



BEFORE SUMMER STORMS

THE Red Army's winter offensive has come to an end. Such a development has been clearly caused by two factors: (1) the thaw which set in fully one month ahead of time; and (2) the continued absence of a second front in Western Europe. The first factor bogged down the Red Army, which had outdistanced its own railroad reconstruction squads, and prevented it from reaching the German strongholds at Krasnogvardeisk (south of Leningrad), Novgorod, Staraya Russa, Smolensk, Bryansk, Orel, Dnepropetrovsk, and Taganrog.

Some of these strongholds, such as Novgorod and Staraya Russa, are only five or six miles from the front line. The vital Bryansk-Kiev railroad was only fifteen miles away from the vanguard of General Golikov's armies. The bend of the Dnieper at Dnepropetrovsk was only thirty-five miles from the vanguard of General Vatutin's armies when the Germans struck back during the last week in February and pushed back the great Soviet salient, which was threatening their armies in the Donbas, on the steppes of the left bank of the lower Dnieper, in the Kuban, and in the Crimea itself, with a disaster which would have topped the disaster of Stalingrad.

THE Germans were able to strike back because they could afford to bring more than a score of divisions from Western and Central Europe to the Eastern Front. This is how the second factor—the absence of a second front in Europe—worked in favor of the German army.

Fighting the war approximately *ninety-five percent alone*, the Red Army during this winter offensive inflicted an enormous amount of damage on the forces of the Axis.

The Wehrmacht (including the satellite armies) lost: 856,000 men killed; 343,500 men captured; 1,490 planes captured; 3,600 planes destroyed; 4,670 tanks captured; 4,520 tanks destroyed; 15,860 guns captured; 4,600 guns destroyed. Or a total loss of approximately 2,000,000 men killed, captured, and wounded beyond repair for frontline duty, 5,090 planes, 9,190 tanks, and 20,360 guns.

This fascist army with its equipment represents approximately the equivalent of the entire German army which invaded Western Europe on May 10, 1940, and conquered it in six weeks. To quote Max

Werner's *Battle for the World*, the German General Staff then marshaled 125 infantry divisions, 7,500 tanks, and 5,000-7,000 planes. Such an army conquered all Western Europe in six weeks, but its equivalent was *completely destroyed* in twenty weeks by the Red Army.

AS A RESULT of the winter offensive, the Red Army freed from the enemy some 180,000 square miles of territory, or an area equal to the entire Ukraine; and equal to the area contained between the Atlantic seaboard, the St. Lawrence River, Lake Ontario, and the Allegheny and Potomac Rivers—or eleven northeastern states.

The Red Army cracked the German strongholds of Schluesselburg, Demyansk, Velikie Luki, Rzhev, Gzhatsk, Vyazma, Kursk, Belgorod, and Kharkov (the latter two had to be given up when the Germans struck back at Vatutin's salient). However, it could not reach Novgorod, Staraya Russa, Smolensk, Bryansk, Orel, Dnepropetrovsk, and Taganrog before the thaw. The Red Army retook from the enemy, and has now restored, a number of extremely important railroads. However, they were restored when the offensive was already waning, and furthermore, the Soviet frontline network of railroads is still weaker than the one in German hands. Most important of all, the Germans control the great railroad nuclei of Smolensk, Bryansk, and Kharkov.

Of course, the Nazis' terrific losses were partly balanced by those of the Red Army; for instance we know that the Soviets have lost about 2,500 planes in the last twenty weeks. The Germans still have a heavy preponderance in manpower over the Soviet Union, which must keep about 1,000,000 men under arms and probably 2,000,000 as mobilized reserves in the Far East.

The Germans also still have more planes, guns, and tanks. Add to this a better network of communications, and you will see that we are certainly on the eve of a new and terrible summer storm which will break over the southern wing of the Soviet-German Front. Certain ominous harbingers of that storm are already in the air: great troop concentrations in the Ukraine, the air raids on Bataisk, the rolling attack against the Soviet lines on the Donets, the stubborn defense by the Germans of their bridgehead on the Taman Peninsula.

IN ADDITION to this, and probably most important of all, we have the "still unfinished business" in North Africa and the tendency not to land in Western Europe until that business is finished.

The landing of nearly 500,000 Allied troops in North Africa coincided almost to the day with the beginning of the Soviet winter offensive. From that day there has been only an abortive attempt by Allied troops to capture Tunis and Bizerte and to "tie up" the orifice of the sac into which Rommel was racing. This attempt was made at a time when there were only a couple of divisions of Axis troops in northern Tunisia. The attempt was a failure and the sac remained open, for both the intake and the outlet of Axis troops. Since then the Axis troops in northern Tunisia have been receiving steady reinforcements, until they reached the 100,000 mark (there were only about 10,000 of them in November).

At the same time Rommel has been pulling out from Libya into Tripolitania and Tunisia, obviously intent on keeping his Africa Corps intact and bringing it into northern Tunisia for a junction with von Arnim's troops. This was Rommel's main objective. Everything else was nothing but delaying actions to prevent Montgomery from doing anything more than stepping on his "tail."

THE trap prepared for Rommel by Alexander and Eisenhower in southern Tunisia looked perfect. On the map it was a corker. The only trouble was that it did not work. Rommel kept General Patton at arm's length at El Guettar while he was pulling out northward and while Montgomery, by a brilliant flanking maneuver around the Mareth Line to El Hamma, was capturing the Mareth Line which was held only by a rearguard.

Along the direction of Sfax American troops are held up by Rommel's flank guard. Along the direction of Sousse (via Kiarouan) the same situation obtains. The time for catching Rommel *before* his junction with Arnim has practically passed. Now it will mean a frontal attack against the tough nut of Tunis and Bizerte defended by 150,000 good Axis troops.

