

= Battle of Moscow =

The Battle of Moscow (Russian : ????? ?? ?????) is the name given by Soviet historians to two periods of strategically significant fighting on a 600 km (370 mi) sector of the Eastern Front during World War II . It took place between October 1941 and January 1942 . The Soviet defensive effort frustrated Hitler 's attack on Moscow , capital of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the largest Soviet city . Moscow was one of the primary military and political objectives for Axis forces in their invasion of the Soviet Union .

The German strategic offensive , named Operation Typhoon , was planned to conduct two pincer offensives , one to the north of Moscow against the Kalinin Front by the 3rd and 4th Panzer Armies , simultaneously severing the Moscow ? Leningrad railway , and another to the south of Moscow Oblast against the Western Front south of Tula , by the 2nd Panzer Army , while the 4th Army advanced directly towards Moscow from the west .

Initially , the Soviet forces conducted a strategic defence of the Moscow Oblast by constructing three defensive belts , deploying newly raised reserve armies , and bringing troops from the Siberian and Far Eastern Military Districts . Subsequently , as the German offensives were halted , a Soviet strategic counter @-@ offensive and smaller @-@ scale offensive operations were executed to force the German armies back to the positions around the cities of Oryol , Vyazma and Vitebsk , nearly surrounding three German armies in the process .

= = Background = =

The original German invasion plan , which the Axis called Operation Barbarossa , called for the capture of Moscow within four months . On 22 June 1941 , Axis troops invaded the Soviet Union and destroyed most of the Soviet Air Force on the ground , advancing deep into Soviet territory using blitzkrieg tactics , destroying entire Soviet armies . While the German Army Group North moved towards Leningrad , Army Group South took control of Ukraine , and Army Group Center advanced towards Moscow . By July 1941 , Army Group Center crossed the Dnieper River , on the path to Moscow .

In August 1941 , German forces captured Smolensk , an important stronghold on the road to Moscow . At this stage , although Moscow was vulnerable , an offensive against the city would have exposed both of the German flanks . In part to address these risks , in part to attempt to secure Ukraine 's food and mineral resources , Hitler ordered the attack to turn north and south and eliminate Soviet forces at Leningrad and Kiev . This delayed the German advance on Moscow . When the advance on Moscow resumed on 2 October 1941 , German forces had been weakened , while the Soviets had raised new forces for the defence of the city .

= = Initial German advance (30 September ? 10 October) = =

= = = Plans = = =

For Hitler , the Soviet capital was secondary and he believed the only way to bring the Soviet Union to its knees was to defeat it economically . He felt this could be accomplished by seizing the economic resources of Ukraine east of Kiev . When Walther von Brauchitsch , Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief of the Army , supported a direct thrust to Moscow , he was told that " only ossified brains could think of such an idea . " Franz Halder , head of the Army General Staff , was also convinced a drive to seize Moscow would be victorious after the German Army inflicted enough damage on the Soviet forces . This view was shared by most within the German high command . But Hitler overruled his generals in favor of pocketing the Soviet forces around Kiev in the south , followed by seizure of Ukraine . The move was successful , resulting in the loss of 660 @,@ 000 Red Army personnel by 26 September and further advances .

With the end of summer , Hitler redirected his attention to Moscow and assigned Army Group

Center to this task . The forces committed to Operation Typhoon included three infantry armies (the 2nd , 4th and 9th) supported by three Panzer (tank) Groups (the 2nd , 3rd and 4th) and by the Luftwaffe 's Luftflotte 2 . Overall , almost two million German troops were committed to the operation , along with 1 @, @ 700 tanks and 14 @, @ 000 guns . German aerial strength , however , had been severely reduced over the summer 's campaigning as the Luftwaffe had lost 1 @, @ 603 aircraft destroyed and 1 @, @ 028 damaged . Luftflotte 2 had only 549 serviceable machines , including 158 medium and dive @-@ bombers and 172 fighters , available for Operation Typhoon . The attack relied on standard Blitzkrieg tactics , using Panzer groups rushing deep into Soviet formations and executing double @-@ pincer movements , pocketing Red Army divisions and destroying them .

