

# "... TOWARD THE KILL"

*Already the earth trembles beneath the fascist beast as America and its allies sweep into the offensive. "The end of the beginning." The main objective. Beware the defeatists' change of strategy. By the editors.*

THE preface to the second front begun so auspiciously in North Africa is well on the way to completion. As the pincers of a two-front war close on Rommel's fleeing troops, the American people, in common with the peoples of all countries, are beginning to turn their thoughts to the far greater pincers that must close on Hitler and his fascist Axis. One gigantic prong is already in existence—the Soviet Front. Maj. George Fielding Eliot points out in the New York *Herald Tribune*, as did NEW MASSES in its last issue, that the magnificent resistance of Stalingrad made possible the successful launching of the Allied offensive in North Africa. What remains is to construct the other prong of this vast pincers, a prong that exists in embryo in the British Isles and in the conversion of North Africa from an Axis base into a United Nations' base.

In the midst of the successes in Africa comes news of the magnificent naval victory in the Solomons. In what was probably the greatest naval engagement in the war, a formidable Japanese armada, attempting to recapture Guadalcanal, has suffered overwhelming defeat. This victory and the advances being made by General MacArthur's troops in New Guinea, strengthen the perilous Allied positions in the South Pacific and lessen the danger of an invasion of Australia. And they help give us greater freedom of movement for concentrating our principal energies on a smashing blow at the center of Axis power, Nazi Germany.

## The War Changes

What makes the African offensive so significant is not merely that it provides a new base for operations against the main fascist bastion, but that it introduces a qualitative change in the war. In the words of Stalin's new letter to Henry C. Cassidy of the Associated Press: "... the campaign in Africa means that the initiative has passed into the hands of our allies, the campaign changes radically the political and war situation in Europe in favor of the Anglo-Soviet-American coalition." Stalin's positive estimate of the African offensive is itself a factor of great importance, for it signifies the elimination of past differences and the consolidation of the American-Soviet-British alliance, widening the prospect for the coordination of strategy.

Heartening, too, are the clear indications from high official sources in the United States and Britain that Rommel is merely small fry and that the main objective of the African offensive is the securing of new positions for the launching of a continental invasion. And Prime Minister Churchill has pointed out that the advance into Africa is not a substitute for an invasion from the West, but that the attack will be made both from the South and the West. He also told Parliament that "should the enemy become demoralized, at any moment, the same careful preparations [for an invasion from the West] will not be needed."

We believe that Churchill exaggerates the difficulties of a western invasion, which would strike at the point closest to Germany. And he himself admits that the Nazis have had only thirty-three divisions (about 500,000 men) in the West, more poorly equipped than the British and American soldiers in the United Kingdom who must have numbered prior to the African offensive 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 men. Yet all this

is water over the dam. Fortunately Russia has been able to hold, and no useful purpose is served by continuing a controversy which events have already rendered obsolete. Churchill has provided us with a most useful strategic conception: the advance into Africa and the invasion preparations in the British Isles as two sectors of a single potential front. The job ahead is to realize to the full the possibilities that exist in both sectors and to launch the liberating forces on the continent as quickly as possible.

There are, unfortunately, a few people who seem determined to stir up the fires of old controversy by making it appear that the millions in this country who demanded the opening of a second front in Europe in 1942 had been barking up the wrong tree, that events have made fools of them and in future they ought to shut up. This is, if not downright malicious, exceedingly superficial. On the contrary, events have proved the rightness of those who helped create among the American and British peoples that offensive spirit which today can be counted on to support to the utmost, no matter what the sacrifice, every effort to come to grips with the enemy. It is clear from both President Roosevelt's and Prime Minister Churchill's exposition of the background of the African offensive that American-British strategy, instead of having been hard and fixed, as so many of the so-called experts told us, was in an exceedingly fluid state, at least until the end of June. Not till then was it decided to organize the African offensive rather than concentrate on the original plan of an invasion of western Europe.

Moreover, in the speech Churchill made to our Congress on his visit here shortly after Pearl Harbor, he declared that not until 1943 would the Allies be able to take the initiative. Yet the fact is that the initiative has already been taken in 1942. Is it not reasonable to suppose that the great movement for a second front in England and America had something to do with speeding this up? That offensive operations did not assume the precise form that so many millions favored is a secondary matter and does not in the least minimize the significance of the action that has been taken. The moral to be drawn from the historic turn in the war is not the anti-democratic injunction that the people shut up and leave everything to the experts, but, on the contrary, that they increase their participation in every aspect of the war in order to help our political and military leaders develop this splendid "end of the beginning" into the beginning of Hitler's end.

