

"IN THE CLUTCH OF BLIND FORCES"

(WORLD WAR I IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF U.S. DIPLOMATIC
AND MILITARY REPORTS - JULY-DECEMBER 1914)

by
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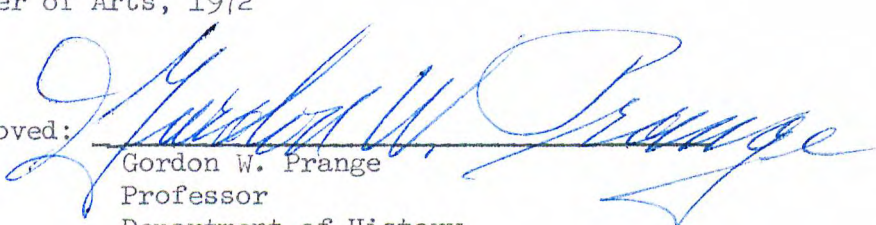
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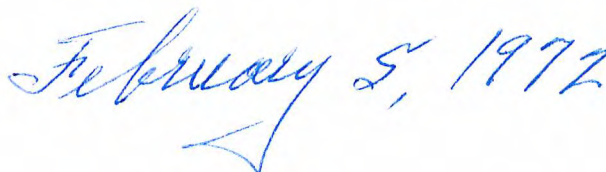
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ABSTRACT

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John Marvin Turner, Jr., Master of Arts, 1972

Thesis directed by: Dr. Gordon W. Prange

Europe in 1914 was an armed camp held together by a complicated system of alliances. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, and his wife in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914 by a Bosnian terrorist provided the spark which ignited the flames of World War I a month later. For almost three years of this brutal European conflict the United States stood aside as a neutral. During that period and until the end of the war, her representatives in Europe were most interested and often concerned spectators to the tragic drama unfolding before them.

The time span covered by this thesis extends from July 1914 to December of that year. During these early months of the conflict U.S. diplomats, military and naval attachés and special observers accredited to the belligerents armies sent numerous reports to Washington on the course of the war in Europe. These reports are valuable historical documents especially when examined in the context of the time and against the background of other events of the day. Not only do they provide interesting vignettes of the world's greatest conflict to that date, they also offer illuminating insights into the war as well. And they cover a wide variety of subjects: diplomacy, politics, personalities, places, strategy, tactics, battles, weapons, naval affairs, controversies, trends,

and estimates of current situations.

These reports, too, varied from country to country and from person to person. Those from France, Germany and England, for example, generally surpassed those from Austria-Hungary and Russia. Some of these documents were long and rambling, others were short, concise, and lacked solid facts. Some were dull and common place, while others were alive and full of human interest. A few were inaccurate and some from Germany and England prejudiced. In the early period of the European diplomatic crisis of 1914, the reports lacked critical analysis and suggested at times an ignorance of European affairs.

These shortcomings stemmed from several sources. First, the embassies were undermanned and had difficulty giving assistance to numerous Americans trapped in Europe by the war. The workload multiplied when the United States undertook the responsibility of assisting citizens of the belligerent nations in like circumstances. Then, too, some representatives placed too much reliance on information supplied by their host nation and a few lent their ears too readily to rumor. But the reports improved toward the end of the year as various embassy staffs expanded and their personnel developed a more professional touch.

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It is most difficult to find adequate words to express my gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Gordon W. Prange, under whose direction I began and completed this thesis. He gave me generously of his valuable time and by stimulation and example, stretched my latent capabilities beyond limits I had not deemed possible. Working with Dr. Prange is a mind-expanding experience in the finest sense of the term, and whatever value there is in this study owes much to him.

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KAISER WILHEIM II

Burt, Report of Observations with the German Army, p. 1.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Almost fifty-eight years ago on 28 June, 1914, a Bosnian youth, assassinated the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, in Sarajevo. His crime proved to be the spark that ignited the flames of World War I exactly one month later. When this tragic period of international anarchy ended on 11 November, 1918, ten million soldiers had died, four empires had been destroyed and the European way of life had changed.

