

# THE SOVIET FIGHTING FORCES

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"Foremost expert on the Red Army."—*Daily Sketch*.

"Major Hooper is now a recognised expert on Russia. What he has to say of Stalin's Army demands to be heard."—*World's Digest*.

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*by*

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**O-DAY the blitzkrieg, that has conquered all land Europe, threatens to overwhelm the Soviet Union. The Red Army is withstanding the whole weight of Hitler's armies, alone.

In the Great War of 1914/18 the armies of Great Britain and France, numbering millions, met the onslaught of the Kaiser's armies. The Russian Empire hurled its millions into the slaughter to save the Western Front. It succeeded. But the effort was too much for this "steam-roller" army of ill-armed, badly-led peasants, and it fell under the blows of Hindenburg. All the fighting on the Western Front by the allied armies could not save it from collapse.

Twenty-five years later out of the ruins of Tsarism rises a new army, the mighty Red Army. What is the story behind this miracle?

A. S. H.

*Grateful acknowledgment is made to that outstanding military writer, Max Werner, for his classic work "The Military Strength of the Powers."*

LONDON, October 9th, 1941.

## CHAPTER I

### *Birth of Red Army—Civil War Period*

**B**Y February, 1917 the peoples of Imperial Russia were exhausted after three years of war and were rapidly approaching starvation. The army was badly armed and equipped and very badly led. The constant defeats it had suffered had undermined its morale and rendered it almost useless as a fighting force. The government of Tsar Nicholas was so discredited that its overthrow was only a matter of time.

Early in March, 1917 the workers of Petrograd went on a series of strikes which became a general strike and finally a revolution. On March 11th the Russian Revolution had become a fact. The Tsar was dethroned.

For some months after, the Government of the country was divided between the Soviets (councils of workers, soldiers, and peasants), and the Provisional Government of which Kerensky was a member at first. Later he became its leader and finally dictator. Kerensky determined to continue the war. He ordered the disorganised Russian Army to launch an offensive against the Germans, and the failure of this still further increased the war-weariness of the Russian Army and the civilian population.

By November 1917 the war policy of Kerensky had become so hated that large numbers of soldiers, sailors and workers within the Soviets had swung over to the Bolshevik Party under Lenin's leadership. At the same time they began forming themselves into Red Guards—the forerunner of the Red Army itself.

Lenin and the Bolshevik Party led these groups in an armed uprising, which seized power in Petrograd on November 7th, only just in time to prevent Kerensky opening the front and letting into Petrograd the foreign invaders, the hated Germans. Kerensky escaped and tried from the outside to bring such troops who had not mutinied, to recapture Petrograd. But the Red Guards and armed workers rushed to the defence of their city and saved the Revolution.

These Red Guards were not on a sufficiently large scale, however, to be of any use for extensive military operations, and as the country was in danger of being overrun by the German Army, Lenin on behalf of the new Soviet Government signed a decree on January 28th 1918, ordering the establishment of a "Workers' and Peasants' Red Army," and on February 28th this Army first resisted the advancing Germans. This date is the official birthday of the Red Army, celebrated every year throughout the Soviet Union.

The German Army was threatening Petrograd. By the spring of 1918, it had overrun the Ukraine and the Transcaucasus. In its desire for peace the Soviet Government signed the infamous Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3rd, 1918. Meanwhile the Japanese had seized Vladivostok, and in the middle-Volga region the Czechoslovak prisoners of war, 60,000 strong, had obtained arms and were attacking the local Soviets. British troops arrived at Murmansk, and Archangel and Generals Denikin and Kornilov had formed a White Guard Army in the North Caucasus. In the Don region, General Krasnov recruited large numbers of Cossacks to attack the new Soviet Government.

Thus the newly-born Red Army was confronted with attacks from within and from all sides. In the campaigns that followed leaders emerged; men little known at the time but whose names are to-day world-

famous—Stalin Voroshilov, Budyonny, and Timoshenko.

The first big battle in the Civil War began when General Krasnov attacked the town of Tsaritsyn, on the Volga, in an attempt to sever the granaries of the North Caucasus from the industrial regions around Moscow. Had he succeeded the food situation of the Soviet Government would have been desperate. The defence of this city was in the hands of ex-Tsarist officers, appointed by Trotsky, and their loyalty to the Soviet Government was doubtful. Realising the seriousness of the threat, the Soviet Government sent Stalin there, primarily to organise food supplies. Stalin found such chaos and treachery in the organisation of the defence that he immediately took matters into his own hands. He turned out the so-called military experts and appointed men of his own choice, much to the anger of Trotsky. With immense energy, Stalin reorganised the defence and restored the situation. Tsaritsyn is now called Stalingrad to honour this great achievement.

Stalin was further helped by the arrival of Voroshilov from Lugansk in the Ukraine. At Lugansk, the workers and Red Guards had elected Voroshilov as their leader, though he pointed out to them that his only previous military training had been the smuggling of arms into the factories before the Revolution. As they insisted, he decided that their only hope lay in moving the Red Guards and the workers, with their families, from Lugansk to Tsaritsyn. With this 15,000 population and all railway stock and wheeled transport, he fought his way to Tsaritsyn through a country infested with White Guards, while he was being followed up and harassed by the German Imperial troops. In many cases miles of railway track which the enemy had torn up had to be relaid, and bridges had to be constructed over the various rivers. Time after time the Red Guards and workers had to

dig themselves in round their trains and fight off attacks. But in spite of this Voroshilov managed to get his army through, and they were incorporated with the other armies defending Tsaritsyn.

It was during the defence of this city that many of the Red Army leaders gained their first military knowledge. Not the least of these being Semyon Budyonny, an ex-sergeant of the Tsarist Dragoons, who commanded a guerilla detachment. It was here too that Stalin, seeing the need for larger mobile forces, formed cavalry units from the scattered detachments defending the city. Subsequently, these units became merged into the First Red Mounted Army under the command of Voroshilov and Budyonny. This Army might well lay claim to being the first mechanised army in history, since its composition included everything in the way of motor transport that could be converted into a fighting machine to supplement the Red Cavalry.

General Krasnov's repeated attacks upon Tsaritsyn were all repulsed until eventually the reorganised Red Army was able not only to defeat General Krasnov but even to throw back the German armies in the Ukraine. By the autumn of 1918 the southern front was no longer in danger and the grain supply of the Soviet Government was assured.

The Red Army, however, was given no rest. In the spring of 1919 General Kolchak began to advance on Moscow from Siberia, with an army 300,000 strong. Behind him, American, British and Japanese troops prevented guerilla detachments interfering with this advance. This is how General William Graves, who was in command of the American troops, described the episodes in his book "America's Siberian Adventure" (page 108):

"There were horrible murders committed, but they were not committed by the Bolsheviks as the world believes. I am well on the side of safety when I

say that the anti-Bolsheviks killed one hundred people in Eastern Siberia, to every one killed by the Bolsheviks."

To meet this threat of Kolchak's, the Soviet Government sent Mikhail Frunze as commander. He seized the offensive, defeated Kolchak in April, 1919, and freed most of Siberia. Kolchak was taken prisoner, tried, and shot.

Frunze was a man of great personal courage and often led his men into battle personally, turning what appeared certain defeat into victory. He was made Defence Commissar and held the post until his death in 1924.

Meanwhile, as a diversion, General Yudenitch had launched an attack on Petrograd, and had succeeded in stirring up mutinies among the garrisons of two forts of the city. But these were suppressed and Yudenitch was driven back into Esthonia. With the defeat of Kolchak and Yudenitch, the French Government, who had sent their fleet into the Black Sea and landed troops at Odessa, hastily withdrew both, mainly because the French fleet had revolted and demanded to be sent home. In spite of these defeats of the White Guards, the Powers again helped them to make another attack on the Soviet Government, by supporting General Denikin in the South and Yudenitch on the Petrograd front once more.

Denikin reached Orel, threatening Moscow in October, 1919. The situation was critical. The Soviet Government at once sent Stalin, Voroshilov and Budyonny to this vital front. Here Trotsky wanted the Red Army to attack over the Don steppe, but Stalin disagreed. He pointed out that the Don Cossacks would fight for their own land, but that if the line of attack were to be more to the west the Cossacks would never be induced by Denikin to leave their own territory to fight the Reds. Moreover, this line of attack lay through the industrial area of

the Donbas where the Red Army would find valuable allies behind the enemy lines. Stalin's strategy was accepted, and the command of the army was given to Voroshilov, with Budyonny to help him.

Denikin was driven back, but made a stand at Kastornaya, where a fierce battle was fought for some days. Here Budyonny with his cavalry outflanked the White position and captured a railway station at Sukovkino. Using the station telegraph apparatus and signing himself as the local White Commander, Budyonny asked the White Headquarters to send reinforcements, for which he prepared the necessary reception. He also asked for an armoured train. The Whites sent two, both of which were captured. It was the Sixth Mounted Division, commanded by Timoshenko, that made the breach of the White Guard lines at Kastornaya, and the Red Army then advanced to Rostov-on-Don. In the battle for this city Timoshenko again broke through the enemy line. He captured the enemy artillery position and ordered the gunners to direct their guns, thirty-seven of them, upon their own troops, which they did. The same guns repulsed an attack by White Guard cavalry. The city was then taken and Denikin's army ceased to exist.

Meanwhile at Petrograd General Yudenitch had reached the very outskirts of the city, but was defeated by the efforts, not only of the Red Army but of every able-bodied inhabitant. He once more retired into Esthonia. Thus by January, 1920, the whole of the Ukraine and the North Caucasus was freed from the White Guard invaders. The British under General Ironside had already retired from Archangel.

There followed now a brief pause. Although the main battles were over, for the moment, there were still groups of White Guards and other nationalities in Siberia, Turkestan, and other areas, and these were being steadily cleared up by the Red Army, now

5,000,000 strong. It really seemed that peace was in sight at last.

However, on April 25th, 1920, Polish troops invaded the Soviet Union, and on May 6th seized Kiev. Budyonny and his First Mounted Army, together with the best Red divisions, were rushed to this front, and preparations for an offensive were made.

The offensive opened and a breach in the Polish army was made by Timoshenko's Sixth Cavalry Division. The Second Polish Army then received the full force of Budyonny's cavalry; and losing 8,000 men and 1,000 prisoners, it disintegrated. The Third Polish Army retreated to Kiev, pursued by the Red Army which recaptured the city.

The First Mounted Army under Budyonny then advanced as far as Lvov when it received orders from Trotsky to come up to the rescue of the Red Army at Warsaw. Trotsky had allowed the advance of his army to take place without making adequate arrangements to consolidate his rear and organise supplies. The result was that the Poles, with French support under General Weygand, were able to halt the Red advance at the Vistula, just in front of Warsaw itself. Had Trotsky allowed Budyonny to capture Lvov, the Polish armies would have had to meet this threat by withdrawing troops from Warsaw. As it was, the Poles made a breach in the Red front with a comparatively small force. But this force, operating behind the Red positions, disorganised their weak lines of communication, and a retreat had to be carried out immediately.

