The seven years war: The capture of Berlin by the Russians in 1760

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Introduction

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The publication of this booklet is very timely. To those who might say: why bother with the Seven Years' War when we have the Second World War on our hands? it may be answered that while historical parallels are dangerous and slippery things, so are historical shibboleths. We don't want to create the impression that the Red Army will crush Hitler and his war machine just because the Russian Army took Berlin in 1760, while the German or Prussian army never took St. Petersburg (Leningrad) or Moscow. But it is a useful thing in these days, when the hope of humanity hangs mainly upon the outcome of the battles on the Eastern Front, to show that the Hitlerian paragon of all military and state virtues—Frederick the Great—was roundly and repeatedly defeated by a poorly led and even betrayed Russian Army which on one occasion even had to disobey orders in order to defeat the enemy.

Hitler has inherited and developed into a general political state principle two of Frederick's purely military ideas. They are summarized by two Frederickian aphorisms: "The soldier must fear the cane of his corporal more than the enemy," and "Marshal de Soubise [French commander at Rossbach in 1757] wants one hundred cooks to precede him, but I prefer to be preceded by one hundred spies." Here are the seeds of the future "New Order" and its adjunct—the "Fifth Column."

Frederick developed the shibboleth of his own invincibility, which won him many a battle before it even started. Hitler imitated him well.

But Frederick met defeat at the hands of the Russian Army which was commanded by the traitor Apraksin. He was beaten, he and his stiff "stick-discipline," by the heroism and spirit of self-sacrifice of the Russians whom he used to call "these miserable troops."

And a young Russian staff officer who was getting his baptism of fire at the battle of Kunersdorf—the second defeat of Frederick by the Russians—clearly saw that the blind discipline of fear cannot stand up against the principle that "every warrior must understand his maneuver." This young officer was the future Field Marshal Alexander Suvorov, whose great "principles of victory" not only live in the Red Army but have been developed by it to the highest degree.

The history of the Seven Years' War makes grand reading in these days when Frederick's distorted twentieth-century replica is being trounced by the great-grandsons of the heroes of Gross Jägersdorf and Kunersdorf, of the men who entered Berlin October 10, 1760 (September 28, old style).

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THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

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BY K. OSIPOV

The people of what is now the Soviet Union have been obliged on many occasions to take up arms in defense of their native land against invading enemies. Recalling the arduous struggle the Russian people have had to wage in the course of their history, Pushkin, the great Russian poet, expressed his pride at the fact that quite early in her history Russia threw off the heavy yoke of Tatar rule and thereby rendered priceless service to European civilization as a whole. "Awakening enlightenment was saved by torn and bleeding Russia," he wrote.

But many other invaders besides the Tatars have felt the potency of the elemental force of the Russian people. The so-called Teutonic knights on the ice of Lake Chudskoye in the thirteenth century, the Poles in Moscow in 1612, the Swedes at Poltava in 1709, the French in 1812, and interventionists of all colors and shades in 1918-19, were all utterly routed by the great Russian people.

So severe was the defeat that the Russian forces, under the command of Alexander Nevsky, inflicted on the Teutonic knights on Lake Chudskoye that it put a stop to their raids into Russia for five hundred years. The Germans appeared on the Russian horizon again only in the eighteenth century; but this time the war against them lasted seven years (1756-63).
As usual, the Prussians were well prepared for their act of aggression. They had a well-planned military organization and well-equipped forces commanded by highly trained officers. The Russian army, however, suffered from numerous imperfections. Frederick II, King of Prussia, counted on an easy victory. "The Muscovites are a wild horde," he declared haughtily. "They cannot possibly withstand regular organized troops." This typically Prussian sentiment contained the seed of the present insane fascist idea that the Germans are a superior race. "I hope to finish these Russians off very quickly, and at small cost," said Frederick boastfully; "after all, they are miserable troops." But these "miserable troops" gave him the surprise of his life. The badly armed Russian soldiers, led by incompetent generals, inflicted a number of severe defeats upon the well-trained and well-equipped Prussians. The myth that the Prussian army was invincible was dispelled.

Taught by bitter experience, Frederick now expressed an entirely different opinion about the Russian soldiers. "These men may be killed, but never beaten," he said more than once during the Seven Years' War.

Like all arrogant and haughty men, the German despots are inclined to ignore unpleasant facts. But facts are stubborn things; and the fact is that neither in the thirteenth nor in the eighteenth century did the Prussians succeed in conquering an inch of Russian soil.

In the nineteenth century the Prussians appeared in Russia together with Napoleon's Grand Army and shared its bitter fate. The Prussians who perished were regretted neither by the Russian people, who drove their enemies from their frontiers, nor by Napoleon, who had driven the Prussians to their doom. In 1813 Napoleon said: "What did the Russian campaign cost me? A matter of 300,000 men; but, then, what a lot of Germans there were among them!"

Another century elapsed. In 1914-17 the Germans again hurled their forces against the Russian army; and in 1918, fifty German divisions poured into the Ukraine. Within a year, however, all the Germans—except the Spartacus detach-
ments, which volunteered to fight in the ranks of the Red Army—were driven from Russian soil.

Thus, in spite of the furious onslaughts of the German invaders and the promising victories they gained in the early period of each invasion, in the long run the Russian people always inflicted severe defeat upon them. Not once have these boastful invaders succeeded in holding even an inch of Russian soil, although they have been vainly trying to seize it for seven hundred years.

This is what history tells us. In the light of present-day events the Seven Years' War against the Prussian aggressors in 1756-63 assumes special importance and significance.

THE MILITARY AGGRESSIONS OF FREDERICK THE GREAT

In his article on "The Role of Violence in History," Frederick Engels wrote: "Since the time of Frederick II, Prussia has regarded Germany, like Poland, as a field of conquest from which to drain everything that can be drained."

Prussia became an independent kingdom only in 1701; but from the very first days of its independent political existence this small state betrayed a remarkable proclivity for "fishing in troubled waters." Whenever any of its neighboring states found itself in difficulties the Prussian rulers unceremoniously grabbed parts of its territory. Thus, they seized part of Pomerania. After Sweden's unsuccessful war against Russia they robbed her of Stettin and the mouth of the River Oder. Then they turned their hungry gaze on the rich Austrian province of Silesia.