## Role of the Peoples

In the strengthening of our offensive efforts and the weakening of the Axis the peoples of conquered Europe and of the colonial countries have a most important role to play. In the African offensive we have for the first time begun to wage political warfare in a serious way. President Roosevelt's broadcast to the French people was official recognition that these people are no mere pawns of those who happen to be temporary masters of their country, but have a role to play in their own liberation. Also of great significance are the direct approaches being made to the Italian people in an effort to secure their cooperation. This began even before the African invasion in the action of our Department of Justice in lifting from

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Italian non-citizens in this country the stigma of "enemy aliens"—an action which had wide repercussions among the Italian people in their homeland as well as here. The recent broadcasts in Italian by Mayor LaGuardia and Assistant Secretary of State A. A. Berle's appeal to the Italian people to throw off their Nazi and fascist masters are all part of the process of undermining the none too solid Mussolini regime from within in preparation for a possible invasion of Italy. Virginio Gayda, Mussolini's ersatz Goebbels, has written an article in the Italian press with the title "Can Italy Lose the War?" The question comes not from Gayda, but from the people. We must continue to help them give an emphatic affirmative answer.

## What About France?

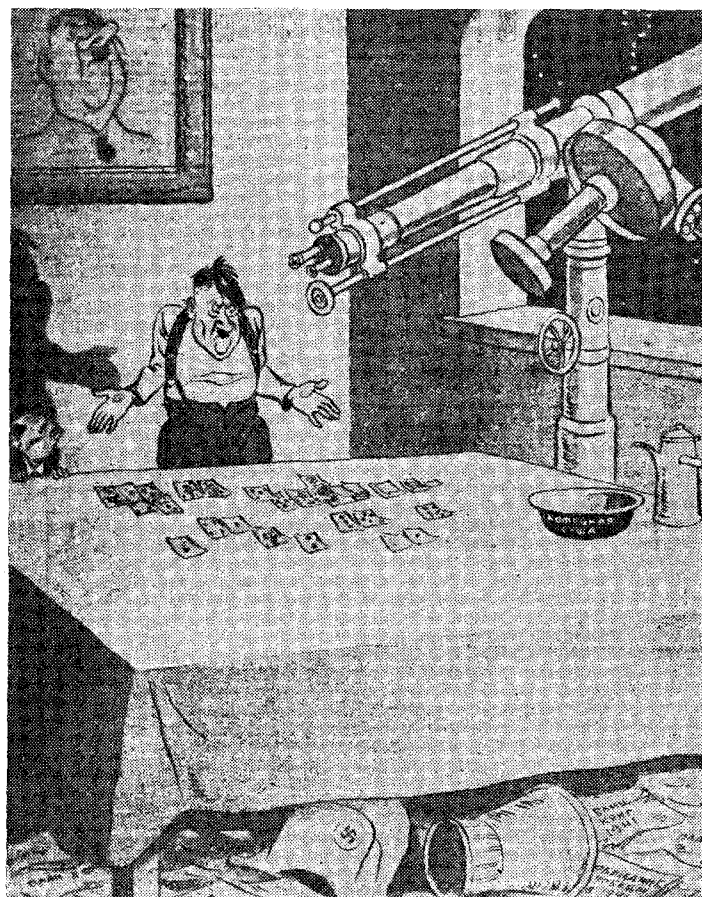
This is all to the good. In regard to France, however, it remains to be seen whether the excellent beginning made by the President will be further developed. Secretary of State Hull has issued a statement attempting an *ex post facto* rationalization of our appeasement policy toward Vichy. No one will take seriously his argument that this policy made possible the "maintenance of close relations with the French people and encouragement of leadership in opposition to Hitler wherever it exists," or that it helped in "keeping alive the basic concepts of freedom of the French people." It did the very opposite. Hull's most serious points are that the Vichy policy enabled us to get confidential information from France and French Africa and that it helped pave the way for the African offensive. Since the Vichy policy began some two years before the first plans were made for the African offensive, the latter argument is not too convincing. As for the claims that this policy enabled us to get confidential information, one might as well argue on the same grounds that it would be well to maintain diplomatic relations with Germany, Italy, and Japan. The question of what we got out of our relations with Vichy must be considered in relation to what Hitler got—what he got from a policy which helped confuse, discourage and demobilize the French people and enabled him to maintain valuable espionage centers on American soil in the Vichy embassy and consulates. And we have a hunch that the Fighting French through their own contacts could have furnished us with at least as valuable information as did our diplomatic representatives if the State Department had so much as deigned to do more than strike up a nodding acquaintance with them.

