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Where Brave men are fighting, Russia, 1942.

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"WHERE BRAVE MEN ARE FIGHTING: -- RUSSIA"

The first of a series of lectures on "Where Brave Men are Fighting"
and "What Brave Men Are Fighting For."

WRHS
By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple



On
Sunday morning, October 11, 1942

Just a year ago, on October 19, I began the Sunday Morning series of lectures with what I remember was an address on Moscow -- 1912-1941. The Nazis seem to have been at the gates of Moscow. Moscow was about to fall. After four months of Blitz Krieg across the frontiers of the Soviet Union, the Nazis were knowcking at the gates of the capital of Russia. It has taken the Nazis a little longer than they had thought. According to their schedule, the Russian armies should have been annihilated weeks before. During the four months from the invasion to the arrival at the gates of Moscow, the Nazis had announced at least four times that the Red Army had been completely annihilated. Yet strangely, for four bloody months the Red Army has kept on fighting savagely, retreating, fighting again. The Nazis could not understand that. They said that the Russians were "morally depraved". Now at last they were at the gates of Moscow. Moscow was about to fall.

It was in that address on October 19, 1941 that I said that "If the Russian forces hold out over the winter, if their armies do not collapse, regardless of how far they retreat, if the Russian government does not buckle under, lose courage and sue for peace, then the Russian Campaign of 1941 is likely to tear the heart out of the German people... Napoleon was not defeated at Waterloo in 1815) but at Moscow in 1812. We do not know when the final battle will be fought, whether on land or on sea or in the air. But it may be quite likely that Hitler, too, who set out to conquer Europe was like Napoleon, ^{de}feated at Moscow."

Well, this October 1942, a year later. The Russian forces did hold out over the winter. The Russian army did not collapse. Their government did not buckle under, lose courage and sue for peace. The Nazis did not take Moscow. Quite the contrary! They retreated -- one of the most disastrous retreats in history -- and they left more dead and wounded on the planes of Russia than did the great Army of Napoleon, and the beleaguered Red army suddenly swept out of Moscow into a counter-defensive position into an amazing offensive -- smote the Nazis, recaptured the city. The Russians seared forever upon the memory of the German people the horrible campaign, the winter campaign in the heart of Russia. To this day Hitler shudders

when he refers to the winter campaign of Russia, to the soldiers fighting in sub-zero weather dying by the tens of thousands some from exposure and frost -- some three to four million casualties.

Hitler in his last address referred bitterly to the possibility that the Jews of the world were laughing at him as a result of this winter campaign in Russia. Hitler gets rather epileptic when he thinks of Jews laughing. But that winter campaign has taken all the alughter or the arrogance of their triumphant laughter out of the throats of the Nazis and they will never again be likely to recover that kind of laughter.

Napoleon was defeated at Moscow. But his career did not end there. He recuperated and he waged quite a number of battles after that but never quite ^{with} the same power again. He fought at Lutzen, Wurschen, Dresden. But never again with the same power. His wings were broken. The myth of the invincible army of Napoleon was destroyed. Napoleon struck out over and over again but always he was weaker and weaker. It was only a question of time. It was within eighteen months that the allied nations entered Paris. Napoleon was sentenced to exile on the Isle of Elba.

Hitler's career, too, did not end at Moscow, although he was defeated there. He recuperated. In the Spring of this year he began another amazing campaign. His army swept right through the Ukraine, on and on to the Volga and to Stalingrad. And here at Stalingrad, as at Moscow, he was stalled again, and forty-eight days of the bloodiest fighting in the history of the world did not enable him to move beyond Stalingrad. This time there was no excuse available. Last year he said he started too late. In 1942 he has a new excuse. In 1941 he underestimated the strength of the Russian army. In 1942 he knew exactly the strength of the army. This was to be the year of final decision. This was to be the year when the Russian armies would be annihilated. But in 1942 the Russian Army would not accomodate themselves to the Nazi time table. They would not be annihilated.

Again as in 1941 they retreated, this time losing far fewer prisoners because this time there was no element of surprise. They refused, as in 1941 to meet the Nazi armies head on in attack. They refused to be wedged in, practically encircled. They sacrificed the Terrain but kept their armies intact. They forced the armies of the vast front to extend the lines of communication. The Russian campaign again as last year was out to delay the enemy, to exhaust him, harass him, bleed him white, make him pay an enormous price for every foot of ground taken, to use him up. Then at a decisive point halt him deliver a staggering body blow, refuse to budge an inch, force him to spend another winter in the inhospitable surrounds of a scorched, ravaged land.