A splendid opportunity to grab neighboring territory presented itself to the Prussian despots in 1740, when the male line of succession of the Austrian ruling house of the Hapsburgs came to an end. Frederick II, King of Prussia, the idol of the present-day fascist usurpers, once cynically remarked: "If you take a liking to a foreign province and you are strong enough to take it, do so immediately. After you have taken
it you will always find plenty of lawyers to prove that you have every right to that territory."

Pursuing this policy of robbery, violence and contempt for international law, Frederick suddenly presented to Maria Theresa's ambassador a claim to Silesia. This claim was so totally unfounded that in making it Frederick could barely restrain his amusement. Without waiting for Austria's reply, without declaring war, and in the act of pouring forth compliments and assurances of good will, Frederick invaded Silesia. Although this invasion was totally unjustified—except by the rapacious appetites of the King of Prussia—the latter, nevertheless, with the assistance of France, succeeded in obtaining the sanction of the European powers for the annexation of Silesia.

The appetite grows with eating. At the end of August, 1756, Frederick invaded Saxony and, after compelling the small Saxon army to surrender, he invaded the Austrian province of Bohemia. In his characteristic way, he did all this without declaring war. Such were the tactics of Frederick II who, as the historian Macaulay stated: "... was considered as a politician destitute alike of morality and decency; insatiable, rapacious and shamelessly false."

Frederick II's policy of aggression began seriously to disturb the governments of Europe. Russia, being Austria's ally, and apprehensive of the Prussian King's policy of conquest, could not remain neutral in face of his predatory raids on other countries. The Russian Government formulated its attitude towards these events as follows: "In the midst of peace and tranquility, Frederick has attacked friendly territory, against which he, on his own confession, had no complaints whatever." Condemning the "perfidy of the King of Prussia," the Russian Government proclaimed him the "instigator of war." This marked the beginning of the Seven Years' War of 1756-63 between Prussia and Russia.
Engels said that "Frederick the Great's military organization was the best in his day." Ruthlessly plundering the countries he had subjugated, and draining the resources of Prussia itself, Frederick built up a huge military machine. His troops were excellently equipped, mobile, and trained for rapid marching. Moreover, the army was an obedient tool in the hands of this, if not brilliant—as the Germans try to depict him—certainly vigorous and capable military leader. It must be remembered also that Frederick was in supreme command of his army, whereas the powers of the commanders of the opposing armies were restricted. Lastly, Russia, Austria and France were torn by disagreement, which Frederick's agents did their utmost to aggravate; and this, too, seriously affected the course of military operations.

In equipment and organization the Russian army was much inferior to the Prussian. For example, owing to the shortage of horses, even the best cavalry regiments came up to only one-third of their proper strength. The army officers—recruited exclusively from the aristocracy—were far from being adequately trained for their functions; and the army itself was cumbersome and slow in its movements. Moreover, every officer had a train of ten or more wagons carrying his personal belongings, while Stepan Apraksin, the Commander-in-Chief, had several hundred of them. The army medical service was totally inadequate.

Nevertheless, the Russian army enjoyed an important advantage over Frederick's troops. The Prussian troops consisted of both mercenaries and levies from different parts of Europe; adventurers, vagabonds and ex-prisoners of war. Such an army could be held together only by the most ferocious discipline. It is not surprising, therefore, that every defeat was followed by mass desertion. To combat this, Frederick introduced the severest penalties, and deserters who were caught had their
noses and ears cut off. Many men, mutilated in this way, drifted into the Russian camp.

The Russian army, however, was bound together by strong ties of patriotism. It consisted of conscripts—mainly peasants—who maintained contact with their homes. They regarded military service as an arduous but sacred duty to their country. They had heard from their fathers and grandfathers that foreign enemies had often attacked Russia and they had become accustomed to the idea of having to fight to expel invaders.

In spite of its lack of training and poor equipment the Russian infantry represented a formidable force. The Russian artillery was in no way inferior to the Prussian. The Russian cavalry, particularly the irregular cavalry—the Cossacks, Bashkirs, Tatars, etc.—was, however, less efficient than the Prussian.

At the opening of hostilities in 1757, the Russian army consisted of 128,000 men, of whom 97,000 served in the front line. The artillery consisted of about 250 guns, not counting 63 siege guns. The Prussian army at this time consisted of 180,000 men, and several of the German principalities provided an additional 47,000 men. The majority of the German principalities, however, incensed by Frederick's perfidious attack on Saxony and Bohemia, declared their opposition to him.

Although the Russian government had announced the opening of hostilities in the autumn of 1756, for nearly six months the Russian army, as Frederick anticipated, did not present a serious menace. This was due, first, to the efforts of the English ambassador in St. Petersburg, who was working in the interests of Prussia. Through Catherine, the wife of the Russian Crown Prince, he persuaded the Russian government to refrain from active operations. Secondly, it was due to the fact that the Russian army was really not quite ready for an arduous campaign. The government therefore decided that Apraksin should go into winter quarters in Poland, organize a food base there, and move into East Prussia in the spring.

Frederick did all he could to thwart this plan, but all the
efforts of his agents and of the English ambassador in this direction were in vain. The Russian Chancellor Alexei Bestuzhev, who hitherto had been in complicity with the Germans, now informed them that he could not do anything to help them; and other aristocrats, Vorontsov in particular, rejected their offers of money.

The danger hanging over him in the shape of the Russian army greatly perturbed Frederick. His former boastfulness gave way almost to despair. In January, 1757, he wrote to his confidant Finkenstein that his position was critical, and he gave directions as to the measures to be taken in the event of his being killed or captured. To the English ambassador in Berlin he wrote that the only thing that could save him was the death of the Empress Elizabeth and the possible change of Russian policy resulting from it. "Apart from this fortuity I see no hope," he declared gloomily.

He decided for the time being to refrain from his favorite offensive tactics and to take up a defensive position in Saxony, even resigning himself to the possibility of losing Silesia. Winterfeldt, one of his generals, persuaded him, however, to attempt a "lightning" attack on Austria. In the spring of 1757 the Prussian army invaded Bohemia. At first the operations proceeded successfully. The Austrian army suffered defeat and was surrounded in Prague. The Second Austrian Army, under the command of General Leopold von Daun, came to its relief. Frederick attacked Daun's forces at Kolin, but was defeated and was eventually compelled to withdraw from Bohemia.