For two years and ten months of this savage conflict the United States stood aside as a neutral. Her representatives and citizens abroad were interested and anxious spectators to the cruel drama unfolding before them. Some of them, such as Ambassadors Thomas Nelson Page in Rome and James Gerard in Berlin, later wrote books about their experiences during and after the war. While these books are interesting and valuable, the truth remains that the authors wrote them after the fact and after serious thought and editing. What the author is primarily concerned with in this study are questions of the following nature: What was the attitude of American representatives in Europe toward the diplomatic crisis of 1914? What kind of reports did they send home from day to day as the conflict raged irresistibly onward, as events piled high upon events? How did they assess the scene of Europe in the grip of her awesome tragedy? What did they think about the combatants, the battles they fought, the causes of the conflict or its probable outcome? Did United States representatives in Europe provide comfort and assistance to civilians squeezed in the vise of

unforseen circumstances? Were their reports accurate, revealing, prejudiced or objective? Did they in any way influence United States policy? The purpose of this thesis is to find answers to some of these questions.

Originally the author of this study planned to cover the entire period of the war - 1914-1918. But this proved to be impossible because the amount of material available in the National Archives is so vast that he decided to limit his thesis to the time span from June 1914 to the end of that year. Then, too, the abundance of documentation on hand also forced him to be selective, and to concentrate his attention on the European phase of the problem, to the exclusion of the Middle East, Africa and the Far East. Within Europe itself events concerning Austria-Hungary and Turkey have not been covered in detail. They have been mentioned only briefly in order to provide connective tissue and continuity to the story. Thus the author has narrowed the approach of his study even within Europe, because he agrees with the Entente Powers that Germany was the muscle, heart, soul and brains of the Central Powers.

CHAPTER II

WAR EXPLODES OVER EUROPE

Sunday, 28 June, 1914, was a beautiful summer day in Sarajevo, the capital of Austrian Bosnia. It was Vidov-Dan, the anniversary of the Battle of Kossovo in 1389, when the Turks defeated the Serbs and absorbed them into their empire. Thereafter, Vidov-Dan was a Serbian national holiday. The streets of Sarajevo, however, were not decorated in honor of Vidov-Dan on that fateful Sunday morning. Serbian national holidays were not officially celebrated in the lands where the Hapsburgs held sway. Sarajevo showed its colors in honor of the visit of the heir to the throne of the Dual Monarchy, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his consort, the Duchess Sophie of Hohenberg.

The Archduke in his capacity as Inspector General of the Austro-Hungarian Army had come to Bosnia to observe Army maneuvers and incidentally show himself as heir apparent to the subjects of that restless province. The Duchess Sophie had journeyed to Bosnia to join her husband in a rare official appearance in which they could both take part. Other travelers also came to Sarajevo for their own purposes, directly related to the visit of the Archduke.

After a short inspection of military barracks in this Moslem-like city, the Archduke, his wife and their party, in six automobiles, started for the town hall "for a municipal welcome".¹ The time was about 10 A.M.

¹The best account of the crimes committed at Sarajevo and their background has been written by Vladimir Dedijer in his book, The Road to Sarajevo. See also Joachim Remak, Sarajevo, and Hertha Pauli, The Secret of Sarajevo.

On the way a Bosnian terrorist, "in a long black coat and a black hat," threw a grenade at the automobile in which the Archduke, Duchess Sophie and General Oskar Potiorek, the Military Governor of Bosnia, were riding. The grenade missed and fell into the street behind the vehicle where it exploded. No one in the Archduke's automobile was injured but an aide, Lieutenant Colonel Erich Von Merizzi, riding in the automobile behind was wounded along with several bystanders. After seeing that the injured were taken to a hospital the procession proceeded to the town hall to continue the ceremonies. The mayor of Sarajevo presented a speech of welcome and loyalty which, needless to say, Franz Ferdinand did not accept with absolute sincerity.

After the ceremonies the Archduke wanted to check on the victims of the grenade at the hospital. This necessitated a change in the original route of return. As the cavalcade went back down the Appel Quay from which it had come, the automobile in the lead turned off to follow the original plan. The Archduke's automobile started to follow but General Potiorek pointed out that they were going the wrong way. As the driver stopped the car and prepared to back up, a young Bosnian fanatic, Gavrilo Princip, stepped forward and fired two pistol shots. One shot pierced the Archduke's neck and the other struck Duchess Sophie in the abdomen. They both died within minutes.