Hitler was weaker in 1942 than in 1941, just as Napoleon was weaker in 1813 than in 1812. Last year he threw into Russia all he had. He had only one front to think of. But practically his whole army was stripped at the inactive Western Front of all they had. In the last world war, the Germans never put more than one-fourth of their army in Russia. With that small army they succeeded in breaking the Czarist army. This time the whole of the German army was thrown in... He resisted invincibly. But it wasn't enough. And it was less in 1942.

It became clear that the Soviet Union had become better, stronger, ^{had a} far more amply equipped army than anyone suspected. They had more tanks, more artillery, greater air force than the world new of. They had an amazingly capable and gifted general, a general with a well-thought out plan of action to take the blitz out of the blitz-kreig. It is clear now that behind this splendid army they had a vast industrial organization that could supply adequately his great army, that it had a great supply line and a skillful transportation system. It wasn't so long ago that everybody agreed that the Russians couldn't operate a machine. They must have built up amazing industrial centers of production. They had quantities of skilled mechanics who were able to produce what they needed. They were a gifted people in handling machines. They could transport their equipment, dismantle it, transport

it behind the lines and in a few weeks have it operate. It is clear now what few people suspected, that there is in the Russian people a marvelous morale which was demonstrated at Leningrad, Moscow last year and which was demonstrated at Rostov and Stalingrad this year -- not to surrender, to fight street by street, block by block, not to surrender, to fight day after day, week after week and month after month.

The Nazis have suffered a disastrous defeat at Stalingrad quite regardless of whether the city holds. The Nazis have practically acknowledged defeat. They are getting ready for retreat. They remember last winter. Hitler hopes that he will be allowed to swim in the oil of the Caucasus. There is only one trouble with that picture. He will not be allowed to swim.

Nobody is fooled by it. Certainly least of all Hitler. He knows that the Russians will harass him as they did last winter. They will stab at him. They will attack at any moment that they will want to do so...Hitler knows, too, that there are the gathering armies of the allies, millions of them waxing stronger day by day, poised to strike, waiting for a signal to ~~ax~~ attack in the West. He knows, too, the restlessness of all the peoples whom he thought he had permanently crushed.

Hitler is growing weaker and the allies are stronger. The Nazis know and this/are becoming panicky and desperate. A year ago, Russia issued a communique to the army in which they said: "The history of war shows that victory invariably comes to those states and armies which increase their power during the war, while states and armies whose powers diminish during the war, are defeated."

That is exactly what has happened today. What is indicated, at least to the layman? What is indicated at this moment, with Hitler getting ready to settle down to a long winter of recuperation, of re-organizing his war machine and preparing himself for the Spring of 1943? What is indicated? That he should not be given that opportunity! A swift and simultaneous coalition of Soviet, Anglo-American counter-

offensive, it seems to the layman's mind at least, to be demanded by the situation, the Russians attacking in the East, and the Allies attacking in the West before Hitler has had a chance to recover -- while he is pinned down.

Russia alone cannot defeat Hitler. A coalition, a sweeping and simultaneous attack from both sides, on land and in the air -- that can. It has been said and increasingly said that only the military authorities are qualified to know when and where a second front will be attacked. No one can qualify that. That statement is only partially true. In any war of alliances and coalition like this one, the political factor can not be entirely ignored, is never entirely ignored. In making the great decision, the wishes of your Allies upon whom you are depending for ultimate victory can not be ignored, and the judgment of the military authorities of your Allies can not be ignored. In a war of coalition you cannot consult exclusively your own interests or for that matter your own military strategists. That is especially true when your Allies have borne the brunt of the attack for a year and a half, done the fighting for you and sacrificing some six to eight million people in their own land and some seventy millions in conquered territory and vast areas of valuable raw materials and manufacturing centers. When your Allies are under terrific strain you cannot say: Now look here -- I have got to wait until I feel myself completely prepared before I can help you, and I must decide myself when is the right moment for attack and the time when I will come to your rescue. You cannot say that, especially at this time when the English have lost perhaps less than 300,000 men and we of the United States, practically none at all.

Russia has officially asserted that the aid heretofore given has been little effective. She is calling on the Allied nations officially to fulfil their obligations fully and on time. Heretofore they have not been either fully or on time, and it has stated that it regards the opening of a second front as occupying a place of first-rate importance in the current situation." In my humble judgment as a layman, it would be a tragic blunder to let Russia wear herself out waiting

for the time when we feel fully prepared, until such a time when Russia may not be able to render us any vital assistance. If that situation develops it will amount to this. Hitler will again have but one front to fight...