At the same time the Prussians suffered a severe reverse on the French frontier. The French army threatened Brandenburg and Saxony. Had the Russian army, commanded by Apraksin, reached the vital arteries of Prussia, such as the line of the River Oder, for example, the position of the royal aggressor would have been critical. Fortunately for Frederick, Apraksin was very slow in his movements.

"The slowness of his operations," wrote the French ambassador in St. Petersburg, "is due to the influence of the Prussian party to whose side Williams (the English ambassador in St.
Petersburg) has managed to win over the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess." *

The main forces of the Russian army began to move only on May 14 and the main blow was to be directed against Memel. The officer appointed to command the Memel expedition was General Fermor, an experienced military engineer, but, alas, in the pay of the Prussians, as events afterwards proved.

Weary of their long inactivity in Poland, the privates and non-commissioned officers of the Russian army eagerly set out on the march. They were confident of victory. In the beginning of July, the Russian army reached Memel, and on July 6 the town and fortress surrendered. Fermor allowed the garrison freely to leave the city, a proceeding which called forth universal indignation in Russia. The Russian casualties in this operation amounted to only 25 killed and wounded.

In St. Petersbourg patriotic feeling ran high and Apraksin's tardiness was rousing angry comment among all classes of society. At the end of July the Russian Chancellor Bestuzhev wrote to Apraksin that "it is generally regretted here that the delay in the operations of the Russian army will enable Levaldt ** to retreat in safety." Several days later Bestuzhev again wrote to Apraksin, stating: "The slowness of your march and, consequently, of the military operations, is giving rise all over the city to adverse comment about Your Excellency and some have even gone to the length of offering a reward to anyone who finds the lost Russian army. . . ."

Apraksin would have been glad to accelerate his operations now, but this was hindered by his colossal baggage train, the poor organization of the food supply for the troops, and the lack of sufficient cavalry.

On August 1, the Russian vanguard entered East Prussia. On the 5th, Gumbinnen was occupied, and on the 11th, Insterburg. Levaldt concentrated his forces and waited for a

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* The future Russian Emperor Peter III, and the future Empress Catherine II.

** Considered to be Frederick's best general; he was in command of the troops in East Prussia.
favorable opportunity to launch a decisive attack. This opportunity occurred when the Russian army, continuing its march on Königsberg, was encamped near the village of Gross-Jägersdorf.

On August 29, forty Prussian squadrons attacked the Russian outposts and destroyed them; but instead of continuing the attack they retired. Night fell, but the attack was not resumed. Some of the Russian generals predicted that the Prussians would launch a general offensive next day and recommended that the whole army be lined up for battle. But Fermor insisted on continuing the march, asserting that the Prussians were only making a demonstration.

Apraksin heeded Fermor’s advice and thereby nearly caused the destruction of the Russian army. Levaldt attacked it in the morning just as it was about to resume the march. The Prussians came up imperceptibly concealed by a dense mist and appeared on the field of Jägersdorf quite unexpectedly. The Russian troops at that time were stretched out in a long, narrow file, their way encumbered by baggage carts, carriages, artillery and munition wagons. Taking advantage of their favorable position the Prussians opened a heavy bombardment of the Russian lines, and their cavalry charged down upon the Russian center. The Moscow Grenadiers, however, repulsed the attack and the Russian artillery, opening fire, compelled the Prussians to retreat.

Levaldt then directed twenty battalions to pierce the Russian front at the junction between the First and Second Divisions. The Prussians overthrew the Horse Grenadiers and Cuirassiers, but were then repulsed by the First Grenadier Regiment. Nevertheless, they eventually succeeded in breaking through and penetrating into the Russian rear.

The Prussians also crushed the Second Grenadier and Second Narva Regiments. The Russian ranks were thinned by the terrific fire and in some regiments three-fourths of the officers were put out of action. The Prussians were already gloating over their victory.

But at this critical moment the Russian soldiers displayed
their amazing fighting qualities. Hard pressed on all sides, mowed down by a withering fire, they fought like lions, rousing the admiration even of their enemies and making them tremble before their super-human staunchness. Andrew Bolo-
tov, an eye-witness and chronicler of this battle, wrote:

“Nothing could be more magnificent than the courage displayed by these soldiers who represented the broken remnants of the unfortunate regiments I have mentioned. One had his right arm cut off and held his sword in his left hand, defending himself against the enemy who was charging and hacking at him. Another, barely able to stand, covered with wounds and blood, leaned against a tree, still beating off his foes who were trying to cut him down. A third, roaring like a lion, hacked his way through a ring of enemies, asking for no quarter in spite of the blood that was streaming down his face. A fourth snatched the weapons out of the hands of those who had disarmed him wanting to take him prisoner, and tried to kill them with their own weapons. A fifth, forgetting that he was alone, charged down upon a crowd of enemies with his bayonet, wanting to stab them all. A sixth, having no more powder or bullets, tore the pouches from the dead bodies of his foes and went on killing the enemy with their own bullets. In short, they did all that brave and fearless fighters could be expected to do.”

This wonderful resistance upset all the Prussians' calculations. Gradually the situation began to change. On the Russian left flank the Prussian cavalry, engrossed in pursuit of the Don Cossacks, who were deliberately enticing them into a trap, came into collision with the Butyrsky and Apsheron regiments and were routed. At last the exhausted Russian center obtained reinforcements, which, however, had not been sent by the generals, for neither Apraksin nor Fermor thought of doing so. The Novgorod and Third Grenadier regiments, concealed behind a wood, heard the din of battle and strained at the leash to rush to their comrades' assistance. At last, not waiting for orders, they decided to go on their own initiative, and, abandoning their guns and ammunition boxes, they
forced their way through the dense wood and joined the Narva and Second Grenadier regiments.

"It is impossible to depict the joy with which our fighters welcomed this assistance, and with what excitement they shouted to their comrades to hurry," writes Bolotov. "Then the whole situation changed. The fresh forces did not wait long but, firing a volley, and shouting their battle cry, charged upon the enemy with their bayonets, thereby turning the battle in our favor. The enemy's line wavered and retired somewhat. He wanted to improve his formation, but there was no time. Our men pressed him hard and did not give him a moment's rest. Then Prussian courage changed to cowardice; on the spot, without waiting long, the enemy turned and sought safety in retreat. This broke the spirit of the other Prussian troops; but it encouraged ours. The former gradually began to waver all along the line, while our fire increased in intensity. In short, within a quarter of an hour, the Prussians began to retreat all along the line, first in order, and then like cattle, in complete disorder."