That same day the American Ambassador to Austria-Hungary, Frederic C. Penfield, sent the following matter-of-fact report from Vienna to the State Department in Washington:

I regret to report assassination today at Sarajevo, Bosnia of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir apparent thrones Austria-Hungary and his wife Duchess Hohenberg by pistol shots fired

by a student. Archduke and wife were attending an official function. Austrian Emperor returns to Vienna Monday from Ischl.¹

The two decades preceeding the assassination at Sarajevo had seen Europe turn into an armed camp held together by a complicated system of alliances. The two principal alliance systems were the Triple Alliance consisting of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, and the Triple Entente of France, Russia and Great Britain.² The two systems were fairly well balanced and nobody wanted a general war. During Bismarck's tenure as Chancellor of Germany he tried to restrain Austria-Hungary from pursuing policies which would use the Triple Alliance for aggressive purposes. But without Bismarck's deft hand at the helm of German foreign policy the ship of state eventually found itself on the rocks of a war not of its own choosing.

Though serious problems divided the Great Powers of Europe such as the Anglo-German naval rivalry, French resentment over Alsace-Lorraine, nationalism, militarism, and economic rivalry, the fatal explosion came in the powderkeg of Europe, the Balkans. And it came between the two least restrained members of the alliance systems, Russia and Austria-Hungary. After being frustrated in her push to the East in the Russo-Japanese War, Russia turned once again to Europe and the Balkans. There she would support rising Slav nationalism as its natural protector. This

¹Penfield to State Department, 28 June 1914. State Department File Number 863.0011/9. National Archives.

²Among the best known works on the origins of World War I are, Sidney B. Fay, The Origins of the War 1914, Bernadotte Schmitt, The Coming of the War, 1914, and Luigi Albertini's, The Origins of the War of 1914. A more recent contribution comes from the pen of the German historian, Fritz Fischer, Germany's Aims in the First World War.

interest clashed directly with the policy of Austria-Hungary, which sought to hold Slav nationalism in check in order to preserve the integrity of the Dual Empire.

Serbia was determined to be the focus of Slav nationalism and build a greater Serbian state, at the expense of Turkey and Austria-Hungary. Serbian outrage knew no limits when the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1908 formally annexed the two nominally Turkish provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which it had occupied and administered since the Congress of Berlin in 1878.¹ Serbia had marked these two areas, especially Bosnia, for her own as a part of a greater Serbia. The iron was driven deeper into Serbia when after the successful conclusion of the Second Balkan War in 1913 the London Conference of the Great Powers informed the Serbs that they must evacuate Albanian territory. They hesitated in their compliance but were forced out when Austria sent them an ultimatum on October 18, 1913.

In both instances Russia wished to back Serbia but could not effectively come to her aid because in 1908 Russia had not sufficiently recovered from the Russo-Japanese War and in 1913 the other Great Powers agreed with Austria-Hungary. Two significant aspects of these clashes between Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire stand out. One was that Germany stood firmly behind her ally both times. Another was that in the Albanian Crisis of 1913 an ultimatum and the threat of armed force had caused the Serbians to act in accordance with Austria-Hungary's wishes after Serbia had ignored the dictates of the London Conference.

¹The best book on this subject is Bernadotte Schmitt's, The Annexation of Bosnia.

This experience no doubt influenced in part Austro-Hungarian action in the crisis of 1914.¹

It was not immediately evident what was going to be the result of the incident at Sarajevo. The Austro-Hungarian Government began an investigation of the assassination to determine who was responsible. Actually, there was little doubt in the minds of the Foreign Minister, Count Leopold Von Berchtold, and the Austro-Hungarian Chief of Staff, General Conrad Von Hoetzendorf. They were convinced Serbia was responsible and were determined that the opportunity to settle accounts once and for all should not be missed. First the support of the Germans had to be secured and the reluctance to use force expressed by the Emperor Franz Joseph and the Hungarian Prime Minister, Count Stephen Tisza had to be overcome. All of this took time. While Europe waited the press of Serbia and Austria-Hungary inflamed public opinion in their respective countries. By 23 July the conditions for action had been met and Austria-Hungary presented a strong ultimatum to Serbia with a forty-eight hour time limit to run out at 6 P.M. on the evening of the 25th.