Voroshilov and Budyonny, now left in the air, had to extricate their armies from an enveloping movement by the Poles. This move from Lvov right back behind Kiev was a masterpiece, for a successful retirement such as this is a far bigger test for a commander than any victorious advance.



The Government of Great Britain which had spent £100,000,000 on sending armies and munitions to help crush the Soviet regime, was now faced by the growing anger of the public. The "Hands off Russia" movement reached a climax when the dockers refused to load the "Jolly George" with munitions for Poland. Great Britain withdrew her support of Poland, and both sides were too exhausted to carry on the war. Peace was signed on October 20th, 1920, by which the Poles took Galicia and a certain portion of Byelorussia.

While the Poles were attacking, General Wrangel landed in the Don region, and this threatened the coal supply from the Donbas. The Red Army, tired by constant battles, was again called upon to deal with this new menace. Frunze ordered Budyonny's Mounted Army to deal the main blow at Kakhovka. A four day's battle was fought, in which General Wrangel lost over 20,000 officers and men. The remnants managed to struggle to the Crimea, which they fortified. Baron Wrangel became known as the "Baron in the bottle," for the Crimean Peninsula resembles a flagon with the neck and mouth at the Isthmus of Perekop, five miles wide, and the Isthmus of Chongar, a mile and a half wide. French engineers had fortified these two isthmuses, and declared them impregnable.

Frunze ordered a simultaneous attack on the Perekop, Chongar, and across the shallow waters of Shibash, which flanked the isthmuses. After intense fighting for three days and nights, Perekop fell on November 12th, 1920, and the Crimea was cleared of invaders by November 16th, General Wrangel and the remnants of his army being evacuated by foreign ships. With this defeat large scale warfare on the Soviet Union came to an end.

In October, 1922, the Japanese left Vladivostok and the Soviet Far East was free of invaders.

Thus the Red Army was born in battle, was hardened and matured in battle. It learnt to fight by practice, not by theory, and it learnt its lessons well. Its commanders were men who had no previous military training and were not tied by military dogmas. They and the men they led had few arms but they had unshakeable convictions, and the people were behind them, so they were victorious. Once more Napoleon's well-worn phrase: "The moral is to the physical as three is to one" was proved true.

## CHAPTER II

### *Foundations of armament industry laid*

AFTER three years of imperial war, 1914-1917, and another three years of civil war, the whole of Russia was in chaos. The food situation was desperate, since no proper farming had been carried on. Worse still was the industrial position. In all their retreats the White Guard armies had left ruin; not only bridges destroyed, railways damaged, but mines were wrecked and all industrial enterprises deliberately smashed. Production dropped to one-fifth of that of the last year of Tzarism in peace, 1913; and Tzarist industrial production was a very feeble affair.

From 1921 till 1929 was a period of restoration. The main industries and the transport system were held by the Socialist Government, but in order to prime productive processes a form of capitalism of the minor industries was allowed. This was Lenin's New Economic Policy. It was a temporary retreat until the Soviet Government were ready to socialize the whole system.

On April 3rd, 1929, the first Five Year Plan was launched, after eighteen months of discussion throughout the country. The object of this plan was to provide an industrial system mainly for the purpose of

providing an armament industry (of which there was none previously in Tsarist Russia), for Lenin had always warned them: "Remember, you are always within an inch of invasion," as they were surrounded by capitalist nations. The difficult struggle of the civil war through lack of arms taught them a lesson they never forgot.

Almost equally important in the Plan was the effort to turn out modern farming machinery for the new collective farm system which they were inaugurating at the same time as part of the Plan.

The struggle and sacrifice to turn backward agricultural Russia into an industrial country, and to make it self-supporting in order to supply their army in case of invasion, was intense. A big obstacle was the reluctance of the rich peasants (or kulaks) to accept peaceably the decisions of the middle and poor peasants under Communist Party leadership to form collective farms. The struggle was carried on with great violence right up to the year 1933. Enormous quantities of grain and cattle were destroyed deliberately by the kulaks. But the enthusiasm of the workers in the industrial cities, supported by the middle and poor peasants in the countryside, was such that the Five Year Plan was successfully completed, in the main, in four and a half years. The Red Army now had a base for its supply of armaments.

On September 18th, 1931, an event occurred which changed the course of history not only in the Soviet Union but the whole world. Japan invaded Manchuria, with the acquiescence of the League of Nations. Great Britain saw to it that no effort on the part of the League of Nations should be made to stop this first decisive act of aggression. When Sir John Simon spoke in the name of Great Britain at the League meeting in Geneva, Mr. Matsuoka, the Japanese representative, stated that he himself could not have put the case for Japan more clearly.

The effect on Soviet Russia was electrical. She at once started to build up in the Far East, at a frantic speed, an army, with all its armament industries and its collective farms, of sufficient strength to prevent her frontier being violated and her rich Far Eastern provinces invaded. The aim was to make this army completely self-supporting, so that no single wagon would be needed to cross the very long and very weak link with European Russia, the Trans-Siberian Railway. The railway itself was doubled; a new harbour, called Soviet Harbour, was built out of reach of the Japanese on the river Amur; and aerodromes were laid down almost within the Arctic Circle so as to be out of range of the Japanese air force. A great defensive fleet of submarines, destroyers, and speed boats was assembled at Vladivostok.

But all this took time, and the Soviet Union had to submit during this period of her weakness to many border incidents and other indignities. Her share (one-third) of the Far Eastern Railway, which ran from Manchouli to Vladivostok through Manchuria, had to be sold to Japan for a mere song, and Japan did not bother to pay even this—until many years later, when the Soviet Union was in a position to cancel the Japanese fishing rights in Soviet waters.

This was Russia's answer to the threat of a two-front war, which became even more imminent when in 1933 Hitler seized power in Germany. In September, 1934, Soviet Russia joined the League of Nations, considering the League a barrier to war, however feeble it might prove in actual practice. From that time, with Hitler not only using every diplomatic form of insult, but threatening her with armaments, a new period sets in.

### CHAPTER III

#### *Growth of Red Army—Shooting of traitor generals*

ON June 18th, 1935, Great Britain, without even informing France, signed a naval treaty with Hitler Germany, giving her permission to build a fleet one-third as large as the British Fleet. The Soviet Union saw in this move, as well as the encouragement given to Japan in the East, that she must now take to arming at an increasing speed. Lenin had warned them "Treat the Red Army as the apple of your eye." Being the only Socialist state in the world, they realised that their very success exposed the inefficiency of the capitalist governments and this could only lead to war. The Second Five Year Plan, which was to give impetus to the light industries, while continuing to build up the heavy, had to be considerably modified in view of these international events. The Soviet Union saw to it that she must be entirely self supporting in case of war.

In 1936, another effort at Appeasement by Great Britain to Hitler was like a danger signal to the Soviet Union. It is true that the event had nothing to do with the Soviet frontier this time. But when Germany marched into the Rhineland tearing up the Locarno Treaty, the Soviet Government saw a dangerous drawing together of the rulers of Great Britain and Germany. Under the slogan "It's their own country, isn't it?" pressure was put on France to prevent her taking action.

In 1936, the Spanish conflict broke out. The rebels under Franco had the full support of the intervention by both Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, openly connived at by the Non-Intervention Committee sponsored by the British Government. Every effort by the Soviet Union to get arms to Spain was throttled by this diplomatic Committee. The League of Nations was rendered helpless; appeasement of the Fascist powers was now in full swing.

From the military point of view the Fascists used Spain as the training ground for the later war against France and Great Britain. The Soviet Union managed to get a few aeroplanes and some tanks over to Spain in spite of efforts of the London Non-Intervention Committee. Unbiased observers have reported their aeroplanes and air tactics to be, though outnumbered, superior not only to those of the Nazis but to those supplied by any other power. It was in this war that the flexibility of Red Army tactics was shown in some degree. For the first time in history the Soviet aeroplanes took the place of cavalry by destroying the two Italian divisions at the battle of Guadalajara.

At the battle of Jarama, the Soviet tanks appeared in a completely new role. Up to then tanks had been used entirely for offensive, but in this battle when the Spanish infantry were defeated, the lines were held by large Soviet tanks which kept the smaller Italian tanks at bay by superior fire, and yet avoided the artillery fire by great mobility and speed, presenting an elusive target. This was the first time tanks had ever been used as a means of defence.

In 1937, the Japanese in the Far East increased their provocative action on the Manchurian frontier until it reached a climax in June. But by now the Far Eastern Army was completely ready, and the Soviet Union was in no mood to accept these incidents. At the battle of Amur River, a purely river action, the Japanese had to retire discomfited. This was probably a test case for the combined military power of Nazi Germany and Japan, which had now reached their highest peak for combined action in relation to the military strength of the Soviet Union.

Here a very significant episode took place in Japan, which later showed how imminent was the danger of war on two fronts for Soviet Russia. The press of Japan had been fretting under the silence of the Japanese military leaders, and in order to appease them

the Chief of the General Staff of the Japanese Army, General Sugiyama, said he would meet them in conference and they could ask questions. Among the questions asked was : " Do you know the carrying capacity of the Trans Siberian Railway?" The General said that they not only knew that, but also a great many other vital military facts about the Red Army. His questioner asked from what sources was this information obtained, and the General replied : "The Trotskyist elements in the Soviet Union." One editor foolishly published this information in his Japanese paper\* and got three months imprisonment for his indiscretion. Later, the author obtained this information from an American paper and had frequently told the story in his lectures, when to his surprise the whole story came out in the evidence at the great trial in Moscow, of Rykov, Bukharin and the other followers of Trotsky in 1938.

On June 12th, 1937, the author happened to be in Moscow when an event took place which possibly changed the whole course of history. Tukhachevski and the seven other Generals of the Red Army were tried by court-martial *in camera*, found guilty of treason and shot. This event, at a date when the idea of Quislings was unknown, shocked the world, and gave a very poor impression of the reliability of the Red Army.

Mr. Wickham Steed, the highest authority on pre-war German affairs, wrote in the *Spectator* of July 6th, 1937:—

"My sources of information are none of them Russian. . . . I know the names of the German Generals who carried on the negotiations on behalf of the Reichswehr.

"Some three years ago a German General had been sent to Russia secretly to investigate the possibilities of a successful invasion. On his return he reported to Hitler that the greatest difficulty was what he called the relative invincibility of Russia." Early this year

\*The Tokyo paper *Miyako* of 20th. Feb. 1937

the economic expert attached to the German Embassy in Moscow reported adversely upon the prospects of a German invasion. He warned the authorities in Berlin that German armies would get no help from Russians in the Ukraine or elsewhere. . . .

"This was roughly the position up to the execution of the eight Russian Generals. For the time being those executions have smashed the Reichswehr's plan."