The closing scene of this desperate battle was concealed from view by a thick pall of smoke. When the first Prussian line began to retreat, its second line, thinking it was the enemy, opened fire on it. This still further increased the panic in the Prussian ranks.

And so the battle of Gross-Jägersdorf ended. As Bolotov quite justly observes: "This victory was achieved not by the skill of our generals, which they entirely lacked, but by the splendid valor of our troops." This battle once again demonstrated the amazing staunchness, contempt for death and courage of the Russian soldier. Frederick had assured his army that it would have to contend against "miserable troops." but in the first big collision with these "miserable troops," the reputedly invincible Prussian army was defeated.

To crown all, Frederick was able to convince himself of the truth of the proverb that misfortunes never come singly. Simultaneously with the news of Levaldt's defeat at Gross-Jägersdorf, he received information that the English and
Hanoverian army had capitulated to the French and that the latter had invaded Saxony. “In death alone can I find a haven and a refuge,” he wrote, vainly pleading for peace.

“FIFTH-COLUMN” TREACHERY IMPEDES THE RUSSIAN ADVANCE

The boastful Prussian King was strong when his enemies were divided. When they acted vigorously and in unison the Prussian army fled as fast as its legs could carry it. But Frederick was saved not only by the absence of coordinated action among his enemies, but also by the fact that their desire to defeat Prussia was thwarted by numerous extraneous circumstances.

This is what happened on this occasion. France, represented by the Duke of Richelieu, suddenly agreed to conclude an armistice with Frederick until May 1, 1758. It was afterwards ascertained that he had received a large sum of money for this. As for Apraksin, instead of pursuing Levaldt, he undertook several irresolute maneuvers and then ordered the army to turn about and retire from Prussia into Poland. This sudden retreat, which nullified the fruits of the whole campaign and of the victory at Gross-Jägersdorf, roused a storm of protest in Russia.

In justification of his action Apraksin pleaded that he was short of food for the army and that the army was enfeebled by sickness, while Levaldt was receiving fresh reinforcements. This plea was worthless. By advancing towards Königsberg through a region as yet unaffected by war, the Russian troops could easily have found the necessary provisions; and the number of sick was not so large as to give the defeated Prussian army numerical superiority over the Russians.

Apraksin’s action was prompted by quite other motives. In his book, New Historical Memoirs About the Seven Years' War, Retsov states:

“The health of the Empress Elizabeth was in such a desperate state that her early demise was apprehended. Owing
to his attachment to the Prussian King, Grand Duke Peter Fedorovich showed the most tender concern for the fate of that sovereign. . . . And it was he who persuaded Count Bes-
tuzhev to recall the army immediately."

Subsequently, Frederick himself admitted that Apraksin retreated in order to serve his, Frederick's, interests.

As a consequence of the avarice of Richelieu and the crime committed by Bestuzhev and Apraksin, the defeated Prussian King was able to recuperate. Obtaining a respite on his Eastern frontier, he hurled himself upon the French, and, in November, inflicted a severe defeat upon them at Rosbach. A month later, he defeated the Austrians at Leuthen. The war which seemed to be drawing to a close flared up with greater vigor and lasted another five years.

However, the retreat from East Prussia was the last drop that filled the cup of bitterness. Empress Elizabeth—who, in spite of the fears of some and the hopes of others, did not die—ordered the arrest and prosecution of Apraksin. Chancellor Bestuzhev fell together with Apraksin. The trial of Apraksin did not take place, as he died from a stroke of apoplexy. Bestuzhev was tried and sentenced to death, but was reprieved and his sentence commuted to banishment to one of his estates.

Unfortunately, the removal of Apraksin did not have the results that were expected. His successor, Fermor, was too fond of money, and of German money in particular. Nevertheless, Fermor was at first compelled to display a certain amount of activity. At the end of 1757 the Russian army again entered East Prussia. The enemy offered feeble resistance. The Russian columns commanded by Ivan Saltykov and Peter Rumyantsev—who, it must be said, had distinguished himself at Gross-Jägersdorf—rapidly advanced, and on January 21, 1758, reached Königsberg. The Königsberg garrison retired without a fight, and the mayor of the city stated that if the Russian command guaranteed the safety of the inhabitants he would give the Russian troops an official welcome.

The inhabitants of Königsberg, as well as of nearly all the
other cities in East Prussia, eagerly transferred their fealty from Prussia to Russia. They displayed most unexpected enthusiasm at the entry of the Russian troops. Many of the houses were decorated with Russian emblems; drawing rooms were adorned with portraits of the Empress Elizabeth, and so forth.

The speedy occupation of East Prussia was a severe blow to Frederick. He thought that the Russian army had been put out of action for a long time to come as a result of Apraksin's retreat, and here the army turned out to be in perfect fighting trim and, in spite of the severe frost, was marching at the rate of about thirteen miles a day.

The Russian Command conducted no further operations until the summer, and it was only in June that it launched another offensive. This time the blow was delivered at Kustrin, which covered the road to Berlin and to Frankfurt. In the middle of June the Russian troops entered Pomerania. Soon after, a column commanded by Peter Rumyantsev occupied the important strategical point of Driesen.

While these operations were in progress, Frederick with his main forces was maneuvering in Bohemia against the Austrians, vainly trying to compel Daun to accept a general engagement; but, failing to achieve his object, he at last left Daun in peace and began to transfer his troops to the East against the Russians.

Again the Russian army operated very slowly. The siege of Kustrin was begun only on August 15. This was a very strong fortress and owing to the lack of siege guns it was almost impossible to take it by assault. Nevertheless, the siege continued favorably. The bombardment of the city with red-hot cannon balls caused numerous fires in which the stocks of grain and hay accumulated for Frederick's army were consumed.