Facing the Wehrmacht were three Soviet fronts forming a defensive line between the cities of Vyazma and Bryansk which barred the way to Moscow . The armies comprising these fronts had also been involved in heavy fighting . Still , it was a formidable concentration consisting of 1 @, @ 250 @, @ 000 men , 1 @, @ 000 tanks and 7 @, @ 600 guns . The Soviet Air Force / Voenno @-@ Vozdushnye Sily (VVS) had suffered appalling losses of some 7 @, @ 500 or 21 @, @ 200 aircraft . Extraordinary industrial achievements had begun to replace these , and at the outset of Typhoon the VVS could muster 936 aircraft , 578 of which were bombers .

Once Soviet resistance along the Vyazma @-@ Bryansk front was eliminated , German forces were to press east , encircling Moscow in similar fashion by outflanking it from the north and south . However , the continuous fighting had reduced their effectiveness . Logistical difficulties became more acute as well . Guderian , for example , wrote that some of his destroyed tanks had not been replaced , and there were fuel shortages at the start of the operation .

= = = The Battles of Vyazma and Bryansk = = =

The German attack went according to plan , with 3rd Panzer Army pushing through the middle nearly unopposed and then splitting its mobile forces north to complete the encirclement of Vyazma with 4th Panzer Army , and other units south to close the ring around Bryansk in conjunction with 2nd Panzer Army . The Soviet defenses , still under construction , were overrun and spearheads of the Second and Third Panzer Groups met at Vyazma on 10 October 1941 . Four Soviet armies (the 19th , 20th , 24th and 32nd) were trapped in a large pocket just west of the city .

The encircled Soviet forces continued to fight , and the Wehrmacht had to employ 28 divisions to eliminate them , using troops which could have supported the offensive towards Moscow . The remnants of the Soviet Western and Reserve Fronts retreated and manned new defensive lines around Mozhaisk . Although losses were high , some of the encircled units escaped in small groups , ranging in size from platoons to full rifle divisions . Soviet resistance near Vyazma also provided time for the Soviet high command to reinforce the four armies defending Moscow (the 5th , 16th , 43rd and 49th Armies) . Three rifle and two tank divisions were transferred from the Far East with more to follow .

In the south near Bryansk , initial Soviet performance was barely more effective than at Vyazma . The Second Panzer Group executed an enveloping movement around the city , linking with the advancing 2nd Army and capturing Orel by 3 October and Bryansk by 6 October .

But the weather began to change , hampering the Germans . By 7 October , the first snow fell and quickly melted , turning roads and open areas into muddy quagmires , a phenomenon known as rasputitsa in Russia . German armored groups were greatly slowed , allowing Soviet forces to fall back and regroup .

Soviet forces were able to counterattack in some cases . For example , the 4th Panzer Division fell into an ambush set by Dmitri Leliushenko 's hastily formed 1st Guards Special Rifle Corps , including Mikhail Katukov 's 4th Tank Brigade , near the city of Mtsensk . Newly built T @-@ 34 tanks were concealed in the woods as German armor rolled past them ; as a scratch team of Soviet infantry contained their advance , Soviet armor attacked from both flanks and savaged the German Panzer IV tanks . For the Wehrmacht , the shock of this defeat was so great that a special investigation was ordered . Guderian and his troops discovered , to their dismay , that the Soviet T @-@ 34s were almost impervious to German tank guns . As the general wrote , " Our Panzer IV

tanks with their short 75 mm guns could only explode a T @-@ 34 by hitting the engine from behind . " Guderian also noted in his memoirs that " the Russians already learned a few things . "

Other counterattacks further slowed the German offensive . The 2nd Army , which was operating to the north of Guderian 's forces with the aim of trapping the Bryansk Front , had come under strong Red Army pressure assisted by air support .

According to German assessments of the initial Soviet defeat , 673 @,@ 000 soldiers had been captured by the Wehrmacht in both the Vyazma and Bryansk pockets , although recent research suggests a lower ? but still enormous ? figure of 514 @,@ 000 prisoners , reducing Soviet strength by 41 % . The personnel losses (permanent as well as temporary) calculated by the Soviet command are smaller but still massive , namely 499 @,@ 001 . On 9 October , Otto Dietrich of the German Ministry of Propaganda , quoting Hitler himself , forecast in a press conference imminent destruction of the armies defending Moscow . As Hitler had never had to lie about a specific and verifiable military fact , Dietrich convinced foreign correspondents that the collapse of all Soviet resistance was perhaps hours away . German civilian morale ? low since the start of Barbarossa ? significantly improved , with rumors of soldiers home by Christmas and great riches from the future Lebensraum in the east .

