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Why the War Will Be Over by June.

Huns to Offer Peace Before November.

(By H. G. WELLS.)

Mr. H. G. Wells, the brilliant novelist, satirist and social philosopher, whose writings command attention the world over, and who has just returned from visits to the Italian and Western fronts, affirms his conviction that peace will come before next June.

In my recent journey along the front from the Adriatic to Arras I found no question more abundantly discussed than the question when the war will end.

They discussed it in all European languages, except only Dutch, Spanish, Magyar and German at Udine, and it was going on in mumbled undertones on the darkened boats that came in to Folkestone pier. My friend Loyson, who lives in Whistler's house in the Rue du Bac, unmasked the battery of an interview upon this universal topic from behind the pleasure of a dinner party. An English paper makes him declare that I pledged my reputation as a prophet that the war would end in next June, whereas I simply protested that he asked me to stake my reputation. These little differences are apt to occur in translation and retranslation.

The opinion I expressed in the glow of Lieutenant Loyson's festivities was that the Germans will make a public and official bid for peace before the year is out, and probably in November, and that the Allies will get the peace they want by June. Since then a Daily Chronicle interviewer has induced General Brusiloff to say that he shall get our peace in August which exactly fits Lord Kitchener's three years. My opinion has, however, an authority behind it—well, almost as good as General Brusiloff's. It isn't by any means merely mine.

Huns Fighting For Terms.

Now, what are the main factors in this calculation? Let us try and state them as simply as possible. Firstly upon Eastern, Western, Italian and Balkan fronts the Central Powers, the reader may rest assured, are being beaten. There may be temporary set-



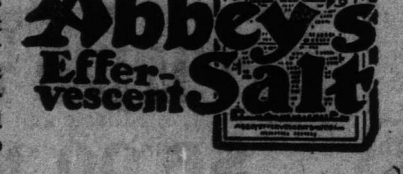
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interests of Italy, Rumania, Poland and the Jugo-Slavs.

The cessation of Germany's lost colonies.

I do not think the Allied Powers are disposed to concede easier terms than that. Nor is this all that will satisfy them. My list omits various points of great interest and importance; it says nothing about the security of Britain at sea, the compensation for sunken shipping, Poland, Bohemia, nor Bulgaria, but these issues need not detain us in a calculation so sketchy as the one we are making.

These omitted questions are, so to speak, collateral questions. They will be settled in a parallel manner and at about the same pace as those others. And none of those points will be settled to the satisfaction of the Allies until certain military ends have been achieved. Because until these ends are achieved Germany will cling to the hope of some showy temporary success or some accident that will bring about neutral intervention, to save her from the full measure of the consequences she challenged in August, 1914.

Enemy Main Fronts Are Crumbling.

This year the Central Powers have made three snatches at such temporary successes; they have concentrated enormous efforts upon single points, points upon which it was unnatural to expect such concentrations, not in the hope of changing the ultimate destinies of the war, but in the hope of snatching an arguable advantage; they have made three great lunges; the first was the Verdun offensive, the second the much weaker Trentino offensive, and the third is the Silesia offensive, perhaps the last kick of all.

None of these thrusts can or will alter the fact that the German defences on the great main fronts, east and west, are crumbling and bending in and approaching the point of rupture. The moment of rupture on the west cannot come much later than November. Now I argue that Germany will almost certainly make her first offer before that rupture comes and while she holds a large piece of industrial France.

She will, with an eye on America, offer to trade Belgium and some inadequate compensation, the occupied districts of France, Alsace, but not all Lorraine, for the return of her colonies. She will seem in that way to give France much that she wants and desires, while giving nothing to England and less than nothing to Russia, and she will hope that this will produce dissension among the Allies.

She counts, quite wrongly, upon a certain fatigue in France. She judges other countries by her own psychology and cannot understand that the Frenchman is neither knave nor fool nor faint heart.

When Constantinople Will Fall.

She will also, probably, make some quite large offer to Italy, Istria and Dalmatia, for example, reserving Trieste and Fiume as free ports, and complicating matters by conditions that will be calculated to produce trouble between Italian and Slav. She will also make proposals about Poland, planned to make friction between America and Western liberal ideas on the one hand, and Russia on the other. This is her obvious course. This, I reckon, is what she will do.

But I am convinced that all the Allies know their Germany well enough now, and that the theory that America can be fooled by sham reasonableness is unsound. I infer that the Allies will not halt in their attack while they are engaged in rejecting these suggestions. I think there may be a sort of Dutch auction of German proposals as 1917 opens. But I do not think that until Sofia has called off, until the Russians are actually in Constantinople, the French and English in Lorraine, the Italians over the Julian Alps and the Eastern Allies near Vienna, that Germany will come down to the hard rock of the terms we must have. That carries my computation well on into next year and involves a spring campaign.

I believe the German western front is very near giving now. They are taking great risks. They are holding quiet parts of the western line with dangerously small forces. There may be no end of prepared positions behind their present line, but they have little else besides prepared positions; they have no great reserves of men or stuff. Their actual strength is now all in the line. They may be clever enough to get back presently to a second line, the Meuse, say, and hold that for a time; but every day of declining morale makes such a withdrawal more difficult for them. The present system of offensive as it has been developed by the innate military genius and systematic instincts of the French, supported as it is by our magnificent infantry and airmen and abundant guns and material, is bound ultimately to go through any line the Germans can put up.

We are certainly not eight months from the time when the west front will be on German soil, and the Russians, coming round through Varna and Trebizond, are, I reckon, not eight months from Constantinople. In

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eight months the Italians may have gnawed their way through the mountains to Innsbruck, and will, I reckon, also be near Labich in the east. Trieste is theirs now for the taking. Sofia in eight months' time will either be occupied by the Allies or at peace.

I submit that is a reasonable horoscope so far as military aspects go. Clearly my figures are, as one says, for the sake of illustration. Six months, one says, or eight; what one means is, of course, really no more definite than "about that figure." Why I think General Brusiloff is making an over-cautious estimate is because I have just seen the French and the English, the guns, the air work, and the German prisoners on the Somme front.

Accidents May Happen.

There you have with the utmost frankness my own unexpert opinion of the broad possibilities before us. That they are such broad possibilities adds greatly to the confidence of the forecast. There may be unexpected accidents that may produce delays and modifications.

The adverse treacheries of the Balkans may not yet be exhausted. Good men may have to die for that.

I have supposed nothing will happen at sea but a continuance of the blockade, but I do not think anything can happen at sea that will not accelerate rather than delay the end. The Zeppelins have done their worst—and it is, by the scale of the war, ridiculous. There can be no question of the steadfast loyalty of all the great Allies.

Revolution in Germany.

But one other big possibility remains, and that is a possibility which nobody I find will consider a possibility, except myself. Everybody I have talked to seems convinced that the Central European Powers will keep their solidarity until the end, and that there is no chance, for example, of a revolutionary movement in Germany. I am not convinced of that. It is one of the things that one feels in one's bones, as people say, rather than reasons out, but my impression of the possibility of real insurrection in Germany may be put in figures as a one in ten chance within a couple of years after the war.

The German Government obviously fears its people far more than any other Government in the world at the present time. It takes more pains to manipulate public opinion. But that fear will tend rather to prolong than shorten the war, because even the weakest Governments have a firmer grip during actual war conditions. A Germany in urgent danger of revolution will probably fight even more tenaciously than Germany entirely united against its enemies. This possibility of revolution, though an interesting one in itself, may therefore be ruled out of the present estimate.

So my guess for the date of peace remains: not earlier than April and most probably by June. H. G. WELLS. —Sunday Pictorial.

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