

HUN TERMS WILL BE MODERATE

THE war student who depends on the military expert for enlightenment as to the locality of the coming fighting will be perplexed by diametrically opposed opinions. The expert of the New York Times, whose capacity is beyond criticism, says that the Germans will undertake a great offensive between Kovel and the Carpathians. He believes that there will be no German offensive in the West. The defence of Verdun has been an object lesson in the French powers of resistance, and it is not a lesson that need be learned for the second time. The Germans were not only disastrously beaten at Verdun, but they were barely able to hold their own on the Somme. The British are now much stronger than they were then, and they have an undeniable advantage in their shell supply. Why, then, should the Germans expect to succeed on a field where their record has been one of nearly continuous failure?

But three days later the New York Times prints a letter from the Amsterdam correspondent of the London Chronicle, who tells us that large bodies of troops are being sent to the depots in western Germany and that they are composed partly of new recruits and partly of veterans from the eastern lines. This movement, he says, confirms his opinion that there will be another attempt on a very great scale to score a big victory in the West, and that either for moral or for military reasons there will be a desperate onslaught in the West within the next few weeks. To this end "all possible elements of frightfulness are being piled up in readiness. These include still more horrible gases and other barbarities than have hitherto been used." The land attack, says the same correspondent, will be sustained from the ocean, where a large fleet of new submarines with all kinds of improvements and able to remain at sea for four weeks will work devastation upon all shipping, irrespective of flag or nationality.

The first of these two views seems to be the more reliable, always supposing that Germany will undertake any offensive at all. She knows well that a Western offensive, unless it should have the most triumphant success, would put her in possession of nothing that must not ultimately be surrendered. She entertains no illusions about territorial gains in the West. Whatever she now holds or whatever she may presently hold in the West will have a value for trading purposes and for nothing else. But she does expect to retain her Eastern gains, or at least all of those gains that have a bearing upon the transcontinental railroad. And she knows well that her hold upon those gains must be of the most shadowy kind so long as Russia is unbeaten, so long as she is able to send men down into Roumania and to fortify the banks of the Danube. With the Russians on the Sereth, the Serbians at Monastir, and the British and French at Saloniki, Germany's grip on the railroad may be shaken loose at any moment. Moreover, an unbeaten Russia is looking steadily at Constantinople, and with the Turkish capital in Russian hands there would be no all-German road into Asia. But if the Russians could be driven back from Kovel and Lemberg they must at once abandon their Roumanian lines, and Germany might then believe that her hold upon the railroad line was secure. We may remember also that Hindenburg is essentially an Eastern general, and that he has never concealed his opinion of the superior importance of the Eastern field.

BUT we rather beg the question when we ask ourselves where the German offensive will begin. It is by no means certain that there will be any German offensive. That Germany will carry out a number of savage attacks upon various parts of the Allied line goes without saying, just as she is doing at this moment in front of Verdun. But a general offensive is something very much larger. A general offensive is an effort to secure the initiative, and to dictate the area and the direction of the campaign. And we may very much doubt if Germany is at all

All Signs Point to Great Economic Weakening. Germany May be Willing to Give up Everything on West Front and Even Alsace, if She can Hold East and Digest Austria

B y S I D N E Y C O R Y N

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HINDENBURG is the apostle of frightfulness. The Kaiser is said to be an advocate of peace at any reasonable price. German editors are leading the army. Their criticisms are permitted to go through by the Emperor when Hindenburg would probably suppress them. Germany no longer has any hope of winning on the west front. In the east she has harried the Balkans which under the thumb of Austria would be the means of a yet greater Empire for the Germans on the assumption that Berlin can swallow Vienna. No further great German offensive seems possible. The recent eruptions are only the signs of desperation. Some experts predict a fresh outbreak of German violence in the west. They are probably mistaken. Mr. Coryn has nothing to say in this issue as yet about what has happened in the United States.

in the position to do this, if she can concentrate enough men anywhere to compel her enemies to abandon their own plans in order to defend themselves. That she was able to concentrate a large and successful army in Roumania is true enough, but it is to be remembered that this was done at a time when all other parts of the field were inactive as a result of winter. Roumania was almost the only area where fighting was possible. The German army in Roumania was drawn from all other parts of the line, and it was strongly aided by the Bulgarians, who are already beginning to ask themselves why they should go on fighting. And yet in spite of conditions so favourable to their arms we find that the German force in Roumania is now practically at a standstill and that the strength of its blow seems to have been spent. Germany could probably have done very little in Roumania had it been possible to maintain the fighting against her elsewhere. Is it likely that she can now hold the line everywhere and at the same time amass enough men at any given point to undertake a real offensive that shall give her the initiative? It hardly seems so.