At this juncture Frederick appeared at Kustrin with an army of 32,000 men. On learning of his arrival, Fermor raised the siege and took up a convenient position near the village of Zorndorf. At that time he had 42,000 men under his com-
mand. Frederick performed a skillful maneuver. He penetrated into Fermor's rear and compelled him to reform his front under Prussian fire. This new position that Fermor was compelled to take was very inconvenient. It was intersected by ravines, which hindered the coordination of the activities of the Russian units. The various regiments were lined up quite close to each other and presented a convenient target for the enemy artillery.

Rubbing his hands with glee, Frederick declared that he now had the whole Russian army at his mercy. He gave orders that not a single Russian be spared in the forthcoming battle, and then issued the order to attack. He was certain of victory and gloated over the prospect of wiping out the memory of his defeat at Gross-Jägersdorf.

His plan of operation was to strike at the right wing of the Russian forces and, if successful, to threaten the center simultaneously from the front and the flank. An important tenet in Frederick II's military theories was that the first blow must be a crushing one. He applied this at this time, and against the 17,000 Russian soldiers constituting the right flank of the Russian army he concentrated thirty-five battalions of infantry and nine squadrons of cavalry, making a total of 23,000 men.

At 9 A.M. the Prussian guns mounted on hills opened heavy fire. The close-packed Russian forces suffered heavy losses. As Bolotov relates, sometimes one cannon ball carried away ten men. Nevertheless, the Russian regiments stood their ground "with fearless and indescribable firmness," as Fermor subsequently reported in his dispatches.

After a two hours' bombardment the Prussians rushed to the attack. The Russian cavalry crushed the enemy vanguard and captured twenty-eight guns. But at this juncture the main forces of the Prussian cavalry, consisting of forty-six squadrons, hurled themselves upon the relatively small Russian cavalry force, scattered it, and then charged down upon the Russian infantry. As Captain E. Arenholtz of the Prussian army relates in his *History of the Seven Years' War*:
"... the Russian infantry was thus attacked in the front, flank and rear... and a frightful massacre ensued. These soldiers presented a sight to the Prussians hitherto unexampled. The Russians had fired all their cartridges, but they still stood as firm as a rock... Fresh regiments stepped into the place of the dead as if desiring to share the same fate as their comrades. It was easier to kill them than to make them run."

The desperate resistance put up by the Russians bore good fruit. "Death flees from the bayonet of the brave," said General Alexander Suvorov, subsequently, desiring to emphasize the fact that the losses of regiments which fight bravely are always much smaller than of retreating regiments. The Prussian cavalry, discouraged by the reception it had received and by the severe losses it was suffering, rolled back. The Russian right wing retreated to a more convenient position; and it is characteristic that this movement, too, was undertaken on the initiative of the privates and the non-commissioned officers.

Frederick, who with his usual cocksureness had already sent a dispatch rider to Berlin with a report of his victory, decided to complete the discomfiture of the Russian army by an attack on its left wing. But here picked Russian troops were stationed. The Russian cuirassiers charged the enemy and cut up two of his regiments. In this engagement Frederick himself was nearly killed and his adjutant was taken prisoner. Describing the scene, Bolotov writes that the Prussians "stamped under the eyes of their king like cattle, and our men pursued them and beat them unmercifully. They drove them into a bog and there captured their batteries."

The Prussian cavalry came to the aid of the infantry and a battle of the utmost ferocity ensued. "Both sides fought with such fury," relates Bolotov, "that we found one of our soldiers, mortally wounded, lying on a mortally wounded Prussian and gnawing him with his teeth."

The battle ended at about 7 P.M., but both armies had maintained their original positions. Frederick admitted that on that day "everything nearly went to blazes." He expressed
his admiration for the Russian soldiers and roundly abused his own.

Under cover of night Frederick's soldiers scoured the battlefield, robbing the Russian wounded and subjecting them to the most abominable outrages. In this matter, as in many others, the present-day fascists are following the bloody example set by their predecessors two centuries ago. Captain Arenholtz testified that "many severely wounded Russians, left without care on the battlefield . . . were thrown into pits and buried with the dead. In vain these unfortunates struggled among the corpses, trying to push them aside and to rise; other corpses were thrown upon them, and their weight kept them imprisoned in their horrible grave."

**THE PRUSSIAN ARMY CRUSHED AT KUNERSDORF**

Gross-Jägersdorf and Zorndorf taught Frederick a good lesson. He was now convinced that Russia was his most formidable enemy and did all he possibly could to conclude peace with her. It is interesting to note that when the memoirs of a certain deceased German general were about to be published he ordered that all the unflattering remarks about Russia contained in them be deleted. Nevertheless, the Russian government rejected all Frederick's peace proposals.

Losing all hope of crushing the Russian army by means of a "lightning" blow, he left a covering force against it and moved his main forces against the Austrians. He overran the Duchy of Mecklenburg and, as in the case of Saxony, pressed all the able-bodied male population into military service. The atrocities committed by the Prussians in Mecklenburg roused indignation throughout Europe. According to Arenholtz "all that the Prussians could not take away with them they destroyed. They even tore open the feather beds of the poor and scattered the feathers to the winds."

While the Prussians were engaged in looting Austria, Fer- mor remained idle in East Prussia. Distrust of this command- er-in-chief grew not only in the army but also in St. Peters-
burg. At last, in June, 1759, a new commander-in-chief was appointed in his place. This was Commander-in-Chief P. S. Saltykov. In making the change, however, the Russian government did not go far enough. It allowed Fermor to remain in the capacity of Saltykov’s assistant.

Although by no means a talented military leader, the new commander-in-chief differed favorably from his predecessors in that he was a perfectly honest man, kept entirely aloof from Court intrigue, and was sincerely devoted to his country. This alone was enough to affect favorably the course of military operations.

In the beginning of July the Russian army crossed the Warthe and marched against the Prussians. After two weeks of maneuvering the opposing armies met on July 23 at the village of Palzig. General Wedel, whom Frederick had especially appointed to command the Prussian forces here, attacked the Russians while on the march. The forces of the two armies were about equal.

The successive attacks of the Prussians were repulsed by the Russian artillery and musket fire. And although the Prussians pierced the Russian lines in some places, they were repulsed and put to flight at the point of the bayonet and saber. The Cossacks pursued the enemy right to the River Oder. In this battle the Russians lost 900 killed and about 4,000 wounded. The Prussians lost 4,200 killed, 2,700 wounded and missing and 1,200 prisoners. The Prussians also lost a number of regimental colors and guns.