The Army Quarterly of that period says :

"German politicians and the German General Staff, it appears, are convinced that any armed conflict will be complicated, so far as the Soviet Union is concerned, by internal disorders. Preparation for the purpose of provoking this upheaval at the right moment and using it according to the interests of Germany is at present one of the most serious considerations of the German General Staff." Later on it speaks of a "net of secret agents maintained on Soviet territory" and adds "Of course such supporters of Germany would not become open adherents of the enemy, but would work behind the scenes and would promote internal disorders within the Union should the occasion arise."

But the immediate effect of the shooting of the traitor generals was, as far as Japan was concerned, to abandon at least for the time the invasion of the Soviet Far Eastern Province. She left a strong enough force in Manchuria to act as a guard and moved all her main armies in preparation for her new line of expansion, that is the conquest of China. For, just over three weeks after the shooting in Moscow, on July 5th, the "China incident" began. That showed the Japanese military opinion of the "weakness" of the Red Army.

The subsequent events that flowed from this determined the flow of current history. For Nazi Germany, not feeling strong enough at that time to take on the Red Army single-handed, changed her tune and

became—for Hitler—almost polite towards Moscow. The trial of the Trotskyist traitors in an open court before not only the people of the Soviet Union but the journalists of the whole world, proved conclusively to those who bothered to read the verbatim report, that Tukhachevski and the seven generals were the tools of these traitors who, in the pay of Hitler, had offered Byelorussia to Poland, the Ukraine to Germany, and the Far Eastern province to Japan. This, they declared, in spite of the knowledge that they would be shot, was the price they were willing to pay if Hitler would support their dictatorship of what was left of the Soviet Union.

In this way the Red Army and the Soviet Government cleared out all the friends of Fascism who had wormed their way into the highest posts of the Government. Had other governments done the same then, or even later, the story of Hitler's successes would have been very different.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### *Effect of Red Army in Europe and Far East*

THE failure of the German and Japanese General Staffs in their efforts at indirect invasion and the exposure of them in the Moscow trials marks the end of this critical period for the Red Army. For a year there was quiet on the borders of the Soviet Union, and the Red Army continued to build up its strength on both the eastern and western front. This was easier now that Japan was fully occupied with her war in China.

Nevertheless, it was on the Manchurian frontier in July, 1938, that the Red Army came into action for the first time as a modern army in a serious military conflict since the days of the Civil War.

Two hills of some 500 feet, called Chang ku feng, or as Russians prefer to call them, Zaozernaya, are

on the border and overlook the inlet of Possiet Bay, a part of the important Red naval base of Vladivostock. The Japanese drove off the few Red border guards, and on July 29th, with an infantry division occupied a defensive position on a four mile front. It was cleverly chosen, for there were only two ways of attacking it and dislodging the invaders—either round Lake Hassan, a large long lake running in front and parallel to the position some hundreds of yards away, or by invading Manchuria at some other point further west to turn the position by outflanking it. The difficulty of taking the position by frontal attack was that of bringing up the infantry to assaulting positions round the lake. On the other hand to invade Manchuria, which was evidently what the Japanese hoped for, would have had immense repercussions throughout the world with the usual cry of "Red Imperialism."

The Red Army decided on the frontal assault and proceeded to action. The effect was staggering, for, after two efforts by the Japanese to discuss negotiations (both refused by Litvinov as long as Japanese troops remained on Soviet territory), Japan signed an armistice on August 10th.

In the battle of Chang ku feng, not more than two or three Japanese divisions can have been employed, but the most important effect was the surprise they got at the flexibility of the Russian tactics. Here was seen the biggest barrage of artillery ever put down since the last war on the Western front. Tanks were used not in mass but as single units, and in some cases would move up, under cover of their armour, as close to the Japanese as possible, making use of local ground for concealment (such as folds or dips), take out their machine guns and bring enfilade fire to bear from a forward position ahead of the infantry. This helped the Red infantry to arrive within assaulting distance. Here, too, the dive bomber to supplement the artillery barrage, made its first appearance in

modern war. The Nazi High Command have since imitated it with great effect. Another form of novelty was the long range fire of the infantry using rifles with telescopic sights.

This was the last conflict on the Manchurian frontier, though a further struggle between the Red Army and Japanese forces took place in September, 1939, but this time in Mongolia.

Events in Europe were moving at an increasing speed. Hitler had occupied not only the Rhineland, but Austria, and threatened Czechoslovakia. The policy of Appeasement was still in full swing.

Litvinov in Geneva with the League of Nations did his utmost to get Great Britain and France to stand by the principles of the League for collective security. He even went so far as suggesting staff talks by the military leaders; but Chamberlain and the Government appeared determined to come to a deal with Hitler and isolate Soviet Russia. The Soviet Government, even after the French broke their word, with the connivance of the British, informed Czechoslovakia, that if they decided to hold their position, even though France and Britain let them down, the Soviet Union would stand and fight with them.

Now the Czechs had the best defensive position in Europe. Not only was it built with the scientific knowledge of the Maginot Line, but nature itself in a mountain range had made it impregnable in the direction of Germany. Bismarck had called it "a fortress made by God for himself." However, Benes, under British and French pressure, decided not to fight. The Sudeten district and the Czech Line of defence were surrendered to Germany. Chamberlain was welcomed as having given the world "peace in our time."

The Munich meeting of the dictators had left out Soviet Russia, for they knew that her honour would never allow her to be a party to such a betrayal. War

in Europe was now certain; it was only a matter of time. In March, 1939, Hitler marched into the remainder of Czechoslovakia, and in the same month Stalin made one of his rare speeches in which he pointed out that if the appeasers thought that their policy would lead to Germany invading the Ukraine, they would be very much mistaken. He added:

"We must be cautious and not allow our country to be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them."

The peoples of Great Britain now had a glimmering of the abyss towards which they were drifting under the policy of their Government. Public pressure forced the reluctant British Government to take some steps towards discussion of a common front with the Soviet Union against the Nazis. They sent over a Foreign Office minor official.

Meanwhile, Chamberlain guaranteed Poland. How Great Britain could possibly implement this guarantee he did not bother to explain, for it was obvious the British Navy could not cross Europe, and that was the only force we had at our disposal to help Poland.

The negotiations meandered on, with the Soviet Government trying to insist on a cast-iron treaty, any breach of which would have shown the world the treachery of the offending signatories. The Soviet Government was ready to put the whole of their Red Army at the disposal of the Parliamentary democracies. They could give far more than they could receive. They did not break up the negotiations, because they knew, the moment that they ceased discussion, Hitler would march into Danzig, which he had been waiting to do for months.

It was obvious that war was looming nearer. Hitler was arming at a feverish rate; he had the arms of the forty divisions of Czechoslovakia in his hands; the forty divisions themselves were no longer available

on the side of Britain and France; and what is most important, he had the Skoda arms works whose output of arms was more than double that of all Italy.

Under still harder pressure of public opinion, a British Military Mission was sent out to Moscow. The members were not well-known to the public and they took the leisurely sea route. When they arrived, they supported the Polish Government which had asked for arms but refused to have any help from the Red Army to defend its frontier.

Meanwhile Nazi Germany as early as June, 1939, had been making tentative efforts for a Non-Aggression Pact with the Soviet Union. The fear of a two-front war was haunting Hitler. He had told Lord Londonderry when they were chatting together that the Soviet Union had the strongest air force, the strongest tank corps, and the strongest army in the world. The Soviet Government had offered a Non-Aggression Pact to Germany (and Japan) ever since Hitler came to power; but now they refused to sign it until they had some guarantee that Hitler's promises were backed by something more than words. So in August, 1939, Hitler at last consented to sign a Trade Treaty in which he gave the Soviet Government on seven years credit £17,000,000 worth of goods. With that safely signed the Soviet Government was prepared to discuss a Non-Aggression Treaty. The world was staggered to see von Ribbentrop crawling to Moscow and signing on the dotted line. The anger of the British press, from left wing to right, was not vented on their Government for its failure to reach any agreement, but turned in full fury on the Soviet Union and insisted it was an Alliance. It is a pity the British Government refuses to publish its own account of the pre-war negotiations with the Soviet Union.

War on Poland by Hitler was now inevitable. The question was how would Great Britain and France carry out their guarantee and save Poland. On

September 1st, 1939, Hitler invaded Poland and Great Britain and France declared war on Germany on September 3rd.

## CHAPTER V

### *War period—Red Army frontier alterations*

THE Nazi armies found no difficulty in crushing the very inefficient Polish Army in the space of a few weeks, while there was all quiet on the Western Front behind the Maginot Line. When the Government in Warsaw abandoned their army and fled, the Soviet Government ordered the Red Army across the then existing frontier. With a speed that surprised the world, and not least the German High Command, the Red Divisions arrived at the very gates of Warsaw before Germany could grasp the spoils she had fought for. In the southern sector of this advance the Germans, owing to the shorter distance which they had to cover, reached almost to the oil fields of Galicia before the Soviet forces met them. The Red Army insisted on the Germans retiring in this district so as to enable the Soviet Government to have a frontier on the passes of the Carpathian Mountains. The Red Army had not forgotten that the Tsarist Army had struggled to reach these vital points in the last war and had exhausted themselves in the effort.

As compensation to the Nazis, the Red Army evacuated the forward position they had taken in front of Warsaw and retired to the River Bug. The Nazis had sent 55 divisions; the Soviet Government sent 102, so a peaceful settlement was reached. The object of this move of the Soviet Government was twofold: first, militarily it was important to have as strong a defensive frontier as possible, in case of any future struggle with Hitler. The second reason was to claim the two groups of people, Ukrainians and

Byelo-Russians, which Poland had seized in the early years of the weak Soviet Government, but whose people had no sympathy with the Polish Government. The wisdom of this move forward has now become quite clear to us, for without it the present situation, in which Soviet Union is fighting the Battle of Britain in Eastern Europe, might now have been disastrous. The press of Great Britain was eager to use the cry of "Red Imperialism," even though Mr. Churchill himself pointed out that the Russians had a right to come forward to the "Curzon Line," that is, the line of frontier agreed upon in 1919, before the Polish invasion of Soviet Russia.

The Soviet Government then made friendly treaties with the three Baltic States of Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and obtained permission to use certain positions on their coasts as naval bases. The Red troops, acting as a guard for these bases, were specifically instructed to have no dealings with the inhabitants, so that the Baltic States Governments could not complain of the introduction of any of the Soviet political ideas into their countries. At the same time a treaty was signed by which these Baltic States would take no concerted action against the Soviet Union. Later it was discovered that the Baltic Governments has secretly broken this treaty, and were forming military alliances. In June, 1940, the Soviet Government was compelled to demand from all three States the formation of such Governments that would loyally carry out their Pacts. Such Governments were formed and they appealed to the people in elections in July. 95% of the people voted and declared for the formation of Soviet Governments and asked to be included in the Soviet Union. In August this was accepted and the three Baltic Soviet States became part of the U.S.S.R. The members of the previous Baltic Governments, Fascist in character, fled to Germany. An arrangement was arrived at with Nazi Germany by

which the German population of the Baltic States should return to their own country. The Red Fleet now had the ice-free ports of Riga and Tallin and were no longer ice-bound in Leningrad for three months of the winter.