In preparing for a coalition offensive you must not only consult your own strength, but the strength of your allies. It may well be that when you wait for an increment in your own strength, that the strength of the Allies may diminish. One cancels the other. It is a very serious question whether the Allied increment in strength in 1943 will overcome the depletion of our Russian Allies. Hitler is now enmeshed in Russia. He cannot retreat. He cannot afford to withdraw his place in Russia. It would appear reasonable to a layman that this is the time for aid to Russia when a great British army of three million idle in Britain and with as many as we have been able to place there -- that this is the time to strike, and to strike hard.

But the military may think differently and their judgment must prevail. We trust, however, that their final decision will be made exclusively on military grounds -- not on advice and counsel of some powerful leaders and politicians who may still be infected ^{with} the old Chamberlain-Clivden ideology. If that kind of counsel prevails it would be suicidal for the Allies. That was the same kind of stupidity that brought on the war.

Stalin is too smart a man to be victimized by that. If Russia is left alone now, she will make her peace alone. It must not happen. Least of all do the Russians want that to happen. They hate the Nazis. They hated them before the war. They hate them more after seeing the cruelty and bestiality of the Nazis.

We are confident and have confidence in the integrity and spirit of the governments both in London and in Washington to see first that all nations fighting for freedom bear their just load of sacrifice in this war, and that none shall be borne at the expense of the other. We are confident they will come not merely to

Russia's aid but to our own aid, as soon as they are convinced militarily.

We salute, at this time, the brave-hearted people of Russia. We have all been spiritually uplifted by the efforts of the Russian people to defend Stalingrad. They know how to fight the Nazis. Of course the social system of the Russians is not ours. Of course their form of government is not acceptable to us....We have our own traditions, our own way of life. We don't have to rewrite history and whitewash anyone in order to justify our way of life. They hate militarism as much as we do. We hate exploitation. They hate obscene doctrines of race, shameless exploitation of other peoples, national chauvenism as much as we do. They hate organized serfdom as much as we do. Therefore they are our spiritual the allies allies. They are our valiant allies and/of all decent people who want to make this world a decent place for decent people to live in.

They made tragic mistakes. So did we..... And Russia paid for it. We made a grave mistake in Munich, we, France, England thought that Munich didn't concern us, that it was better to appease Mr. Hitler and have peace in our lifetime -- and we shall continue to pay grievously for this mistake. We have learned a lot in the last two years. It may well be as a result of this war that Russia will have a friendlier understanding of the democracies and become more and more democratic herself. Someone truly said that the destruction of democracy in Russia was not programatic. The people of Russia ideologically still believe in democracy. Therefore they are capable of reformation. But in the case of the Fascists and Nazis the destruction of democracy is part of the fulfillment of its program, and therefore is incapable of reformation.

Therefore we find ourselves fighting alongside the Russian peoples against the common enemies in spite of our ideology. Just as we are able to fight alongside of them in war, so we shall be able to live alongside of them in peace time. With Fascists you cannot live. We must kill them. We must destroy their government and

their power....

So we salute the great people of Russia as up to this moment, the bravest
the most valiant, the most sacrificial.



1) A year ago - "Moscow 1812-1941" - After 4 mo. of Blitz Krieg
Knocking - Red Army should have been annihilated before - 6 weeks
4 times. Fought savagely - retreated - "morally defeated" -
Beasts - And now, at last, they were - Spoke - outcome un-
certain:

"If the Russian forces hold out over the winter, if their
armies do not collapse, regardless of how far they retreat, if the
R. govt. does not buckle under, lose courage & sue for peace,
then the R. Campaign of 1941 is likely to tear the heart out of
the Ger. people... Napoleon was not defeated at Waterloo (1815) but
at Moscow (1812). We do not know when the final battle will
be fought, whether on land, sea or in the air. But it may well be
quite likely that Hitler, too, who set out to conquer Europe
was ^{by Napoleon} defeated at - Moscow."

- 2) Well this is Oct 1942 - a year later! R. forces did hold over
winter - armies collapse - govt
Nazis did not talk peace! Retreated - disastrous retreats after
→ Left men dead - ^{2/3} Behaved Red Army - Suddenly swept
Hip and thigh - recaptured - seared - Hitler still shudders
Triumphantly
3) Nap. was defeated at Moscow - career did not end there
Recuperated - never with same power again - Wings broken
myth - hatreds - Strut out, Lützen, Warschau, Dresden
always weaker - End quarter, June - within 18 mo - Elba
4) His career, too, did not end at Moscow - Recuperated - Apr. 42
Swept them - on-on to the Volga - Stalingrad,
and here, at Moscow, stalled again - 48 days

this time no excuses! started late 41 - Underhanded
42 was to be year of final annihilation - It wasn't! H. isn't

5/ Refuse to accountable H. - as in 41 - retreat - lose his pursues
no element of surprise - no frontal attack - "Wedge" and
"Kessel" - beat them & encirclement - Sacrifices Terrain but
keep armies intact -

Force enemy extend his spread over vast front - extend
about him - delay him - exhaust him - harass him - preclude
make him pay dearly - Use him up - bleed him white
And then stop - hit him ~~but the eyes~~ a stopping body blow
as at Stalingrad - Don't bridge an inch - Pin him
down! Another winter - inhospitable surroundings

6/ H. was weaker in '42 > '41. - Threw in all he had in '41.
only Front - ~~Exhaust~~ Army - Stufl in action W. Front -
Last War - only 1/4 - 650,000 - this was - whole -
much more powerful - victorious -
wasn't enough! And in '42 even less!

