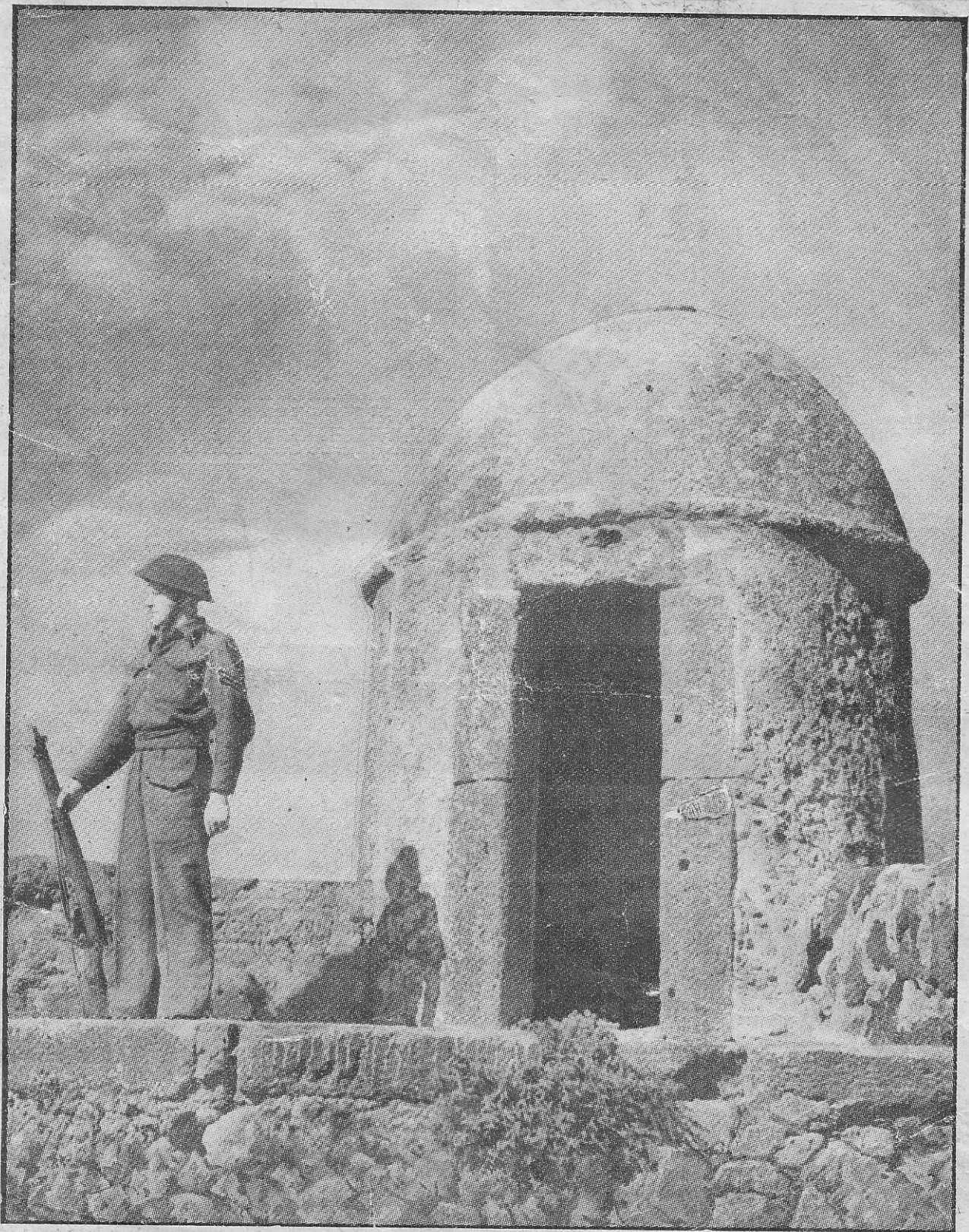


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SIXPENCE

Edited by Sir John Hammerton

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**ON GUARD IN THE AZORES.** Allied mid-Atlantic air base, this corporal of the R.A.F. Regiment strikes a modern note against the ancient stone sentry-box of his observation post. "By means of aircraft operating from the Azores," said Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt in a joint statement, "we have been able to improve the protection to our convoys and to diminish the area in which enemy U-boats were free from attention by our forces." See also p. 541.

*Photo, British Official: Crown Copyright*

# Our Roving Camera Inspects Air Raid Fighters



**SEARCHLIGHT** projector operator (left) is a member of the A.T.S. Girls snap into action to illumine the targets for the A.A. guns. A.T.S. also serve at fire control instruments, command posts and plotting rooms.



**WOMEN SWITCHBOARD OPERATORS** at the London Region Fire Control Room, headquarters of the N.F.S. This switchboard is the nerve centre through which the operations officer receives reports of fires and through which he issues his fire-fighting orders.