The Soviet land frontier was further strengthened when in June, 1940, the U.S.S.R. demanded the return of Bessarabia from Roumania. This was to redeem a promise given in 1919 by the Roumanian Government and never fulfilled. At the same time the Soviet Union claimed the province of the Bukovine, in the northern part of Roumania and this was given them, so that there was now continuity of defensive frontier over the Eastern Carpathians. This new frontier along the River Pruth and through the mountains of the Bukovine was of immense value later in the resistance to the Nazi Blitzkrieg in this particular sector.

But while Hitler was destroying Poland in the autumn of 1939, and the world stood aghast and inactive, a campaign of some months was being fought in the Far East of which very little has been heard. The Japanese tried to invade Mongolia for the second time. But here the Japanese 6th Army, some of her finest troops and tanks suffered a bloody defeat by the Far Eastern Red Army. The Japanese lost over 600 of their air force compared to a Soviet air loss of under 150. The Japanese authorities even admitted 18,000 casualties.

But the decisive factor in this campaign of Khalkhin-Gol was the Soviet tanks. Before the Blitzkrieg method of the Panzer divisions had shown their power in the battle of France, the Red Army in the Far East had used this tactic with deadly effect. According to the *Times* of July 11th, 1940, "The Japanese forces had been beaten by huge tanks, throwing flames some thirty yards farther than the Japanese tanks opposing them could reach. The effect was irresistible . . .



The discovery of the terrific power of these new tanks, and the knowledge that the flat Manchurian plain offered opportunities for developing their maximum power, was a decisive factor in influencing the Japanese Army to accept a truce."

This was the last occasion in which Japanese and Soviet forces were engaged—up to the time of writing

## CHAPTER VI

### *Soviet Finnish Campaign*

**I**N October, 1939, the Soviet Government tried to arrive at an amicable settlement concerning the weakest part of its whole immense frontier. This was on the Karelian Isthmus, where, within twenty-one miles of Leningrad, was built the most efficient modern fortified line, in strength though not in size, that military science had so far constructed, the famous Mannerheim Line. Even in Tsarist days Stolypin, the Tsar's Minister, pointed out to an English diplomat the danger of an enemy on this Isthmus. "How would you," he said "like to have an enemy frontier as near to London as Gravesend?" The Finnish Government, on the advice of its military leaders, decided to resort to arms rather than accept the generous exchange of territory proposed by the Soviet Union. History will reveal what influences were behind the Finnish leaders in causing them to rush in where Hitler feared to tread.

War began on December 1st, 1939 and was concluded on March 13th, 1940, by Finland signing virtually a peace at any price to save an imminent military collapse. But the Soviet Government only took such Finnish territory, i.e. Viborg and a small piece of the frontier, as would protect the U.S.S.R. in the event of Finland being used as a jumping-off ground against it by other military powers. Hango, the Gibraltar of Finland, was leased at a cost of

£30,000 a year to the Soviet Government. Thus the Soviet Fleet had command of the Bay of Finland, and, with the losses inflicted on the German Fleet by the British in the war, it probably gave the Red Fleet command of the Baltic Sea.

In this Finnish campaign we have a close picture of the Red Army in action. Their task was to break a modern fortified line, both of whose flanks were secured. As for the Mannerheim Line, it was built under the best European military direction, including that of a British General, Sir Walter Kirke, who had given it a final inspection in June, 1939. Many expert military thinkers believed it impregnable. It consisted of 350 two-story reinforced concrete underground forts and 2,257 granite emplacements. Seventy miles long, its main defensive system was seven miles deep, in the midst of a lake district and with many waterways which were invaluable for defence.

Mannerheim had been promised aid by Great Britain and France in men as well as material, but he considered that with the appalling difficulties of the winter (it is the coldest climate in Europe), and his very strong defensive position, he would need no help from outside powers until May, when the winter was over. The British Government, however, collected a force of 100,000 men ready if wanted. This force was never employed, however, for the Red Army did not do as Mannerheim expected, wear out its energy in attacks in the winter, but reserved its forces for an immense blow in the early days of February. Thus the Red Army broke the Mannerheim Line and the war was over before the British Army could arrive.

The task of the Red Army was to finish this war while the ground was yet frozen, for the thaw in the later days of March would have faced its mechanised units with immense difficulties in such a water-logged country as Finland. To bring up all the necessary men, arms, stores and supplies to break through this

Mannerheim Line, two months' preparation at least was needed, for the rail lines of supply from Leningrad were only two, and these passed through a bottleneck in the city itself, the one railway bridge over the River Neva.

Meretskov was the Commander of the Leningrad Garrison, and he and his troops, some twenty-four divisions on all fronts, carried out the task. His first job was to clear the forward defence zone, which he did in a few days, and this gave him a chance to find out all the details of the strength and weakness of the various sectors of the Mannerheim Line. Meanwhile he sent a division to the Port of Petsamo in the north to prevent any hostile power interfering in that sector. Hostile naval craft were reported in that area on February 22nd, 1940, but Mr. Chamberlain stated in the House of Commons that it was considered too hazardous an enterprise for the British Navy.

In order to weaken the reserves which Mannerheim had in the main defensive position on the Karelian Isthmus, Meretskov decided to bluff his opponent by threatening to cut Finland in two through the so-called "waist line". He launched an invasion on Finland's eastern frontier from four different points, all based along the Leningrad-Murmansk railway. The three northern thrusts were a division each, and the southern one two divisions. These four thrusts had at least eighty and in some cases over hundred miles of roadless communications to their base. The thrusts were made in mid-winter when there was only one hour of daylight, and in a temperature which was intensely cold. Isolated from each other by hundreds of miles, they had no weight behind them whatever, and they obviously could not succeed, as the further they advanced, the more their difficulties increased. In any case, had they reached the Gulf of Bothnia, they would have only isolated the northern half of Finland which was rail-less, almost townless,

and certainly useless from a military point of view.

Such was the propaganda issued in all countries on the absolute ineptitude of the Red Army, that even the Finnish High Command swallowed their own misinformation. The Soviet Government purposely did not discourage the nonsense issued, with the result that Mannerheim sent up valuable reserves to the north and this made a vital difference in the coming days of the Red offensive on the Mannerheim Line.

The Red divisions in these thrusts were held up, surrounded, and in some cases isolated, but they never ceased to be a force in being, and they achieved their task by immobilising a number of Finns who would have been more usefully used in the South. On January 6th, when the "waist line" thrusts had been held up, and Mannerheim's reserves had been sent up to meet them, the Red Air Force bombed all the railways to prevent their return to the vital point.

Just before his great offensive on February 2nd, Meretskov completed his great bluff by sending one division and a tank brigade round the north shore of Lake Ladoga, confirming the enemy's opinion that he was afraid to attack the impregnable Mannerheim Line and was trying to turn it instead. This deception of Meretskov's, aided by the press of the world, took in everyone. Even military correspondents who had at the beginning of the campaign pointed out that the invasion in the north could have no weight behind it, had now swallowed the bait and thought that, when the offensive opened on the Mannerheim Line, this—the great main attack—was merely a bluff.

The whole weight of the offensive was brought to bear on one narrow sector of ten miles, called the Summa Front, while on the rest of the sectors, the enemy were kept pinned to their position. This was the first occasion on which the Red Army showed in Europe that it had materials worthy of a great army.

The artillery power was immense; in fact, on those ten miles of front a barrage was put down of 300,000 shells or 7,000 tons of metal, in one day—equal to the amount the mighty British Army fired in the same period at the Battle of the Somme, but in that case on over 100 miles of front; and over three times the amount of explosive metal the Nazi Air Force dropped on London in the first fortnight of the blitzkrieg.

The temperature was 30° below zero, and the ground being frozen to some three or four feet meant that the Red infantry on taking any position had to blast trenches to consolidate it, as digging was out of the question. Day after day the attacks were resumed with increasing force until the Finns started to give way. By February 15th, certain important points in the line had been taken and Mannerheim had already had to draw on his reserves. By February 16th the line was pierced. The Red Army had, practically, before them an open road to Viborg, but they decided to leave that objective for a larger aim—the encirclement of the whole Southern Finnish Army. They pinned the left flank of the Finnish forces at Taipale on Lake Ladoga to prevent it withdrawing, while they moved their troops across the ice of the Bay of Viborg and finally across the ice of the Gulf of Finland. By March 10th, the Finnish army was not only exhausted and suffering heavy losses, but its communications with the capital, Helsinki, the main base, were threatened. Small wonder that Mannerheim telegraphed to the Finnish delegation which had gone to Moscow to discuss peace, and told them to sign it at any price, to avoid a military catastrophe.

The mechanised forces of Russia here showed their great superiority. Tanks were used over the most difficult ground and in a sub-Arctic climate. The methods of bringing the infantry up to attacking distance with a minimum of losses were ingenious.

Armoured sledges were used, pushed by the tanks over the snow. Triple turreted tanks of seventy tons were tried out as an experiment in the final stages of the offensive. As the advance moved forward through the broken line, the speed of the follow up of the artillery to the infantry advance was very rapid, and it demonstrated the mobility of the Red heavy artillery. But probably the most impressive thing of the whole campaign was the fact that the fourteen divisions used on the Karelian Isthmus had to be supplied entirely by only two railways, proving excellent railway organisation and brilliant staff work. The Air Force had no difficulty with the enemy for none of the enemy machines were able to put up any resistance worth speaking about, although the Powers had sent 350 aeroplanes including over 100 British. The Red Air Force were careful not to bomb the civilian inhabitants and concentrated on military objectives, railways, etc. That they achieved this is shown by the Finnish statement that only 646 civilians were killed after six weeks' continual bombardment behind the lines.

But most remarkable of all is the fact that not a single aeroplane got through the Leningrad defences, though the city was only twenty-one miles from the front line. In Leningrad lay a most vital point which should have been destroyed from the air, or at any rate an attempt made to do so—the one railway bridge over the River Neva. Through this bottleneck flowed all the supplies for the offensive.

No use was made of airborne troops or parachute armies in this campaign, as it was a siege war on a very narrow front. Parachutes were only used for supplying isolated detachments.

Meretskov's plan succeeded not only because it was well-conceived and boldly executed, not only because he had immensely superior weapons over all those supplied to the enemy, but also because of the

fighting qualities of the Red Army men. No other army in history has ever fought continuously in any winter, not to speak of a winter such as is found in the Arctic sub-region (and, incidentally, this particular winter was the coldest for seventy years). No other army had dared yet to attack a modern defensive system of fortifications by a frontal assault, for be it noted the Nazi Army evaded the Maginot Line by turning it. The Red Army succeeded in the short time of 104 days, just ten days before the thaw set in.

The value of the new strategic frontier has now come to light. The old plan of General Hoffman of the invasion of Russia from Germany was by two movements, one through the Baltic States and the other from the Karelian Isthmus, both converging on Leningrad. For Leningrad is the key to Moscow.