Austrian leaders deliberately framed the ultimatum to secure Serbia's rejection of the document and to provide the necessary excuse for war.² As expected the Serbian reply presented to Austria-Hungary was considered unsatisfactory and diplomatic relations between the two countries were severed on the 25th.³ The Serbs knew what was coming from the tone of the ultimatum and ordered full mobilization three hours

¹Fay, The Origins of World War I, Vol. 1, p. 475.

²Ibid., Vol. II, p. 273.

³Ibid., p. 349.

before they presented their answer to the Austro-Hungarian Government. Thus Serbia was the first country to order full mobilization in 1914.

The Austro-Hungarians ordered partial mobilization against Serbia on the evening of the 25th. They hoped that by not mobilizing against Russia on their common frontier in Galicia, Russia in turn would not move. In this hope Austria-Hungary was to be sadly disappointed. So Germany's ally to the south became the first major power to order partial mobilization in Europe's mad rush toward armed conflict.

United States diplomatic representatives in the European capitals watched the war clouds gather and reported the changing situation to Washington. Ambassador James W. Gerard in Berlin was a 47 year-old former jurist on the New York State Supreme Court. President Woodrow Wilson had appointed him Ambassador to Germany in 1913 and he would hold that post until Germany and the United States broke relations in 1917. Upon his return to the United States, Gerard wrote two books based on his wartime experiences in Germany, My Four Years in Germany and Face to Face with Kaiserism.

He generally viewed events through eyes and a mind not favorably inclined toward Germany. As early as 20 July he sent a message to Washington stating that the efforts of Kaiser Wilhelm II's Reich to maintain the peace were fruitless and that a general European war was certain.¹ Gerard did not elaborate on the sources of his information or on the reasoning behind his statement. The political skies over Berlin seemed

¹Gerard to State Department, 20 July 1914. State Department File Number 763.72119/3. National Archives.

to brighten briefly during the week and he reversed his initial gloomy pronouncement. He told Washington on the 27th that a general war did not look inevitable after all.¹ It would appear that he knew little about events then taking place in Vienna.

The United States Ambassador in the Austrian capital was a fifty-nine-year-old man with an aristocratic name - Frederic Courtland Penfield. He was an experienced diplomat, having served in London and Cairo. Wealthy by marriage, Penfield was a Catholic, a good Democrat, a serious student of literature and world affairs and an author.² These attributes made him a natural for the Vienna post and President Wilson had duly appointed him on 28 July 1913.³ Exactly one year later he found himself at the very center of the developing European crisis.

On the same day that Gerard was telling Washington that a war did not look inevitable, Penfield, who had his eyes and ears closer to the scene of action than his colleague in Berlin, notified the State Department of the very opposite:

War certain and probably localized Balkans. Germany morally supports Austria but Italy neutral; Montenegro and Roumania will aid Serbia; France not participate but Russian attitude unknown. Vienna anxious and hoping for short conflict. Bourse temporarily closed; monarchy under martial law. Austrian troops for days have been moving southward. War loan three million crowns planned.⁴

¹Gerard to State Department, 27 July 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/5. National Archives.

²Present Day Egypt and East of Suez.

³Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. VII, pp. 425-426.

⁴Penfield to State Department, 27 July 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/12. National Archives.

Penfield was completely correct about war being certain, Italian neutrality and Germany's support of Austria. But he was wrong on Roumania and his assessment of France did not conform to the facts. He also guessed wrong about the war being localized in the Balkans. This was certainly what Austria-Hungary and her German ally desired. For Germany at the time was urging Austria-Hungary to act quickly and present the rest of Europe with a fait accompli.¹ Then, too, both Germany and Austria-Hungary believed that Russia was not sufficiently prepared for a war and could be bluffed into remaining quiet by the threat of German intervention on the side of the Dual Monarchy.

The Austro-Hungarian declaration of war against Serbia came on 28 July. That same day, Penfield cabled a bare outline of developments to Washington:

To end subversive intrigues issuing from Belgrade directed against the territorial integrity Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Imperial and Royal Government July twenty-third sent to Royal Servian Government note in which were formulated series of demands, for the acception of which delay of forty eight hours was granted Royal Government. Servian Government not having replied to note in a satisfactory manner, Imperial and Royal Government is under necessity in protecting its rights and interests, of having recourse to the force of arms.²

The news reported by Americans from the other side of the Danube was sketchy. Charles J. Vopicka, United States Minister to Serbia and Roumania was located in Bucharest when the crisis began. He was in touch with the United States Consulate in Belgrade for a brief period and learned that there was great excitement in the Serbian capital. Later Vopicka lost contact with the Consulate and it was reported to him, (he

¹ Schmitt, The Coming of the War, 1914, Vol. I, pp. 357-360.