It must be stated that in his report on the courage displayed by the Russian soldiers Saltykov particularly emphasized their humane treatment of prisoners. “Many of our slightly wounded men carried severely wounded enemy soldiers from the battlefield,” he wrote. “Our soldiers gave them their bread and water, although they were in sore need themselves.”

Saltykov continued his operations with great vigor. Several days after the victory at Palzig he reached Frankfurt-on-the-Oder, obviously with the intention of marching to Berlin.

Frederick hastened to the aid of Frankfurt by forced
marches, picking up on the way the remnants of Wedel's army corps. Now he was no longer boastful. Gross-Jägersdorf, Zorndorf and Palsig had taught him that the Russians were a formidable enemy against whom he was impotent. "We are beggars," he wrote to his brother, "all we have left is our honor. I will do all I can to save it...."

In the beginning of August Saltykov, at the head of his army, entered Frankfurt-on-the-Oder. The keys of the city were surrendered to him and these he sent to St. Petersburg. At the same time General Laudohn arrived with an Austrian army corps numbering 18,500 men. These joined the Russian forces.

Meanwhile, mustering all the forces he could get together, Frederick marched out to meet the Austro-Russian forces. Saltykov decided to accept a general engagement and chose for his position the village of Kunersdorf. In command of an army of 48,000 men, Frederick, on August 12, 1759, launched an offensive.

Never before had the King of Prussia concentrated on one spot so large a force as he had on this occasion. His object was to crush the Russian army at all costs. At 12 noon he hurled large masses of troops against the Russian left wing, and thanks to his superiority in numbers he crushed it and captured forty-two guns. This success brought the whole of the Austro-Russian army, huddled up as it was in a small area, directly under fire of the Prussian artillery. At this juncture Frederick received a dispatch informing him that the Prussian forces had defeated the French in battle at Minden. He sent a reply stating that he had defeated Saltykov at Kunersdorf. But Frederick crowed too soon. He had obviously underestimated the power of resistance of the Russian army.

True, the condition of the Russian army at that time was critical. In addition to the blow it had received on its left flank, its center had also been pushed back. The Prussians were beginning to penetrate into the Russian rear. But instead of the dismay and confusion that might have been expected under such circumstances, the Russian soldiers displayed utter
coolness and indomitable courage. Line after line of Russian fighters rose up to bar the way of the advancing Prussian infantry.

Owing to the nature of the terrain, the battle was fought on a narrow front, which precluded the possibility of maneuvering. Everything depended upon the endurance and courage of the soldiers. Frederick led his troops to the attack in person and twice his horse was shot under him. But all in vain. The Russians stood as firm as a rock; and as it became apparent that all attempts to put them to flight were fruitless, the spirit of the Prussians was broken.

"At last," writes Bolotov, "nature gained the upper hand. All the courage, bravery and valor of the Prussians could not compensate for their exhaustion. . . . The frightful and continuous fire that our side maintained against them from many muskets and many guns mowed them down mercilessly and bullets and shrapnel rained down upon them like death-dealing hail. . . . In short, our Russians fought this time with great ferocity and passion, and subsequently, even the Prussians themselves wrote that it seemed as if our men had lain down in rows and allowed the Prussians to step over them as if over dead bodies, and then had jumped up and shot them in the back."

Once again the old rule was proved that however skillful the generals may be, in the last resort it is the staunchness and valor of the troops that decide the issue in war. As had been the case in previous engagements, the furious attacks of the Prussians were broken by the stern determination, fearlessness and endurance of the Russian soldiers.

Losing all hope of achieving success by the operations of his infantry, Frederick threw into the attack his last reserves—his crack cavalry. But the Russian cavalry, commanded by Rumyantsev, aided by the Austrians, scattered the Prussian horsemen and then attacked the enemy infantry. Simultaneously, Russian battalions drove the enemy at the point of the bayonet out of Kunersdorf. Now it was the Prussians who were
dropped into a confined space, and the Russian guns decimated their ranks.

Panic broke out among the Prussians. Impetuous in attack, they proved less staunch in a crisis. They fled, leaving behind regimental colors and guns. Whole regiments surrendered. Frederick rushed among the fugitives in a vain attempt to stop them. He was in utter despair. "Is there no cannon ball to strike me down," he shouted hysterically. He himself was nearly taken prisoner by the Cossacks. With great difficulty his adjutants collected an escort of forty men and carried him off the battlefield.

The Russians lost 13,000 men and the Austrians 2,000. Frederick's army lost 18,500 men in battle, 172 guns, 10,000 muskets, 26 regimental colors and a large quantity of other material. The surviving 30,000 Prussians were utterly demoralized. They scattered through the woods and deserted en masse. In his despair Frederick wrote to Finkenstein: "I regret that I am still alive. Of an army of 48,000 men, I have barely 3,000 left. As I am saying this they are all in flight, and I no longer have any power over these men. . . . I am at the end of my resources, and to tell the truth I think all is lost."

Thrown into utter despondency by this defeat, he no longer paraded in the toga of the conqueror. He was on the verge of committing suicide, and was no longer in a state to command the army. He transferred the command to General Fink, saying that the Russians would now probably march on Berlin and there were no means of preventing them. The shadow of the defeat at Kunersdorf hung like a pall over the whole of Prussia.

BERLIN IS CAPTURED BY THE RUSSIANS

This time Frederick was saved by the diplomatic bickering that went on between Austria and Russia and, encouraged by this, he began feverishly to form a new army. He pressed prisoners of war into his service, raised another levy of ten thousand men in Saxony, and recruited volunteers in all countries,
tempting them with offers of commissions and the prospect of loot.

In the summer of 1760 the Russian army again took the offensive. At the end of July it laid siege to Breslau, but failed to capture the city because of the arrival of strong Prussian forces. Several months were then spent in fruitless marches, which caused considerable dissatisfaction in St. Petersburg. To improve matters Fermor, who was acting commander-in-chief in view of Saltykov's sickness, was ordered to organize an expedition to Berlin, not so much in expectation of holding that city as to produce a moral effect. For this purpose Fermor detailed two army corps, one under the command of Totleben, consisting of two regiments and four battalions of Grenadiers, eight cavalry regiments and fifteen guns, and another commanded by Zachary Chernyshev, consisting of seven regiments of infantry. Both units set out on the march to Berlin by different routes. The main forces of the Russian army undertook a maneuver for the purpose of supporting this movement.

