



# THE BATTLE FOR STALINGRAD

*Its decisive significance to all the United Nations. How it can be won. The meaning of the Rzhev offensive. Field Marshal von Bock has trouble with logistics.*

**T**HE quip about the Red Army "opening its own second front" has become quite popular. There is, of course, more sarcasm than fact in it. The Soviet local offensive in the Rzhev-Vyazma sector is in no way a second front; neither can it have the effect of even a remote substitute for one.

The fundamental idea of a real second front is to force the enemy to face in two opposite directions. Hit him in the chin and in the small of his back at the same time so as make him spin around, figuratively speaking. It is clear that hitting him in the chin and in the solar plexus will not have the same effect, because his attention will be still engaged only in one direction.

Furthermore, the scope and location of the Red Army offensive in the Rzhev sector has certainly not forced Field Marshal von Bock to give up some of his reserves to help out the Nazi generals on the central front. Von Bock is using some eighty divisions with no less than ten panzer divisions among them, all at Stalingrad and points south. On the other hand, so far, the Red Army has routed, decimated, and shaken up no more than eleven German divisions, with two panzer divisions included among them, in the Rzhev offensive. Thus we see that for the present the central push of the Red Army is in scope and actual numbers equivalent to but one-eighth of the German push against Stalingrad and the Caucasus.

There is no evidence that the German High Command has had to shift troops from the lower reaches of the Volga to its headwaters. (Rzhev is on the Volga, some 1,250 miles up-stream from Stalingrad, but only 700 miles as the crow flies.) Even if it had to throw in reserves at Rzhev it would most certainly bring them 600 miles from Warsaw instead of borrowing them from von Bock at Stalingrad. The Red Army offensive at Rzhev is seemingly a defensive operation, aiming to forestall a possible German push from this stronghold in the direction of Kalinin and Yaroslavl. Throwing the Germans off balance in this sector is of the greatest importance as can be seen from the way the Germans have stubbornly clung to Rzhev ever since the Red Army approached it in early March but were not able to take it. But it certainly is not going to affect directly the German effort at Stalingrad.

**W**HILE in the wooded and marshy regions west and northwest of Moscow the German numerical superiority in tanks and planes is partly negated by great stretches of forest, while the individual Soviet fighter with his inherent initiative and stamina is assisted by those same forests, the main German military might remains concentrated in the south, at Stalingrad, where the terrain and the weather are direct "allies" of the invaders. This is where the Germans are seeking a decision within the next couple of weeks and they will not be deterred from their goal by anything less than a real Western Front on European soil. Thus the battle for Stalingrad is the most decisive issue in the struggle of the United Nations and must obscure in importance all other present actions and operations, even that of the heroic Chinese armies.

Everything—and this means nothing less than the opening of a second front in Europe—must be done to help the Red Army win this battle. Those who say that it would take "too much strength and power" on the part of the Allies to do it now are either intentionally or unintentionally misrepresenting

the situation. This situation, while extremely dangerous for Stalingrad in particular and the Red Army and the USSR in general, is far from being a bowl of cherries for von Bock.

Let us examine briefly certain problems of logistics and supply from the German viewpoint. First of all, it has been established from all sources available that von Bock is using about fifty infantry divisions, twenty motorized divisions, and ten panzer divisions in the big southern push. Assuming that the only "solid" and "reliable" supply bases the Germans have must be located outside the area of Soviet guerrilla activity and that "field bases" only can be located within the confines of the USSR, we find that von Bock's line of communications stretches to a length of about 900 miles from the rockade line (a line parallel to the front) Voronezh-Rostov to Warsaw by rail with another 150 miles or more by road (from that same line to the approaches to Stalingrad). In the case of the German spearhead in the North Caucasus the line is by 200 miles longer. From Warsaw to Mordok the distance is about 1,300 miles.

Von Bock has four railroad lines leading to the main transversal line Voronezh-Rostov. These lines join the rockade line at Millerovo, Kamensk, Sulim, and Rostov. East of that line, the only railroad available is the one running from Kamensk to Stalingrad. It is about 200 miles long. Let us note in this conjunction that the other railroad leading to Stalingrad from the northwest cannot be used by the Germans because of the Soviet stonewall stand at Voronezh. The railroad leading to Stalingrad from the southwest can be used (intermittently), but it is a long haul by way of Rostov and Tikhoretsk (350 miles). So we see that von Bock has four railroads, a total of no more than six tracks, leading to his advance bases and one single track line from the army bases to the front's railheads.

Let us now see how much stuff von Bock has to transport over these railroads. We will assume, for the sake of simplicity—such calculations cannot be exact unless we have at our disposal the complete logistical graphs of the German General Staff—that von Bock is using seventy-five divisions.

