



The 12-day WAR

M-Day. Victory or Allied air forces must

By Clive Baxter

(In the course of a recent trip to Europe Mr. Baxter had an opportunity to visit the RCAF's air division and talk with the NATO leaders who will control it in action. Following is his frank appraisal of the tense situation under which Canada's airmen carry out their present role and the probable conditions, under which they will fly into combat.)

A network of giant air fields extends eastward from the Iron Curtain. There are 450 in East Germany and the other satellites alone.

Based on them is a formidable tactical force — 100,000 aircraft, mostly modern jets — poised for attack.

It is an offensive unit, superbly trained and equipped, ready within minutes to support the 90-odd armored and armored-support divisions Russia has ready in Eastern Europe.

On a recent visit to the European theatre I met and talked with senior planners at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe and the headquarters of Allied Airforces Central Europe. These men know their potential enemy. They do not underrate him.

► **Red Tiger.** The Red air force, according to all intelligence reports, is well trained, well led, and above all "keen."

The last feature is the most dangerous. It is the "Tiger" spirit that air forces work so hard to create. The desire to fly, to fight—to win.

NATO officials believe the international stalemate brought on by the recognition of both sides' power of mutual nuclear destruction holds back the attack—that and nothing more.

But such a stalemate can be easily swept aside by too fiery tempers or misplaced fear. In other words every hour, day in and day out, attack is a possibility.

► **NATO Key.** This situation is the key to NATO. It is the reason for the 1st American Division being in Europe. That is why the RCAF's contribution must be, and is, as fine a fighting force as can be produced.

defeat could be 12 terrifying days away. With attack an hourly possibility, maintain a constant state of readiness or fight with their backs to the wall.

Based on four airfields across the traditional invasion route from Germany into France, the Division is the vital link between the second Allied tactical air force in the north and the fourth in the south.

At present four of the 12 squadrons are being equipped with urgently needed CF-100's. With them they will provide the only completely effective all-weather defense force in Europe. Using their considerable range they will operate in all areas by night and in bad weather.

► **RCAF Role.** When I visited them, all squadrons were mounted in Sabres—most flying Sabre 6's with Orenda engines. At that time their role was twofold:

- To gain air superiority over given areas, for instance, covering troop movements on the ground or escorting bombers.

- To take part in sweeps over enemy territory, to draw off and destroy the enemy defense forces.

To properly evaluate the importance of the Division one must imagine a situation which, terrifyingly, could happen today or tomorrow or any day. Here's what could happen and what the West will be called upon to do:

A group of dedicated men—reared on Communist doctrine of an inevitable clash between East and West, seizes complete power in Moscow. While the western nations wait, as they so often have in the past, wondering what the new government means for them, a new hate campaign starts in the Russian press.

The line is America and Britain are about to attack. The end is near. Russians must be ready. No amount of denial on our part will change the picture.

► **Battle Order.** Planners at SHAPE and NATO will be sifting information as it comes to them. Slowly the Russian war machine; poised, tensed and ready, will be brought up to the last stages of preparedness.

In order to mount their full attack, and they must do this quickly if they are to crush the West, the Russians will have to move a great many men and much equipment through satellite Poland and Czecho-

slovakia into Eastern Germany. This will be the West's warning. The moment of attack is known as M Day to the planners.

- **M-3.** Allied intelligence gets the warning that the 65 divisions in Western Russia are on the move.

On hearing this, SHAPE will order the forces under its command into a carefully planned series of actions. All military units are to leave their comfortable but conspicuous barracks and spread out into the countryside. The 15 NATO divisions will disperse to carefully pre-arranged points then deploy sufficiently to be almost invulnerable to atomic attack, yet ready to race to meet the first Russian attack.

All squadrons in the Allied Tactical Air Force will come to stand-by. The radar chain in West Germany, manned by British, Canadian and American airmen, will keep watch deep into Russian territory.

Meanwhile, Strategic Air Command would be brought to the final stage of readiness. The atomic and hydrogen bombs will be brought from storage to be loaded on the USAF B-47s, B-52s and RAF Valiants and Canberras.

- **M Day.** Of course western planners have no idea exactly how the Russian attack would come. It could begin with massive nuclear attacks on important western centres. Early warning radar would give the defense forces the word that this was coming.

► **Counter Punch.** At that moment our entire Strategic Air Force will go into full-scale operation. The crews know their targets. They have rehearsed their runs over and over again. Before the first Russian bomber was over an important western target our bombers will be streaking at great heights toward their Russian and other Communist targets.

For the RCAF air division, the word that war had begun will be the signal to take the offensive. Every aircraft in the Western Tactical Command will spend the first two terrible days of war deep in Communist territory, supporting Canberras, F-84-F's and other tactical bombers and fighter bombers in

an all-out attempt to break up the Red army and air force on the ground.

Western experts calculate they will have 24 to 48 hours in which the Russians will be uncertain exactly where our ground forces are. It is during that time that our ground forces will have little or no air support directly above them.

► **Supply Lines Vital.** At the end of two days, it is hoped, the advancing Russian divisions will be operating in front of hopelessly mangled supply lines.

Russian divisions have a great deal of fire power, each soldier has automatic weapons. Their supply problems will be enormous. This is the trump card that western ground forces are counting on.

Canadian Sabre squadrons would be mixing it up deep over Czechoslovakia, Poland and other satellite nations within hours of the initial act of aggression. They would certainly be involved in enormous and frightening dog-fights with vast numbers of Communist fighters.

- **M + 2.** By now the main enemy in Europe should be the Russian troops who are ahead of their supply lines. At this point all remaining Allied aircraft will swing over to a new role. About half will be used in defense of our troops and centres on the ground, while the other half will continue supporting interdiction behind the enemy lines.

Twelve days after the outbreak of war Strategic Air Command will have totally destroyed Russia's ability to continue fighting. If they have not done this, we will have lost the war—as much as any side can win or lose a nuclear battle.

► **12-Day War.** No air defense known today can completely stop an air attack. But an attack repeated 12 days, one after the other, would be critical. Either Red defenses collapse under the dozen days of assault, or the attack itself runs out of momentum.

So the magical 12-day figure looms vital in SHAPE planning. For the troops and airmen in Europe, the men and women who will face the Red attack face to face, those 12 days will be the testing time.