The GROWTH of the RUSSIAN BEAR

BECAUSE attention of the world is focused on the titanic conflict in Russia, The News takes the occasion to revise and reprint this map which originally appeared here on March 17, 1940. The map traces the history of Russia from its humble beginning as a vassal Tartar state in the 15th Century to its apogee as a great empire this year just before the invasion by Hitler's forces. While the nation's story is replete with bloody conquests and annexations, there have been few and comparatively small territorial losses. Russia, as we know it today, stems from the principality of Moscow in the 15th Century (area colored red). The reign of Ivan the Great (1462-1505) marked the great turning point in its history. He freed Moscow from two centuries of domination by Tartars of the Golden Horde, made it a power by conquering Novgorod, Tver and Yaroslavl, and cut a path to the Baltic by defeating the Liths and the Poles. He first assumed the title of Czar. His son, Basil III, unified Russia after grabbing Pskov in 1510, annexing Ryazan and taking Smolensk in 1514. The land became a mighty kingdom under Ivan IV, known as Ivan the Terrible. Absorbing the Cossacks, he conquered the Tartar provinces of Kazan (1552) and Astrakhan (1554), then pushed eastward into Siberia. The empire was extended to the Amur River, Sea of Okhotsk, and north to the Bering Sea in 1648. Alaska was added in 1741. Peter the Great opened "a window to Europe" by battling Sweden and acquiring Baltic provinces in 1721. The partitions of Poland were achieved by ambitious Catherine II in the late 18th Century. Russia grabbed Finland in 1809, Bessarabia in 1812 and the Turkestan area in 1865-1875. Alaska was sold to the United States in 1867. From the Napoleonic era to the World War, Russia dominated the Baltic. Bessarabia, White Russia, conquered Polish lands, and Finland were lost after the last war. After an astounding pact with the Nazis just before the outbreak of the current World War, the Reds helped dismember Poland, then completed expansion to the Baltic by swallowing Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. They invaded Finland and despite heroic Finnish resistance cut out some rich slices of land in the North and took over the strategic Karelian Isthmus. A grab from an impotent Romania netted Bessarabia for the Reds. Before Germany turned on its erstwhile partner this year Soviet Russia was the largest country in the world, with a population of 190,000,000 and a land area of 8,100,000 square miles. (NEWS map by Hugh Aitken Boadberg)