I MENTIONED the present attack upon Verdun, which seems to be in considerable force, as an example of the isolated assaults that will probably be directed against various points of the Allied line. We may suppose that this particular movement was intended to forestall a French threat against Metz. Some weeks ago I suggested that the French army, liberated by the cessation of the Verdun siege, would be used in this way, and from time to time there have been reports of movements eastward against the German fortress, which is actually within range of the larger French guns. It seems likely that the Germans have been alive to this danger and that their new attack upon Verdun was intended to remove it.

It is therefore by no means certain that Germany will undertake an offensive at all, but if she does so it will probably be in the East. It is only in the East that her prospects are at all encouraging and it is only in the East that she can expect to gain any permanent territorial advantages. We may dismiss as wholly improbable the stories that point to an invasion of Switzerland. If Switzerland should be

willing to assent to such an invasion it would of course enable the German armies to make a damaging attack on the French right wing or even to descend upon Italy. But there is no evidence that Switzerland would assent. On the contrary, she has mobilized her forces in order to maintain her integrity, and the Swiss army is by no means insignificant. By an invasion of Swit-

zerland, Germany would do no more than create a new enemy for herself, and an enemy that would instantly receive reinforcements from France and Italy. At the beginning of the war a large part of Switzerland was strongly pro-German, and to such an extent as to welcome a German invasion. But much of this sympathy has been dispelled by the fate of Belgium, and it now exists only among the intellectuals of the German cantons. Swiss patriotism is supreme among the masses of the people, and they would unite with enthusiasm against an invader. None the less, the mobilization of the Swiss army is a proof that the authorities are wide awake to the possibilities.

THE report of Sir Douglas Haig on the battle of the Somme seems to point clearly to a resumption of the fighting in the same area as soon as the weather shall permit. Sir Douglas Haig says that his army sought to attain three main objects. The first was to relieve Verdun, the second was to prevent the transfer of troops to Russia, and the third was to exhaust the German strength. The British field marshal makes no mention of a hope to pierce the German line and roll it up north and south, but we need have no doubt that there was such a hope and that it has not been abandoned. But the three objects enumerated by General Haig were, he says, attained. The siege of Verdun was raised in order to meet the new danger in the north; the dispatch of troops to Russia was stopped; and German resistance became "decidedly feebler" toward the end of the operations. Bad weather, he says, "has given the enemy a respite," and from this we may infer that the battle will be resumed as soon as the snow and mud have disappeared. If one might venture on a forecast from such scanty data as are available it would include a new battle on the Somme and probably over a wider front, and some serious move on the part of the Saloniki army as the main features of the fighting now immediately ahead of us.

At the moment of writing there has been no further peace proposal from Germany and nothing but a mass of gossip and conjecture from which to construct an opinion of the actual situation. There are stories from neutral countries of a keen rivalry between the Emperor and Von Hindenburg, and, on the part of the people, a loyalty that oscillates between the ruler and the general. Von Hindenburg is said to favour projects along the line of "frightfulness," of which the Emperor does not approve, but it is hard to see what these can consist of over and above a ruthless submarine war. Von Hindenburg looks at the problem from the purely military point of view and knows little or nothing of internal conditions nor the views of neutrals. The Emperor, on the other hand, must be something more than a soldier. He must be a statesman also. The resumption of peace will relegate Von Hindenburg to the background, but the Emperor must still be at the helm and he must confront problems of reconstruction even greater and more dreary than those of war. It is for these reasons that popular gossip in Holland and Switzerland attributes to the Emperor an overwhelming desire for peace and to Von Hindenburg an equally rigid determination to continue the war. The antagonism between the two is said to be so acute as to amount almost to hatred.

BUT we need not doubt that other peace proposals will soon be on the way. The evidences of internal distress are too numerous to be negated by a few neutral travellers who are personally escorted through Berlin and allowed to see the well-lighted restaurants and the well-staged evidences of nor-