All these failures may have been nobody's fault. This is quite possible, and it would seem that General Patton is the last man to be blamed. Maybe he did not have the men and stuff to stop Rommel's amazing flank march to the north. The point is

not to blame anybody in command in Tunisia. The failures there are not so important in themselves. It is the five months' delay in the opening of a second front in Europe that is tragic. No amount of explanations can account for that.

WE WERE told that there were no ships; but Admiral Sir Andrew Browne Cunningham has said that 800 ships carried 6,500,000 tons of stuff and 500,000 men—according to Churchill—to North Africa in three months following

Nov. 8, 1942. So we see that the ships, men, and materials *were* there. They could have been sent to Europe over a line of communications thirty times shorter than the one to Africa.

Ah but, some will say, the experience of the Dieppe raid showed us that an attack on France was impossible. At the time, i.e. in August and September 1942, I stuck my neck out and said that the Dieppe raid was a success. Now no less a figure than General McNaughton, *who commanded the Canadians at Dieppe*, comes out and

says that he could have stayed at Dieppe if he had been so ordered. That is plain talk. Put Churchill's, Cunningham's and McNaughton's words together—and you will see that a second front could have been opened months ago.

HOWEVER, let bygones be bygones. The important thing now is *not to wait for Rommel's and von Arnim's "Stalingrad" or "Dunkirk,"* whatever it might be, but to invade Europe *before* the African affair draws to its belated end.



WATCH ON THE POTOMAC by BRUCE MINTON

ABSENT WITH REASON

Washington.

IT WAS to be expected that a stalwart politician like Rep. James W. Mott of Oregon, with a decidedly isolationist record before Pearl Harbor, would not overlook the chance to badger Secretary of Labor Perkins when she appeared before the House Naval Affairs Committee. That the subject of absenteeism in war production plants should have claimed the attention of the Naval Affairs Committee might at first appear strange, but the explanation lies, of course, in the slick wording of Rep. Lyndon Johnson's "work or fight" bill to "punish" absentees working on Naval Department contracts. By this old trick of limiting application of the proposed legislation, the bill was handed over to Naval Affairs, headed by the labor-baiting Carl Vinson of Georgia; the chances of a favorable report to the House were far better than if the bill were brought before the Labor Committee, and the bill could always be broadened in scope by committee amendment. Even so, protest caught up with the Johnson proposal and a revised measure was substituted—which is hardly better than the original. Rep. Mary Norton's insistence that absenteeism should be referred to her Labor Committee failed to stop Vinson.

Representative Mott jumped at the opportunity to attack the administration and organized labor when the Secretary of Labor testified before Naval Affairs. He launched a loud and belligerent argument (disproved by the known facts) that absenteeism is aggravated by the closed shop, and that the administration spends its time imposing the closed shop on helpless employers. The fact that no statistics on absenteeism exist for the country at large, and that information, though piling up, re-

mains incomplete, did not prevent Mott from concluding that the whole blame for absenteeism must rest with organized labor. The added fact that every close study of absenteeism bears out the Labor Department's contention that the evil can seldom be traced to malingering or to willful defections was also grandly disregarded by Mott in his passion to smash the unions.

The reactionaries and defeatists in Congress have only one interest these days—to seize on every difficulty in the war effort, to magnify it, and to use it to belabor the administration and organized labor. When it comes to manpower mobilization, the Austin-Wadsworth bill to "draft" labor embodies exactly the same snap-the-whip coercion as the Johnson bill on absenteeism. For its part, Bankhead's proposal to defer farm workers merely adapts the Austin-Wadsworth approach to agricultural workers. All such legislation, accompanied as it is by slander and opinionated misinformation, far from strengthening the home front, serves to spread the lie that American workers do not support the war and therefore must be bludgeoned into line. Any of this legislation, if passed, will disorganize the production effort still further, aggravating present planlessness.

ON ABSENTEEISM in particular, a lot of loose talk is heard these days in Washington. Yet when the Secretary of Labor informed various congressional committees of surveys proving that most job absences are involuntary and that at least ninety percent of absenteeism must be attributed to illness or to industrial accidents, the newspapers which filled columns of space with the unsupported charges of Rickenbacker and similar special pleaders just

didn't see fit to print the Secretary's documented remarks. The head of a powerful congressional committee commented—off the record—that the press boycott of Secretary Perkins' testimony could not be blamed on reporters who turned in to their editors full and accurate accounts. This same person added that the press must certainly be aware that space given to the pro-Rickenbacker groups amounted to publicity for Axis propaganda, since the fight against absenteeism as waged by the labor-baiters spreads maximum confusion and succeeds only in hampering the war effort.

INFORMATION on absenteeism supplied by Secretary Perkins, and supplemented by material entered into the *Congressional Record* by Rep. George H. Bender of Ohio, threw light on the real causes. For six months of 1942, employment rose six percent, but industrial accidents increased by twelve percent. Altogether 801,000,000 man-days were lost in 1942 from sickness and accidents. It is of little benefit to "forbid" an employe to get sick. Those who reason that absenteeism is the product of "high" wages, which in turn are supposed to lead to drunkenness and other dissipation, advocate the "cure" of sub-standard wages. This solution may be attractive to Rickenbacker and those like him, but scrutiny of available figures on absenteeism shows that drunkenness has nothing to do with the increased number of workers failing to appear on the job when scheduled, and "high" wages, on examination, turn out to be shockingly low in comparison with rising living costs. Rather, behind absenteeism lurks bad planning, abuses that sap the workers' vitality or confront them with problems that can

