



FRONT LINES

by COLONEL T.

FROM SICILY TO POLTAVA

MORE than a month ago I wrote an article for these pages which was entitled "Sicily to Orel." Only the latter part of the title has to be changed today—"Sicily to Bryansk and Poltava." That $(n + 1)$ 'st front is still in Sicily, while the strategic situation on the Eastern Front has been completely reversed. In order to understand *how* completely, just get your copy of *NEW MASSES* for July 20 and look at the map which accompanied my article. Now, if you could cut out the big fat arrows, turn them around 180 degrees (i.e. make them about-face), and push them somewhat toward the rear of the enemy, you would have a picture of the situation today.

The fact that these arrows have been reversed is a graphic illustration of the phenomenon which has taken place on the Eastern Front. In its essence, the phenomenon boils down to this: the German Army cannot advance any more even in the summer, while the Red Army can advance in both winter and summer. Thus an entirely new balance of forces has emerged from under the hammerblows of war.

The following table gives a clear picture of what has happened in these two years:

	German penetration (Miles)	Front of offensive (Miles)	Duration of offensive
Summer, 1941	600-700	1,000	5 months
Summer, 1942	300-400	500	4½ months
Summer, 1943	18	50	7 days

There is the essence of the whole story of the armed contest between two diametrically opposite social systems.

German armor, with the new Tiger tanks and Ferdinand self-propelled guns, has done no better than penetrate the forward zone of the Soviet defenses at Belgorod and Maloarchangelsk to a depth of less than twenty miles, and has been able to keep up the effort for exactly seven days.

The Luftwaffe has lost the initiative on the Eastern Front and is now busy fighting off the Soviet Air Force instead of attacking the Soviet troop concentrations and communication centers. Right now it is strategically passive and tactically on the defensive while the Soviet Air Force, which is using a number of new type planes, is tactically *and* strategically on the offensive.

In this connection it is worthwhile pointing out to those who express disappointment at the comparative absence of long-range Soviet air raids against German objectives, that the Red Air Force has a great battle on its hands and naturally must concentrate on the enemy operational rear

(say between the front and the line of the Dvina and Dneiper) instead of going out to bomb Ploesti, Silesia, and East Prussia. The Soviet Air Command obviously figures that 240 enemy divisions packed in a zone 1,000 miles long and 200 miles wide are more important than the objectives that feed those divisions. In other words they consider that breaking the enemy's "gun-hand" is more important than slowly ruining his "stomach."

THE German infantry and artillery have never been able to develop the teamwork which their Soviet counterparts have achieved. One example will illustrate the latter. Just before an attack on a German stronghold the Soviet artillery lays down a short, powerful barrage which drives the German defenders into their dugouts. While the barrage is still on, the Soviet infantry advances to the forward zone of the German defenses. Up to here everything has been happening according to standard rules. However, at this point things become "original." Instead of laying low and waiting for the barrage to be lifted and moved back to the enemy tactical rear (which would give the enemy at least several minutes to re-man his guns and machine guns) the *Soviet infantry moves right into the barrage, between shellbursts* so that when it is lifted, the German gunners rushing to their stations are confronted with the cold steel of Russian bayonets. Of course, the Soviet infantry suffers losses from its own barrage; however, it has been calculated that such losses are always much lighter than would occur if the enemy could man his guns.

Such tactics are possible only when the following conditions have been fulfilled: (1) the training of the troops in split-second maneuver; (2) both arms—infantry and artillery—have been virtually *brought up together*, like brothers, and (3) the infantry troops are of the highest caliber in training, morale, and discipline. Marching into your own barrage without flinching is probably one of the greatest military feats. Mass performance of such a feat is something almost unique in military tactics.

Taking the Soviet artillery alone, we must recognize that it is far superior to its German counterpart, both qualitatively and quantitatively. For instance, it has just been reported that on the Bryansk Front the Soviet High Command concentrated fire-power at the rate of 3,000 gun-barrels per kilometer. (I use the ex-

pression "gun-barrels" because it seems that the barrels of multiple guns are being counted singly; so that a six-barrel mortar would count as six "barrels.") This is several times more than was seen on the Western Front during the first world war, including Verdun and the Allied offensive in the summer of 1918.

Such artillery and infantry-artillery tactics were responsible, among other things, for the comparatively rapid reduction of the Orel defense complex which the Germans had been building for almost two years and were defending with at least a score of the best divisions.

So far it is known that the Germans, in their offensive-defensive fighting between July 5 and August 5, lost 120,000 officers and men killed and more than 12,000 captured; over 5,000 tanks destroyed and captured; 1,700 guns destroyed and captured; and 2,500 planes brought down. Now, these losses, together with the wounded Germans—calculated at the rate of 2:1 to those killed—represent the elimination of about 400,000 men, or more than half the number Moscow has been asking the Allies to draw off from the Eastern Front. Just imagine what would be happening *in Germany* today if that 750,000 German troops were missing today from the front between Leningrad and Novorossisk. There is little doubt that Allied armies would be battling within the bastions of the inner Fortress Europa.

IN SICILY the Allies have all but closed a ring around the Mt. Etna *massif* and to all practical intents and purposes the front now (August 15) stretches from Patti on the north coast to Taormina on the east coast. It is clear that the Axis is giving up Sicily, and the only question now is, how many Germans will succeed in escaping to the mainland? Probably a good portion. Determined small rearguards fighting on the two coastal roads can give the others a good chance to flee across the narrow Straits of Messina at night. All in all, the Axis by defending Sicily will have paid with some ten unreliable Italian divisions and not much more than one German division for a delay of six weeks in the invasion of Europe—that is, if the invasion of Europe should follow the close of the Sicilian campaign immediately. A reasonable price indeed. We achieved a logistical wonder and tactically a good job, but strategically we are still "in the sticks." Or on the rim, if you prefer.