However , Red Army resistance had slowed the Wehrmacht . When , on 10 October the Germans arrived within sight of the Mozhaisk line west of Moscow , they encountered another defensive barrier manned by new Soviet forces . That same day , Georgy Zhukov , who had been recalled from the Leningrad Front on 6 October , took charge of Moscow 's defense and the combined Western and Reserve Fronts , with Colonel General Ivan Konev as his deputy . On 12 October , he ordered the concentration of all available forces on a strengthened Mozhaisk line , a move supported by Vasilevsky . The Luftwaffe still controlled the sky wherever it appeared , and Stuka and bomber groups flew 537 sorties , destroying some 440 vehicles and 150 artillery pieces .

On 15 October , Stalin ordered the evacuation of the Communist Party , the General Staff and various civil government offices from Moscow to Kuibyshev (now Samara) , leaving only a limited number of officials behind . The evacuation caused panic among Muscovites . On 16 ? 17 October , much of the civilian population tried to flee , mobbing the available trains and jamming the roads from the city . Despite all this , Stalin publicly remained in the Soviet capital , somewhat calming the fear and pandemonium .

= = Mozhaisk defense line (13 ? 30 October) = =

By 13 October 1941 , the Wehrmacht had reached the Mozhaisk defense line , a hastily constructed double set of fortifications protecting Moscow 's western approaches that extended from Kalinin towards Volokolamsk and Kaluga . Despite recent reinforcements , only around 90 @,@ 000 Soviet soldiers manned this line ? far too few to stem the German advance . Given the limited resources available , Zhukov decided to concentrate his forces at four critical points : the 16th Army under Lieutenant General Rokossovsky guarded Volokolamsk , Mozhaisk was defended by 5th Army under Major General Govorov , the 43rd Army of Major General Golubev defended Maloyaroslavets , and the 49th Army under Lieutenant General Zakharkin protected Kaluga . The entire Soviet Western Front ? nearly destroyed after its encirclement near Vyazma ? was being recreated almost from scratch .

Moscow itself was also hastily fortified . According to Zhukov , 250 @,@ 000 women and teenagers worked building trenches and anti @-@ tank moats around Moscow , moving almost three million cubic meters of earth with no mechanical help . Moscow 's factories were hastily converted to military tasks : one automobile factory was turned into a submachine gun armory , a clock factory manufactured mine detonators , the chocolate factory shifted to food production for the front , and automobile repair stations worked fixing damaged tanks and military vehicles . Despite these preparations , the capital was within striking distance of German tanks , with the Luftwaffe mounting large @-@ scale air raids on the city . The air raids caused only limited damage because of extensive anti @-@ aircraft defenses and effective civilian fire brigades .

On 13 October 1941 (15 October , according to other sources) , the Wehrmacht resumed its

offensive . At first , the German forces attempted to bypass Soviet defenses by pushing northeast towards the weakly protected city of Kalinin and south towards Kaluga and Tula , capturing all except Tula by 14 October . Encouraged by these initial successes , the Germans launched a frontal assault against the fortified line , taking Mozhaisk and Maloyaroslavets on 18 October , Narva @-@ Fominsk on 21 October , and Volokolamsk on 27 October after intense fighting . Because of the increasing danger of flanking attacks , Zhukov was forced to fall back , withdrawing his forces east of the Nara River .

In the south , the Second Panzer Army initially advanced towards Tula with relative ease because the Mozhaisk defense line did not extend that far south and no significant concentrations of Soviet troops blocked their advance . However bad weather , fuel problems , and damaged roads and bridges eventually slowed the German army , and Guderian did not reach the outskirts of Tula until 26 October . The German plan initially called for the rapid capture of Tula , followed by a pincer move around Moscow . The first attack , however , was repelled by the 50th Army and civilian volunteers on 29 October , after a desperate fight within sight of the city . On 31 October , the German Army high command ordered a halt to all offensive operations until increasingly severe logistical problems were resolved and the rasputitsa subsided .

= = Wehrmacht at the gates (1 November ? 5 December) = =

= = = Wearing down = = =

By late October , the German forces were worn out , with only ? of their motor vehicles still functioning , infantry divisions at ? to ½ strength , and serious logistics issues preventing the delivery of warm clothing and other winter equipment to the front . Even Hitler seemed to surrender to the idea of a long struggle , since the prospect of sending tanks into such a large city without heavy infantry support seemed risky after the costly capture of Warsaw in 1939 .