Within six days Totleben's unit came in sight of Berlin. The appearance of the Russian forces astounded the Prussians. The richer classes of Berlin fled in panic; none of the inhabitants would take a hand in defending the city. The garrison of Berlin consisted of several battalions of infantry and two squadrons of cavalry. The commandant of the fortress wanted to leave the city without a fight, but Levaldt, who was in Berlin recuperating from his wounds, and Seidlitz, commander of the Prussian cavalry, who was also in Berlin at the time, persuaded him to defend it. Flèches were erected outside the gates of Berlin on which three-pound guns were mounted, and battlements were cut in the city walls. The first assault of the Russian cavalry upon the Kottbus Gate was repulsed; the Halle Gate, however, was captured. But, failing to receive reinforcements, the Russians were compelled to retire. Meanwhile, Prussian troops commanded by Kleist and Hülsen were approaching Berlin. At the same time, however, General Chernyshev's army corps appeared,
and from the west a column of Austrians was advancing.

The Prussians had lined up on the right bank of the Spree five battalions of infantry, five squadrons of Dragoons, and several squadrons of Hussars. On October 6, Kleist's group, consisting of six battalions of infantry and twelve squadrons of cavalry, marched through Potsdam and, overthrowing the Russian cavalry guarding the approaches, he forced his way into Berlin.

The Prussian commanders considered the possibility of making a sortie against Chernyshev's force, but came to the conclusion that it would be hopeless; they decided instead to withdraw from the city. Thus, Kleist's penetration into Berlin proved purposeless and merely hindered the Prussians in their retreat.

Meanwhile the Russians placed guns on the heights outside the city and began a heavy bombardment. Soon fires broke out in the city. The Prussians then decided that all further resistance was useless. On October 10, 1760, Prussian members of parliament appeared at the Kottbus Gate of Berlin and announced the surrender of the city.

The Prussians managed to settle the terms of capitulation with Totleben before the arrival of Chernyshev. A year later it was revealed that Totleben had been in constant communication with Frederick, and that the latter had been kept well informed about the expedition to Berlin. At the time we are discussing, however, this was not yet known. Chernyshev considered that the terms of capitulation were very mild, but did not consider it expedient to demand their revision.

The terms were that Berlin should pay a contribution of 4,000,000 thalers. Totleben afterwards reduced it to 1,500,000 thalers. The gunpowder factories, ordnance works and small arms factories were blown up. Arenholtz and Bolotov state that it was planned to blow up the armory, but when soldiers were sent to the "powder mill" for gunpowder they found that it had blown up from an unknown cause and, consequently, no gunpowder was available for the purpose. Chernyshev ordered the requisition of all the money in the treasury and of
all the arms in the arsenals and a part of these arms were to be destroyed and thrown into the river.

A number of newspapers were published in Berlin, chief of which was the Vossische Zeitung. All these newspapers had been conducting a scurrilous campaign against Russia and the Russian army and had published the most absurd and outrageous slander. General Chernyshev decided to teach these overzealous hacks a lesson. He ordered the journalists employed by these newspapers to appear on the parade ground in the Lustgarten. When they got there they found two lines of Russian soldiers drawn up all armed with birches. The journalists were informed that they were now to be flogged for continuously writing and publishing lies. At a sign from the officer in command, the soldiers undressed these pen-pirates in preparation for the thrashing they were to give them—but at this moment the officer in command called a halt and informed the “newspapermen” that this time they would be reprieved, but they were never to forget that Russia’s arm of retribution could quite easily reach Berlin. The journalists hastily donned their shirts and trousers and hurried from the parade grounds amidst the jeers of a large crowd of inhabitants who had gathered to witness the scene.

The Austrian soldiers who had entered Berlin with the Russians began to sack the city. It must be said, they were only following the example of Frederick’s army, which always sacked every city it captured. The Russian command, however, immediately took measures to restore and maintain order. Russian patrols were posted in all parts of the city with orders to prevent all looting. Frederick himself subsequently admitted that the Russians “maintained perfect order” and “saved the city from the horrors with which the Austrians had threatened it.”

Meanwhile, the Prussian king, having learned from his spies that the Russians had started out to march on Berlin, hastened to the relief of that city by a series of forced marches. The troops in occupation of Berlin were too few to meet Frederick’s main forces and, moreover, it was not the intention
of the expedition permanently to hold the city. Both Saltykov and Fermor of the Russian generals, and Daun and Laudohn of the Austrian, were too cautious and hesitant to undertake a task of this kind. They regarded the occupation of Berlin merely as a reconnoitering operation or as a brief raid. Since this object had been achieved, the Russian troops, on October 13, began to withdraw from the city without accepting battle.

Among the trophies they took with them were the keys of the gates of Berlin, which were afterwards placed in the Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg as a constant reminder that the distance from Berlin to St. Petersburg was greater than from St. Petersburg to Berlin.

**FREDERICK'S DEFEAT AND THE END OF THE WAR**

The war continued. The Russian soldiers again fought and gained new victories, but their heroic efforts were rendered fruitless by the cowardice, incompetence or treachery of their commanders.

In the autumn of 1760 Buturlin replaced Saltykov as commander-in-chief. This, too, was an unfortunate choice. Throughout the whole of 1761 the new commander-in-chief engaged in fruitless marches and counter-marches.

The principal event in the campaign of 1761 was the siege of Colberg. This was an important strategical center, concerning which Frederick had written: "I must not lose this city; it is far too important. It would be disastrous if it fell into the hands of the enemy."

The siege of Colberg was led by Rumyantsev. The garrison put up a stubborn resistance, but on December 16, 1761, it was compelled to surrender. The Russians captured about 3,000 prisoners, 146 guns, 30 regimental colors and large quantities of war material. The Russians were now in command of the whole of Pomerania. The capture of Colberg created a *place d'armes* for a decisive offensive against Frederick.

