggling to get out of the Neutrality Act straitjacket bit by bit. What was most hopeful was not the passing of the amendment, but the size of the vote, nearly two to one, reflecting the growth of popular support for the administration's foreign policy.

But why retain any part of the abortive, pro-Axis Neutrality Act? Why, after this attack on an American destroyer, hesitate to fight fire with fire, wage war against those who wage war on us? Our full participation in a struggle that will determine our own future no less than the future of Britain, the Soviet Union, and other nations, would contribute powerfully to the opening of a western front and would strengthen the Eastern Front where the soldiers and civilians of Russia fight so heroically against America's mortal enemy. In the most literal sense Moscow and Leningrad are the bastions of New York and London, and we cannot defend those bastions merely by amending or repealing the Neutrality Act, or by limiting our efforts to the shipment of supplies.

THE SHELL that struck the *Kearny* and killed or wounded over a score of American boys was not the only torpedo fired at our national defense. Alfred M. Landon and Martin Dies also favored the country with samples of their marksmanship. Landon tried the flank attack instead of the America First frontal assault. "I think we should help Russia. But. . . ." And "Yes, it is our duty, in common with others, to cooperate with the President. But. . . ." Particularly snide was Landon's attempt to speak in the name of the little businessman as against the New Dealers who "are working hand in hand with big business." It must be admitted that Goebbels does this sort of thing a little more cleverly. It will be recalled that the only reason Landon's name is known today outside his own state is that in 1936 he was picked as the Republican candidate for President by a small businessman named William Randolph Hearst, admirer of Hitler and Mussolini. And during that campaign Landon had the almost unanimous support of Hitlerites, anti-Semites, and assorted appeasers.

It is true that the Roosevelt administration has given insufficient attention to the problems of little business, particularly in respect to involving small manufacturers in the defense program. It is the anti-Hitler forces of the country that are today seeking to help little business to survive in a way that will simultaneously step up defense production. For the triumph of Hitler and his American henchmen would mean the complete ruin of tens of thousands of small business people, as it has in the conquered nations and in Germany itself.

NO LESS THREATENING to national defense is the letter of Representative Dies to Attorney General Biddle listing the names of 1,124 federal employees who are alleged to be Communists or to have "strong leanings toward Moscow." It was not revealed whether those charged with having such leanings include the banker and industrialist W. Averell Harriman, who headed the American mission to Moscow; or President Roosevelt, whose recent statement about religious freedom in the USSR brought forth angry growls from the Texas fuehrer. We don't know whether any of those listed are actually Communists, since in the Dies lexicon even mild progressives are defined as

Communists. But we certainly think that Communists have a far greater right to be on the government payroll than certain southern congressmen who hold office because the majority of their constituents are disfranchised through the poll tax.

Dies, like Landon, is playing a double game. He votes for amending the Neutrality Act, but at the same time does yeoman work for Hitler by undermining national unity. He professes to support the administration's foreign policy—otherwise, even in poll-tax Texas he'd get turned out of office—but his letter to Attorney General Biddle reveals his real attitude when it states that "the very grave danger exists that our government, by its aid to Russia on the Eastern Front, has opened up for Stalin a new western front right here in the capital of America."

It's not Stalin that Dies is shooting at, but American defense. That's why he's the favorite congressman of the KKK, the Silver Shirts, and the Nazi Bund.

In striking contrast to the attitude of Dies and Landon is the eloquent appeal to President Roosevelt of 1,000 Protestant bishops, ministers, religious editors, and college presidents calling for all-out aid to the Soviet Union and attacking those who play Hitler's game in this country.

HIGHLIGHTING the battle for production is the announcement that defense officials are drafting a \$100,000,000,000 arms program, to be spent by the end of 1943 or early 1944. The program would provide the United States and the other anti-Axis nations with about 125,000 planes and tens of thousands of tanks. As a result, twice as much material would be supplied in 1942 and 1943 as originally planned.

A program of this kind is not at all utopian, provided the problem of organizing production on an all-out basis is solved not in 1943, but within the next few months. The industrial potential of this country is truly staggering. Consider, for example, steel production, which is the foundation of all armaments. In 1939 the United States manufactured more steel than the combined production of Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, Alsace-Lorraine, Luxembourg, Hungary, and Spain. This country produces more than half the world's oil. Think what would happen if this tremendous industrial potential were realized in terms of tanks, planes, guns, and weapons of every sort for the Soviet front, as well as other fronts. The fact is, however, that only fifteen percent of the nation's production is today devoted to defense, compared to about fifty percent in England and an even higher percentage in the USSR.

True, our defense production is steadily expanding, but far too slowly. President Roosevelt has announced that in September \$155,000,000 of lend-lease supplies were shipped to the anti-Axis nations, or more than double the amount sent in the first three months of the program. That is encouraging in relation to the past, but in relation to present and future needs it is still like the

