

Soviets Drive Toward Rostov

Thrust Spearheads Across Don South of Stalingrad and Advance 10 Miles

By KEN CLARK

A cheering report from Moscow announces a new drive by the Russians westward across the lower bend of the Don in the direction of Rostov.

The Red Army crossed the river at three points and advanced spearheads upwards of 10 miles to the south of the Stalingrad Axis siege army, threatening it with more strict encirclement and at the time moving toward the key city of the Caucasus.

Moscow dispatches stressed the importance of this action which apparently swings a considerable weight along the railroad toward Rostov.

The first crossing of the river was five miles below the Stalingrad-Kharkov railroad. Eighteen miles to the south the Russians pushed a second spearhead through and 20 miles south of that point they made another successful crossing, advancing to the west to take Tchepurin, 30 miles northeast of Tsimlyansk, 135 miles southwest of Stalingrad and about the same distance northeast of Rostov.

Defenses Breached

It was at Tsimlyansk that the Germans crossed the Don last summer after a long and bloody battle.

At the same time as these operations were in progress, the Russians drove a column through the central part of the Don bend advancing westward and threatening to split the Axis forces within the Don bend.

East of the Don the Red Army was reported driving through successive lines of defenses which the Germans had built in depth and heavily manned. Villages were key strong points and the line has been so filled with tanks and artillery that it was necessary to attack each in force. The Germans were fighting savagely on every hill and in every ravine wherever they could place a field gun, a mortar or a machine gun.

Within the city of Stalingrad the Axis still held on. Saturday's communique reported that in the factory area Russian assault detachments operating in small groups destroyed 25 enemy pill boxes and dugouts and killed 200 Germans. These operations followed advances of 200 to 300 yards Friday.

Northwest of Stalingrad and east of the Don, the Russians captured 20 pill boxes, killed 400 Germans.

Two German infantry battalions (2000 men) were routed in another sector.

West of the Rzhev advance lines were reported to have been carried into the Smolensk area and the offense was broadening to include the Kalinin front northwest of Moscow.

The Germans were reported making extraordinary attempts to maintain their positions and were pouring in reinforcements to fill gaps made by the Russians.

The newspaper *Pravda* said that German resistance was growing daily on the Moscow front and that despite bad weather the Luftwaffe was attacking.

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