² Penfield to State Department, 28 July 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/14. National Archives.

does not specify the source), that the Serbian Government had retreated from Belgrade to the interior of the country, fearing the approach of Austrian troops.¹ Lewis W. Haskell, the U.S. Consul stationed in Belgrade, was in London on leave when the crisis broke and he was not able to get back to his consular district until the latter part of September.² Therefore, when war exploded over Europe in July 1914, the United States did not have an official representative in Belgrade to report on the developing situation.

As is well known the course of the crisis depended on the attitude of Russia. Twice before, as previously mentioned, Russia had been unable to come to the aid of Serbia and had to back down in the face of Austro-German power. This time the Russians decided that they could not back down and retain any influence in the Balkans. Therefore, the belief of Germany and Austria-Hungary that Russia would remain inactive while Serbia was conquered lacked substance.

Russia ordered partial mobilization directed against Austria-Hungary on 29 July, thus becoming the second major power after Austria-Hungary to take such a step. In doing so, Russia nourished false hopes and dangerous illusions. One of these was that if Russia made no hostile move against Germany's frontiers then the Kaiser's armies would not be mobilized. What is more Russian generals opposed partial mobilization for technical reasons and soon set to work to persuade the Czar to order

¹Vopicka to State Department, 30 July 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/854. National Archives.

²Haskell to State Department, 4 July 1914. State Department File Number 123H27/40; 30 September 1914, State Department File Number 123H27/52. National Archives.

general mobilization. In this task the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Sazonov, assisted them. The Czar finally gave in and ordered general mobilization on 31 July.¹ General Sergei Dobrorolski, Chief of the Mobilization Section of the General Staff, took the order to the Central Telegraph Office. His excellent description of the scene follows:

Every operator was sitting by his instrument waiting for the copy of the telegram, in order to send to all the ends of the Russian Empire the momentous news of the calling up of the Russian people. A few minutes after six, while absolute stillness reigned in the room, all the instruments began at once to click. That was the beginning of the great epoch.²

Thus Russia was the first Great Power to order general mobilization and general mobilization meant war as every General Staff clearly understood throughout Europe.³ Russia in her turn was gambling on bluffing Austria and hoped that Germany would not take offense. She would be bitterly disappointed.

The senior United States representative in Russia at this time was Charles S. Wilson, the Secretary of the Embassy. He was in charge because the former Ambassador, Curtis Guild had come to the United States in April of 1913 because of illness. His health did not improve so he resigned in June. Henry M. Pindell was appointed to fill the post in St. Petersburg on 27 January 1914, but officially declined the ambassadorship the next day. Accordingly President Wilson appointed George T. Marye on 9 July, but he did not arrive in country until 24 October 1914.⁴

¹Fay, The Origins of the World War, Vol. II, p. 472. Details of the interplay between the Czar, the Foreign Office, and the Russian General Staff can be found on pp. 450-473 of this study.

²Ibid., p. 473.

³Ibid., p. 479.

⁴List of U.S. Diplomatic Officers by Country 1789-1939. Vol. III. National Archives.

Wilson had been in Russia since 1912 and had a good grasp of Russian affairs. He cabled Washington on 31 July:

Situation steadily becoming more hopeless. Complete mobilization now in progress. Whole country, all classes unanimous for war. Last week's serious political strikes ended. Owing to mobilization railways disorganized and in case of war passenger service will probably be entirely suspended...¹

Wilson correctly assessed the situation. His comment concerning the curtailment of railway passenger service is significant. Of the many difficulties Russia would soon experience in her conduct of the war, insufficient transportation would be one of the most damaging.

Back in Vienna the crisis developed unfavorably as Austria-Hungary answered Russia's general mobilization with the same measure. On 31 July Ambassador Penfield told the State Department:

Emperor this afternoon orders general mobilization all armed forces Austria-Hungary including landstrum. (sic) This is extremest military muster of realm. Situation growing in seriousness.²

So Austria-Hungary was the second Great Power to order general mobilization.