In this case we dwell on the past because it is not entirely certain that it is the past. Admiral Darlan, that shadow of a shadow, the Vichy government, has with the agreement of American military commanders in North Africa proclaimed himself protector of French interests in North Africa. Darlan's switching of sides, after having been one of the most loyal collaborators in Hitler's crimes against the French people, is not difficult to explain; when the ship begins to sink, certain unpleasant members of the animal kingdom can be expected to desert. There is every reason to make use of Darlan if he will, for whatever motives, help our cause. But let us make certain that we do not permit this discredited politician to use us in order to resurrect a new Vichy, obstruct the preparations for opening a second front in Europe, and short-circuit the activity of the French people at the very moment when they are springing to join us in the great struggle against Hitlerism. It is not so much a question of recognizing de Gaulle, though he has become the symbol of French resistance, as of recognizing the French people, putting our main reliance in them, and helping to unify all the patriotic forces of France. If we do that, the arrangements with Darlan—about whose present role it is impossible as yet to pass final judgment—will drop into their proper place in the larger scheme of things and cease to be a source of either great hope or danger.

For the American people the important thing is to keep their

eye on the ball and not be diverted from the strategy of victory: the crushing of the Hitler dictatorship in the vise of a two-front war. Already the African offensive has had salutary domestic effects: the defeat of all efforts to cripple the bill lowering the draft age to eighteen, and the action taken by the heads of four committees of the Senate and House in opening a drive for legislation to establish centralized planning of our war economy. But the African offensive has also been the signal for the enemy within, the appeasers and defeatists, to redouble their machinations. A shocking example of this was the recent broadcast of Representative Maas of Minnesota, which has led to a demand for a Congressional investigation. At the very moment when America and Britain have seized the initiative from Hitler, Maas has come out with an attack on this strategy and a demand for concentrating on Japan, a strategy that would lead to certain defeat and the betrayal of our boys fighting so valiantly in the Solomons. "It will make little difference in the end who wins in Europe, we or Hitler," Maas said, "if Japan wins in the Pacific"—though the fact is that if Hitler wins in Europe we must inevitably lose in the Pacific as well, lose the very independence of our country. And Maas' racist talk about "the white man's civilization," with its insult to our Chinese allies and to 13,000,000 American Negroes, only underscores his pro-fascist leanings.

Maas and his kind, together with the defeatist McCormick-Patterson and Hearst press, may be counted on to do everything they can to delay and divert the opening of the second front in Europe. This would mean the sacrifice of many thousands of additional American lives and the grave risk of losing the war. We do not stand alone in the Pacific, any more than we do in Europe and Africa. China, India, and Australia are our allies, and together with them we can hold and even push back the Japanese while the main blow is prepared in Europe. The African offensive foreshadows the doom of Japanese fascism no less than of German-Italian fascism. We have only just begun to fight, but already the earth trembles beneath the fascist beast as America and all its allies move toward the kill.



"I do not know when the war will end. I do not know how the year 1942 will end."—Excerpt from a recent Hitler speech.



## FRONT LINES by COLONEL T.

# FROM NORTH AFRICA TO—

*How the Allied forces can get at the "soft belly" of Europe. Results of the offensive so far—and next steps.*

**T**HE creation of a second base" is a much more appropriate name for the African offensive than "the creation of a second front" as some have rashly dubbed it. Africa is being transformed into a base for offensive operations against the "soft belly" of Europe—i.e. against its southern area, whether it be Spain, southern France, Italy, or the Balkans. Thus the United Nations will have three key bases for this global war: the British Isles, Africa, and Australia. With the Soviet Union and China forming the center of anti-Axis military action, the forces of the Axis can be crushed between that center and the pressure of the other Allies from the outside—*provided* offensive action does emanate from those three key bases.

