

GERMANY'S NEXT MOVE ?

blow which has already deprived the enemy of the power necessary for a new and dangerous assault. Some of the Russian leaders seem to be inclined to overlook this point.

Yet, even if a big-scale German action appears tactically possible, it still remains questionable from the strategic point of view. The following were the fundamental premises of the German attack on Russia: The conviction that their new military doctrine, tested in France and Belgium, would shortly lead to the destruction of Soviet forces; the belief that under the influence of military reverses a disintegration of the Soviet state machine would follow; and, finally, that a centrifugal anti-Soviet movement could, if necessary, be developed among the peasantry dissatisfied about the collectivisation of agriculture (*Kolhozs*). The latter especially applied to Ukraine, where a strong national-Ukrainian propaganda against Russians and Bolsheviks was simultaneously launched.

Russian Unity

None of those premises have, however, materialised. A quick and decisive German victory over Soviet forces proved to be impossible. It must be admitted that these forces suffered serious losses in men and in material, and that the German capture of important industrial centres may handicap the Soviet war effort. Nevertheless, in spite of their territorial gains, and with particular regard to their own losses, it is still questionable whether the Germans are now any nearer to the conquest of Soviet Russia than they were at the beginning of the war. Furthermore, they must by now realise that they can hardly hope to bring about anything like a collapse of the Soviet Government.

Supposing, even, that at an extravagantly expensive price they should occupy both Moscow and Leningrad—as they might have done in November—the Soviet Government would, in any event, remain the master of the situation. The power of cohesion of the Soviet state machinery will be fully maintained in spite of any future reverses. The difficulties in supplying the army, in reorganising the industries, in keeping up the communications, will be overcome and the confidence of the population will remain unshaken. It is, indeed, only insufficiently realised in this country how all the German endeavours, though undertaken on a fairly large scale, have utterly failed to disrupt the social or national unity of the population of U.S.S.R.

The possibility of a renewed German drive against Russia cannot be ruled out on the presumption that it will lead to another long and difficult campaign, which would tie up the major part of the German forces. Yet the strategic aims to be achieved must justify those efforts. Nothing short of a total destruction of the U.S.S.R. as a political and military power, resulting in a complete liquidation of the Eastern front and the liberty to transfer the bulk of German armies elsewhere, would be an adequate object of such a new offensive.

It is doubtful whether there will be unanimity in the German High Command, and German political leadership, as to the prospects of attaining the above purpose.

The probability of a new German campaign against Russia, not limited to any defensive action only, must not be examined exclusively from the point of "grand strategy." It is also necessary to have it viewed in the light of one important aspect—that of the German oil supplies.

There cannot be any doubt that, starting the war against U.S.S.R. with a thorough destruction of Russian military power in view, the German High Command reckoned also upon capturing the Caucasian oil fields as the most valuable and coveted part of the booty. To say, however, that the Germans embarked upon the war in order to capture those oil fields would be a simplification to the point of inaccuracy. The war would have come, probably, even if the Soviet country had no oil resources whatsoever.

Nevertheless, it is now frequently pointed out that, since this war started, there has been some change in the posi-

tion of Germany's oil supplies. Having lasted much longer than it was expected and having required a much bigger effort, the Russian campaign is said to have depleted the German oil supplies. There has always been speculation in this country on that subject. After the first two months of war it was alleged in the bulletin published by one of the most reputable Statistical Institutes that the German oil supplies would be exhausted after a period of four months of full-scale military operations. Quite recently the daily Press came back on this subject.

It seems uncertain how far the published figures may be relied upon. It is known that the average German peacetime oil consumption was close to 6,000,000 tons a year. Since the war started it has been increased by the enormous needs of the air force and of the mechanised units. On the other hand, it has decreased owing to the drastic restrictions of the motorised goods, passenger and private transport. Moreover, not only the civilian but also military vehicles switched over from petrol to the use of gas (*Leuchtgas*) for fuel.

Already, when travelling across the German occupied part of Poland in the first months of the war, the writer noticed among the hundreds of military lorries only a few which were still driven on petrol instead of gas. Maybe that in the more remote parts of occupied Soviet territories and in the Balkans the liquid fuel only can be used. Still, the economy in petrol consumption achieved by the almost general use of gas all over the Reich and most of the occupied countries must not be underrated.

Oil Fuel Essential

The annual production of petrol, including the Rumanian, Polish and German wells as well as synthetic products, is probably reaching something between 7,000,000 and 8,000,000 tons. Consequently the gap between the supplies and the demand should not have been too excessive in the past. In the months of comparative lull certain supplies might possibly have been accumulated. The six months of expensive operations on the Russian front have most probably devoured those supplies. It is possible that with a further numerical development of the *Luftwaffe* and of the armoured forces, necessitated to keep pace with the air and land forces of the Democracies, the balance in the fuel situation is becoming less and less favourable for the Axis.

But is the oil famine so acute as to dictate the next step of the German military machine? Should this prove to be so, it would be a most conspicuous triumph for the British blockade policy. For it would mean that the blockade can be credited not only with enforcing upon the enemy the experience of some serious difficulties in his war preparations, but also with driving him to certain deviations in his war plans and thus influencing his strategy.

Should this prove true, the route to the Caucasus (either across the Crimea and the banks of the Don and Kuban or along the Southern coast of the Black Sea) might become one of the pivotal points of the globe. Then the entire consolidated power of the allied anti-Axis forces must be, and certainly would be, concentrated on barring this route against the enemy.

Aircraft Work for the Blind

SOME time ago Phillips and Powis Aircraft, Ltd., introduced a new scheme for training draughtswomen. That scheme is proving a considerable success. Last week the firm announced another pioneering venture, at a luncheon in London at which Col. Llewellyn, the new Minister for Aircraft Production, and Sir Ian Fraser, chairman of St. Dunstan's, were present. Recently a number of blind men, trained at St. Dunstan's, had been taken into the P. and P. works, where they began with such simple operations as removing the burr from the edges of machined parts. They then went on to inspection, first by "go" and "not go" gauges, and afterwards more advanced forms. Even assembly of parts was not beyond them.