

NEW WEAPONS IN SPAIN

VALUE OF BOMBER AND TANK

LESSONS OF THE WAR

From Our Military Correspondent

The lessons of the war in Spain, and the bearing of its experience on the problems of modern warfare, are being much discussed abroad. Our own sources of information have been limited by our strict policy of non-intervention, but on the Continent its collection is assisted by the greater opportunities that exist for obtaining the impressions of expert observers who have taken part in the campaign; and no country is better placed than Switzerland to be a clearing-house for such data. From a military friend there I have recently received a copy of a long summary of the lessons during the first six months of the campaign, compiled, I gather, from various sources, but mainly from the observations of a German officer.

Some extracts from them may be of general interest, though it would be unwise to regard them as a conclusive judgment on the questions with which they deal. They begin by referring to the fact that

the great military Powers of Europe have been accused by various papers of using the opportunity provided by the Spanish Civil War for a "dress rehearsal" of their modern armament; in other words of testing in practice which of their weapons would prove satisfactory and which were in need of further improvement.

This theory of a "dress rehearsal" may be true in part, but in part only. For the number of modern arms employed in Spain on one side or the other is insignificant, the main part of the material sent there being decidedly out of date. The last secrets which are meant to surprise us in the war of to-morrow remain, and will continue to remain, closely guarded.

Nevertheless it has been possible to make a number of interesting and instructive observations and definitely to establish certain results, observations and results that will not be without influence upon the future developments of the technique and tactics of modern war.

ADVANTAGE OF DEFENCE

The most important problem of the war in Spain—from the military point of view—was the applicability and efficacy of tanks under the conditions of modern warfare—and, no less, that of the means invented to defeat them. It should not be forgotten that the extraordinary successes gained in the World War by British and French tanks at Cambrai, Soissons, Amiens, were nothing else but surprises under conditions that would not occur again. They were gained (and they could only be gained) against a defence practically non-existent, improvised with the most primitive of means, and completely inexperienced; and they could be expanded into decisive action only because the tank (at that time) was shrouded in the veil of the "tank-terror."

Since that time the tank has been developed and improved in various directions. Its construction has been simplified and to a very large degree made secure against the usual forms of disturbance and breakdown; its capabilities have been increased to many times their former efficiency. But at the same time the means of anti-tank defence have been increased and developed to at least the same degree; and the tank of the experiences of the Spanish