To stiffen the resolve of the Red Army and boost the civilian morale , Stalin ordered the traditional military parade on 7 November (Revolution Day) to be staged in Red Square . Soviet troops paraded past the Kremlin and then marched directly to the front . The parade carried a great symbolic significance by demonstrating the continued Soviet resolve , and was frequently invoked as such in the years to come . Despite this brave show , the Red Army 's position remained precarious . Although 100 @,@ 000 additional Soviet soldiers had reinforced Klin and Tula , where renewed German offensives were expected , Soviet defenses remained relatively thin . Nevertheless , Stalin ordered several preemptive counteroffensives against German lines . These were launched despite protests from Zhukov , who pointed out the complete lack of reserves . The Wehrmacht repelled most of these counteroffensives , which squandered Soviet forces that could have been used for Moscow 's defense . The offensive 's only notable success occurred west of Moscow near Aleksino , where Soviet tanks inflicted heavy losses on the 4th Army because the Germans still lacked anti @-@ tank weapons capable of damaging the new , well @-@ armored T @-@ 34 tanks .

From 31 October to 15 November , the Wehrmacht high command stood down while preparing to launch a second offensive towards Moscow . Although Army Group Centre still possessed considerable nominal strength , its fighting capabilities had thoroughly diminished because of combat fatigue . Although the Germans were aware of the continuous influx of Soviet reinforcements from the east as well as the presence of large reserves , given the tremendous Soviet casualties , they did not expect the Soviets to be able to mount a determined defense . But in comparison to the situation in October , Soviet rifle divisions occupied a much stronger defensive position : a triple defensive ring surrounding the city and some remnants of the Mozhaisk line near Klin . Most of the Soviet field armies now had a multilayered defense , with at least two rifle divisions in second echelon positions . Artillery support and sapper teams were also concentrated along major roads that German troops were expected to use in their attacks . There were also many Soviet troops still available in reserve armies behind the front . Finally , Soviet troops ? and

especially officers ? were now more experienced and better prepared for the offensive .

By 15 November 1941 , the ground had finally frozen , solving the mud problem . The armored Wehrmacht spearheads , consisting of 51 divisions , could now advance , with the goal of encircling Moscow and linking up near the city of Noginsk , east of the capital . To achieve this objective , the German Third and Fourth Panzer Groups needed to concentrate their forces between the Volga Reservoir and Mozhaysk , then proceed past the Soviet 30th Army to Klin and Solnechnogorsk , encircling the capital from the north . In the south , the Second Panzer Group intended to bypass Tula , still held by the Red Army , and advance to Kashira and Kolomna , linking up with the northern pincer at Noginsk . The German 4th Field Army in the center were to " pin down the troops of the Western Front . "

= = = Final pincer = = =

On 15 November 1941 , German tank armies began their offensive towards Klin , where no Soviet reserves were available because of Stalin 's wish to attempt a counteroffensive at Volokolamsk , which had forced the relocation of all available reserve forces further south . Initial German attacks split the front in two , separating the 16th Army from the 30th . Several days of intense combat followed . Zhukov recalled in his memoirs that " The enemy , ignoring the casualties , was making frontal assaults , willing to get to Moscow by any means necessary . " Despite the Wehrmacht 's efforts , the multi @-@ layered defense reduced Soviet casualties as the Soviet 16th Army slowly retreated and constantly harassed the German divisions trying to make their way through the fortifications .

The Third Panzer Army captured Klin after heavy fighting on 24 November , and by 25 November Solnechnogorsk as well . Soviet resistance was still strong , and the outcome of the battle was by no means certain . Reportedly , Stalin asked Zhukov whether Moscow could be successfully defended and ordered him to " speak honestly , like a communist . " Zhukov replied that it was possible , but that reserves were desperately needed . By 28 November , the German 7th Panzer Division had seized a bridgehead across the Moscow @-@ Volga Canal ? the last major obstacle before Moscow ? and stood less than 35 km (22 mi) from the Kremlin ; but a powerful counterattack by the 1st Shock Army drove them back . Just northwest of Moscow , the Wehrmacht reached Krasnaya Polyana , little more than 20 km (12 mi) from Moscow ; German officers were able to make out some of the major buildings of the Soviet capital through their field glasses . Both Soviet and German forces were severely depleted , sometimes having only 150 ? 200 riflemen ? a company 's full strength ? left in a regiment .