The focus of action now shifted to Berlin. The German Government began to have second thoughts on whether the impending conflict could indeed be localized between Serbia and Austria-Hungary in view of Russia's attitude and military preparations. Another problem bothering the Germans was the British attitude. Through diplomatic channels the British made it clear that they were holding Germany responsible for Austria-Hungary's

¹Wilson to State Department, 31 July 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/44. National Archives.

²Penfield to State Department, 31 July 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/36. National Archives.

actions.¹ Things seemed so bad to Ambassador Gerard on 31 July, that he told Washington it looked like there would be a general war after all.² As events moved inexorably toward a showdown, the German Government presented Russia with an ultimatum late in the evening of the 31st demanding that Russia suspend her mobilization within twelve hours or face the same action by Germany. This of course meant war. Earlier that same evening another ultimatum had gone to Russia's ally, France. This ultimatum informed the French of the state of affairs between Russia and Germany and demanded to know within eighteen hours if France would remain neutral in the event of a Russo-German conflict.³

The ball was now in the French court. Myron T. Herrick was the United States Ambassador in Paris at this time. The sixty-year old Herrick had been governor of Ohio from 1903 to 1905. President William Howard Taft had appointed him Ambassador to France in 1912 and he held that post until December of 1914.⁴ Herrick had been preparing to turn over his post to a new ambassador but the State Department instructed him to remain in charge for the duration of the crisis. On 31 July he informed the State Department of the German ultimatum to France and its provisions. The German Ambassador, Baron Wilhelm Von Schoen, correctly anticipated a negative reply from the French and told Herrick that he understood that the German Ambassador to Washington had requested that

¹Fay, The Origins of the World War, Vol. II, p. 410.

²Gerard to State Department, 31 July 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/48. National Archives.

³Fay, The Origins of the World War, Vol. II, pp. 528-529.

⁴The New Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia, Vol. 18, p. 6532.

the United States assume responsibility for German Government property and interests in France.¹ Accordingly, Herrick requested instructions from the State Department.

On 1 August, France gave Germany her answer: She would "act in accordance with her interests". Anticipating that the Germans might get the jump on her, France ordered general mobilization about 3:45 P.M.² France thus became the third Great Power to take this decisive step.³

In the meantime the Russians refused to demobilize as Germany had demanded so Germany in turn ordered general mobilization a quarter of an hour after the French. Technically speaking Germany was the last Great Power in Europe to mobilize. She also made one further move by declaring war on Russia the evening of 1 August 1914.⁴

On 2 August then the pace of events quickened. Ambassador Herrick reported that hostilities had already started on the German border but that neither France nor Germany apparently wanted to be the first to declare war. The German Ambassador was still present in Paris and the French had not given him his passport, nor had he asked for it. Herrick provided funds to the German Ambassador to allow him to make provision for many of his countrymen trapped by the press of events in France.⁵

¹Herrick to State Department, 31 July 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/40. National Archives.

²Fay, The Origins of the World War, Vol. II, pp. 532-533.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 533.

⁵Herrick to State Department, 2 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/61. National Archives.

In Belgium public feeling was marked by uncertainty and apprehension. The situation in this little country was reported to Washington by Ambassador Brand Whitlock. The forty-five-year-old Whitlock was a lawyer by profession, an author, a former newspaper correspondent and four-time mayor of Toledo, Ohio. He was to be a tower of strength during the terrible days that were coming.¹ Whitlock reported on 2 August that it was difficult to secure information on which to base an accurate estimate of the situation. The money market was seriously affected and there existed, he wrote; "Great financial timidity among all classes which caused runs on all the banks."²

The United States representative to the Italian Government in Rome was sixty-one-year-old Thomas Nelson Page, distinguished author and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.³ President Wilson appointed him to the post at Rome in 1913 which he held until 1919. He wrote a book based on his experiences in Italy entitled, Italy and the World War, which was published in 1920.⁴

Page was absent in London when the European crisis developed so the early reports from Rome were dispatched by the Secretary of the

¹The New Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia, Vol. 36, p. 13, 154.

²Whitlock to State Department, 2 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/55. National Archives.

³Page's works include In Ole Virginia, Two Little Confederates, The Old South and Robert E. Lee, Man and Soldier.

⁴The New Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia, Vol. 25, p. 9271.