Three weeks have passed since the exit of Mussolini provided us with an opportunity to support the popular risings in Italy and help overthrow Badoglio and the King—the position now taken by the five party Italian coalition. This would have made the positions of the then few German troops in Italy extremely difficult and uncertain. Now it is quite clear that the defense line of the Northern Appennines and the Po has been manned by the Germans and, considering the time it took us to conquer Sicily, it is a fair guess that we could not reach the Brenner before winter.

To put it bluntly, a new strategic di-

rection for decisive action will have to be found. It still lies between the mouths of the Seine and the Schelde.

IN THE air we have been doing rather grandly, even reaching out to the suburbs of Vienna from Egypt with a mighty air blow at the Messerschmitt works in Weiner-Neustadt. By the way, that spot on the map is a rather interesting one: it is equidistant from central England, Bizerte, and Velikie Luki. And, strangely enough, it was not raided from either one of these spots, but from a base which is time-and-one-half farther away

(the distance between Weiner-Neustadt and Istanbul is also equal to the other three).

Nothing of importance has happened in the Pacific since the capture of Munda which occurred one year after our first landing on Guadalcanal.

As to the action in the Atlantic, it was disclosed that we had sunk an average of one German submarine per day through May, June, and July; which is far from being bad.

Thus we are doing things in the air and on the sea, but on land we are still in the homeopathic stage of military action.



WATCH ON THE POTOMAC by BRUCE MINTON

THE TRUTH ABOUT COL. LANZA

Washington.

CISSY PATTERSON's hate sheet, the Washington *Times-Herald*, last week reprinted a series of articles originally prepared for Colonel McCormick's Chicago *Tribune*. There is nothing unusual in this procedure. The *Tribune*, the *Times-Herald*, along with the New York *News*—and rivaled only by the Hearst chain—have always interchanged features, and never overlook the chance to give added circulation to any new voice of disruption and appeasement. As the American and British armies advance, as the Red Army's powerful offensive gains momentum, the enemies of American security grow increasingly frenzied in their last-minute efforts to stop the war and to prevent a democratic victory. I want to call attention to four articles (there may be more coming) written by Col. Conrad L. Lanza, retired field-artillery officer whose "authoritative views" are the most recent offering by the defeatist press to the cause of destroying the war effort. I want to call attention to the spectacle of the Chicago *Tribune* and its satellites buying the services of a retired American army officer—one of a handful routed out of obscure retirement—to provide an aura of "official" sanction to the campaign of calumny.

Colonel Lanza is introduced to the readers of the McCormick-Patterson press as a "regular contributor to the *Field Artillery Journal* and recognized as an authority on military matters." Because of his status (the *Times-Herald* took pains to obscure Colonel Lanza's retirement and to intimate that he is still an active officer) every line, every word written by the colonel must be approved before publication by the War Department. In consequence, Colonel Lanza's remarks carry the

sanction of his superiors; the illusion is created that Colonel Lanza expresses the official thinking of the War Department. This is not true, as will be shown later.

In the first article, headlined "Russians Seeking Pact with Reich, Lanza Declares," the Colonel offers the following "authoritative" facts:

"If the war goes on, and Germany is overthrown by the Americans and British, their announced intention is to disarm Germany and probably break it up into a number of small states. If this occurs, the Americans and British will dominate Europe, and be in a position to curb certain dearly desired Russian ambitions. Russia would not have a single ally to help her."

Aside from threatening the Soviet Union, Colonel Lanza states as an accepted fact that Anglo-American policy is to create a *cordon sanitaire* in eastern Europe. No doubt certain reactionaries are flirting with the possibilities of creating a group of hostile nations to hem in the USSR. But the State Department felt it necessary to deny these rumors officially in so many words as utterly false. Colonel Lanza does not mention these denials. Instead, he presumes on his rank and prestige as a member of the American army to misrepresent American policy.

He continues: *"A separate peace between Germany and Russia is a distinct possibility."* Premier Stalin specifically denied this libel, and repetition has no other purpose than to disrupt the amity of the United Nations.

"In 1942," writes Lanza, *"Russia was preparing for war with Germany with a view of marching through the Balkans and seizing Istanbul, Turkey. At a conference between Hitler and Foreign Commissar Molotov in Berlin in November,*

1940, Hitler had refused to agree that Russia should have Istanbul.

"This started the Russo-German war. Undoubtedly Russia still wants Istanbul. Germany might now agree, but the British would not. As far as Russia and Germany are concerned, they are not in a position to make an agreement on Istanbul."

The above sentences, aside from the historical fiction that the Soviet Union precipitated the war with Germany, and aside from Colonel Lanza's secret information on what Molotov said to Hitler in 1940—a neat trick to overhear a carefully guarded conversation from a distance of well over 3,000 miles—the above statements are attributed to "reliable sources." Colonel Lanza does not reveal his sources in the *Tribune* articles. But writing for the *Field Artillery Journal* where he repeatedly stresses the Soviet Union's alleged desire to annex Istanbul, Colonel Lanza names the New York *Times* of July 21, 1940, as his authority. A close examination of the *Times* for that date (a Sunday), produced the following stupid sentence from an article entitled "Strategic Gateway to War or Peace" appearing in the magazine section and written by J. W. Kernick, evidently the *Times'* Istanbul correspondent: "The Dardanelles, of course, have always been a goal of Russian imperialism." That is all. The rest of the article is devoted to a routine and superficial review of Turkey's turbulent history.

NOT satisfied with this "source," I looked through the *Times* for the following day and found a dispatch from London dated July 21 and signed by Augur (well known White Russian). This typical dope story, which seems likely to