In the south , near Tula , combat resumed on 18 November 1941 , with the Second Panzer Army trying to encircle the city . The German forces involved were extremely battered from previous fighting and still had no winter clothing . As a result , initial German progress was only 5 ? 10 km (3 @. @ 1 ? 6 @. @ 2 mi) per day . Moreover , it exposed the German tank armies to flanking attacks from the Soviet 49th and 50th Armies , located near Tula , further slowing the advance . Guderian nevertheless was able to pursue the offensive , spreading his forces in a star @-@ like attack , taking Stalinogorsk on 22 November 1941 and surrounding a Soviet rifle division stationed there . On 26 November , German tanks approached Kashira , a city controlling a major highway to Moscow . In response , a violent Soviet counterattack was launched the following day . General Belov 's 2nd Cavalry Corps , supported by hastily assembled formations which included 173rd Rifle Division , 9th Tank Brigade , two separate tank battalions , and training and militia units , halted the German advance near Kashira . The Germans were driven back in early December , securing the southern approach to the city . Tula itself held , protected by fortifications and determined defenders , both soldiers and civilians . In the south , the Wehrmacht never got close to the capital .

Because of the resistance on both the northern and southern sides of Moscow , on 1 December the Wehrmacht attempted a direct offensive from the west along the Minsk @-@ Moscow highway near the city of Naro @-@ Fominsk . This offensive had limited tank support and was directed against extensive Soviet defenses . After meeting determined resistance from the Soviet 1st Guards Motorized Rifle Division and flank counterattacks staged by the 33rd Army , the German offensive

stalled and was driven back four days later in the ensuing Soviet counteroffensive . On 2 December a reconnaissance battalion managed to reach the town of Khimki ? some 8 km (5 @. @ 0 mi) away from Moscow ? and captured its bridge over the Moscow @-@ Volga Canal as well as its railway station , which marked the farthest advance of German forces on Moscow .

The temperature dropped far below freezing . On 30 November , von Bock reported to Berlin that the temperature was ? 45 ° C (? 49 ° F) . General Erhard Raus , commander of the 6th Panzer Division , kept track of the daily mean temperature in his war diary . It shows a suddenly much colder period during 4 ? 7 December : from ? 36 to ? 38 ° C (? 37 to ? 38 ° F) . Other temperature reports varied widely . Zhukov said that November 's freezing weather stayed around ? 7 to ? 10 ° C (+ 19 to + 14 ° F) Official Soviet Meteorological Service records show the lowest December temperature reached ? 28 @. @ 8 ° C (? 20 ° F) . The absolute numbers did not matter to the German troops who were freezing with no winter clothing , and whose equipment was not designed for such severe weather . More than 130 @, @ 000 cases of frostbite were reported among German soldiers . Frozen grease had to be removed from every loaded shell and vehicles had to be heated for hours before use . The same cold weather , typical for the season , hit the Soviet troops , but they were better prepared .

The Axis offensive on Moscow stopped . Heinz Guderian wrote in his journal that " the offensive on Moscow failed ... We underestimated the enemy 's strength , as well as his size and climate . Fortunately , I stopped my troops on 5 December , otherwise the catastrophe would be unavoidable . "

= = = Artificial floods = = =

Some historians suggest that artificial floods played an important role in defending Moscow . They were primarily meant to break the ice and prevent troops and heavy military equipment from crossing Volga river and Moscow sea . The first instance was blowing up Istra waterworks reservoir 's dam on 24 November 1941 . The second was draining the water from 6 reservoirs (Khimki , Iksha , Pyalovsk , Pestov , Pirogov , Klyazma) and Moscow sea near Dubna on 28 November 1941 . Both were results of Soviet General Headquarters ' Order 0428 dated 17 November 1941 . Artificial floods were also used as unconventional weapon of direct impact . In addition to nature and enemy damage , they partly submerged some 30 @-@ 40 villages in the severe winter weather conditions of the time .

= = Soviet counteroffensive = =

Although the Wehrmacht 's offensive had been stopped , German intelligence estimated that Soviet forces had no more reserves left and thus would be unable to stage a counteroffensive . This estimate proved wrong , as Stalin transferred over 18 divisions , 1 @, @ 700 tanks , and over 1 @, @ 500 aircraft from Siberia and the Far East . The Red Army had accumulated a 58 @-@ division reserve by early December , when the offensive proposed by Zhukov and Vasilevsky was finally approved by Stalin . Even with these new reserves , Soviet forces committed to the operation numbered only 1 @, @ 100 @, @ 000 men , only slightly outnumbering the Wehrmacht . Nevertheless , with careful troop deployment , a ratio of two @-@ to @-@ one was reached at some critical points .