Embassy, Mr. Peter Augustus Jay. The universal impression, he told Washington, was that Italy would remain neutral in the upcoming conflict. Despite the fact that she was a member of the Triple Alliance, memories of old grievances and the clash of new rivalries with Austria-Hungary would prevent Italy from going to her assistance. In contrast to the financial situation described by Whitlock in Brussels, Jay reported that the Italian financial structure appeared better and stronger than that of any of the other European nations.¹ As he had already informed Washington, the Italian Government officially told Mr. Jay on 3 August that Italy would remain neutral. The Italian position was that her membership in the Triple Alliance was for defensive purposes only and that she would not support Austrian aggression in the Balkans. Then, too, Italy was miffed that Austria-Hungary had failed to consult with her before taking action in the Serbian matter.

Germany finally declared war on France ^{on} 3 August. Like all of the Great Powers, Germany had a master strategic plan for a European war.² This plan had been evolved by General Count Alfred Von Schlieffen who had been the Chief of the German General Staff from 1891 to 1906. Briefly the plan called for a holding action against the Russians in East Prussia while crushing France in the west. The blow against France was to be delivered by a huge right arm sweep across northwestern Europe, through the Netherlands and Belgium, passing to the west of Paris with the objective of enveloping and crushing the entire French Army within a period of

¹Jay to State Department, 2 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72111/1. National Archives.

²The best and most recent study of German strategy toward France is Gerhard Ritter's volume, The Schlieffen Plan.

about two months. The sweep would pivot on the Thionville-Metz area while the French were fighting German forces who would be conducting a planned and deliberate withdrawal in Alsace and Lorraine. After the Germans defeated France they would turn on the Russians and defeat them.

Schlieffen's successor, General Helmuth Von Moltke, the younger, made serious modifications in the plan. In the first place he eliminated the invasion of the Netherlands. He also limited the withdrawal of the German armies in Alsace and Lorraine more than Schlieffen had planned. In the East the frontiers were to be defended instead of trading space for time as Schlieffen desired.

Thus German offensive operations began in the West first and Belgium would be the first country to feel the bite of the Teutonic sword. Belgian neutrality was guaranteed by treaty and Belgium was determined to maintain it against all possible violations. As the crisis became worse the Belgian Government took all military precautions short of mobilization.¹

Ambassador Whitlock reported from Brussels on 3 August that German representatives had presented an ultimatum to the Belgian Government demanding passage for their troops across Belgium. He also noted that he had reliable reports that the Germans had already invaded Belgian territory and that a clash had taken place at Vise, a town north of Liège near the Dutch frontier, resulting in considerable casualties.² Later that day Whitlock sent another message to Washington which he requested be held in strictest confidence. Germany, he related, was seeking to

¹Schmitt, The Coming of the War, 1914. p. 386.

²Whitlock to State Department, 3 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/77. National Archives.

justify her demands on Belgium by asserting that the French intended to violate Belgian neutrality and that military necessity dictated that Germany anticipate French action. Whitlock also learned that the official Belgian reply to Germany would be a categorical refusal of all demands. However, negotiations between the Belgians and the Germans continued largely because the Belgian Government was waiting to see what the attitude of the British would be to the violation of Belgian neutrality.¹ The popular feeling among the Belgian populace was unmistakable: strongly anti-German.

In the meantime Ambassador Gerard reported from Berlin that all foreigners, including Americans, were forbidden to leave the country until mobilization had been completed.²

In this dire state of affairs, the position of Great Britain was of utmost concern to Berlin, Paris and Brussels. Would the British come in on the side of France and Russia or would they stand aloof? The man who kept Washington informed on such matters during these critical days was Ambassador Walter Hines Page.

Page was fifty-nine years old in 1914 and had been the United States Ambassador to Great Britain since 1913. He had been a partner in the publishing firm of Doubleday and Page, and also the founder and editor of a monthly magazine of general commentary.³ Page had been a firm supporter of Woodrow Wilson's candidacy for President and his appointment followed

¹Whitlock to State Department, 3 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/99. National Archives.

²Gerard to State Department, 3 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/84. National Archives.

