

The Wonders of Russia's Military Strength

Continued from last issue
But if it is impossible for Hitler and Blomberg to over run the Socialist army with a "lightning blow" on the ground, may be possible for Goring to do so with a lightning blow in the air! That is, in fact, the actual task of modern air strategy. If Goring rises a few hours before the declaration of war from the German and "allied" airdromes, flies across the Soviet frontier during the night and hurls himself precipitately on the Russian railway stations, barracks, depots, factories, and Government buildings, can he balk the Soviet mobilization? Then the object would certainly have been achieved in "another dimension."

In theory—yes, he can. In practice—the question is that of the relation of forces in the air, the relation between the air armies, the air strategy, and the air tactics of the Fascists and the Socialists.

That Hitler's air army is today growing without interruption and on a scale hardly seen hitherto is beyond question. That with a continuance of this tempo it can become not the third strongest but the second strongest (formerly France) air force in Europe, is a serious possibility.

The number of Germany's military airplanes at the beginning of 1936 may be put circumspectly at about 1,200 first line planes and about 1,000 reserve planes. But since

May the monthly production may be safely estimated at 250 first line planes, so that the beginning of this year of the German air army numbers roughly 4,000 first line planes (of which more than half are heavy bombers) and at least 3,000 in reserve.

Altogether 7,000 airplanes. That is five or six times the size of the British air force at the beginning of 1936, and considerably more than France possessed at the same date. But in the meantime France has also increased her armaments. A race is on, but since the German airplane industry with its nineteen huge works is far superior to the French, and since Goring has announced quite openly and almost officially that the minimum standards for German armaments will be the combined strength of the two air fleets previously leading in Europe, it is thoroughly possible that the German air fleet may overtake France (if it has not already done so) whether the Western Air Locarno materializes or not. The Fascist air army may become the second strongest in the world. But the strongest is the air army of Socialism.

According to almost all international experts, Soviet aviation unquestionably takes first place among all countries today. The number of their military airplanes has increased tremendously in the last five years. Their air-route system for civil traffic is

comparable only to that of the U. S. A.

Enthusiasm for the air has affected hundreds of thousands of ordinary workers, school-boys, clerks, who learn to fly in their spare time, because they feel that in the new world every one must fly and will fly.

Yet in the coming war it will not at first be the human "air capacity" which turns the scales, but the technical, and the first decisions will be brought by those "air fortresses", the squadrons of heavy air-cruisers which today, as once the armoured fleets of the sea, have assumed the dominating role.

The necessity of the modern strategy of surprise to provide weapons of extreme mobility and at the same time of the highest destructive power, capable of being directed against key-objectives, has led to the development of a session of the airplanes (bombers) into veritable flying batteries of artillery, which are of such a size the most of them get through the fire of anti-aircraft guns on the ground, so speedy and heavily armed that they have nothing to fear from the enemy fighting planes, and so reliable (number of engineer, fuel capacity, etc.) that they can carry out the most distant and prolonged raids.

If squadrons like these break through to the enemy "nervecenters," there is little or nothing still in a posi-

tion to stop them doing their paralyzing work.

Germany is producing such machines in quantity. Russia is not standing still. The U. S. S. R. has a good start on Germany and intends to maintain its advantage, with the help of all national reserves.

As for the abilities of the pilots—how these compare is not known. The Germans were the best, but whether they are today superior to the pilots of the "Tchelyuskin class" and their pupils will not be known until the test comes.

One thing is certain: in the important new sector or air tactics, the mass parachuting, mass-landing of whole infantry regiments from the air behind the enemy's lines, the Soviet Union so far has a sort of "monopoly".

During the Soviet maneuvers near Kiev in the autumn of 1935, the assembled foreign generals saw how 2,500 Red soldiers landed in full on the ground from the air within forty minutes and at once went into action with their automatic rifles.

But they did not see how at the same time in another district of the Soviet Union a body of 5,700 men—equal to more than a brigade—carried out the same operation.

And later still they learned that tens of thousands of Red soldiers have the "parachute jumps made among the civil population is already approaching the million

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The Wonders...

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mark.

The nation which has risen into the air *en masses* is not afraid to move through the air, and the sociology of the air is no trifling strategical factor.

Soviet aviation has also learned to convey heavy artillery and tanks through the air, and the French Air Attaché in Moscow has seen, according to a statement made in the French Parliament in the winter of 1936, how ninety-seven Soviet airplanes transported within two hours a fully equipped brigade, with sixteen guns, machine guns and tanks, into "the enemy hinterland." The report closed with the comment that "no other air force in the world is capable of such an operation."

If Goring, for his part, is now intervening in alarm and Japan will have great

difficulty reaching vital Russian centers by air raid, the distances are so great, and there will be so great, and there will be so many lines of defense to pass through. But on the other hand both Germany and Japan are relatively small, compressed countries, with vital centers closely huddled together.

Counter attack against Germany from the air would probably prove deadly for Fascist Germany. Deadly for industry and the technical organization of the war, deadly for national mobilizations, if it has not gone quickly and surely enough, but deadly above all and most certainly for the social and political heart of warring Fascism. Here we come to the final, inevitable act in the tragedy of this war, which has become Hitler's tragedy.

If airplanes of the Socialist and the Pacifist armies of defense arrive over Fascist soil, they will bring with them a more devastating con-

flagration than that of explosive and incendiary bombs. More important than the goods of the ammunition makers will be the psychological effects.

For all thinking people in Germany know that this war is not a war of Germany's, but a war of the Fascists, of the gangsters and lunatics. And as the planes appear the German opponents of the gangsters and lunatics will for the first time feel themselves not alone with them, not isolated and abandoned, but with mighty allies pressing toward them.

The development shifts here into that last of all strategies, which usually concludes all wars and determines their final result: into social strategy. Further and deeper than that there is nothing more in the struggle between human masses.

To the figures of the divisions, guns, airplanes, the strength of the positions, it

adds the invisible but mighty "figures" of the social temperature, of the fighting country: the tendencies among the population, the mood prevailing in the proletarian districts, the thoughts of the workers' wives, the intentions of the illegal revolutionaries. And it makes all these factors so powerful that it can thereby alter or even upset the factors of the first order, the purely military and technical quantities. The longer the war lasts the more dominating the social strategy becomes, over the material and operative strategy.

At the best the Fascist soldier will be an obedient automaton under compulsion. The Socialist soldier will be not only a rifleman, but also revolutionary propagandist and organizer, diminishing the number of enemies on his route and in his rear.

No, Hitler will never be "over Russia." Fascism will lose its crusade.

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