

LAST DAYS OF SEPTEMBER WERE OMINOUS ONES FOR GERMANY

(N. Y. Times' Editorial)

The entry of the British and French into Comblès was not a more ominous thing for Germany than the false bulletins behind which she concealed the failure of the attempt to smash into the Dobruja, or the great efforts she is making to mask the laudible response to the appeal for a war loan. The last week has been an ominous week for Germany, bitter week to those who are directing her exhausting fight against the inevitable. Her military effort has been a defensive one, with a smashing blow in the east. The eastern glow failed to smother anything, and a few days later her defensive in the west suffered another disaster. Meanwhile Hindenburg's cry that he could not fight without money has met with such a response that the effort in Berlin is directed as much toward the concealment of the response as toward the incitement of it.

Hindenburg intended to hold the British and French stationary while he shattered the Russian-Rumanian line and got in his rear. Mackensen struck hard in the Dobruja, with momentary success, but the Russians and Rumanians now hold him stationary, and their forces increase daily. The moment when the smashing tactics, so often successful, could win another victory, went by when Mackensen was stopped and forced to stand in the Dobruja. The highest recognition of this failure was the German attempt to conceal it, the false bulletins from headquarters which announced it as a success. The German bulletins used to be truthful. It is a paralyzing disappointment and a great fear that have forced Berlin to resort to the subterfuges of Sofia and Constantinople.

Close on the heels of this disaster—fear, as it is the failure of Hindenburg's plan of campaign, it is nothing less, even should Mackensen win some dramatic but minor victories—comes the capture of Comblès, the blasting out of a rock that had made impassable the road to Bapaume or to Peronne. The offensive again, failure to strike the blow in the west, failure to ward off the blow in the east.

At home every effort is being made to raise the money of which Hindenburg tells the empire it is in such need. There have been other loans, and Germany has always announced the successive stages of their raising, the totals subscribed, because she had no object in conceding them; they were for her

an object of pride. Now all she will give out is the amount of the largest contributions; the world is kept in the dark about the response of the people. Instead, in Germany itself the loan is an object of doubt, and even, it seems, of hostility, for the government, silent on the totals, is visible in "countering" certain rumors calculated to influence unfavorably the war loan and "stimulating enthusiasm among the public." Secretary Heffrich makes speeches combating the argument that "subscribing to the war loan lengthens the war," and calls it "infamous," "lying," and "treasonable" to say such things. Who is saying them? And why does the Cologne Gazette plead with small investors not to hang back, and belittle the large subscriptions of the few, which are the only subscriptions the government does not conceal? Meanwhile the German press clamors for the modification of the censorship, so that it can tell the truth about the conduct of the war. Failure in the east, staggering blows in the west, loss of confidence at home. These last days of September are ominous days for Germany. Her descending arm is arrested and gripped in the east, her upraised arm diverts no blow in the west and at home the mind of the people grows anxious and cautious. The loss of victory is the beginning of doubt.



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Grant in 1864; Allies in 1916

Remember that we may any day read that the British and French have got through. It is unlikely, but it is not impossible, and if they do get through then the western field will become the most interesting and important. But short of this it is well to recall that what the French and British are accomplishing is not the reconquest for vast areas, but the holding of big German forces on the western front and the consequent starvation of the Austrian and German lines in the east and south. They are inflicting heavy losses—not larger than they are suffering, probably materially less, just as Grant's losses were far greater than Lee's, but these losses, borne mainly by the British, the British can better afford to hold on. Above all, it is the strain the Allies are putting upon German stocks of munitions, by their western attack, which is helping the Russians and the Italians at this juncture.

Read Lee's comments in the last days of his defence of Petersburg, when the North was discouraged and the South frankly exultant in the belief that Grant could never break through and you will have the picture as the Allies see it and you will have exactly the idea of what the British and French are doing in the west, or trying to do. If the parallel is a good one, we may have many months before there is any break in the west, but the effect of the western operations will be unmistakable in the east and so far it has been unmistakable.

Looking over the whole field you may conclude that the Allies have agreed to make their main effort this summer and fall against Austria, Russia and Italy are to attack Austria, the French and British in due course of time will endeavor to reach the Austrian frontier coming up from Salonica. But now the mission of the French and the British is to occupy Germany so completely that she will be unable to go to the aid of her ally. Had they been able to do this in the spring of 1916, Austria would have collapsed in the Carpathian fighting. Had they been able to do this after the Marne and Lemberg, Austria would have collapsed in the first six months of the war. Everything now depends upon the amount of help Germany can give that ally she has twice saved. The amount of aid she can give is conditioned the amount of pressure she has to meet in the west.

The Allies are now engaged in putting into operation a thoroughly co-ordinated plan for winning the war. It seems to be a plan which has for its main element the elimination of Austria by defeat and exhaustion. If this be the case the striking and impressive work will be done by Russia with Italian contributions. If Austria is put out, then the German problem can be tackled next year. Meanwhile France and Britain are bending all their energies to holding as many Germans as possible on the western front. In doing this they may get through and expel the Germans from France and even from Belgium, but this presupposes a German weakness that is not disclosed or to be expected. The measure of Allied success may now be had in the east, not the west, by the Austrian situation, not the German, and the most important thing that the Allies have accomplished, the immobilizing of German masses when Austrian necessity is dire, is a thing that will not be disclosed in any official reports of trenches taken or lost, villages stormed or destroyed from the Somme to the Scarpe.

All through this war we have heard most about the western front. And this



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has been true, whether decisive actions like the Marne and Verdun were going on, or minor affairs like the countless little local attacks and counter-attacks from the Vosges to the sea. This is bound to continue, but there is every indication now that the decision in the war will come not in the west but in the east.

Bear in mind that in the Civil War our fathers, North and South, had their attention fixed upon Richmond and Washington and counted the Virginia campaigns the decisive operations. They were not. While Lee held Grant for many months, with little change of front, and prevented him from obtain-

ing any considerable advantage, the whole Confederacy crumbled to nothing under the blows of Thomas and Sherman. The western field in Europe may again become the most important, but it is not at the moment, and Russian, Italian, and, above all, Balkan operations deserve far closer attention.

If you think first of the battle of the Somme, you will necessarily get a distorted view of the war. The long trench war before Petersburg similarly misled Americans in 1864. But if you think of the battle of Europe, as historians now think of the whole field of the Civil War operations of 1864, if you think of the Russians as playing something of the

role of Sherman, of the Italians fulfilling the part of Thomas' mission, if you recall how Sherman and Thomas broke the back of the South while Lee and Grant stood firm—you will see the picture as it is in its making and be able to judge accurately the real state of the war—From "The Battle of Europe—Allied Offensives on Four Fronts," by Frank H. Simmonds, in the American Review of Reviews for September, 1916.

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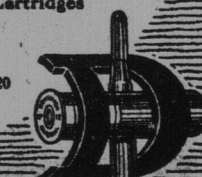
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