**CIVIL DEFENCE PERSONNEL** labour doggedly, with a mobile crane, to clear away debris after a direct hit. Folks may be trapped beneath the rubble masses: men of the Rescue Service attend to these when contact has been made.



**ROCKET GUNS** of the multiple-barrelled type being unloaded (above) for swift assembly; on its mobile mounting (left) one hurls salvos of rockets into the night sky. Large numbers of batteries are now operating, mostly manned by Home Guards. In its original form the rocket weapon was designed for defence against the low-flying dive-bomber. Salvos were then fired, experimentally, at high-flying night raiders; the first battery went into action in the spring of 1941, and now rocket guns are used with outstanding success against targets whose speed sometimes exceeds 400 miles per hour at 25,000 ft. The propellant, developed in Britain, is also in production in the Middle East, and its secrets have been made known to the U.S. Army Ordnance by the British authorities. It is in use in various theatres of operations.

*Photos, British Official, Fox, Associated Press*

# THE BATTLE FRONTS

by E. Royston Pike

**RUSSIA** A thousand days of the Russian war! Did Hitler realize the sinister significance of March 18, 1944, as he dropped the calendar-leaf into his wastepaper basket? If so, what thoughts of the "might have been" must have surged through his tormented brain, what a load of bitter disappointment and falsified hopes must have weighed down his spirit! A thousand days of fighting, of vast conquests, of tremendous victories: his troops almost within sound of the Kremlin's bells, within sight of the peaks of the Caucasus.

Then the dreadful débâcle of Stalingrad, the beginning of the retreat (of course, then, it was easy to make out that it was just a retirement "according to plan"), the abandonment of the Donetz, the retirement to the Dnieper. And now the guns of Moscow were booming for yet another Russian victory, the greatest of the campaign, perhaps the greatest of the war, a victory which must find a place in any future collection of "decisive battles of the world."

Up to the beginning of March 1944 the Germans in Russia were retreating in good order. Every mile of ground was stubbornly contested, and though Nazi losses were terrific it was unfortunately all too certain that the Red Army too was losing the cream of its young fighting strength. The German commentators breathed an almost audible sigh of relief—"The front of Von Manstein stands firm."

THEIR satisfaction was short lived. On March 4 the 1st Ukrainian Front group of Russian armies under Marshal Zhukov delivered a terrific punch from the direction of Shepetovka. In 24 hours the Russians advanced 30 miles; by March 7 they had reached the suburbs of Tarnopol and had cut the supremely important Lwow-Odessa railway along a 12-mile stretch at Volochisk. Here for the time being the advance was slowed up, though not stayed. Somehow Von Manstein scraped up some reserves from Lwow and pushed them into the gap.

Practically simultaneously another great Russian offensive was launched four or five hundred miles away to the south-east. Here



Lieut.-Gen. H. D. G. CRERAR, C.B., D.S.O. (left), now commander of the 1st Canadian Army (in succession to Lieut.-Gen. A. G. L. MacNaughton), seen in Italy with Lieut.-Gen. E. L. M. Burns, O.B.E., M.C., one of his Corps commanders. Photo, Canadian Official

the attackers were General Malinovsky's 3rd Ukrainian Front; and a week's battle, of furious swirling movement, brought them into the Black Sea port of Kherson.

Still the amazing Russians had not shot all their bolts. Another group, the 2nd Ukrainian Front under Marshal Koniev, on March 10 attacked the Germans in the Uman sector, about half-way between the other two offensives, and in a series of forced marches swept through Uman, abandoned by the Germans in what was described by the Russians for the first time as a panic flight, to the banks of the Bug.

Here Manstein's men might have been expected to halt and recover. The river was broad, and swollen with spring floods. On every side the black earth district was a morass of mud, and military commentators spoke knowingly of difficulties engendered by the thaw. But the Russians showed that they had taken the measure of "General Mud." Driving their tanks and transports through the squelching mass, they covered a dozen or even twenty miles a day, driving the enemy before them. They reached the Bug, they crossed it on March 15, they pursued the broken foe beyond it to where the Dniester suggested another line on which some sort of stand might be made.

From the Bug to the Dniester is a matter of fifty miles. The Russians covered the distance in a couple of days. The fact speaks

OUR distinguished military commentator, Maj.-Gen. Sir Charles Gwynn, K.C.B., D.S.O., has unfortunately had to undergo an operation recently which must, for a time, prevent his maintaining his regular contribution to our pages. We hope, however, that after the lapse of a few issues he may be able to resume that long series of authoritative reviews on the War situation which has become an established and greatly appreciated feature of THE WAR ILLUSTRATED.—Ed.

volumes as to the wholesale rout of Manstein's divisions, their disorganization, perhaps even their disintegration. But not, it would seem, their collapsing morale. The number of prisoners claimed by the Russians was significantly small. The Nazis, or most of them, were still resisting fiercely, though their resistance was that of men who have no longer any hope of victory, but who fear defeat more than death. All the same, the Russians captured 200 tanks intact, which suggests that for a time at least the enemy thought only of flight.

