

Is Russian Drive First Blow in Great Allied Offensive?

Military Critic Says Russians and British Must Now Win War—Germans Must Shorten Lines or Face Disaster—Political Effect of Russian Victories Soon Apparent.

An article entitled "The First Blow—The Russian Offensive," appears in a recent issue of the New York Tribune by Frank H. Simond, the author of "The Great War," which throws much light on the activities of the different warring nations in Europe.

The great Russian offensive, he says, is not generally appreciated by the outside world. They have up until June 13th captured some 115,000 prisoners and re-occupied Lutsk, Dubno, Husatz and Csernowitz.

In places they have advanced 35 miles and have reached Zlota Lipa at one point. He continues:

"It can now be said that the Russians have won the greatest victory on the Allied side since the trench warfare began. It is the most considerable success on either side since the battle of the Dunaie, and it is a final demonstration that trench lines can be broken and the deadlock at least temporarily interrupted under certain circumstances. We have first to examine these circumstances and then to consider the possible consequences of the actual operation."

"It is fairly clear that the Russian attack was delivered at the weakest point in the Austro-German line after there had been a large and patently unwise stripping of this line for reasons that are clear. Away back at the beginning of the war we saw that Austrian armies were unable to stand up against Russian, when they were not supported and stiffened by German contingents. We saw the Russians consistently successful from the frontier to the edge of the Hungarian Plain and over a period of nearly nine months."

In regard to the Verdun offensive of the Russians he says that there is little doubt but that the Germans, after reorganizing the Austrian armies, drew heavily upon them for this blow at the French troops. They did this on account of the roads, for they could rest assured that the Russians could not begin an offensive for at least three months.

Then the Germans persuaded the Austrians to draw more troops out of the east for an offensive against the Italians, which was at first locally successful but in the main proved a failure, and the gallant Italians held their lines against the Austrian onslaughts.

The Austrian lines in the east being thinly held when the Russian offensive began they crumbled and broke like tissue paper walls; the Russians rushed through and carried the day. It is also doubtful if the Austrians have been able to draw what was left of their forces out of

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the wreck and re-establish the line. In any case it would be a very difficult task.

It is pointed out by the writer that because of these facts Lemberg is now in deadly peril and the conditions all are on the side of the Russians, who are still rushing forward unchecked. If Lemberg falls Galicia will be reconquered and if the advance continues the armies will be standing on the old battle ground of September, 1914.

"If the Russian advance in Galicia reaches and passes Lemberg, then the effect upon the German lines to the north, from the Pripiet marshes to the Gulf of Riga, will be unmistakable. Just as the Russian armies along the Carpathians were compelled to go back when the Dunaie army collapsed; just as the Warsaw army had to retire when the Galician armies had been driven back upon Lublin, the German armies will have to retire from the Dvina to the Niemen, and conceivably to the Vistula, to avoid being taken in the rear by the Russian armies, which are advancing in the south."

The German Map Destroyed. "This retreat would mean the surrender of a clear half of all the territory now held by the Germans in the east; it would mean that a balance between Russian territory held by the Germans and Austrian territory held by the Russians would be almost struck and the German claim to make a 'victorious peace' on the basis of the map would be destroyed. In a word, the whole situation in the east would be changed, and changed in a wholly unexpected fashion."

"This, of course, is only on the political side. On the military side by retiring the Germans would shorten their lines very materially, and standing behind the Niemen and Vistula and the San, and along the Carpathians south of Przemyel, which could come back into the bulletins, they would have an easier line to defend and one which would offer grave difficulties to the invader. There would be no immediate, perhaps no eventual, peril for the Germans of such an envelopment as threatened the Russians for so many weeks last summer."

The Political Peril. "But for political reasons the Germans may desire to avoid this recoil. They are in the position of Napoleon in his last campaign in Germany; they are condemned to hold long and dangerous lines because of the political consequences of retreat and the surrender of conquered territory. Napoleon had to fear, what happened, the entrance of Austria; Germany has to fear a complete change in the Balkan situation, and the probable enlistment of Rumania, if she has to confess defeat by any considerable relinquishment of conquered territory."

"Before turning to examine the political consequences of continued Russian success, I desire to mention, very briefly the situation that seems to exist now. Bear in mind that henceforth the whole field of the war in Europe must be viewed as a unit. In the winter of 1915, Germany, having failed to break the Anglo-French lines and win the war, could go east and build up her campaign against Russia because she knew that the French and British would not be ready for many months to attack her. This explains her great drive into Russia, which had reached its maximum of success before the Allied drives in Champagne and Artois could be begun."

"But now if the Germans draw any considerable number of troops from the western to the eastern front it is certain that the British will attack from the Somme to the sea. They are now ready to make this attack. They have not less than 1,250,000 troops where they had little more than a fifth of this number a year ago; they have big guns and ammunition, and they have had a very long time to pre-

pare. Nothing is more certain than that the withdrawal of any number of German divisions along the western front will be followed by a terrible British offensive, exactly like the present Russian drive, and delivered under conditions similar to those which made the Russian drive successful."

