

SEP 19 1939

By W. R. PLEWMAN

The military situation has not changed greatly during the last 24 hours. Everything is being held up by the dramatic change in the political situation which has developed a new German campaign for peace. The Hitler press is declaring that Britain and France have been relieved of their obligations by the disappearance of the Polish state, just as Russia was relieved of her obligations under her non-aggression pact with Poland and given her liberty to invade former Polish territory. The reasoning is a little thin and the British government officially has declared that it will proceed to

fulfil its obligations toward Poland and to prosecute the war with all energy until its objectives have been achieved. Hitler is making a triumphant entry into Danzig today, although the guns are roaring nearby as Germans attack Polish Corridor troops that remain in the outskirts of Gdynia. Der Fuehrer's utterance promises to be a plea for "reasonableness."

Washington has intimated that it will not act as a mediator at this stage. It feels that any peace terms involving the partition of Poland or the reduction of the western part of Poland to the level of a German vassal state would mean an armed

peace, leading to crisis after crisis and be little better than actual war. Being also an unjust, oppressive peace, the United States will have nothing to do with it. The attitude of the Vatican City has not been clearly revealed but the pope is known to be eager for peace on a sure basis. The Vatican official organ has denounced Russia's action in invading Poland and declares the war has grown "monstrously" from Germany's "most bloody campaign." It expresses the view that Poland has not been extinguished by the joint action of Russia and Germany but will rise again as a sovereign state.

### Russians on the March

The Russian army is moving westward steadily on a front nearly 600 miles long extending due north and south. It has advanced from 70 to 100 miles and is closing more tightly the gateway to Rumania. Lemberg has not been taken and may prefer to surrender to the Russians than to the Germans. Warsaw will not be able to hold out much longer. The Posen army near Kutno, nearly 50,000 strong, has given up the fight. One half of the Polish air force has taken refuge in Rumania, being unable to fight without fuel, air fields and repair facilities. German and Russian troops are hobnobbing in Brest Litovsk where they last met 20 odd years ago as victor and vanquished and where Germany dictated a severe, one-sided peace.

It is unlikely that Germany cares to see her troops moved backward by Russia from the Rumanian frontier. They gave ground voluntarily rather than run the chance of being thrown back. Hungary has territorial claims she would like to press on Rumania but she values her own independence yet more highly and it is doubtful that she will encourage Germany to send an army through Hungary to attack Rumania. If she joins Russia in barring the way, Hitler may not obtain the benefits from his Polish conquest that lured him in that direction.

Hungary today broadcast greetings to the defenders of Warsaw and to all Polish soldiers. The feeling between the two countries has been cordial. Another radio broadcast from Budapest conveyed Catholic greetings from Hungary to the French soldiers on the western front. At a moment of great national anxiety, because of Hitler's ambitions, it is strange that these messages should have been sent. Perhaps they would not have been sent if Hungary had not believed that Russia was ready to support the southeastern European front against Hitler.

### War on the Sea

The sinking of the Courageous serves as a reminder that the German submarines should not be regarded with contempt. The admiralty is intensifying its efforts to wipe out the enemy pest. Planes and small craft are taking a heavy toll of submarines. Now that the British expeditionary forces are in France more attention can be given to the convoy system and to the anti-submarine campaign. Taking everything in to consideration the struggle on the sea has gone quite well. The British appear to believe enemy submarines are trying to avoid the necessity of returning home to refuel and are using freighters as mother ships at an appointed rendezvous on the high seas.

At least 681 of the crew of the Courageous were rescued; 579 are missing. Only 24 planes were on board—others may have been scouting—and about 1,260 men.

### Possible Surprise Moves

As more German troops are not needed in Poland, troops from the central reserve are being sent into the Rhine-Moselle front; also additional planes. No doubt the allies could make headway in their offensive for some weeks longer in the face of a steady reinforcement of the enemy front with troops from the east. So long as the fighting is resulting in disproportionately heavy losses for the enemy, that policy will be favored. But the German high command, which has a preference for offensive operations and always desires to seize the initiative, will be tempted to strike elsewhere in a surprise move even though a violation of the neutrality of Holland, Belgium or Switzerland should be involved.

The defences of Belgium are much stronger than they were in 1914 and the well-trained army already is mobilized, ready to fight to the death against invasion from any source. Holland is not so strong but she has her dykes and would resist strongly. In Switzerland the difficulties of the terrain would be of value in denying passage to a foe. Altogether, the Germans can find few weak spots in which to launch a drive, and they realize that world sentiment would harder against them if they attacked any one of the three little neutrals, whose attitude has been most scrupulously correct. The Germans, however, know no law but military necessity. Behind the Dutch, Belgian and Swiss defences are strong French fortifications. It is believed there are no gaps this time. Hitler will have difficulty in making rapid enough progress anywhere to bring into play the surprise element that alone might offer him victory.

### A Look Ahead

A pertinent question is, "When the Germans have massed the bulk of their army in the west, what chance is there that the Allies could break through and dictate terms that would restore Poland?" It may be that the Allies could not and should not try to restore to Poland the territory populated by Ukrainians and White Russians that Russia has seized. But if they could overcome Germany they could set up a strong homogeneous Poland with an outlet to the Baltic. Should Russia deny Germany access to the riches of the Ukraine and Rumania, and Italy refrain from joining Germany, Germany would be unable to carry on the war for more than two years because of her lack of raw material and gold and the discontent of her people. All that Britain and France would need to do would be to keep her walled in on the west—which should be well within their strength—and maintain a strict blockade on the sea. Obviously there are some ifs and buts in this reasoning. But Germany is not nearly as strong as she tries to appear and secretly is panicky about the future.

159-001-004

*Handwritten notes:*  
1939  
Review  
2/25