MARCH 18 was the 1,000th day of the war, and the Russians were in jubilant mood as they announced from Moscow another series of tremendous victories. Koniev's 2nd Ukrainian Front had captured Yampol on the northern bank of the Dniester, and looked across the 400 yards of river to the cottages of the Bessarabian villages on the farther bank. Malinovsky's 3rd Ukrainian Front had completely smashed the German 6th Army—reformed since Paulus' surrender at Stalingrad a year earlier. Marshal Zhukov's 1st Ukrainians had taken Zmerinka, on the Odessa-Lwow railway, and in honour of their victory Moscow guns fired a dozen salvos. During the preceding fortnight the German casualties (said Moscow) totalled almost a quarter of a million, of whom 100,000 were dead.

It was indeed a great victory, and the Russians were swift to exploit it. The Germans attempting to cross the Dniester



VICTORY FLAG OVER SATTELBERG, New Guinea, Japanese stronghold captured by the Australians on Nov. 26, 1943. Hoisting the flag is Sgt. T. C. Derrick, V.C., D.C.M., who silenced 10 enemy machine-gun posts and made this victory possible. His V.C. is the 14th to be won by an Australian in this war. Photo, Sport & General

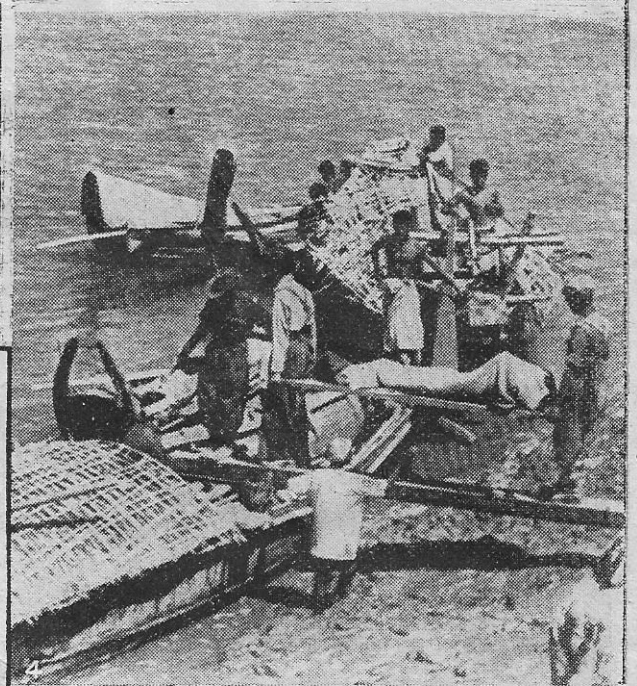
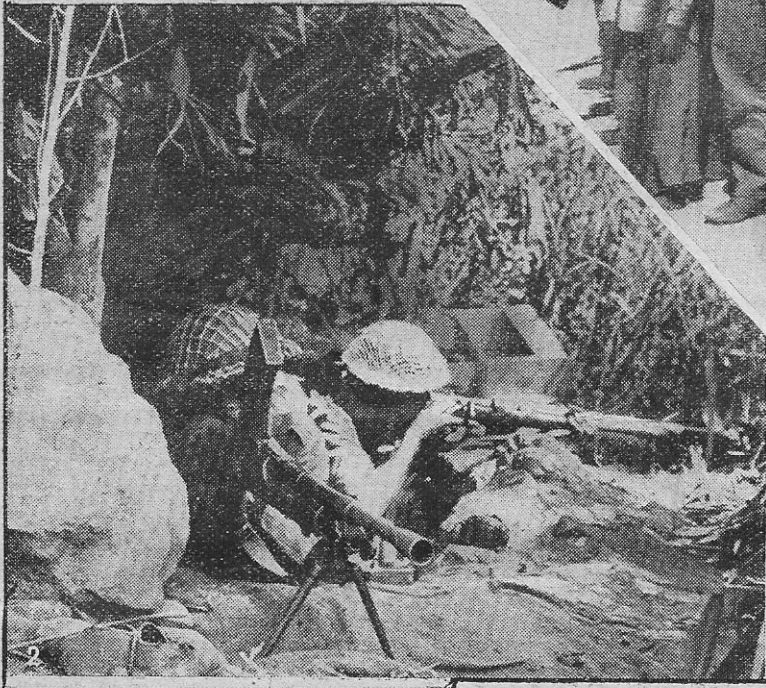
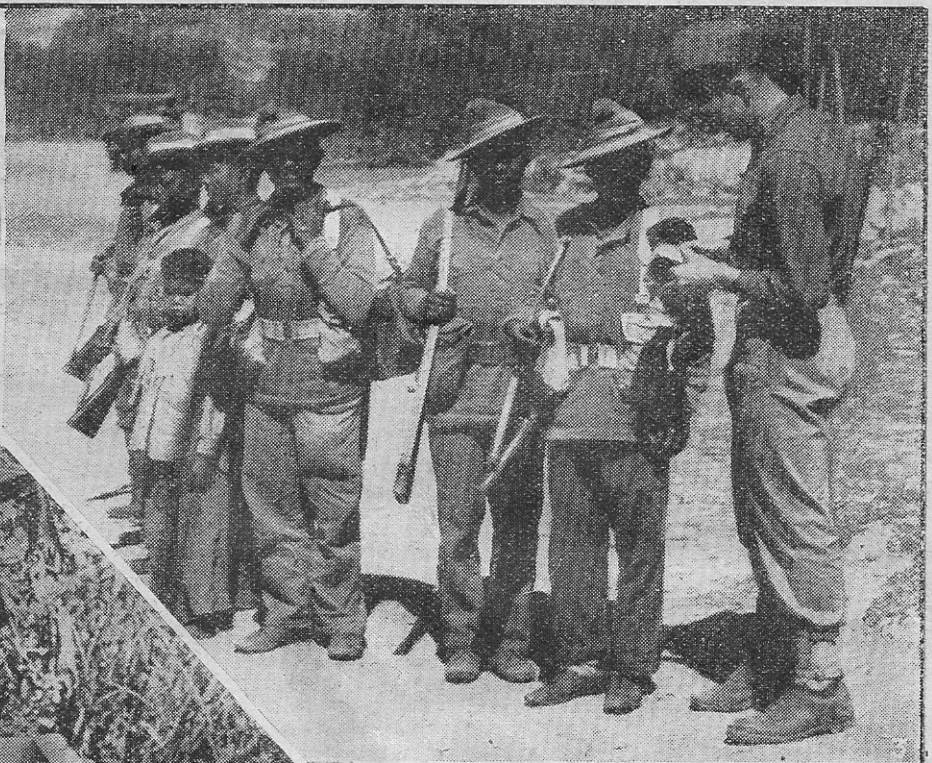
were mercilessly harried, and their massed transport, awaiting their ferries, was bombed and bombed again by the Stormoviks. Then, on March 19, the Red Army crossed the river in strength, some of the bridges having been captured intact before the German demolition squads could get to work. Koniev got his tanks across, and within a few hours they were deep into Bessarabia.