The great base in the British Isles has not provided such offensive action since the popular demand for a second front was first voiced openly in October 1941 (*not* in July 1942, as it has been said by some). Nothing emanated from it except sporadic air sorties, Commando raids, and the Dieppe test.

The Australian base, with the related positions in New Guinea and the Solomons, has done its best under very difficult circumstances and, although not much territory was wrested from the Japanese, at least they were heavily engaged, mauled, and held.

The British base and the Australian base are roughly 12,000 miles apart. That huge gap had to be filled in order to tighten the encirclement of the Axis. And encircle we must, and organize a blow aimed at the heart of the enemy. There is no choice. *Entweder, oder*—as the Germans put it.

**A**FRICA had to be taken in hand. In our way stood Rommel with his four German and several Italian divisions (it is said there were as many as eleven Italian divisions in Africa). This represented a total of some 150,000 men. Here Allied strategists readily recognized the utter necessity to open a "second front," but in miniature, against Rommel.

It has been reported that General Alexander amassed between thirty and forty Imperial divisions in Egypt for his initial blow at Rommel on October 22. Thus the British here had accumulated a superiority of 4:1 in men; we do not know what the actual superiority in machines was, but we know that the Allies right from the start had almost complete mastery in the air. The Luftwaffe did not even attempt to hit back strategically and confined itself to tactical resistance over its own objectives when these were attacked. It was much too busy on the Eastern Front.

Allied submarines and bombers intensified their actions against Rommel's supply line from Italy and it seems that hardly a ship or tank reached him during that crucial period. During the second week General Montgomery's offensive cracked the El Alamein line and Rommel's headlong retreat toward Libya began. At the same time rumors began to spread about "monster" Allied convoys concentrating at Gibraltar. This must have made Rommel "look over his shoulder" and finally decide to begin the race for Tripoli and Tunisia, in order at least to try and hold this vital bulge as a bridgehead in Africa for the Axis.

On November 7, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Soviet Union, General Eisenhower's great armada swept on the shores of Africa like a huge tidal wave. It has been said that it consisted of 500 ships escorted by 350 war craft. The number of men and engines of war it carried is, of course, unknown, but it has been reported that General Anderson's First British Army, which forms a part of Eisenhower's force, numbers about 150,000 men. Now, if a British general is subordinated to an American general, it most certainly means that that there are more American troops in the expedition than British. So it is safe to assume that the men under General Eisenhower's command total not less than 400,000. Maybe 500,000.

The two Allied arms of the African pincers, consisting of 500,000 men each (this is a very approximate figure), race toward each other and should crush the remnants of Rommel's force, meeting somewhere in Tripolitania.

**T**HE assembly, organization, transport, and timing of the expedition is probably one of the greatest feats in staff work. Preparatory work by Gen. Mark Clark and his associates, who went into Algeria and "greased the ways" for the expedition that was to come several months later, deserves to form the theme for a fascinating adventure book.

There was little fighting except at Casablanca, where the French fleet offered some opposition. Elsewhere logistics rather than battle tactics carried the way. Key French officers had been "prepared" well in advance and in some instances the gates of forts were simply opened to the American commanders. This is encouraging as far as future operations in Europe are concerned because it proves that *not all troops on the other side of the fence will fight*.

At this writing (November 15) the hub of the strategic situation is in Tunisia, that protuberance which juts out into the Mediterranean toward Sardinia and Sicily and forms the central bottleneck in that sea, only ninety miles wide between Cape Bon and Sicily and 144 miles wide between Bizerte and Sardinia.

The situation in Tunisia is confused. Around Tunis French troops are reported to be carrying out Darlan's orders to "resist aggression" and are fighting the air-borne German troops which are being sent from Sicily to strengthen the defenses of Tunisia. General Anderson's troops, having established themselves on the western border of Tunisia, are pushing patrols into the country. Anderson's objective probably is to cut southeastward across Tunisia to Gafsa and Gabes and occupy the so-called Mareth line which faces Tripoli, so as to prevent the remnants of Rommel's forces from joining the German troops in Tunisia, thus strengthening its defenses.

It would seem logical to assume that all of Northern Africa will be in Allied hands within a matter of weeks. This also means that Dakar will be cut off from all overland communications with the Axis centers and will have to fall to the Allies like a ripe plum, with negotiations taking the place of fighting.