

with only some activity in the Florence and Arezzo sectors, major breakthrough attempts on a broad front were launched in the Adriatic sector later during that month. The right wing of the British 8th Army had been strengthened considerably for this purpose, for here the Allies no longer faced difficult mountain barriers on their way into the Po valley. Preparations were also made for an attack by the 8th Army's left wing, from the area east of Florence. A breakthrough into the Po valley would give the Allies far better chances to use their material superiority; it would give them access to the agricultural and industrial riches of that densely inhabited part of the country—two fifths of Italy's population live there—and it would threaten the German positions in the mountains further to the west with envelopment from the north.

The Allied landing in southern France on August 15 and the German evacuation of that region have denuded Marshal Kesselring's right wing. The Alps form a steep precipice there on the Italian side, and the Germans must try to hold the passes and their western approaches. Fighting for them has already flared up. In view of Allied naval supremacy, the defense of the Nice gap will be extremely difficult. Besides, the Allies may yet carry out another landing in the Gulf of Genoa.

RESULTS

It has been one of the Allied aims to tie down large German forces on the Italian front. But the German High Command has preferred to give up territory rather than throw reserves into battle in an area which is isolated from the rest of Europe by the towering wall of the Alps. German troops may even have been withdrawn from that theater of war as the territory to be protected grew smaller and the lines of communications shorter, and as mixed German-Italian formations under the command of Marshal Graziani—which were trained and equipped in the Reich—arrived on the scene.

On the other hand, the stubborn German resistance has tied down very considerable Allied forces in an area where they can hardly hope to determine the outcome of the great European battle. While giving the Allies some political prestige, the occupation of southern and central

Italy is no economic asset, this territory being dependent on outside food supplies and virtually without industry. Although General Alexander has seen to it that English and American blood was spared as much as possible at the expense of Polish, French Colonial, De Gaulle's, and other auxiliaries, heavy losses have been inflicted upon the Anglo-Americans too. According to a statement by War Secretary Henry Stimson, US casualties in Italy up to May 27 aggregated 55,150, while Churchill admitted a total of 73,122 British casualties in Italy including those of Dominion and Indian troops up to June 5. To this must be added casualties suffered since the beginning of June as well as losses en route and officers and sailors lost by the combined navies. Politically speaking, the Anglo-Americans have also been faced by difficulties in Italy. Moscow is utilizing the dissension among the Italian population, which has been increased by Allied maladministration, as a fertile ground for planting its doctrines. One third of the Italian fleet had to be handed over to the Soviets. And the Bonomi Cabinet, which succeeded that of Badoglio and includes in its ranks a number of Communists, has reflected the confusion and bitterness felt in Allied-occupied Italy. In his letter of resignation from the Cabinet, the famous Italian liberal Benedetto Croce flayed the indifference of the Italian people, who "listen to none of us," and characterized the Allied armistice terms as "terrible and merciless."

The battle of the last few months has been fought on ancient historical ground covered with more monuments of past splendor than perhaps anywhere else in the world. Names of cities antedating Rome have been mentioned in communiqués, as have been the flourishing centers of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Some of the most venerated monuments of the Occident, among them the Abbey of Monte Cassino, have been destroyed despite all endeavors on the part of the German High Command to spare such irreplaceable treasures. It is to the credit of the defenders that, through the early evacuation of such cities as Rome, Siena, and Florence, a substantial part of this rich legacy has been saved, although their defense might have offered the Germans military advantages.

THE EASTERN FRONT

(June 22 to August 31, 1944)

THE two great German offensives of the summers of 1941 and 1942 were followed by four great Soviet offensives (winter 1942/43, summer 1943, winter 1943/44, summer 1944), the last of which is the subject of this survey, although it has not yet come to a close. After the first Soviet offensive had brought the success of Stalingrad, the second and third ones lacked the hoped-for breakthrough and resulted in a forcing back—sometimes fast, sometimes slow—of the German lines which on the whole remained intact. It was only the fourth offensive

which succeeded in achieving a breakthrough of considerable depth in one sector of the German central front.

THE BREAKTHROUGH (JUNE AND JULY)

With a sentimentality one would hardly expect from them, the Soviets began their summer offensive this year on June 22. Within a few days the Red Army tore up the German front over a width of 300 kilometers. The bastions of the German defense in this sector fell into their hands

after a brief struggle—Vitebsk and Jlobin on June 26, Orsha on 27th, and Moghilyov on 28th. The hosts of the Red Army poured deeply into the German-occupied territory. Among the reasons which made these Soviet successes possible we shall enumerate the four principal ones.