A very conservative American army estimate, based certainly on battles of less intensity than the one developing



Delegates from the Soviet Union to the International Student Assembly. From left to right: Senior Lt. Lyuimilla Pavlichenko, 26-year-old girl guerrilla who has killed 309 Germans; Vladimir Bazykin, First Secretary of the Soviet embassy; Nikolai Krasavchenko, Moscow youth leader who directed the building of Moscow's outer fortifications; and 23-year-old Senior Lt. Vladimir Pchelintsev, who killed 152 Germans with 154 bullets.

before Stalingrad, fixes the figure of slightly in excess of 4,000 tons of supplies and ammunition as necessary for one day of combat by an army corps. This does not include gasoline and oil for transport, tanks, armored cars, and planes. The daily supplies needed by von Bock amount to at least 100,000 tons *plus* gasoline and oil.

It is estimated that on the average a combat vehicle forming part of an armored division travels one mile per gallon. Ten panzer divisions have about 5,000 such vehicles. A total of twenty tons of fuel per mile. Here it must be remembered that the number of *tactical* miles which a combat vehicle travels is many times more than the *strategic* mileage traveled by the unit. Just as a game-dog travels a distance ten and more times that covered by his master, so tanks and armored vehicles in combat cover many times more ground than their division or corps covers on the map in terms of operational advance or retreat. No exact calculations are possible because much depends on the terrain and on the resistance of the enemy, but it is fair to say that 200 tons of fuel are necessary for ten panzer divisions to cover one (strategic) mile. This, in turn, means an average of 1,000 tons of fuel per day. The German advance in the last sixty days was about five miles along the operational direction Kharkov-Stalingrad.

Maj. George Fielding Eliot estimates that von Bock's twenty-five army corps need another 3,000 tons of fuel per day for their other vehicles—not counting the armored forces. Total—4,000 tons of fuel per day, not counting the air force.

**A**LL in all, counting in the air force, the needs of the countless staffs and headquarters organizations, plus the needs of the supply system itself, it can be estimated that von Bock needs about 150,000 tons per day, of which 100,000 are needed in the Stalingrad sector and 50,000 in the other sectors in the Caucasus.

The six tracks leading from the deep German rear to the line Voronezh-Millerovo-Rostov can carry no more than 65,000 tons per day. (A single track line can carry 7,500 tons and a double track line can carry 25,000 tons.) This means that von Bock's main feed lines can carry only forty percent of what he needs, the rest having to be moved by road which greatly complicates the problem by the need of "supplying the supply system." But when the stuff reaches the railheads on the line Voronezh-Rostov, it is faced with a single track which can carry only 7,500 tons per day. Let us assume that the railroad Rostov-Tikhoretskaya-Kotelnikov carries another 7,500 tons. This leaves 100,000 tons less 15,000 tons, or 85,000 tons to be carried daily by truck and cart a distance of some 200 miles. This requires certainly no less than 50,000 trucks and countless horse carts because a truck cannot cover a total of 400 miles in twenty-four hours.

It thus becomes clear that von Bock's problem in fighting a mammoth battle at the end of the long trail to the Volga is not easy and that the strain is bound to tell. It is also clear that Marshal Timoshenko intentionally forced von Bock to fight the general battle under such adverse conditions. *This, however, does not mean that the danger to Stalingrad does not remain extremely grave.*

The Red Army must preserve its offensive power for this fall and winter. It still has it, as the battles around Rzhev show. It may lose it with the loss of the Volga. That "second front" the Red Army opened west of Moscow is a great tribute to its resiliency, stamina, and leadership, but it cannot take the place of a real second front, the necessity and the feasibility of which is greatly enhanced by von Bock's precarious, albeit victorious, so far, position on the Don. Neither El Alamein, nor Tulagi nor Nanchang, neither bombs on Kassel, nor Berlin nor Crete will pull the strings that can yank von Bock back from Stalingrad and the oil of Grozny and Baku.



"... Personally, Schultz, I still think woman's place is in the kitchen."





## LESSON NUMBER ONE

*They're still drawing conclusions from the Dieppe raid. What one well informed military observer thinks. . . . The effects of the lifting of the ban on the "Daily Worker" and "The Week."*

London (by cable).

NINE-TENTHS of the discussions here in the last few days have been devoted to analyzing the lessons of Dieppe and likewise to the continuously increasing gravity of the urgent situation on the Eastern Front. One of the ablest military observers now in Britain is a man who held a leading position in the Spanish republican forces. He has written for private circulation a brief memorandum which I have seen and which excellently sums up the lessons and conclusions that can be drawn from Dieppe as they strike a brilliant and well informed military mind. He begins by pointing out that Dieppe "proved above all that landing in strength on the fortified enemy Channel coast is possible." After referring to the activities of the successful combined Russian forces on the Kerch Peninsula last winter as an indication of the possibilities of establishing bridgeheads, he says, "The various landings in the Dieppe raid were carried out on one of the most strongly fortified sectors of the Channel coast on both sides of Dieppe Harbor along a twelve-mile front which must have been regarded by the German commander in France as a potential invasion point. Nevertheless, the landing party reached its objective, overcame the beach fortifications, and achieved its aims further inland. . . .