① R. army better trained equipped - more tanks - airless & planes
Strategy - take Blitz out - Blitzkrieg - long war of attrition
for which Nazis were not prepared.

② Behind Army - Vast mechan. org - greater > could
work a machine - Supply line - transportation
Dismantle.

③ Morale - Spec. Stalingrad - Shut by Street - no air

7/ H. has suffered another disastrous defeat, at Stalingrad - ^{may take 3} ^{city} -
Practically acknowledged it - getting ready to retreat - exhausted
another ~~2~~ M. men - incalculable material
going on the Defensive -- ~~settling down now~~ - Failed to win
the war - Stalemate - Given up idea of destroying Red Army
Settle down now - incorporate - (Junk).
No-body is fooled - Certainly not H. He knows Russians -
waxing Anglo-Amer. fresh armies - poised - Resting
Natives -

"It is growing weaker. Allied to stronger" - "New Men"
Communique - Aug. 22 - 1941 : "The history of war shows
that victory invariably comes to those states and
armies which increase their power during the war,
while states & armies whose power diminishes during
the war, are defeated"

8/ What is indicated - swift correlated Soviet-Anglo-Amer
counter-offensive - R. in the East - G.B. & U.S. in West
Before he recovers - while he is pinned down - Messed up
40% destroyed -
Russia cannot do it alone - Un can G.B. & U.S. alone
A coalition, a swift & simultaneous assault on both
sides - on land & in the air - can!

9/ It has been said - only military authorities - (where. when)
Partial truth - In any war of alliances & coalitions - pol.
factor cannot be ignored - nor is actually ever ignored
Wishes & your ally - judgments, its military strategy

cannot be ignored - & extensive attention paid - (9)
Exp. in case when you ally - Bunt 1 1/2 yrs. ⁵⁻⁸ ~~8-10~~ M.
70 M. - Valuable manuf. centers & natural resources
Eng. less > 300,000 - U.S.A. - practically none at all.

10/ R. has officially asserted - little effective -
"Fulfill their obligations fully & on time"
Regards opening of 2nd "as occupying place of post-war importance
in current situation".
Wishes "proceeding".

11/ Tragic blunders - but R. mean stay out - until we are
fully prepared. - Unable to under any ^{vital} assistance -
This would amount - again - to Single Front - Coastal
In ^{preparation for} a coalition of powers - you must commit not only
your own strength -
Allies' ^{preparation} ~~strength~~ may cancel your previous strength
Serious question whether Allied increment in strength
'43 - will overcome - depletion.
H. is pinned down in R. now - kept weak - related
would appear reasonable to a layman - Eng. 3 M.
→ But with any authority is way that diff. - their judgement
must prevail - We trust - Chamberlain character
Top-dog - Criminal stupidity - but on war
→ Stalin - too smart → "If R. is left to fight alone, she
will make peace alone. Few can blame her."
→ Must not happen - least all R. people want it to happen

5

Hated Nazis before - cruelty & brutality at work

12/ We salute - indomitable fighters! superb - knew how to defend
menaced rats / so c.

Their Social System is not ours!

Form of Govt. unacceptable to us

Resented their doctrine of soc. progress - Criticized

We have our own traditions - way of life

We need not re-write history - a white wash -

But they hate militaries as we do -

Strawless exploitation of other people

Obscure doctrine, Race - Nat. chauvinism

Organized cruelty, oppression & suffering

They are our reluctant allies & of all decent people trying
to live in a decent world

13/ Made mistakes - to have me. Until June 1941.

Mistake - We have learned a lot - May well be

Destruction of Democr - in R - persecution - repression

Fulfillment -

We find ourselves - inevitably fighting along side, then

against a common enemy - in spite of our ideal. diff.

shall be able to live together after war - Fascist

In 1936:

"If we had at our disposal the incalculable wealth and stores of raw material of the Ural Mountains and the unending fertile plains of the Ukraine, to be exploited under National-Socialist leadership, then we would produce, and our German people would swim in plenty".