Few could foresee that the Red success in Finland was a prelude to the saving of Great Britain less than two years later. Such is the irony of history.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Present Red Army—Arms, training and industry*

**B**ETWEEN the years 1914 and 1941 there have been three armies in what used to be called Russia. The Tsarist Army, the Red Army of the days of the Civil War and Foreign Intervention, and the Red Army of today. There is only one common factor in these three armies, and that is the great personal bravery of the rank and file. Otherwise there is no similarity. The antiquated Tsarist Army when it collapsed in the November revolution gave birth to the Red Guards and young Red Army, but they were as badly armed as the Tsarist army though brilliantly led. The Revolution threw up the natural leaders that the situation demanded. Just as the English, American and French revolutions produced Cromwell, Washington and Napoleon, so the Russian

Revolution produced Stalin, Voroshilov, Budyonny and Timoshenko. The Red Army of today, led by these same men, is a very different army to that of the Civil War days, for it has now behind it a most up-to-date industry able to supply its immense numbers with all the latest modern weapons.

The object of the Soviet Government in building this mighty army was not merely to win a war, but to be so strong as to prevent any war-monger daring to encroach on its borders.

No one knows the actual strength of the Red Army except its own leaders. But some idea may be gained however by the very healthy respect shown it in pre-war days by the military authorities of Nazi Germany and Japan. From a population of almost two hundred millions they have an inexhaustible reserve of manpower. In 1938, Nazi military writers estimated that the Red Army had from ten to thirteen million first line and second line reserves, and added to that the arms for such numbers. At the outbreak of the present conflict, a very conservative estimate would put their strength at seven million first line troops and six million second line reserves: and the latter have all had periods of refresher training. About one and a half million are permanently garrisoned in the Far East and along their immense land frontier in Central Asia.

Behind these fighting troops is an organisation called Osoaviakhim or League of Labour and Defence, consisting of some fifteen million voluntary members of both sexes. They are trained in such military knowledge as the use of the rifle and machine gun as well as gas and street fighting, and a special branch includes the training as pilots and parachute jumpers. There are various standard tests; and badges are awarded according to efficiency of members. All training must take place in the members spare time. Since Hitler's invasion, the Soviet Government has

given orders for the whole male population between sixteen and sixty to undergo military training. All will be armed—a striking illustration of the complete confidence the Soviet Government has in its people.

The mobilisation of this huge army would naturally tend to check the vital flow of industrial goods and arms at the very moment when it was most needed—the outbreak of war. To avoid this, women volunteered to learn industrial production technique to overcome this anticipated difficulty. So the smooth passing over from peace to war in the Soviet Union was partly due to this foresight, though in any case it is a much easier operation naturally in a country whose economic base is Socialism. None of the conflicting problems of all the myriad private enterprises which have to be considered in other countries, arise in the Soviet Union.

The Red Army, together with the Red Air Force and the Red Fleet, were up to 1940 under the command of one man, Marshal Voroshilov, the Defence Commissar, as he is called. Voroshilov took over in 1924 after the death of Frunze. But in 1940, Voroshilov was promoted to include in his responsibilities the Defence Industries as well, and Timoshenko took over the military command of the three services. This new change ensured the correct distribution, expansion and balance of the needs of the services by Voroshilov, that is from a military point of view. The Defence Commissar is always a member of the Soviet Cabinet. Thus in all discussions on policy the man who knows the capabilities of the Red Forces is present to give his views. This does not mean that military views can over-ride policy, for in the Soviet Government policy must always come first. But it does mean that the cabinet which decides policy cannot give impossible orders to the fighting services.

The basis of the Red Fighting Services is the Red Army and the foundation of the Red Army is the

infantry arm. All the mighty modern inventions are developed to an incredible extent in the Red Army but they are never allowed to overshadow the fact that they are all servants to the final decisive factor in actual war—the man with the rifle and bayonet. Though possessing the greatest air fleet in the world they know that wars are won in the end by the infantry supported by all the modern weapons of war. This was put with a journalistic economy of words recently by an American editor. "The war is eventually going to be won by troops, and not by a lot of gallant young men in aircraft. The war will be won by armies."

The Red Infantry division is the strongest of any army. It numbers 18,000 and has a fire power that is more formidable even than that of a German Infantry division. It also has more mechanisation and a greater support of guns, tanks and aircraft attached to it than has a Nazi division. In all actions in which infantry are involved, all the other arms come under the infantry commander. This has been ridiculed by the Nazis but history will prove the Red Army was right. The increase of the motorisation and mechanisation of the infantry is shown by the figures of seven horse power per man in 1934, being increased to thirteen horsepower per man in 1939—the army in that period having been doubled in numbers. The infantry man is lightly equipped for mobility.

After the brilliant work of the cavalry arm under Voroshilov, Budyonny and Timoshenko in the Civil War, the cavalry is considered of vital importance, provided the country is suitable. This arm, which would be hampered in the swampy districts of the Leningrad area, finds the Ukraine ideal country for its work. Accurate figures of the Red cavalry are not known, but it can be stated that in 1939 they exceeded in numbers the total cavalry of Germany, Italy, France and Poland combined. These mounted troops

are supported by motor-mechanization, and tanks, and artillery of the most mobile type are attached. Altogether a very different arm compared to its prototype of the Civil War. Its task is not only local counter-attacks, in which it has already done valuable work in the present war, but as a strategic force penetrating deep into the enemy rear in the main offensive.

The Red artillery has developed every type of modern weapon, and its power has been shown not only against Japan and Finland, but against the Nazi Army today. Its striking power has literally staggered the Nazis. With its usual disregard of dogmatic military conventions, the Red artillery brings its guns, of all calibres, right up to the fighting line in close support of the infantry, in defence as well as attack. The moral value alone to the infantry is immense. Guns of great range and power are used from rear positions as well, and large concentrations of heavy artillery are made in groups for long-distance effect. The speed with which the heaviest artillery, twelve-inch guns, are moved by motor transport is astonishing. When the Red infantry broke through the Mannerheim Line and pursued the retreating Finns, the Red artillery were always closely supporting them, and this included guns of the heaviest calibre. The destructive power of their guns can be judged from the Finnish campaign where reinforced concrete casements of seven feet thickness were broken up like china. The heavy gun emplacements of the Finns, steel and concrete and embedded in the ground, were literally levered up and the guns thrown out of alignment by the heavy gun fire of the Red artillery. The power of their anti-aircraft weapon can be seen in the feeble results of the Nazi mass bombing raids on Moscow, Leningrad, and Odessa. Only a few planes have managed to struggle through the barrage of Leningrad, though the Germans claim to be within fifteen

miles of the city. They apparently have A.A. guns in profusion and an excellent system of zonal barrage.

The attitude of the Red High Command to tanks is best expressed in their own words. "The particular fighting qualities of tanks must not be over-estimated. Tanks have tremendous striking power, but only when they are strongly supported by infantry and artillery under favourable circumstances." Thus the Red tanks are the basis of the offensive power of the Red Army, but they must be supported by motorised infantry, artillery and from the air. As regards quality, the Nazis have complained that the models shown on the Red Square were by no means their latest. While developing weight and size, this has not been done at the expense of speed. Large tanks of seventy tons are reported to have a speed of over twenty-five miles an hour. Report speaks of tanks of over 100 tons with crews of fifteen. These must be veritable mobile batteries.

The author saw for himself as far back as 1935 a model of some thirty tons passing through the Red Square on the 1st May at about thirty-five to forty miles an hour. These medium cruiser tanks, as they are classed in the Red Army, are built strong enough to drive full speed over precipices of twenty feet. The surprising fact is that not only the crew survive this crash, but they carry on with the manoeuvres quite normally.

The Red Army is the only army to develop amphibian tanks to a large extent. These can move on land or in water without stopping for any adjustment, and they can cruise for seven hours at sea. With the lakes and rivers over the fighting area today, there would be unlimited possibilities for their use against an enemy who tries to cover his retreat by destroying bridges.

Red tanks must always co-operate with the infantry and cavalry. Here is a quotation from "The Military

Strength of the Powers" (by that brilliant military writer, Max Werner), published in 1939. "Soviet Russian military literature criticises the plans for motorised shock armies put forward by the British and French army reformers, Fuller and de Gaulle. It declares that such formations must be inflexible in their organisational structure, that the various arms involved are too closely dependent on each other, and that therefore there is little elasticity and mobility."

As regards parachute troops, the Red Army is so far in advance in military thought as well as practice, that no other army can ever catch it up. Only in 1938 did the German Army attempt to form a parachute corps, and its weakness has been shown throughout the otherwise successful Nazi campaigns. Its birth in the Red Army was due to a young commander, who in 1929 manoeuvres dropped with eight others by parachute, at night, into the enemy lines and destroyed the general headquarters. The first disclosure of this development to the world was made in 1935, on the Kiev manoeuvres before the military representatives of all armies. The film of these manoeuvres was shown in England, but only the press and military authorities saw it. What the latter thought of it is unknown, but the press treated it as a glorious Bolshevik joke, from ignorance probably, rather than prejudice. The standard of training reached in those days may be judged from the fact that two infantry battalions (1,200 men) with sixteen light field guns and 120 machine guns, took only eight minutes, from the moment of release in the air, to march off in military formation.

That this form of warfare was as revolutionary as the invention of gun-powder in the days of feudalism was the conviction of the author when he used to lecture on it to civilian audiences in 1937, but it only appeared ridiculous to those with no military training either in theory or practice. So convinced of its use

is the Red Army, that the "Landing Corps" as it is called, now consists of two million trained parachutists. These parachutists are not merely individuals spreading fire, terror and sabotage on the lines of communication, as is the Nazi method, but are a definite military unit with a tactical task to carry out. For this purpose an air-borne army is needed, and that is why the practice of moving divisions by air with all their arms and equipment is a normal part of Red military training. As long ago as 1935, a division was moved in this way from Moscow to Vladivostok, a distance almost as far as London to Vancouver. The same year the Red Air Force had mastered the carrying of light tanks of some ten tons. Thus the "Landing Corps" consists of a parachute advance guard with an air-borne main body.

The parachute troops are landed on ground that can be used as an aerodrome. In the area over which the present war is being fought such ground is available everywhere. This parachute advance guard, consisting perhaps of a brigade with its artillery, will hold a perimeter position round the future aerodrome to prevent local attacks during the subsequent operations. These would be followed by the arrival of a division by air. Air-borne troops are not only transported quicker than by rail or road, but they can be embarked and disembarked very rapidly; since the transports land and leave the ground within a few minutes. Above all there is the supreme advantage in war of surprise.

In this way there is a fighting force of all arms well behind the enemy lines. Allenby in the last war in Palestine achieved the same result, but to do this he had to send his cavalry at the Battle of Aleppo on a five days flanking march round the Turkish positions. In this way the German aerodrome was captured before even the enemy headquarters were aware of the arrival of the British cavalry.

So the Red air-borne forces would arrive, not round a right and left flank, but using the third dimension, the air, a flank of unlimited scope. Of course moves such as these would not be used until the offensive by the infantry at the front had made considerable headway into the enemy's main positions. But once started, its effect will be to turn defeat into disaster. Coming events in Eastern Europe may show how devastating this revolutionary method of war can be.