On 5 December 1941 , the counteroffensive for " removing the immediate threat to Moscow " started on the Kalinin Front . The South @-@ Western Front and Western Fronts began their offensives the next day . After several days of little progress , Soviet armies retook Solnechnogorsk on 12 Dec. and Klin on 15 Dec. Guderian 's army " beat a hasty retreat towards Venev " and then Sukhinichi . " The threat overhanging Tula was removed . "

On 8 Dec. , Hitler had signed his directive No.39 , ordering the Wehrmacht to assume a defensive stance on the whole front . German troops were unable to organize a solid defense at their present locations and were forced to pull back to consolidate their lines . Guderian wrote that discussions with Hans Schmidt and Wolfram von Richthofen took place the same day , and both commanders

agreed that the current front line could not be held . On 14 December , Franz Halder and Günther von Kluge finally gave permission for a limited withdrawal to the west of the Oka river , without Hitler 's approval . On 20 December , during a meeting with German senior officers , Hitler cancelled the withdrawal and ordered his soldiers to defend every patch of ground , " digging trenches with howitzer shells if needed . " Guderian protested , pointing out that losses from cold were actually greater than combat losses and that winter equipment was held by traffic ties in Poland . Nevertheless , Hitler insisted on defending the existing lines , and Guderian was dismissed by 25 December , along with generals Hoepner and Strauss , commanders of the 4th Panzer and 9th Army , respectively . Fedor von Bock was also dismissed , officially for " medical reasons . " Walther von Brauchitsch , Hitler 's commander @-@ in @-@ chief , had been removed even earlier , on 19 December .

Meanwhile , the Soviet offensive continued in the north . The offensive liberated Kalinin and the Soviets reached Klin on 7 December , overrunning the headquarters of the LVI Panzer Corps outside the city . As the Kalinin Front drove west , a bulge developed around Klin . The Soviet front commander , General Konev , attempted to envelop any German forces remaining . Zhukov diverted more forces to the southern end of the bulge , to help Konev trap the Third Panzer Army . The Germans pulled their forces out in time . Although the encirclement failed , it unhinged the German defenses . A second attempt was made against the Second Panzer Army near Tula , but met strong opposition near Rzhev and was forced to halt , forming a salient that would last until 1943 . In the south , the offensive went equally well , with Southwestern Front forces relieving Tula on 16 December 1941 . A major achievement was the encirclement and destruction of the German XXXIX Corps , protecting Guderian 's Second Panzer Army 's southern flank .

The Luftwaffe was paralysed in the second half of December . The weather , recorded as ? 42 ° C (? 44 ° F) , was a meteorological record . Logistical difficulties and freezing temperatures created technical difficulties until January 1942 . In the meantime , the Luftwaffe had virtually vanished from the skies over Moscow , while the Red Air Force , operating from better prepared bases and benefiting from interior lines , grew stronger . On 4 January , the skies cleared . The Luftwaffe was quickly reinforced , as Hitler hoped it would " save " the situation . Two Kampfgruppen (Bomber Groups) (II . / KG 4 and II . / KG 30) arrived from refitting in Germany , whilst four Transportgruppen (Transport Groups) with a strength of 102 Junkers Ju 52 transports were deployed from Luftflotte 4 (Air Fleet 4) to evacuate surrounded army units and improve the supply line to the front @-@ line forces . It was a last minute effort and it worked . The German air arm was to help prevent a total collapse of Army Group Centre . Despite the Soviets ' best efforts , the Luftwaffe had contributed enormously to the survival of Army Group Center . Between 17 and 22 December the Luftwaffe destroyed 299 motor vehicles and 23 tanks around Tula , hampering the Red Army 's pursuit of the German Army .

In the center , Soviet progress was much slower . Soviet troops liberated Naro @-@ Fominsk only on 26 December , Kaluga on 28 December , and Maloyaroslavets on 2 January , after 10 days of violent action . Soviet reserves ran low , and the offensive halted on 7 January 1942 , after having pushed the exhausted and freezing German armies back 100 ? 250 km (62 ? 155 mi) from Moscow . Stalin continued to order more offensives in order to trap and destroy Army Group Center in front of Moscow , but the Red Army was exhausted and overstretched and they failed .

