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Nazis 100 Miles From Grozny Oil

Beginning at Maikop, the Germans are penetrating the foothills of the great Caucasus mountain barrier that runs diagonally across the isthmus in towering snow-capped peaks for a thousand miles, according to a bulletin from the National Geographic Society.

Maikop is 65 air miles from the Black Sea in an area holding the first important oil wells of the Caucasus which the Nazis have struck—wells reported to have been destroyed under the Russians' scorched earth policy. Even in normal times the highest output, however, of the Maikop fields is less than one-tenth of the Caucasus production.

The main wells are those at Baku, on the Caspian shore—nearly 600 airline miles away. Between Baku and Maikop are still other oil fields, chiefly at Grozny, some 100 miles southeast of the present battle area, near Mozdok.

Distribution Center

The city of Maikop had a population before the war of more than 50,000 people. It was long a distributing center for farm products from nearby regions. A 10-mile spur linked Maikop with a branch of the trans-Caucasus trunkline between Baku and Rostov.

An oil pipeline also ran near Maikop. Through it oil flowed not only to the Black Sea port of Tuapse, but also to the city of Krasnodar, an important oil-refining center, now held by the Germans.

If the Nazis succeed in reaching Grozny, the source of 20 per cent of Caucasian oil will be theirs. In the last 25 years the population of this boom town has grown from 25,000 to more than 200,000—all engaged in oil production.

Superior Quality

The oilfields lie northwest and southeast of Grozny and are modern and electrically operated. The National Geographic Society says many wells come in as gushers and the oil is of superior quality. It has the highest benzene content of all Russian oil. Seventy-five million pounds of paraffin were turned out by Grozny's refineries before the war—an amount equal to the quantity imported by the U. S. A.

A pipeline 97 miles long runs from Grozny to Makhach Kala on the Caspian Sea, which in turn has rail and sea connections with Astrakhan at the mouth of the Volga.