Up to the present neither the Nazis nor the Red Army has used gas. The Red Army captured some important documents, showing the German Army was quite prepared to use this weapon. The official Red comment laconically pointed out that the Nazis were not the only ones to study the uses of this form of warfare.

In the Soviet Union scientists have the most privileged position. Every available facility is given them and no expense is spared for their research work. There is every reason to suppose, therefore, that in the matter of chemical warfare the Red Army is in advance of the German Army especially when it is recalled that the Nazi regime has persecuted and driven into exile some of the best German scientists—men whose origin was either Jewish or otherwise non-Aryan, to use their unscientific jargon.

Every year the training of the army has culminated in manoeuvres on an immense scale. The reason has been to train commanders in handling large bodies of men as well as the co-operation of all arms of the services. The brilliant staff work shown in the present war, as well as the smooth working of their railways, has shown the value of these mass exercises.

Of course it was easy for the Soviet Union to carry these out for two reasons—the immensity of their country which allows full deployment of mass armies, and the fact that there is no private ownership of land under their socialist system, so that in the event of

damage to property in the realistic training of war, the Government did not face the same difficulties as other countries who still have the system of private ownership of land.

But in 1940, Timoshenko, who had succeeded Voroshilov as Commissar of Defence, decided on a series of manoeuvres on a small scale. Every battalion throughout this vast army carried out an intensive manoeuvre with all the other arms—guns, tanks and air, in order to develop the lessons of the recent two year fighting in Europe, to bring up the standard of the junior commanders and the rank and file to the highest possible pitch of perfection and to develop their individual initiative.

Modern war depends for its success as much on modern industry as on organised manpower. In the First Five Year Plan the Soviet Government created the base of a modern industrial system and the rapid process of changing a purely agricultural country into an industrial one began. Owing to the lack of trained technical staff this process resolved itself into the construction of gigantic factories.

But in the Second Five Year Plan the training of new cadres in technique allowed for a considerable decentralisation in the industrial system and this tendency increased rapidly with the Third Five Year Plan. This meant that industry was spread all over the vast territory of the Soviet Union; and factories and combinations of factories were built near the sources of the raw materials. This tended to ease the strain on the transport system which was struggling to cope with the ever increasing production of goods.

But it was the dangerous international situation with the arrival of Hitler and the policy of appeasement, together with increased power and range of the modern bomber, that accelerated the spreading of the new industrial growths further and further away from the threatened areas in Europe. A great modern



industry has developed east of the Ural mountains, close to the immense natural resources that the Soviet scientists had discovered in Siberia.

The Red Army has, therefore, a good base of supply, to continue a war as long as is necessary, even if they lose the industrial centres of Russia in Europe, provided of course their armies are still intact.

The destruction of the great Dneiper Dam, the darling of the First Five Year Plan, would have no great effect on Soviet industry as a whole. The astonishment of the world at this sacrifice has been great, but to the Soviet people the destruction of the Fascist armies is more important than the material loss to their industrial construction. This can be made good by rebuilding when the war is won.

In Soviet industry the supplies of the Red Army always have first call and the most skilled technical workers are found in their aeroplane industry. Everything is of the best, from the material for Red Army clothing to the most powerful guns and tanks. The experience of Spain showed that the sturdy construction of the lorries, etc., sent by the Soviet Union, were ahead of those sent by all other countries.

The armament factories had heavy calls on them, for every two years the arms and equipment of the Red Army were brought up-to-date. Timoshenko announced some weeks before the war that the Red Army was now equipped with the latest models, which the fighting in Europe had shown to be needed in modern war.

Some idea of this increase in expenditure on the Red Army can be seen from the fact that in 1940 the Soviet Government spent five times the amount on armaments as was spent in 1937. It should be remembered that none of this expenditure is absorbed in profits, or dividends to shareholders under the Soviet system.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Red Air Force and Red Fleet*

THE Red Air Force has three tasks. First and foremost is co-operation with the Red Army; and, of course, with the Red Fleet. The second task is strategical long range bombardment, and the third is the defence of towns and industrial undertakings of importance.

No one outside the Soviet Union knows the exact size of the Red Air Force, and opinions are so diverse that any accurate estimate is impossible. Colonel Bulow, the German air expert, put its first-line strength in 1937 at a figure between 8,000 and 10,000 machines, while for the same year the German military journal *Wehrmacht* estimated it as between 15,000 and 17,000 machines. Some idea of the extent to which expansion was contemplated may be gathered, however, from the fact that in December, 1936, the training of 150,000 war pilots was undertaken. The first contingents of these passing out a year later. By 1939, the lowest possible estimate of first-line strength was probably 12,000 aircraft.

The structure of the Red Air Force is similar to our own. Three aircraft make a flight (zveno); three flights form a squadron (otriad); three squadrons form a wing (eskadrilla); three wings a group (brigad); and three groups an aviation corps.

The personnel is selected from volunteers among those called up for military service, and they serve for three years. Intelligence and good educational qualifications are required as training is of a high standard. Pilots do a minimum of 250 hours flying before being posted to a squadron. The supply of reserves is of great importance, and here the Red Air Force can draw on the Flying Clubs, of which there are over 1,000 in the Soviet Union, as well as the Osoaviakim (the organisation which has an immense

membership and provides technical air training to civilians).

The Red Air Force has always been reticent about its types of aircraft. In 1935, it had in service large quantities of J.15 and J.16 type, fighters capable of 260 miles per hour; and in 1936, the ZKB 19 fighter, of over 300 miles an hour made its appearance. The J.15 was a single-seat bi-plane with four machine-guns, and the J.16 was a low winged monoplane. The I.16 made its reputation in Spain, where an early version, armed with two machine guns, each firing at 1,800 rounds a minute, proved superior to the latest German and Italian fighters. Later versions, no doubt with increased armaments and other modifications, are engaged in the present war.

In 1937, the I.17 type was first produced. This machine, in use today, was at first fitted with a 960 horse-power engine and armed with a cannon and four machine guns. It is a low-wing monoplane, with a maximum speed in 1937 of 310 miles per hour. The I.18, of which little is known, seems a development of the I.17 type. Its armament consists of eight machine guns, and like the I.17, it has a liquid-cooled "in line" engine, which gives it a speed of some 370 miles an hour. A still later type, the I.19, is reputed to have a speed of over 400 miles per hour and a ceiling of about 40,000 feet. The ranges of the I class machines lie between 500 and 700 miles.

Of great value in combating tanks is the Stormovik dive-bomber, a single-engined low-wing monoplane armed with a 55 mm. cannon firing a 2 lb. shell (the largest cannon carried in British or American aircraft is 37 mm.), and having sufficiently heavy armour round the cockpit to withstand anything other than a direct hit from a shell.

The best known type of bomber is the S.B.2. This machine, which first appeared in 1935, is a twin-engined monoplane. The earlier versions had a range of 600

miles, but this has since been increased to 1,400 miles. The ceiling is 33,000 feet, and the maximum speed 270 miles per hour, carrying a bomb load of one ton and a crew of four. A similar bomber, the S.K.B.26, is also a twin-engined monoplane, and can carry 1,100 lbs. of bombs 500 miles at 240 miles per hour. Like the S.B.2 it has gun positions in the nose and amid-ships.

Among the heavier types of bombers is the T.B.3, a monoplane of which the Soviet Union had about 2,000 in 1939. It has a range of 2,700 miles, a maximum speed of 200 miles per hour, and a bomb load of three tons. It carries a crew of five, with gun positions in the nose, tail and amid-ships. In this class also is the T.B.6, a monoplane with a range of 1,250 miles, a speed of 280 miles per hour, a ceiling of 28,000 feet, and a bomb load of three tons. As for the still heavier bombers, according to the *Petit Journal*, the Red Air Force, in 1935, possessed machines with a bomb load of seven to eight tons each, though it is doubtful whether bombers of this size existed in great numbers.

In the present conflict, where flying has to be done from snow covered aerodromes, the Red Air Force's experience in handling aircraft fitted with skis is of great value to them. The Germans, not having been faced with the same climatic problems as the Russians, do not appear to have mastered the handling of aircraft so equipped; an omission which will prove costly.

Of the industry behind this great Air Force, the Nazi, Colonel Bulow estimated in 1936 that there were twenty-eight large aircraft factories in the U.S.S.R., and that in that year 20,000 aeroplane engines of the A.M.34 type, developing 1,250 horse-power, were produced by one such factory. In 1937, twenty and twenty-four ton bombers were being produced at the rate of 750 a year by a single plant, while in 1939, the total capacity of the Soviet aircraft industry was estimated at 20,000 aeroplanes annually.

In that year, the industry was employing about a quarter of a million workers, and the plants were operating three shifts daily, producing aircraft in much the same manner as cars are produced in the up-to-date automobile plants of Europe and America. Only since this war began has America adopted this method of making aircraft.

The Soviet Union, however, has not attempted to substitute quantity for quality. In spite of its vast numbers and in spite of the enormous scale of production, the equipment of the Red Air Force has shown itself to be not only equal but superior to that of its enemies.

Some idea of the quality can be gained when it is recalled that the Soviet airmen twice crossed to America over the North Pole, breaking the long distance record. It should be noted that this feat was achieved with no possible landing places below, in the teeth of an average head wind of thirty miles per hour and through blizzards and ice.

#### THE RED FLEET

In the Revolution of 1917, the sailors of the Baltic Fleet were amongst the first to help overthrow the Tsarist regime. On November 7th, 1917, it was the cruiser, *Aurora*, which opened the attack on the Winter Palace, by sailing up the Neva. During the Civil War and foreign Intervention, the sailors fought on land with the Red Army, and were considered the most reliable elements in the army. Most of the Fleet had to be sunk during this period, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Whites, and all that the new Soviet Government had at the end of the Civil War was three old battleships, four cruisers, some twenty destroyers, a dozen submarines, and an assortment of minor vessels. As a Fleet its fighting value was worth nothing.

At first the Soviet Government decided that as it had no oversea colonies and harboured no imperial

ambitions, it would need nothing stronger than strong coastal defence forces. Accordingly, from 1923 onwards, all efforts at naval construction were concentrated on submarines and small high speed torpedo craft. About the end of 1934, however, the Soviet Government decided that its policy had been ill-advised, and immediately started to build an ocean-going fleet. The Spanish War endorsed this policy, for the Soviet Union found its Navy lacking in numbers and power, and therefore unable to convoy ships carrying material aid to the Republican Government. The construction of the new Fleet was speeded up, therefore, and the inefficient elements in the Naval Staff were cleared out. The problem facing the Soviet Government was not an easy one. Three main fleets were necessary, one in the Baltic, one in the Black Sea, and a third in the Far East. Apart from these, some naval provision was necessary for guarding the White Sea and the Caspian Sea.