= = Aftermath = =

The Red Army 's winter counter @-@ offensive drove the Wehrmacht from Moscow , but the city was still considered to be threatened , with the front line relatively close . Because of this , the Moscow theater remained a priority for Stalin , who at first appeared to be in shock due to the initial German success . In particular , the initial Soviet advance was unable to level the Rzhev salient , held by several divisions of Army Group Center . Immediately after the Moscow counter @-@ offensive , a series of Soviet attacks (the Battles of Rzhev) were attempted against the salient , each time with heavy losses on both sides . By early 1943 , the Wehrmacht had to disengage from the salient as the whole front was moving west . Nevertheless , the Moscow front was not finally

secured until October 1943 , when Army Group Center was decisively repulsed from the Smolensk landbridge and from the left shore of the upper Dnieper at the end of the Second Battle of Smolensk .

Furious that his army had been unable to take Moscow , Hitler dismissed his commander @-@ in @-@ chief , Walther von Brauchitsch , on 19 December 1941 , and took personal charge of the Wehrmacht , effectively taking control of all military decisions . Additionally , Hitler surrounded himself with staff officers with little or no recent combat experience .

For the first time since June 1941 , Soviet forces had stopped the Germans and driven them back . This resulted in Stalin becoming overconfident and deciding to further expand the offensive . On 5 January 1942 , during a meeting in the Kremlin , Stalin announced that he was planning a general spring offensive , which would be staged simultaneously near Moscow , Leningrad and in southern Russia . This plan was accepted over Zhukov 's objections . Low Red Army reserves and Wehrmacht tactical skill led to a bloody stalemate near Rzhev , known as the " Rzhev meat grinder " , and to a string of Red Army defeats , such as the Second Battle of Kharkov , the failed attempt at elimination of the Demyansk pocket , and the encirclement of General Andrey Vlasov 's army in a failed attempt to lift the siege of Leningrad . Ultimately , these failures would lead to a successful German offensive in the south and to the Battle of Stalingrad .

A documentary film , Moscow Strikes Back , (Russian : ??????? ??????? ????? ??? ??????? , " Rout of the German Troops near Moscow ") , was made during the battle and rapidly released in the Soviet Union . It was taken to America and shown at the Globe in New York in August 1942 . The New York Times reviewer commented that " The savagery of that retreat is a spectacle to stun the mind . " As well as the Moscow parade and battle scenes , the film included images of German atrocities committed during the occupation , " the naked and slaughtered children stretched out in ghastly rows , the youths dangling limply in the cold from gallows that were rickety , but strong enough . "

The defense of Moscow became a symbol of Soviet resistance against the invading Axis forces . To commemorate the battle , Moscow was awarded the title of " Hero City " in 1965 , on the 20th anniversary of Victory Day . A Museum of the Defence of Moscow was created in 1995 .

= = Casualties = =

Both German and Soviet casualties during the battle of Moscow have been a subject of debate , as various sources provide somewhat different estimates . Not all historians agree on what should be considered the " Battle of Moscow " in the timeline of World War II . While the start of the battle is usually regarded as the beginning of Operation Typhoon on 30 September 1941 (or sometimes on 2 October 1941) , there are two different dates for the end of the offensive . In particular , some sources (such as Erickson and Glantz) exclude the Rzhev offensive from the scope of the battle , considering it as a distinct operation and making the Moscow offensive " stop " on 7 January 1942 ? thus lowering the number of casualties .

There are also significant differences in figures from various sources . John Erickson , in his *Barbarossa : The Axis and the Allies* , gives a figure of 653 @, @ 924 Soviet casualties between October 1941 and January 1942 . Glantz , in his book *When Titans Clashed* , gives a figure of 658 @, @ 279 for the defense phase alone , plus 370 @, @ 955 for the winter counteroffensive until 7 January 1942 . The estimate of 400 @, @ 000 German casualties by January 1942 reported in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* was published in 1973 ? 78 . On the other hand , official Wehrmacht daily casualty reports show 35 @, @ 757 killed in action , 128 @, @ 716 wounded , and 9 @, @ 721 missing in action for the entire Army Group Center between 1 October 1941 and 10 January 1942 . However , this official report does not match unofficial reports from individual battalion and divisional officers and commanders at the front , who record suffering far higher casualties than was officially reported . Under the totalitarian political constraints of the day , no objective reports of costs were possible .