

MAGNANIMOUS HINDENBURG!

THE Russian offensive still holds centre of the stage and with the limelight full upon it and from its orderly and steady development we may infer that it will be continuous. Last week I said that the actual military gains were relatively unimportant in comparison with the fact that the Russians were actually fighting, and that a great battle front quiescent for months had once more burst into volcanic flame. That, I think, is still true, and in a sense in no way derogatory to the brilliance of the Russian successes.

Whether the German commanders believed in a Russian military paralysis we have no means of knowing, but we may doubt it. At least they told the people that they believed it, and the people of course accepted the assurance as they always do. Hindenburg—so they were informed—could smash the Russian front whenever and wherever he pleased, but a sense of magnanimity restrained him. Germany was under no necessity to fight in the east. She had only to await the development of the Russian revolution, and the demand for a separate peace was certain to follow.

Hindenburg even committed the folly of offering an armistice to Russia so that she might conduct her elections in peace, and this only a few days before the offensive began. He may have had a desperate hope that the offer would be accepted, but at least the offer would sound well to the German public. Scheidemann, the Socialist, had been sent to confer with his Russian confreres, and the German people felt no doubt that he would win them over. Of course he failed. He had been instructed to say that there could be no domestic reforms in Germany until the advent of peace, and that the best way to hasten the social revolution in Germany was to end the war by a Russian withdrawal.

But the Russian delegates were not so easily beguiled. They knew that Scheidemann was a representative of the government and not of the socialists, and they could hardly suppose that the German government was so solicitous for the social revolution. They were fully convinced that a victorious Germany was not likely to be a revolutionary Germany, and that there could be no hope of reform until the German armies had been soundly beaten in the field. Scheidemann on his return to Berlin found that he must bear the penalty of failure. He was soundly trounced in the press, and then ignominiously kicked back into the Socialist ranks.

That was only a day or two before the resumption of the fighting on the eastern front, and we can hardly doubt that the German commanders knew well what was coming, and that the trumping of the Scheidemann trick was a foregone conclusion. But the people had to be fed with comfortable fictions, and so they were offered the picture of a magnanimous Germany unwilling to strike a prostrate foe, and offering the olive branch instead of the sword. That they will now resent the sedative so assiduously offered to them is too much to expect. Indeed we are told that they are already solacing themselves with the assurance that the Russian fighting is merely a spasm, and that it will wear itself out in the course of a few days.

But there is nothing in the study of the map and of events to confirm this narcotic theory. The situation of the Teutonic forces was bad enough in the light of the first bulletins, but it has grown steadily worse with each passing day. The Russians were reported to have taken Brzezany, about fifty miles south east of Lemberg, which was evidently their objective. The Teuton lines were not only pushed back but broken over a front of twenty miles. If the attack had been confined to this area we might have accepted the "spasm" theory as at least plausible, and this in spite of the large number of prisoners and the quantity of booty. But the attack spread rapidly. Halicz, about thirty miles to the south of Brzezany, was captured in spite of heavy resistance, and now we are told that the Russians

THERE may be a scarcity of food in Germany, but the authorities have already substituted a preparation for which all Germans have an apparently insatiable appetite. The new food is known as War-Bunkum

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And this poor down-trodden wretch is a sample of the soldiery that is being fed on War-Bunkum in the trenches.

are advancing upon the Carpathians from Stanislaw, which is about twenty miles south of Halicz. Moreover we learn that there are signs of activity north of Lemberg, toward Kovel, and this means that the whole length of the Russian line south of the Pripet Marsh to the Carpathians is involved, or about three hundred miles. This does not look at all like a flash in the pan. On the contrary, it appears to be a well considered and well prepared offensive, led with skill, and backed by a plentiful supply of munitions. We may remember that Brusiloff has an extraordinarily high reputation, and a long record of spectacular successes. His previous advances have never been stayed except by treachery at Petrograd, and he is said to be the one Russian general who is heartily feared by his Teuton opponents.