"Another outstanding feature of the Dieppe raid is that a force of tanks, probably light tanks, was landed from barges after the enemy was cleared from the shore and some of his batteries were silenced. Thus certain professional military correspondents who are obsessed by Maginot-minded thinking and still stick to theories learned at Sandhurst or Camberley after the Boer War have proved to be wrong again. A landing force does not need, during the initial stage of an invasion, a port in order to disembark tanks, guns, and other heavy equipment. A port is undoubtedly needed for the second phase of any invasion in order to land the heavy material and to supply the columns which are penetrating into the rear of the coastal defenses, but Dieppe has proved that tanks could go into action with the first land parties.

"British and American equipment, which was so heavily criticized by the appeasers during the debate on the Libyan defeat, has stood the test of a most difficult operation. This equipment was used by spirited and well trained soldiers during an offensive action which was carefully prepared, well coordinated, and directed with vigor and determination.

"The Dieppe raid was a success in spite of the heavy casualties. The heavy loss of planes appears to have occurred because of the unexpectedly quick arrival of the German air reserves. This created for a short period a situation where air domination over the battle zone could only be maintained by ruthless attacks against the enemy machines without regard to our own losses. With the arrival of fresh British fighter reserves . . . complete air mastery was reestablished."

Continuing this criticism of the weaknesses which disclosed themselves, the writer goes on to point out that "A considerable number of planes seem to have been lost during the low level attacks against the enemy strong points. If dive bombers had been available, these losses would have been much smaller, and the accuracy of the bombing would have been certainly greater. Although the daylight reembarkation was carried through with success, a number of prisoners fell into enemy hands because some of the men were cut off from the beaches. So far, no official account has been given of why this happened. It might be possible that the German panzer division stationed at Amiens succeeded in getting to Dieppe before or during reembarkation. . . . If they [the panzers] had been held up by heavy bomber attacks and by obstacles created by a few determined parachute troops, or if they had been diverted by a simultaneous raid elsewhere, their intervention would have been too late."

THIS represents a view pretty generally accepted by progressive military opinion. Last week another event occurred which must be appreciated in its full significance as an indication that views of this kind, backed by the instinctive, enthusiastic demand of the mass of the people, can and do emerge victorious over all the opposition of appeasers and reactionaries. I am referring, of course, to the lifting of the ban on the *Daily Worker* and *The Week*. You are familiar with the extent and vigor of the public campaign demanding the lifting of that ban. It becomes, as I have said, before, both a symbol and a touchstone. The campaign was a symbol of the vigorous determination of the mass of the people, and above all, of the great trade unions, the Labor Party and cooperative organizations to ensure the freedom of expression of a newspaper which, whether they agree with its basic opinion or not, nevertheless was recognized as the greatest potential force in British journalism for the mobilization of the national war

effort. It was a touchstone at the same time of the sincerity of the government, or perhaps it would be better to say a touchstone of the ability of the sincere forces in the government to defeat those who were opposing them.

The campaign had reached proportions very rarely seen in Britain before. The question of the ban had become one full of meaning for hundreds of thousands of people who actually had never seen a copy of the *Daily Worker*.

TO THEM, in consequence, the ban on the *Daily Worker* was a constant ground for suspicion and for the fostering of doubt and frustration. It was a situation which, of course, lent itself to the propaganda of the Trotskyists, whose slogans so faithfully week by week reflect the directive given to them by the particular Nazi radio station which specializes in this activity concerning Britain.

The lifting of the ban has for all those reasons resulted in a new feeling of confidence, a new sense of national unity, and a new realization on the part of the people, and the people's organizations, of the power which they possess in Britain at this moment, in the life and death struggle against fascism. Over and over again voices have been raised at meetings, at discussions, and in the press by those who despaired of progress or of achieving the fulfillment of popular demands and who, as a justification for cynicism, pointed to the fact that the ban on the *Daily Worker* and *The Week* had not been removed.

That the *Daily Worker* will now play a role of unparalleled and unprecedented importance in the practical mobilization of this country's war effort nobody doubts. This is not a view held only by Communists; it is accepted as a fact by members of all parties, including many of the highest officials who are in a position regionally or otherwise to know the real facts.

This is the guarantee that the British people, despite all hindrances and sabotage, will nevertheless be able to impose their anti-fascist will. Last week there was throughout the country, sharp intensification of the demand for the opening of the second front. In London on August 30 meetings in every borough parallel and redouble the central meeting in Trafalgar Square a few weeks ago. The people are moved to a degree not seen in our lifetime. The people are calling for action. The people believe that Mr. Churchill is prepared, if he is sufficiently supported, to carry out the people's demands.