(1) The German commanders on all fronts, including the Eastern Front, had to manage with a minimum of forces, as all available reserves were being trained in the use of new weapons and methods far behind the front lines. The *Völkischer Beobachter* wrote at the end of June: "The German eastern army has had to fight its battles before without obtaining operative reserves at the disposal of the Supreme Command. This will be no different in the coming weeks." It was only through the unflagging watchfulness of the German military command, the unparalleled performance of the troops, and with a good portion of luck that it had been possible from the spring of 1943 to the spring of 1944 always to distribute the slender forces available in such a way that the Soviets did not succeed in any large-scale breakthrough.

During the pause in fighting lasting from the middle of April to June 22, both sides regrouped their armies. The German Command seems to have expected the next powerful Soviet thrust in Galicia—approximately in the sector Kovel/Tarnopol, where the Soviet front bulged furthest west—in the direction of the industrial area of Upper Silesia, and the Soviets succeeded in deceiving the German Command as to the vast extent of their preparations in the northern part of the central front, between Vitebsk and the Pripet Marshes. It is possible that the German Command placed too much confidence in the resisting power of this sector, which had succeeded throughout winter and spring in warding off numerous heavy Soviet attacks. The Germans may also have believed that the area, abounding as it does in lakes and rivers, would favor the defense even more in summer than in winter. According to Moscow, the Red forces which attacked in the breakthrough area amounted to one million men under 300 generals and colonels.

How slight the German forces were in the area exposed to the Soviet attack is revealed by the following facts. The Soviet attack took place, roughly speaking, in eight columns, which are indicated in our map by black arrows. When these columns met in the rear of the German bulwarks, the latter were isolated. The whole thing went so fast that hardly any German troops managed to get out of the four fortified areas. If, in spite of this fact, the Soviets themselves claim to have taken no more than 10,000 prisoners in the Vitebsk area and only 18,000 in the particularly large area of Jlobin/Rogachyov/Bobruisk, this means that the Germans really only had a very small number of men in the front line. Behind the front line there were even less troops. Through a concentric thrust of units of the II and III "White Russian Fronts," for instance, the Soviets encircled the immense area of Orsha/Jlobin/Minsk (more than 30,000 square kilometers) within ten days from the beginning of the

offensive. But although the Soviets do not as a rule hide their light under a bushel, we have never read any Soviet figure on the number of prisoners made in this area. It looks as if it was too small to be worth mentioning.

The German reports, too, reveal the tremendous superiority in men and material on the part of the Red Army. In the middle of July a German reporter wrote: "Tanks are rolling into our flank and roll on. Later they are in front of us, behind us, to our right. The hand-to-hand struggle goes on. The night brings no respite. Mercilessly the wave of dust, fire, and death rises against us, over and over again. Sometimes we wonder that the enemy has not yet forced a breach, because there are so many tanks and so many men against our few. Without pause the battle continues into the new dawn." And at about the same time, Transocean's reporter Zottmann wrote: "The Red High Command threw whole armored divisions against single German battalions, whole tank brigades against isolated German tank units, and squadrons of planes manufactured in America against a single chain of German fighters."

It stands to reason that the Soviet reserves in manpower are not unlimited either. This is indicated alone by the fact that they had to discontinue their Karelian offensive (commenced on June 9) in July in spite of having overcome the main Finnish line of defense, probably in order to transfer troops from this front to the German front. Nevertheless, the quantities of troops and material at their disposal are still great. Moreover, the attacker has the advantage of having the



All along the German frontiers hundreds of thousands of Germans are busy building antitank trenches such as this one

initiative and being able to determine where he wishes to mass his forces for the attack.

(2) The smooth functioning of the German war machine was disturbed by a crisis within the German military command. Officers who had only reluctantly obeyed the orders of the political leadership during the years of advance, rebelled against them after a year and a half of withdrawals. The resulting conflict between parts of the military and the political leadership, which came to a head on July 20, was bound to have an unfavorable effect on the course of the war.

(3) In three years of war, the Soviets had learned much from their German enemies. With boldness and skill they employed the strategy of by-passing: instead of attacking the strong points of the German defense, they advanced into the area between these points, thus breaking up the cohesion of the German front, and threw their fast armored units deeply into the territory in the rear of the Germans, leaving it to less mobile units to liquidate the bastions left behind.