BUT even if the Russian advance should be stayed it is certain to have the happiest results upon the other fronts. Reinforcements must be sent to the east, and there are no reinforcements available, except at the cost of the German lines in the west, and the Austrian lines in the Trentino. Perhaps the political results will be no less real. In spite of denials we may be sure that Austria is straining the link that binds her to her ally, although here she has peculiar difficulties to face, seeing that all her military forces are under the command of Hindenburg. And we may be sure also that the political upheaval now in progress in Germany will lose none of its force from the eastern news of which the gravity cannot be wholly concealed from anyone possessing a map.

The sudden and partially successful raid upon the British at the northern end of the lines is generally assumed to presage a German offensive toward Dunkirk. I do not believe that it has any such meaning. Otherwise it would have been followed up with vigour, and at the moment of writing there are no such indications. It is far more likely that it was intended to sustain the hands of the German Chancellor and of the Junker party in the political crisis that they were then being called upon to face.

The Junkers were strongly opposed to the Chancellor when he was suspected of lukewarmness toward the unrestricted submarine campaign, but when he stiffened his back in this respect the Junkers placed themselves solidly behind him and are behind him now. It may have been believed that a suddenly snatched success would do something to lighten the gloom, and to rally the public in support of a statesman who seems now to represent the extreme military policy.

THERE is a disposition in some quarters to look upon the present situation in the west as a restoration of a deadlock that can only be broken by the intervention of fresh armies. It is a new manifestation of the "German myth" that looks drearily upon all situations from a settled conviction of German invincibility. The deadlock theory, it may be remembered, was particularly to the fore during the weeks immediately preceding the German retreat from the Noyon angle, and now it seems to have crept once more into favour. We are told that the Allies must now be content to sit tight, and mass their resources for a great and decisive blow next spring, and that this year's fighting is so "stale" that nothing more can be expected from it. This despondent theory is evidently based on the theory that the German armies have to be driven back yard by yard to the German frontier. As a matter of fact they have to be driven back only a very short distance, and when that point has been reached the task of the Allies will not be to drive them back, but rather to keep pace with their retreat, as was the case upon the last occasion. We do not know precisely where that point is situated because we do not know how far the German manpower is sufficient to compensate for the bulging of their lines. But the critical point is certainly very close to the present position.

The German military experts are certainly not talking about a deadlock. Quite the contrary. Major Endres, writing in the Frankfurter Zeitung, finds some dubious satisfaction in the fact that the Allies have not broken the German lines—which of course they never tried to do—but he says "the great offensive is by no means ended" nor even "reached its zenith." He says that the British and the French pressure has required the German command to revise its whole "tactical defensive scheme." A still greater authority, one of the greatest in Germany, Colonel Gadke, writing in the Berlin Vorwarts, says that all the fighting in the west constitutes one great battle, one hundred and twenty miles long, and he then accurately sketches the Allied plan when he says, "It is perfectly clear that the Anglo-French attack is based upon one guiding idea, to occupy the German centre with strong forces, and to deliver decisive blows on both wings, which, in the event of success, shall lead to a great outflanking movement."

Colonel Gadke is referring, of course, not to the whole length of the rival lines from the North Sea to Metz, but to the new Hindenburg line from Arras to Rheims, with its centre at St. Quentin. He means that if either end of the Hindenburg line should be pried loose from its supports it would involve an outflanking not only of the Hindenburg line, but of all other lines, northward to the North Sea, and eastward to Metz, or at least to Verdun. Reverting to a previous simile we may compare the two ends of the Hindenburg line with hinges that unite the doors to the lintels—the Hindenburg line being the doors and the old established lines north and east being the lintels. Continuing the simile, we may say that the task of prying off the hinges depends upon the length of the screws and their grip upon the wood, that is to say, upon the successful tenacity of the Germans in holding on to the junction points. But the hinge screws can not be very long. Hinge screws never are. And the moment the screws seem to be drawing out of the wood there will be another German

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