The Red Navy has for several years had the largest submarine fleet in the world, and has recently announced that they possess more submarines than the combined navies of Germany, Italy, and Japan. It is probable also that the Red Navy has also supremacy in the sphere of small high speed torpedo boats.

In 1936, the larger vessels under the new programme began to come off the stocks; first the 8,000 ton cruiser *Kirov*, armed with nine 7.1" guns, soon to be followed by her sister ship *Kuibyshev* and the *Orjonikidze*, and from then onwards the Red Navy has apparently continued to receive vessels at a steadily increasing rate. Information about the later types is so meagre that it is of little value for assessing the navy as a whole. But such information as is available shows that the ships now forming the Red Navy are equal, if not superior, to their counterpart in other navies.

The personnel of the Red Navy is selected from

volunteers in the annual call-up. The period of service is four years. The efficiency of the training has already been shown in the present conflict on those occasions when the Red Navy has come in contact with the Nazi Fleet.

## CHAPTER IX

### *Red Army Strategy and Tactics*

THE strategy of the Red Army, like the strategies of all other armies, is governed by the basic principle "To destroy the armed forces of the enemy," but unlike other armies, it states in more detail how this is possible of achievement. As long ago as 1924, Frunze, who was then Defence Commissar, said "The development of military technique and new weapons, flying, chemistry, armoured shock forces, and so on, will lead to a situation in which a continuous fixed line or front will hardly be possible over any considerable distance and for any length of time." Their present regulations state concisely "Modern technical means make it possible to organise a simultaneous attack on the enemy throughout the whole depth of his position, to isolate him, to encircle him and finally destroy him."

The country of Eastern Europe over which the Red Army was well aware it would have to fight has been a considerable influence on its strategy. This terrain is one immense plain, sometimes open and sometimes covered with forests; and there are few rivers large enough to form major military obstacles. Thus there has been no tendency towards the Maginot defence strategy of the Western military mind. The Civil War had taught them the value of the offence. To-day, with unlimited numbers and a modern armament industry, their leaders possess in the Red Army a weapon of immense striking power. The Red Field Service Regulations of 1937, state "The enemy must be caught throughout the whole depth of his position, and there

encircled and destroyed." The defence is relegated to its time-honoured role in military history, and is only used as a preparation for the successful offensive.

In building up the power for this offensive, unlike the Nazi army, they do not put their whole faith in tanks or aircraft. A Soviet military journal writes in 1935: "Modern air forces are not the decisive factor in battle, compared with the volume of operative tasks set before modern mass armies." And the deputy chief of the Red General Staff commented shortly afterwards "The particular fighting qualities of tanks must not be over-estimated . . . Tanks have tremendous striking power, but only when they are strongly supported by infantry and artillery under favourable circumstances."

How balanced is their appreciation of all arms is brought out in this passage from their Field Service Regulations: "Each arm must be used in battle with careful regard to its peculiarities and its strong points. Each arm must operate in the closest possible co-operation with all other arms, and each arm must be used under conditions most favourable for developing its possibilities to the full."

In their power to carry out this Red strategy they have two offensive weapons that the Nazi army lacks—their air-landing corps on a mass scale, and their strategic cavalry.

But this Red offensive must not be confused with the Nazi panzer methods. The comparison between the two cannot be contrasted more concisely than in the words of a Soviet military writer, "Modern warfare is not like a boxing match in which the better man knocks out his opponent suddenly with one blow. In war an uninterrupted flow of strength and energy is necessary in order to beat the enemy to his knees." Another Soviet writer says "Withdrawing to his own strategic base the enemy has more time to rally and

concentrate his forces, and in the upshot he may prove stronger than the first wave of the attacking forces, unless the latter have drawn on their reserves."

The lessons of the failure of the battle of Warsaw in the Polish War of 1920 have not been forgotten. The failure of Trotsky and Tukhachevski in this battle taught the Red Army to avoid ill-prepared offensives. No better summing up on Red strategy could be found by Max Werner in his "Military Strength of the Powers," page 112. "If an army in Eastern Europe is defeated by superior numbers and a superior weight of modern arms, then it will have no possibility of retreat or even flight; it will be faced with the alternatives of complete surrender or complete destruction."

Flexibility, originality, and freedom from antiquated military dogmas are the characteristics of Red Army tactics. They are based on the prime importance of the infantry arm, and all other arms are subservient to the infantry when the latter are engaged in any operations. In such cases the infantry Commander is always placed in supreme command. The varied use of the close co-operation of all arms had been shown in action in the Far East and in Finland. In the present conflict, too, such information that has come through, has shown the surprise of the German Army at the variants employed on the different battle-fields. The old idea of infantry as cannon-fodder is replaced in the Red Army by the greatest solicitude. This is shown in the efforts made to help the infantry reach the final decision with cold steel. In Finland, special armoured sledges carrying the assaulting infantry were pushed over the snow by tanks, to bring the men with the rifle and bayonet to the decisive point.

In the Red Army the highly trained personnel are considered of much greater importance than arms and equipment or territory. Weapons can be replaced much easier than trained men. Naturally, they are

quite aware war cannot be waged without suffering casualties; but the old idea of "Save the guns at all costs!" no longer holds good. As long as the guns are rendered useless to the enemy, it is better to retire the personnel and draw fresh weapons from the reserve. Of course, such action will depend on circumstances, but as a main principle Red Army men are far more valuable than Red Army weapons. The official figures given out in the present conflict by the Soviet Government show immense losses of material, almost equal to that of the German attacking forces; but the casualties are, in relation to these figures, on the small side.

The Red General Staff were the first to work out the tactical implications of modern offensive weapons, because they were the first to possess these weapons in profusion. They were the first to apply dive-bombing, airborne "landing corps," plane-tank, plane-cavalry, and plane-infantry co-operation, air assault on tanks, armoured shock formations, and long distance tank units fanning out across the enemy's communications. Only later did the Nazis possess these weapons and adapt tactics to them.

As regards defence, the defence in depth is carried to a degree further than most other armies; but the Red Army is far from being a defensive army. It considers that an active defence in depth should at the right moment change to an attack in depth, the most powerful form of offensive.

Its close study of offensive weapons and tactics have led it to an understanding of their weaknesses, and to the discovery of the reply. This has been shown in dealing with the Nazi panzer-columns. These were allowed to blunt their head by the use of aeroplane-tank counter-attacks and mobile artillery, while at the same time isolating them from their supporting infantry. These latter were then attacked by Red infantry with their support tanks and artillery.

This explains the high rate of loss of the German infantry. When the Nazi reserves are brought up, the Red infantry has to extricate itself and fall back on its main forces. If this cannot be achieved, the infantry must either break up into small units and join the guerilla forces, or die fighting. Nazi evidence shows the ferocity with which such encircled units fight.

The mobility of the infantry and the cavalry is assured by motor mechanisation, and these arms are always supported by mobile guns and tanks. The infantryman is equipped, too, for speed and is not over-loaded.

Great care was spent after the Soviet-Finnish campaign in developing the initiative of the junior commanders and Red Army men.

## CHAPTER X

### *Personnel and leaders*

**T**HE change from backward, illiterate, ignorant peasant Russia into the scientific, educated industrial Soviet Union in just over twenty years has astonished the world. The Red Army itself was used as a means to achieve this result.

The soldier of Tsarism was only a peasant, a moujik, in uniform—illiterate, drunken and often a thief. He hated his period of service when torn from his family and hovel. Notices in the park ran "Soldiers and dogs not allowed in this park." The Soviet Government at once reversed this attitude, for the Red Army was a people's army and one no longer to be used as an instrument of suppression. For this it needed to be made of such material as would earn the respect, admiration and even the love of the people. In fact, the Red Army man (the word "soldier" or "private" was anathema to them) was put on a pedestal and

encouraged by every means to live up to this position. All through the civil war no opportunity was missed of teaching the Red Army man to read and write, and raise his standard of education, and that education has been going on ever since with increasing speed.

Throughout his period of service of two years the recruit is given not only a military education, but a cultural, and, above all, a political training. With the result the Red Army man returned to his village or factory far ahead, not only in experience, but in knowledge and organising ability, of those who had not been lucky enough to have been accepted for service. These Red Army men, having tasted some of the joys of knowledge and culture, were an instrument in bringing them to the backward ignorant population. As the modern technical weapons began to flow from the new industrial system so the Red Army needed education in the broadest sense to master the tactical use of these weapons in modern war.

Not only the Russians, but the 165 smaller nationalities that make up the Soviet Union were made to realise this Red Army was their army and not a weapon in the hands of an Imperial power to keep them in subjection, and this was instilled into recruit from the first day of his service.

As a People's army it was their duty to help the people in all their difficulties. Should a collective farm be behind in its sowing or harvesting programme, the Red Army must come to their help. If a bridge or factory construction needed speeding up to reach completion for the plan, always the Red Army must go to the rescue without hesitation.

In order to keep complete touch with the people, factories, theatres and all sorts of civilian organisations become patrons of regiments. Delegations would visit the fighting units and *vice versa*. A Trade Union delegate, in some cases a girl, would travel by air to the Far East, to be the guest of some Red Army unit.

Newspapers, clubs, theatres, cinemas are built for the Red Army and run by the Red Army: sometimes for their own benefit, sometimes for the benefit of civilians. Red Army choirs are famous throughout the Soviet Union. Red Army troops give theatrical performances for small towns and villages away from the beaten track, and even provide travelling libraries in lorries. The best Moscow theatres in the summer give performances all over the Soviet Union, and this includes garrisons of the Red Army as well as ships of the Red Fleet. The wives of Red Army men and commanders organise to make the barracks more pleasant, as well as joining in the theatrical presentations. Thus all this standard of cleanliness, orderliness, friendliness and culture is carried by the demobilised soldier back to civilian life. No wonder there is joy when time comes for service and they are accepted—with a corresponding sorrow when they are rejected.

There was a law that if any man had religious scruples about war, he would be exempted, on his giving six months' notice before joining up. The Soviet Government wanted only willing fighters. But this law is now abolished, because since 1937 no one has claimed this exemption.

All promotion is from the ranks, that is to junior commanders (N.C.O's.) and to commanders (officers). There were seventeen Red Military Academies for the training of officers in 1939, that is besides the training academies for the training of staff officers and higher commanders. Promotion is on merit, and if necessary a commander may come down a rank if he shows that he has not yet had sufficient experience to command in that rank. But as everywhere in the Soviet Union the question of position in a hierarchy is not so important and personal as it would be in other countries. Women may become commanders if they go through the necessary training, but no woman is conscripted to serve in the ranks of the Red Army and they volunteer

for the administrative, medical and supply services. The age of the commanders, especially those of high ranks, has surprised the military authorities of other armies. Divisional commanders of thirty years age is not unknown. Merit is the only test. General Wavell, after being present on their manoeuvres before the war, said to the Red Army "Your commanding personnel has made an excellent impression on us, as has also the high level of their preparedness. The precision with which the commanders elucidate the military position is also worthy of note. Your commanding personnel are younger than in a number of other armies, in particular than in the British Army. This is a favourable feature . . ."