WHEREUPON all Hitler's satellites in the Balkans shivered with apprehension. Rumanian quislings started packing their bags. Pro-ally—or so they would like it to be deemed—Rumanians and Bulgars and Hungarians got ready to depart on peace missions to the Allies. Hitler found his south-eastern wall collapsing, the battle for the Danube about to begin; and on March 21 his troops converted Hungary and her neighbours into militarily occupied countries such as France had been since 1940. March 21—another fateful anniversary. It was on that day in 1918 that the Kaiser's hosts plunged through the mists on the Somme to overwhelm General Gough's Fifth Army and, so the Germans boasted, win the war. But November 11 was only eight months ahead.

**BURMA** While the world-shaking battle was raging across the plains of southern Russia a very different struggle was developing in the Burmese jungles. In March both the Japanese and the Allies were making offensives, although in widely separated zones. From the north, Gen. Stilwell's little army of Americans and Chinese was developing a pincer movement down the Hukawng valley against Myitkyina, the Japanese key base on the Irrawaddy. About a hundred miles to the south a force of British airborne troops was endeavouring to get astride the railway and river communications of Myitkyina (see p. 708 for Burma front illustrations).

In the Chin hills, still more to the south, the Japanese were hitting at British and Indian forces guarding the approach to India. Judged on the scale of the Burma campaign this was a major offensive; but many more troops were fighting near Cassino in Italy than there were in the whole of Burma.

# With Our 14th Army in Japanese-Held Burma



**JUNGLE AIR BASE** and Army stronghold for the Allies were established when an airborne force seized Japanese-occupied territory in Upper Burma, it was announced on March 17, 1944. Air Marshal Sir John E. A. Baldwin, C-in-C, Tactical Air Force of Eastern Command (1, right). A Vengeance dive-bomber returns to its Arakan base (5). Gurkha riflemen (3) who escaped from a Japanese ambush and saved the battalion treasure chest. Men of the 1st Punjab Regt. in a forward position (2). A casualty is carried aboard a hospital sampan (4).  
*Photos, Indian Official and Keystone*