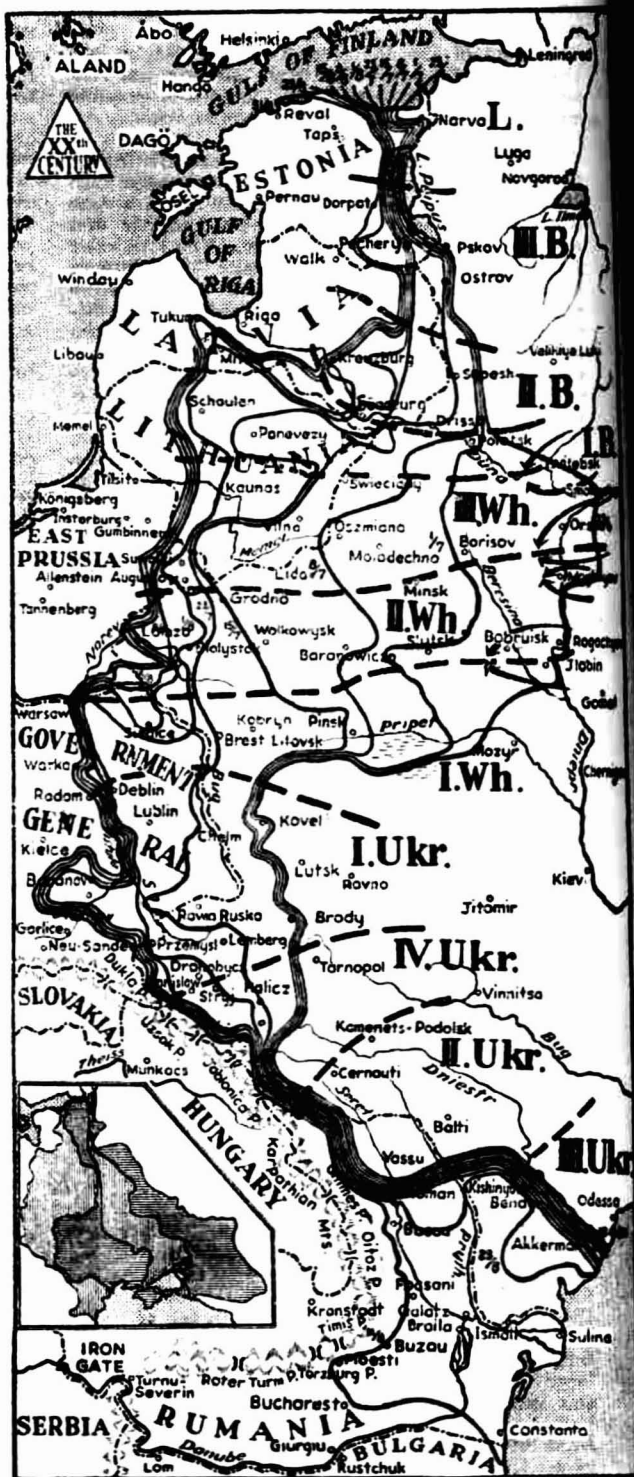
The Twelve Soviet Fronts

(from north to south)

Front	Commanding General	Starting Date of Summer Offensive
Finnish	Meretskov	June 9
Leningrad	Govorov	July 25
III Baltic	Maslennikov	" 17
II Baltic	Yeremenko	" 12
I Baltic	Bagramyan	June 22
III White Russian	Chernyakhovsky	" 22
II White Russian	Zakharov	" 23
I White Russian	Rokossovsky	" 23
I Ukrainian	Konyev	July 15
IV Ukrainian	Petrov	" 20
II Ukrainian	Malinovsky	August 20
III Ukrainian	Tolbukhin	" 20

(4) Finally the Soviets owed their breakthrough to their gigantic artillery preparation. Soviet reports go to show that, in those sectors in which breakthroughs were planned, up to 300, indeed, in some cases up to 400 cannons were used per kilometer of front. The Soviets have divided their artillery as follows: (i) "destruction artillery," consisting of 152-mm and 203-mm howitzers and other heavy-caliber guns, which is supposed to destroy enemy fortifications; (ii) "long-range artillery," which turns its attention chiefly to the enemy artillery further in the rear, and consisting of 107-mm, 122-mm, and 152-mm cannons with a range up to 25 kilometers; and (iii), by far the largest group, "infantry-supporting artillery," whose job it is to back up the attacks of the infantry. In the course of this war, the Russian artillery has developed to what is now the most outstanding weapon of the Soviets. By dint of long practice it has become possible to lay down an advancing artillery barrage no more than 150 to 200 meters before the attacking infantry. The effect of this combined firing was in some cases so great that the infantry found not a single enemy alive in the positions they reached.