The French Minister for Air, Pierre Cot, in the pre-war days visited the Soviet Union and commented on the officers of the Red Army as follows: "They are young. They work hard. Their intellectual activity is remarkable. Everywhere throughout the Army we found laboratories, workshops, and technical equipment for independent work which aroused our admiration. There is nothing similar in our officers' training schools," and later he wrote "They are men who are thoroughly abreast of modern military theory and modern military technique. Their leaders are young, their critical sense is well developed, and they give one the impression of intelligence and energy. Their cultural horizon is broad, and their intellectual curiosity (the basis of all culture) and the extent of their knowledge astonished me."

The system of having political commissars throughout the Red Forces is still in force and was a product of the November Revolution in 1917. When that event took place the masses of workers and peasants had one single aim—to get rid of the system under which they had suffered so. But naturally, like other revolutions in history, the masses had only the vaguest ideas of what they wanted to be put in its place. It was in this respect

that Lenin and the Bolshevik Party, a mere drop in the ocean of Russia's millions, played the vital part in guiding the masses towards the construction of Socialism. The political commissars were picked men of this party who were appointed to mutinous regiments who had come over to the revolution. Many Tsarist officers, owing perhaps to force of circumstances rather than convictions, were on the Red side in the Civil War. As these were the only people who had been trained in the art of war, it was necessary for the Red Army to use their services, but these political commissars were always placed above them to see that their work was not hampered by sabotage and treachery. Political Commissars were sent also to the guerilla, or partisan troops, as they were called, and these having only peasant leaders, needed political help to understand for what they were fighting. Lenin said "Without the Political Commissars there would have been no Red Army." From the end of the Civil War up to the Soviet Finnish campaign, the system of Political Commissars remained, and their task was to educate politically the Red Army men who were passing through their two years' service. This education consists not only in a study of world events, but the political interpretation of them, and for this the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin are studied. In units of the Red Army the commanders dealt always with the military side of the problem and the Political Commissars, who were above the commanders, dealt with their educational training.

At the end of the Soviet-Finnish campaign the Soviet Government made the commanders of units responsible both for the military and political training of the men and officers, but the Political Commissar remained at his own task, though now under, and responsible to, the commander.

At the outbreak of the present war the commander was made responsible for military operations only,

and the Political Commissar for the education. These Commissars take all the administrative details of the individual rank and file out of the hands of the commanders, and thus leave him free from a mass of office work which in other armies so often tends to hamper their military work.

The relation of the Communist Party to the Red Army can best be expressed in the words of Max Werner. "The Red Army is a political army: it gives the soldier a political education and moulds his general social outlook. The relation of the Party and the Army in the Soviet Union is very different from that which prevails under a Fascist Dictatorship . . . The Bolshevik Party created the Red Army, it did not take it over, and a political organisation, a military party organisation, embraces the whole army from top to bottom and gives it ideological cohesion."

And to quote from *Deutsche Wehr*, a German military publication, "Since the existence of the Red Army there has been no single case of mutiny either at the front or behind the lines. The question as to the reliability of the Red soldier in the event of war must be answered in the affirmative."

It would be easier to discuss Hamlet without mentioning the Prince of Denmark than to speak of the Red Army and avoid mentioning Stalin.

Stalin's part in the military campaigns of the Civil War is only now becoming known to the public. History now shows that the Soviet Government invariably sent Stalin to take charge at the most threatened danger points during those desperate days.

Every step in the building up of this mighty Red Army with its huge defence industry has been taken on his initiative and carried, thanks to the Communist Party under his guidance. The present army commanders, Voroshilov, Budyonny and Timoshenko, look up to him not merely as a statesman, but as a great military leader. Where Stalin and his com-



manders have a great advantage is that they are realists, or as they prefer to call it, Marxists; that is, they do not allow wishful-thinking to enter into the scientific analysis of any problem, military or political. Nor do they drown such problems in a flood of oratory.

The "enigma" of Stalin would melt in the minds of those who use that phrase if they took the trouble to read his actual words. The book "Leninism," which contains most of his speeches and writings, shows clarity of statement and a mind of incisive reasoning; it shows also a vast wealth of knowledge, not a little humour, and above all, dynamic, and not static thought.

Stalin, Voroshilov, Budyonny and Timoshenko were all without previous military training when, owing to their natural talents as leaders, they rose to command in the Civil War. All these men were free from the military dogmas so prevalent in the other military minds in Europe. They won the Civil War by their unorthodox strategy and tactics, and it was then they learnt the great weakness of the Red Army of those days—the complete lack of arms. So the Red Army of today is the best armed in Europe, as regards quality, thanks to the efforts of these leaders, firstly in building up a modern armament industry, and secondly in continually bringing it up-to-date with modern arms as the progress of invention developed.

These men work together as a "band of brothers," to use Nelson's famous phrase, and the Soviet people have full confidence that they will one day lead them to victory.

## CHAPTER XI

### *The Present War*

ON June 22nd, Hitler launched his Blitzkrieg on the Soviet Union, springing a surprise on the Red Army and on the rest of the world. Few people, unless they had inside knowledge, could have expected

that Hitler, at the height of his success at Crete and when he appeared to be preparing for an invasion of Egypt, would have abandoned these plans in order to add another enemy on another front. What is more, an enemy whose army according to their own military opinion was "the most gigantic army which has ever been organised in the world."

The German plan was to reach the three Red Army mobilisation centres, Leningrad, Moscow and Kiev before the Red Army could mobilise its immense resources of men and materials. The Nazis had as reluctant allies, the Finns, the Hungarians and the Roumanians.

To give weight and momentum for their offensive the Nazi High Command took from France 157 infantry divisions, which were awaiting for the day to invade Britain, and replaced them with twenty-five divisions of second-line troops, to cover France and the Low Countries. They took all the armoured divisions from the West.

The Nazi offensive was launched with thirty armoured and two hundred infantry divisions, that is three million first-line German troops, and about three-quarters of a million allied troops. Behind them were four million second-line reserve German troops. Every available German surface ship except the three cruisers left in French harbours, was brought to the Baltic.

The Nazi Army had four advantages; first, the initiative, the choice of where they would strike; the second, surprise, the unexpectedness of the attack; the third, war experience, that is all the experience gained in their victorious campaigns in Europe, and the air experience in fighting the Royal Air Force; and fourth, the enormous superiority in quantity of tanks, thanks to the workshops of all Europe being at their disposal with their enslaved labour.

The German attack in the centre on the River Bug

and the Roumanian-German attacks along the River Pruth failed to make any headway. But in Lithuania the Red Army was unable to hold up the advance on Vilna, their weakest sector, not only militarily, but politically owing to the fifth column activity in Lithuania behind the Red Army lines.

The success in the northern sector on the Vilna front threatened to encircle the Red Army position at Brest-Litovsk and along the River Bug. The Red Army withdrew to conform with the withdrawal in the northern sector.

South of the Pripet Marshes at Lvov and along the River Pruth the Red Army held all attacks for several weeks, but as the Red forces north of the Pripet Marshes were driven steadily back, the southern army had to conform to this withdrawal and take up a new line west of Kiev and Odessa.

The Finns, with some German divisions as stiffening, attacked at Viborg and in the north at Murmansk.

The Red forces was divided into three armies, the northern under Voroshilov, the centre under Timoshenko, and the southern under Budyonny. Stalin took supreme command. The advance of the Germans was rapid, though at a steadily decreasing rate, so that they failed to capture any of the objectives before the Red Army was mobilised. The first plan of the Nazis had failed. The Red Armies had avoided encirclement and were intact, and though forced to give up great stretches of territory, they made the German Army pay heavily for every mile of advance.

On July 3rd, Stalin broadcast an appeal for the famous "scorched earth" policy. "In occupied regions conditions must be made unbearable for the enemy, and all his accomplices. They must be hounded and annihilated at every step and all their measures frustrated." This was loyally carried out, and behind the German lines in the dense forests, armed guerilla bands were joined by Red Army groups

that had been isolated in the withdrawal of the main forces, and together they carried out destructive work on the German lines of communications.

The German Army drove steadily forward throughout the summer, but at a steadily decreasing rate. At one period Timoshenko was able to seize the initiative in the Smolensk area, but only for a short time; for the Red Army had to evacuate Esthonia in the North and this imperilled Leningrad. On the southern front Kiev was surrounded and overwhelmed and Budyonny had to withdraw his army to the Dnieper, leaving Odessa as a thorn in the German-Rumanian advance. These German successes forced Timoshenko on to the defensive once more and the fighting now approached Moscow itself.

In the south the German Army thrust the Red Army from the Dnieper to the Donetz and eventually captured Rostov. They also broke through the Perekop defences, captured all the Crimea, including Kerch on the Sea of Azov, and besieged Sevastopol. Odessa was now evacuated with the aid of the Black Sea Fleet.

Leningrad was surrounded and Hitler launched his last mighty offensive to encircle and capture Moscow. Timoshenko, after organising the defence of the capital, took over the command of the southern front, while Zhukov was given command of the northern group of armies. Voroshilov and Budyonny were given the task of organising fresh armies for the coming offensive.

On November 7th, with the fighting at the very gates of Moscow, the anniversary of the Revolution was celebrated in the usual way on the Red Square, and Stalin addressed the Red Army, pointing out that they would be the liberating force for the oppressed peoples of Europe.

The Red Army had borne the whole weight of Hitler's onslaught alone; not a single other soldier

on the continent of Europe had forced Hitler to fight on two fronts, though Stalin himself had asked for a second front to be formed to ease the strain on the Red Army and so shorten the war.

On December 1st Timoshenko recaptured Rostov, but the great Hitler offensive continued to its climax on the Moscow front up to December 6th. On that day Stalin ordered the counter-offensive to begin on the whole front.

From then on the Red Armies pressed steadily on in their offensive, increasing their pressure in speed as well as weight as they advanced. Successful landings were made at points on the Crimea and the besieged garrison of Sevastopol took up the offensive.

The centres of German resistance, Mojaisk, Orel, Kursk, Kharkov, were isolated by the surrounding flow of the advance. Snow and winter conditions were not a help to the Red Army in this offensive, but were a still greater handicap to Hitler's army, untrained and unprovided for winter warfare.

With the advance of the Red Army the activities of the guerillas increased in volume and effect. For the first time in this war Hitler's "invincible army" had been defeated but not destroyed—yet.

The offensive continues with an uninterrupted flow of strength and energy. The Soviet leaders are confident of victory in 1942. It is not unreasonable to suppose that this will occur, and that in this year Hitler's armies will be faced with the alternatives of complete surrender or complete destruction.

Engels, Karl Marx's great colleague, speaking of the defence of a communist society, said:

"In case of war . . . the member of such a society will have a *real* fatherland, a *real* home to defend, and therefore he will fight with an enthusiasm, perseverance and courage before which the mechanical training of any modern army must scatter like chaff. . . ."

What Engels said in 1845 Hitler will learn in 1942.

LONDON, January 17th, 1942.