THE MOSCOW BATTLE OF 1941-1942

ENDED 20 April 1942

**«When I am asked what I remember the best about the war I always reply: the battle of Moscow. It ruined the ‘Barbarossa’ plan”.**

**Marshal G. K. Zhukov**

In the beginning of 1941 the Nazi commandment started to prepare for the offensive of Moscow. According to the plan large German alignments were supposed to encircle the main forces of the Red Army which defended the capital and defeat them near the towns of Bryansk and Vyasma. Then they had to quickly round Moscow from north and south.

[September 30, 1941](https://www.prlib.ru/en/history/619587) began Moscow strategic defensive operation.

Owing to bloody battles and stubborn resistance of the Soviet forces the German offensive of November 1941 was stopped. On December 5-6, 1941 when it became clear that the enemy had exhausted himself, the Soviet armies launched a counter-offensive.

During the battles of Kalinin, Klinsko-Solnechnogorsk, Tula, Kaluga and Elets the Soviet forces took the lead from the beginning.

On December 8 Hitler signed the instruction to start the defensive operation at the entire Soviet-German front including the Moscow sector.

In the beginning of January 1942 the counter-offensive of the Soviet forces at the western sector was completed. The [General Headquarters](https://www.prlib.ru/en/history/619333) decided to pass to the general offensive at all the main lines of advance: north-western line, western and south line in order to defeat the main enemy alignments.

During Rzhevsk-Vyasma operation which took place in the period of January 8 – April 20, 1942 and was meant to complete the defeat of the ‘Center’ German armies group the enemy was thrown back for 100 – 250 kilometers from Moscow. Completely liberated were Moscow, Tula and Ryazan regions, many parts of Kalinin, Smolensk and Orel regions. Due to the insufficient experience of conducting the offensive operation of a large scale and the shortage of forces and means, especially mobile forces, the task of encirclement and defeat of the ‘Center’ armies group was not accomplished in full. However in spite of incompletion the general offensive on the western line of advance proved successful.

On April 20, 1942 the High Command of the USSR decided that the west sector forces should begin the defensive operation at the line of Rzhev, Gzhatsk, Kirov and Zhizdra.

**The battle of Moscow was the first significant defeat of the German army during the World War II. The enemy lost over 400 thousand men, 1.3 thousand tanks, 2.5 thousand guns, over 15 thousand machines and other equipment. It was also a psychological turning point for the soldiers and civil population: the faith in victory increased, the myth of the German army invincibility was debunked. The failure of the blitzkrieg plan spread doubts of the successful outcome of the war among the military and political German leaders as well as the ordinary Germans.**

**For the model accomplishment of military tasks and the demonstrated courage about 40 units and formations were conferred the rank of Guards, 36 thousand of the Soviet service men were awarded with orders and medals, 110 men were conferred the title of the Hero of the Soviet Union. In 1944 the Supreme Soviet of the USSR instituted the medal ‘For the defense of Moscow’. It was awarded to over 1 million defenders of the city.**

Lit.: Москва — город-герой // Аудитория. 2006. № 9.; То же [Электронный ресурс]. URL: <http://auditoriya.mguie.ru/1448.pdf>; Московская битва в хронике фактов и событий. М., 2004; То же [Электронный ресурс]. URL: <http://militera.lib.ru/h/moskovskaya_bitva_v_hronike_faktov/index.html>; Мягков М. Ю. Вермахт у ворот Москвы, 1941-1942. М., 1999; То же [Электронный ресурс]. URL: <http://militera.lib.ru/research/myagkov/index.html>; Рейнгардт К. Поворот под Москвой. Крах гитлеровской стратегии зимой 1941/42 года. М., 1980; То же [Электронный ресурс]. URL: <http://militera.lib.ru/research/reinhardt/index.html/index.html>.

**From the Presidential library materials:**

[Битва под Москвой (сентябрь 1941-январь 1942 гг.) : [фрагменты кинохроники]. СПб., 2010](https://www.prlib.ru/en/node/399008);

[The Great Victory Memory: collection](https://www.prlib.ru/en/en-us/Pages/collection_victory.aspx).