All Soviet reports, however, prove one reason not to have been among those enabling them to break through: demoralization of the German Army. On the contrary, the Soviets emphasize the fierceness of the German resistance. Encircled German units continued to counterattack until



The Eastern Front from June 22 to September 1, 1944. The red lines show the approximate course of the front at each given date. Broken red lines indicate Soviet withdrawals. Broken black lines separate the Soviet "fronts" (I-Leningrad Front, B-Baltic, Wh-White Russian, Ukr-Ukrainian). Inserted map: land gains made by the four Soviet offensives

their ammunition was exhausted. In describing the battle of Vilna, the Soviets say that the Germans defended every house. In some houses, Tass wrote on July 14, there had been hours of fighting for every floor, indeed, for every room; and one Hitler Youth regiment made 19 counter-attacks there in one single day. Moreover, the fact reported by the Soviets that the Germans had time enough to destroy all war-essential establishments before evacuating such towns as Baranovicze, Pinsk, Grodno, etc., shows that the German retreat was not a flight.

The Soviet breakthrough confronted the German Command with two main tasks. The first of these was the establishment of a new line of defense far behind the disrupted front. It was undertaken by Field Marshal Model. At the points on our map where the red lines are clustered, the front can be discerned at which the German Command succeeded in halting the Russian offensive. To accomplish this, the employment of fresh troops was necessary. We do not know to what extent the German Command had to resort for this purpose to its reserves. The Russians even claim that German divisions from Italy and France were thrown onto the Eastern Front. It is possible that the German Command transferred some divisions from one front to another in order to leave the reserve armies, destined for other purposes, as untouched as possible.

The second main task confronting the Germans was to decide what to do about the neighboring sectors of the front. As regards the sector to the north, it was decided not to withdraw the German troops, notwithstanding the fact that up to the end of July a gateway some 120 kilometers wide stood open between the Gulf of Riga and the northwesternmost Red spearhead through which the German armies in Estonia and Latvia might have been able to withdraw. Not until the fall of Mitau on July 31 and the reaching of the coast of the Gulf at Tukum by the Soviets on August 1 was this gate—temporarily—closed. The reasons which contributed toward the German Command's decision not to withdraw the armies on the northern sector in spite of the risk this entailed were the following: the desire not to deliver up the Baltic States to the Soviet Union; the possibility of threatening the right flank of the Soviet armies advancing toward East Prussia; the safeguarding of the net and mine barrages which effectively cut off the Bight of Leningrad between Estonia and Finland from the Baltic, so that German shipping in the Baltic—particularly important for communications with Finland and the iron mines in Lapland—could proceed undisturbed. As regards the southern front between the area of the breakthrough and the Carpathians, however, the German Command decided to take it back. This

was done at first without, later with Soviet pressure.

STABILIZATION (AUGUST)

August was marked to the same extent by the German defense as July had been marked by the Soviet attacks. The Germans worked feverishly at the reinforcement of this front while the Soviets prepared the next stage of their offensive. If one bears in mind what is needed in the way of men and material for their next breakthrough attempt, it becomes obvious that the Soviet High Command needs time for bringing up the necessary thousands of cannons and millions of shells.

The outstanding developments in August were (from north to south):

(1) By the occupation of the university town of Dorpat in Estonia and its environment, the Soviets succeeded in reducing the territory held by the Germans on the Baltic. But in return the Germans restored the connection lost three weeks earlier between their Baltic divisions and the rest of the German Eastern Front, when the armored troops of General Count Strachwitz occupied Tukum on the Gulf of Riga on August 20.

(2) On August 1 at 5 p.m. a Polish revolt broke out in Warsaw. Although it took more than a month to liquidate, this revolt did not open the way to Warsaw for the Soviets. On the other hand, reciprocal accusations of having intentionally caused the revolt to break out prematurely led to new tension between the Polish Emigré Government, London, and Moscow.

(3) The German troops annihilated several of the Soviet bridgeheads on the western bank of the Vistula. No exact information on the number and size of these bridgeheads is available.

(4) In Rumania, in the narrow area between the Carpathians and the Black Sea, the opposing armies had faced each other almost without fighting since the second half of April. When the Soviet offensive commenced on August 20 it succeeded without particularly heavy fighting—its preliminary barrage lasted only 105 minutes—in forcing breaches west and southeast of Kishinyov. When the treachery of King Michael became known on August 23, it was clear that, as in the case of Badoglio, the open betrayal was preceded by a secret one which had demoralized the Rumanian Army from within after years of brave fighting. In the chaos resulting from the collapse of the Rumanian Army, the German divisions could retreat to the Carpathian passes only after bitter fighting and heavy losses, while the Red troops continued the occupation of the country without any further Rumanian resistance.