"On the other hand, if the Austrians draw back troops from the Italian front, as is reported to have been done, then the Italians are bound to attack, not in the Trentino, but along the Isonzo, where they have been preparing for more than a year. Even a slight advance at this point would take them to the rear of Trieste, and threaten the whole waterfront of Austria-Hungary."

"Finally, if the Central Powers draw any part of their slender forces out of the Balkans it is certain that the Allies in Salonica will attack the Bulgarians, and it is exceedingly likely that the Bulgarians will very quickly tire of fighting the British, French and Serbs, with a fair prospect of having the Greeks on their hands as well; for the first sign of collapse on the part of the Central Powers is bound to bring the Greeks in and King Constantine cannot prevail upon his people to remain neutral once the fortune of war begins to run markedly in favor of the Allies."

The "Big Push."

"It is clear, then, that this Russian offensive may well be the first step in the 'Big Push' that has been expected so long. The Austro-Germans are heavily outnumbered on all fronts now. They have weakened themselves on one front to deliver two blows on two other fronts. Both blows have been carried and neither has resulted in any military achievement of moment. While some ground was being won in France and along the Italian boundary at a high casualty cost, a disaster has come on the eastern front, and there has been a partial and possibly a permanent collapse on the part of several armies."

"The Allies have also maintained that at some time not later than this summer the Central Powers would have to shorten their lines or suffer disaster. It is too soon to say that the Galician fighting demonstrates that this was an accurate forecast or constitutes a great disaster. Certainly it is a tremendous defeat, but we shall not have to wait long to see whether the Allied prophets have at last been accurate."

"Accepting the Allied forecast for the moment, what should now happen is a withdrawal by the Germans either from France or from all the Russian territory which they now hold, save only Russian Poland. We may soon see the evacuation of France and even of Belgium or the retreat behind the Niemen and the Vistula."

Evacuation May Follow.

"But the first will be accepted as a tremendous moral defeat all over the world and will encourage France and Britain to go forward; the second will be a plain invitation to Rumania and Greece to come in on the winning side and a discouragement to Bulgaria and Turk, which may conceivably tempt one or both to change sides, for so far both have suffered out of all proportion to anything they expected, and their hope of permanent profit is growing very dim."

"On the other hand, we may see that the Germans will be able to bring reserves into Galicia, restore the deadlock, standing behind the Bug and the Zlota Lipa and at the same time beat off any British attack in the west, an Italian offensive in the south or Allied operations in the Balkans. Yet even now it is not too soon to say that we are witnessing what is intended by the Allies to be the first move in the 'Big Push,' their supreme effort to win the war."

The Decisive Period. "It is my own belief—and in this I found ample agreement in Europe—that the present summer will see the decisive phase of the present war. Unless one side or the other wins a substantial victory, unless the Germans are turned out of France and Belgium, or such a deliverance is well begun, I believe the winter will see the beginning of negotiations for peace on the basis of status quo ante. I do not believe that if the deadlock

continues any belligerent will continue to desire war, provided no sacrifice of territory is asked of any nation. Nor do I believe that any such demand will be made if there is no change."

"But the eagerness of Germany to make peace before the summer campaign began, the refusal of the Allies and the astonishing success of the Russians in the first operation must combine to give new hope to the friends of the Allies and afford at least reasonable ground for believing, as the French and British do, that after Verdun the outcome of the war is assured."

The Meaning of Verdun.

"We begin to see the meaning of Verdun more clearly now. France once more 'took on' the 'operative corner' of the fight. She accepted and fulfilled the mission of holding the final drive of the Germans to win a moral victory on the battlefield. By holding Verdun for nearly four months under terrific attack the French have succeeded in preventing the moral victory for Germany; their work is now about done. It must be for the British and the Russians to bear the cost in lives and to do the main work of the summer campaign. France has fought and won another Marne, even if the ruins of the old city of Verdun should ultimately fall to the Germans."

"Verdun may easily prove to be another Genoa and Petain may have rendered to the Allies exactly the service that Masena rendered to Napoleon when he held the Italian town until the victory of Marengo had been prepared. Genoa finally fell, but Marengo settled the war."

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Splendid Way in Which
England Gets Dollars.

This war is making new precedents of many kinds. The financial precedents are startling both in magnitude and in character. War debts and war cost have reached proportions away beyond human comprehension, but England's method of selling her own loans is not only admirable but must be greatly admired. The United States will not buy enough French and English bonds to pay for the supplies which these countries purchased here. The United States will, however, buy an unlimited amount of the stocks and bonds of its own corporations which are owned in Europe. British brains evolved a way to buy these American supplies and to pay for them with American dollars.

Parliament has compelled British investors to turn over their American securities, taking new British loans in payment. These American securities are being sold as rapidly as possible in the United States, and the proceeds in dollars are used to pay for war supplies. Never before did any nation mobilize in this fashion the individually owned stocks and bonds of its people and compel them to exchange them for its own loans. It is good business for the British government, and it is also good business for the United States, which gets back its own securities at moderate prices with the proceeds of its unexpended sales of materials at sky-high prices. But only time can tell if this is likewise a good thing for the individual British investor. At any rate, he has the satisfaction of knowing that when he sells his American stocks and bonds, he gets in exchange a lien upon his empire, for whose safety 5,000,000 men have shouldered arms.—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

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