

MILITARY SCIENCE

German Economist Credits Britain With Great Strength

Both Economically and in Military Sense, He Considers British a Formidable Foe But Thinks Planes Effective

BRITAIN is no contemptible foe, no mere pushover, as some of the more jingoistic Nazis hopefully believe. Britain is a formidable power still, both economically and in a military sense, declares a German nobelman-economist, E. C. Count Pückler, in a new book, *How Strong Is Britain?*

Count Pückler, who wrote his book some months before the outbreak of the war, bases his estimate on a comprehensive survey of every important material element in Britain's present set-up. He finds the British economic front rather uneven: textile industry in very bad shape, shipbuilding and engineering a little better but still not good; coal in process of recovery from post-war slump; steel in very healthy condition due to heroic modernization efforts during the quite recent past.

Britain's time-honored position as the world's banker (and absentee owner of much of the world's industries) Count Pückler finds considerably impaired.

Heaviest British holdings now are within the Empire; the World War liquidated much of the old financial set-up, especially in the United States.

When he speaks of Britain vis-a-vis an adversary, whether economic or military (but especially the latter) the Count always tacitly assumes Germany as that adversary, though he becomes explicit on the point only once or twice. He admits the naval impregnability of the "tight little island," and the advantage that gives in leisure to train an army for the decisive thrust on the fields of the Continent.

He points out, however, that the situation has become radically changed by the air arm and (perhaps somewhat hopefully) suggests that giant planes may succeed where the submarines of 1914-1918 failed. This may even be a hint of that "devastating, unanswerable weapon" of which Herr Hitler has recently been darkly boasting.

Count Pückler's book ends on a note

of the advantage of intangibles. Admitting that Britain is still the greatest empire in the world, and that by 1941-42 she will be powerfully armed indeed, he declares that she still must court the world's good opinion by pursuing "a morally justifiable foreign policy. The country whose policy is more moral than hers will therefore defeat her without even crossing swords—unless she has already become its friend."

Which, considering the events of the past few months, looks like a rather odd choice of weapons on the part of a spokesman for the Third Reich.

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CHEMISTRY

Japan Plans Program of Synthetic Rubber Making

DESPITE its proximity to the great rubber-producing areas of the East Indies, Japan is planning a long-time program for production of synthetic rubber and other synthetic chemicals. Chemical intelligence to the American Chemical Society reports a special 10-year plan . . . first five years for research and experimental production . . . last five years to perfect actual commercial production. Semi-government corporation for the task to have capital of 50,000,000 yen . . . about \$11,500,000.

Science News Letter, October 28, 1939

FORESTRY

Trenches Used in Forests As Defense Against Fire

TRENCHES are used not only in the deadly warfare of man against man, but in the more useful strife of man against fire. Ordinarily, the wide, shallow trenches that break the forest fire's line of advance are scooped out by hand labor with spades and shovels—back-breaking work.

The U. S. Forest Service has a new trench-digging machine that will make as much as 50 feet of fire-trench a minute—a job for 300 men under some conditions. It is the invention of Jim Bosworth, assistant supervisor on the Kanisku National Forest in Idaho.

The Bosworth trencher is mounted wheelbarrow fashion, with a heavy bicycle wheel to carry the 96-pound load of a small gasoline engine and the series of rotating bars or "hammers" that throw the soil aside. One man can push it, and if need be another can harness himself in front and pull.

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TRENCH DIGGER IN FIRE FIGHT

New trenching machine for fighting forest fires kicks up dust in digging 50 feet a minute.