At that time the Russian army numbered about 100,000
men. During the war it had greatly improved. The cavalry and artillery had been considerably augmented, the organization of food supplies had been greatly improved, and the baggage trains had been reduced. Frederick's spies were gradually combed out. Totleben was impeached as a spy and sentenced to death. New generals of great caliber came to the front, such as the young Suworov, Rumyantsev and Chernyshev. On the other hand, the Austrians were threatening Saxony and Silesia.

Frederick at that time had an army of only 50,000 men. England, which up to that time had been paying him a subsidy of £2,500,000 per annum, informed him that from the beginning of 1762 this would cease. Frederick had no more fields to plunder and no sources of finance with which to maintain his army. Prussia, exhausted by the long war which had swallowed up all her resources, was starving.

Frederick again found himself on the brink of an abyss, but this time he had no hope of salvation. He who had boastfully plunged into war in 1756 in the expectation of gaining a speedy victory with the aid of his powerful army was now thinking of abdicating from the throne in favor of his nephew in the hope that the European powers would allow him to transfer to the latter at least the remnants of the kingdom of Prussia. So low had his spirits fallen that he always carried about with him a vial of poison.

But he did not commit suicide and did not abdicate. He was saved by a mere fortuity. On January 5, 1762, the day on which the news of the capture of Colberg was announced in St. Petersburg, the Empress Elizabeth died, and Peter III succeeded her on the throne. The first step the new emperor took was to send Count Gudovich to Frederick to express to him his cordial friendship. In the middle of March an armistice was signed. Frederick took it for granted that he would be compelled to cede territory and was resigned to the loss of East Prussia. Peter III, however, restored to Frederick all the territory that had been won by the Russian army. Moreover, he concluded a military alliance with Prussia. Totleben was
reprieved. The Prussian ambassador Holtz began to play the leading role at the court of the new emperor.

All this roused a wave of indignation among the Russian aristocracy. Catherine, who had long been in sullen enmity with her consort, took advantage of this, and on the night of July 9, 1762, Peter III was dethroned and Catherine ascended the throne. She annulled the alliance with Prussia, which was very unpopular in the country, but she ratified the peace treaty.

Russia's withdrawal from the ranks of the belligerents served to bring the Seven Years' War to an end. In February, 1763, a peace treaty was signed between Prussia, France and Austria, by which Prussia restored Saxony to Austria. The map of Europe remained what it had been before the war.

SOME LESSONS OF THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

Thus Frederick succeeded in averting his doom, but he did not succeed in conquering an inch of new territory. The Seven Years' War, however, had thoroughly undermined the foundations of the kingdom of Prussia. According to Frederick's own calculations, the war cost Prussia 200,000 men who had perished on the battlefields, and 135,000,000 gold marks, not counting the devastation caused in various parts of the country. The German historian Schmoller writes that "at the end of the war the Prussian provinces were in a frightful condition. The country had suffered enormous losses in men, cattle, and capital. Thousands of houses were burned to the ground. As a consequence of the war a severe crisis set in, which lasted for several years."

No less important was the fact that Frederick had lost his whole army, on the building up of which he had stinted no resources. Thomas B. Macaulay, the English historian, wrote:

"Even the army was disorganized. Many great generals and a crowd of excellent officers had fallen, and it had been impossible to replace them. The difficulty of finding recruits had,
towards the close of the war, been so great, that selection and rejection were impossible. Whole battalions were composed of deserters or of prisoners.

Indeed, the war against Austria, which Frederick launched fifteen years later, ended in failure, because the Prussian army proved unfit to fight.

As for Russia, in spite of the criminal mistakes committed by her rulers, who with their own hands destroyed the fruits of the Russian victories, she emerged from the war stronger and mightier than she had been before. Her international importance was greatly enhanced. As Engels wrote, now “confronting . . . the Great Powers . . . involved in endless quarrels and constantly trying to outwit each other—confronting them stood united, homogeneous, young, rapidly developing Russia, almost invulnerable and unconquerable.”

Such were the political results of the war for which the Prussian aggressor had made such thorough preparations. As had been the case in the past, as well as in subsequent times, the impact with the Russian troops ended disastrously for the Prussians. As Marx has observed: “Prussia never subjugated a single powerful Slav nation, and in five hundred years never even succeeded in getting hold of Pomerania until she finally got it by ‘exchange.’”

It must be borne in mind that Frederick’s position on the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War was exceptionally favorable. He had the advantage of launching a surprise attack, of superior military equipment, and of superior military leadership. His adversaries lacked a united command; very often they were at open loggerheads with each other. The operations of his most formidable foe, the Russian army, were paralyzed by the downright treachery and incompetence of its generals. In spite of all this, Frederick was beaten; the valor of the Russian troops upset all his plans and nullified all his efforts.

In addition to the main tenets of his theory of war, the present-day fascists have borrowed from Frederick his per-
fidious tactics, and his method of plundering conquered territories, of imposing forced labor upon their populations, and of brutally treating prisoners of war and the defenseless civil population.

But Frederick was really a great military leader. True, Napoleon said that there was nothing wonderful about Frederick's ability in waging a long war, considering the disagreements among the Allies, their unsatisfactory methods of warfare and the English subsidies. Nevertheless, the King of Prussia revealed considerable military talent, inexhaustible energy and great resourcefulness. The present-day fascists, who are following in Frederick's footsteps, cannot boast of these talents. And, above all, the foe that they have to contend against is the Soviet Union and not the Russia of Elizabeth and Peter III. The Soviet Union has no Apraksins, Fermors and Totlebens. The Red Army knows its leaders, loves them, and has absolute confidence in them. New Suvorovs and Rumyantsevs, new Chapayevs and Kotovskys are coming to the fore out of the ranks of the Soviet army. The resources of the Soviet Union are inexhaustible, and the Red Army's equipment and training are in no way inferior to the German. Under these circumstances, the scales are weighted on the side of those who are most courageous and brave in battle. And here the Russian bayonet has more than once proved its superiority over the German.

During the German occupation of the Ukraine in 1918, the German journalist Maximilian Harden wrote: "Read the history of Russia, it will do you good." If in their intervals of sanity the present-day fascist usurpers who are trying to imitate Frederick II were to follow the advice of this bourgeois journalist they would learn a very useful lesson from the history of the Seven Years' War. For at that time the idol of Hitler's fascist gang received a severe thrashing, while the Russian troops carried away in triumph the keys of the capital of Prussia.
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