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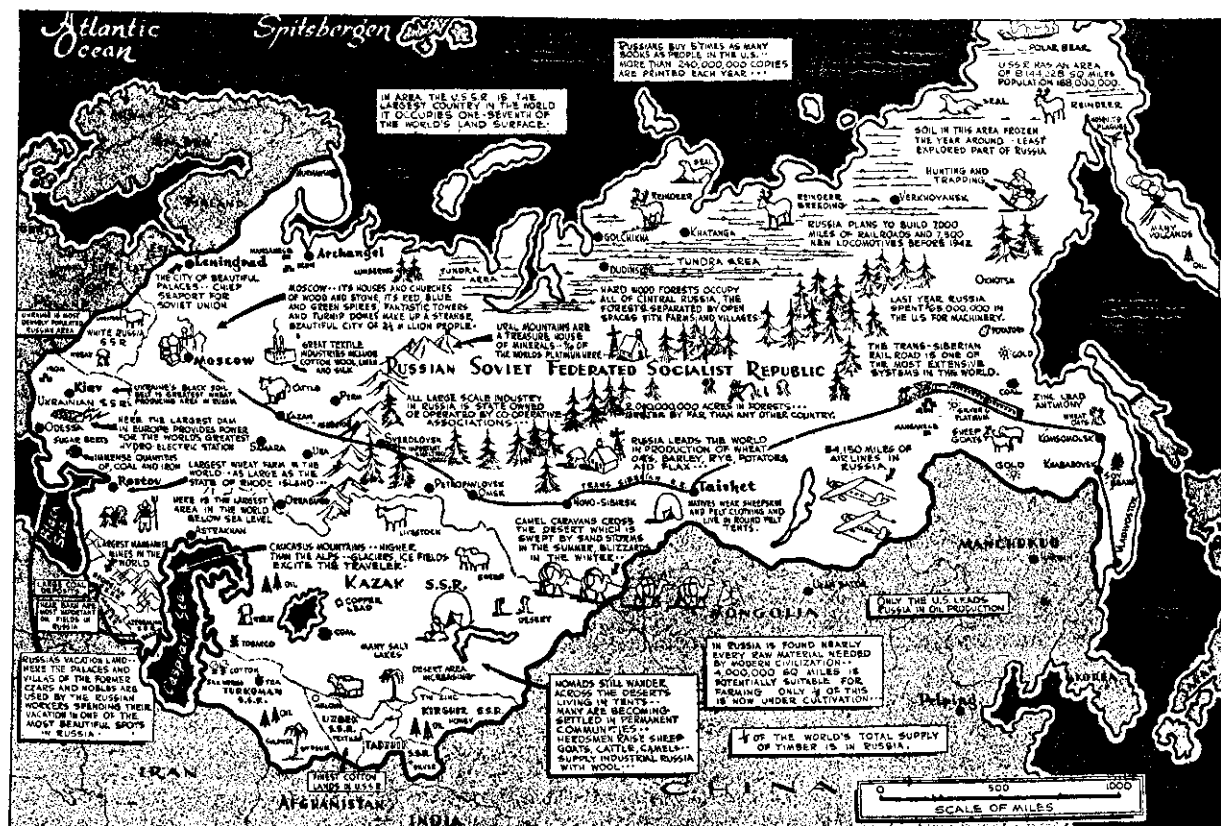
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THE RESOURCES OF SOVIET ASIA:



"If The Worst Happens..." [III]

The second of two articles written for "The Listener" by A.M.R., answering the question "Can An Isolated Russia Carry On?"

WE saw in last week's survey that, should the Nazis realise their wildest hopes this summer and cut the Murmansk-Archangel supply-pipe as they have almost cut that from Persia and the Caucasus, there would still be open the route through Samarkand in Soviet Central Asia and that through Dickson Island in the Arctic. But we saw too that both routes had a weak link. The southern one was the lorry journey via Meshed or Herat to the Central Asian railhead at Merv. The northern one was the barge journey up the Yenesei River which so far is usable only in summer. Therefore, supposing the White Sea line were seriously damaged, the U.S.S.R. would have to rely mainly on its own resources until accelerated ship building made possible both a "Second Front" and the maintenance of supplies to the present one.

If these resources were purely Russian the task would be impossible. For Russia-in-Europe has now left free only one industrial area (that just behind Moscow) and only one exporting agricultural area (that just behind Voronezh). But fortunately there is the much greater Russia-in-Asia. Concerning the

resources of this sub-continent, particularly the potential ones, there are plenty of statistics. Only, figures by themselves never tell anything about a situation. One must know the situation first in order to be in a position to use the figures. In the case of Russia this is particularly true, both because Russian conditions are so different from Western European ones, and because Russia's light-hearted statisticians tend to use figures somewhat as humorists use words—to obtain effects rather than to give information. So first we must picture the Soviet Asiatic scene.

What Maps Don't Show

First, to get some idea of relative size. The Soviet territories are so spread-eagled that no one flat map can hold them all without distorting the extremities. Few maps, moreover, indicate that two quite separate regions are involved—Siberia and Soviet Central Asia. And no map at all reveals that a third area, approximately of the same size (and topography and type of inhabitant) as the latter, is also part of the U.S.S.R. in every respect except its Chinese colour on the map. But we can roughly say that the whole U.S.S.R. is over double the United States in area, and 25 per cent. greater in population, both peoples increasing at about the same rate; that Soviet Asia is well over one-and-a-half times the size of U.S.A.; and that of its

(Continued on next page)

The map above is from "News Review" of July 3, 1941. In several obvious ways it is, of course, rather out of date

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