

of propaganda have already given way to colder reality. It has been announced this week that there will be no issue of uniforms or boots save to recruits who have been bombed out. Dittmar in his weekly talk was apparently concerned to provide doubters with some assurance of the military value of the new levies. Their creation signified "an unprecedented extension in depth of the battle zone" but he explained that by this he did not mean an increase in fully-armed forces, but "an increased degree of safety for the rear of the actual fighting front." The levies might achieve considerable defensive strength "but their chief value would be moral rather than material."

Mr. Churchill's statement on the Moscow visit has received fairly detailed comment. Apart from abuse, and the capital made out of the picture of the wandering minstrel, between whom "and the kings to whom he sang there was indeed a great gulf fixed in the Middle Ages," some comfort was derived from the cautious phraseology used to describe the military situation and from the lack of details as to what had really transpired in Moscow: "The House knows as little about the actual conversations as it knew before he spoke." German listeners were told not to be alarmed by the references to Allied unity and the destruction of Germany. This was nothing new and people need not hope for startling political developments: "Germany knows that at this stage the war will be and must be fought exclusively by military means."

The only utterance of political importance on the German side has come from Goebbels who, in another of his general reviews of the war, which was given considerable advance publicity, attempted a German balance sheet of happenings in the last three months. He argued that to fight for time, as Germany was now forced to do, was not hopeless resistance, but contained real hope of victory and suggested that the German leaders were not without a policy: "The nation is firmly determined to hold out in this struggle for its existence until its victorious end, and it is the duty of its leaders to show it the ways and means whereby this gallant endeavour may be brought to the speediest and most complete success." Denying that the self-confidence of the nation had been impaired, he praised the fine spirit both of fighting troops and air-raid victims, and assured his hearers that the September crisis was definitely over. He passed on an assurance of belief in victory given personally to him by Hitler and found in it more conviction than boastings in the enemy camp could provide. Hitler has this week given the same assurance in reply to a telegram from the new Hungarian Premier who had addressed him as "the first hero of the present tremendous military, ideological and workers' struggle." (See later under "Hungary.")

An examination of the fighting value of the German Air Force in October brings out the great efforts made by the Germans to develop their fighter force, which, despite all difficulties of training, reorganisation and fuel shortage, has increased in strength since August. The worst difficulties caused by the retreat through France, such as the lack of operational airfields, shelter cover, &c., within the Reich would seem to have been overcome. The supply of pilots is maintained by withdrawal from the now heavily reduced bomber force. Fuel difficulties have caused training in all branches to be cut to a minimum, but the efficiency of the German night-fighter force is stressed and experiments with jet-propelled aircraft are thought to be well advanced. It has long been evident that one task which the German Air Force is unable to perform is the provision of adequate cover for the fighting troops. What this means to the soldier is brought out by German Army Divisional Report on operations in Norway in July stating without qualification that "the enemy have complete mastery of the air. They bomb and strafe every movement, even single vehicles and individuals. They reconnoitre our front the whole time. Against all this the Luftwaffe is conspicuous by its total absence. . . . Our soldiers enter the battle in low spirits at the thought of the enemy's enormous material superiority. They are always asking: 'Where is the Luftwaffe?'"

Recent air attacks on the rail and water arteries of Western Germany have gravely prejudiced communication between the centres of heavy industry in the Ruhr from those in the rest of the Reich. Supply difficulties have reduced crude steel production in the Ruhr, and the bombing of Duisburg in early October has caused the actual destruction of one-third of all crude steel capacity in that district. Meanwhile, the Russian advance in east, south and north, in conjunction with Allied pressure on the neutral States, has deprived Germany of such important steel alloys as manganese, chrome, nickel and wolfram, which are bound to affect adversely German arms production. A shortage of weapons has been observed on both western and eastern fronts; this is, however, partly due to transport difficulties. It is also reported that 50 per cent. of the newly formed

infantry units in East Prussia are equipped with weapons confiscated from Czech stores in 1939.

In connexion with the armament plants now being driven underground in Germany, it is announced that underground workers are to be given additional rations, approximating to those received by miners. Suggestions have been made that the number of such plants is now considerable, and that working conditions (involving lack of air and sunlight, damp and discomfort) are not conducive to increased effort.

Now that the Allies stand on German soil, the refusal of Germans to believe in the brutality of their enemies is giving concern to the Nazi authorities. The press frequently rebukes people for saying that the Americans are not to be feared. The arrest was recently reported of a woman who said that British officers billeted in her home during the Rhineland occupation behaved like gentlemen. "Rumours" of the good behaviour of Allied troops are denied, and one paper has actually spoken of them as the cause of widespread refusal to obey the evacuation order. It is now clear that large numbers of people have done this in German towns so far captured. Similar developments are reported from the eastern districts of the Reich. The good behaviour of Russian troops, said DNB on the 23rd October, was a trick to persuade Germans not to resist them. The Nazi answer is a flood of publicity, greatly swollen of late, regarding enemy severity and brutality. Details have been given of the confiscation of food stocks in Aachen, the refusal to import further supplies; courts which pass only death sentences; bad conditions in work camps; and the like. The destruction of Wallendorf, announced in the United States on the 17th September, was kept back for this spate of publicity, and first revealed to Germans on the 12th October. Happenings in the East Prussian village of Nemmersdorf have been similarly written up. The German press has also reported the courageous behaviour of patriots in the conquered districts, notably that Eisenhower has been unable to find Germans to act as heads of communes, that administrative officials have continued to perform their duties only if they could thereby assist their compatriots. A Communist has, for lack of better candidates, had to be installed as Mayor of Eupen. Allied sentries have mysteriously disappeared.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

During the past week the Red Army has cleared practically the whole of Ruthenia of the enemy and has reached the eastern borders of Slovakia. The chief towns and communication centres of Chust, Mukačevo, Užhorod and Čop have all been taken, and on the 27th October, the eve of Czechoslovak Independence Day, M. Nemeč, the Czechoslovak Government Delegate for Liberated Territory, was able to send telegrams to President Beneš and Premier Sránek stating that he had entered Ruthenia and taken over the administration of the liberated areas.

By contrast, the German divisions in Slovakia have scored important successes against the resistance forces. The two main bastions of the patriots' defence area, Zvolen and Banská Bystrica, the centre and headquarters of the rising, were captured on the 26th and 27th October respectively, and the remaining troops and partisans can only hope to continue the struggle on a guerrilla basis in the hills. A telegram from the resistance headquarters to the Czechoslovak Government on the 27th October indicated the gravity of the situation: "The Slovak people and army fight enthusiastically for the Czechoslovak Republic despite absolute enemy superiority. They fight for every inch of liberated soil and pay a heavy toll. In the fierce iron encirclement, which becomes more and more gripping, the only encouragement in our physical and moral distress is the knowledge that you fight with us and that we are not alone." Subsequently it was announced that, in view of the nature of the fighting and to avoid giving information to the enemy, regular communiqués would no longer be issued.

Bratislava has naturally waxed jubilant over the capture of Banská Bystrica. President Tiso, his Premier and his Defence Minister sent grateful telegrams to Hitler, Ribbentrop and Himmler; flags were ordered to be flown in all towns and parishes of Slovakia; and the press and radio extracted the maximum of propaganda value from the success. The favourite lines of argument were that Beneš, under Russian orders, had once more brought calamity to Slovakia, and that, as in the case of Warsaw, the failure of the Red Army to bring promised relief to the rebels was merely additional proof of Bolshevik perfidy.

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