³The World's Work.

the election. In the months to come Ambassador Page would also prove to be a firm friend of his British hosts.¹

Page had already offered the good offices of the United States for mediation on 29 July to Sir Edward Grey, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He reported to Washington on the 31st that Grey had expressed his gratitude for the American offer and asked if a similar offer had been made in Vienna, St. Petersburg or Berlin. Sir Edward was in a gloomy mood after the failure of his proposal for an ambassadorial conference to prevent Austria-Hungary from going to war with Serbia. Said he to Page: "It looks as if Europe were in the clutch of blind forces."²

The situation did not improve as July faded into August. Page reported that communication with Germany was difficult and the telephone to Paris was out. Many American travelers were caught by the turn of international events and needed assistance. More ominously, the Ambassador told Washington that the British Admiralty expected a general war and that British troops were being concentrated on the northern seacoast.³

By 3 August the "blind forces" that Sir Edward Grey spoke of had almost completed their work. The British Foreign Office informed Page that the Czar had given his personal assurance to the Kaiser that Russian

¹The New Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia, Vol. 25, p. 9271.

²Page to State Department, 31 July 1914. State Department File Number 763.7119/4. National Archives.

³Page to State Department, 1 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/52. National Archives.

troops would not cross the frontier unless Russia was attacked. Actually things were not that simple. As previously mentioned, the rulers and military staffs of Europe for years past recognized that mobilization meant war. When Russia failed to halt her mobilization upon Germany's demand, the Germans knowing that mobilization itself was tantamount to an act of war responded accordingly. Page also related that the British Foreign Office believed that the Germans and Austro-Hungarians had decided on war some time previously. The opinion in official circles in Great Britain was that Germany was the determined aggressor.¹

Meanwhile the Ambassador had immediate problems of his own. The Embassy was overrun with crowds of Americans wanting cash for letters of credit and most anxious to get home. The Americans were further pinched by the ordinary British bank holiday being extended three days. Page anticipated that the crowds and their troubles would increase as the crisis developed.²

Late on 3 August, "an army source" informed the American Ambassador that the British land forces were mobilizing to the last man, including the territorials, and that an expeditionary force would be sent to the Continent. Page told of "immense crowds" marching the streets near the War Office and the Parliament buildings. The prevailing attitude was that Great Britain would be at war very soon.³

¹Page to State Department, 3 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/95. National Archives.

²Ibid., p. 2.

³Page to State Department, 3 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/98. National Archives.

Grey informed Ambassador Page on the 4th that his Government had that afternoon sent an ultimatum to the German Government demanding that the treaty insuring the integrity of Belgium be respected and that Germany withdraw her demands on Belgium. The ultimatum was to expire at midnight. The Germans had made overtures to Great Britain to secure her neutrality, but the British rejected them. Grey told Page:

All governments must rest on mutual agreements and the sacredness of treaties, (it) is all that separates us from unorganized society. England's position becomes impossible if we accede to the violation of the treaty insuring Belgium's neutrality.¹

The British Ambassador in Berlin, Sir Edward Goschen, took the ultimatum to the German Foreign Office around seven on the evening of the 4th. The German Foreign Minister, Gottlieb Von Jagow, explained to Goschen that strategic necessity dictated the move through Belgium as the quickest and easiest way to get at France. Goschen then asked to see the Chancellor, Theobald Von Bethmann-Hollweg. The Ambassador's interview with the Chancellor was no more satisfactory than the previous interview with the Foreign Minister. Bethmann-Hollweg repeated the reasons given to the British previously for the violation of Belgian neutrality and delivered himself of the following statement:

He said that the step taken by His Majesty's Government was terrible to a degree, just for a word 'neutrality' a word which in war time had so often been disregarded - just for a scrap of paper, Great Britain was going to make war on a kindred nation who desired nothing better than to be friends with her.²

¹Page to State Department, 4 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/130. National Archives.

²Fay, The Origins of the World War, Vol. II, p. 545.

Neither Great Britain nor Germany backed down. The interview in the Chancellor's office ended and Goschen departed. The ultimatum expired at midnight of the 4th without a satisfactory German reply. So Great Britain and the German Empire were at war. In the early hours of 5 August a representative from the British Foreign Office officially notified Ambassador Page of this final turn of events.¹

The scene now shifts back to the Continent where the modified Schlieffen Plan was uncoiling through Belgium toward the French border. On the 5th Ambassador Whitlock reported to Washington that the first big engagement of the war had taken place at the fortress city of Liège. The Germans had been repulsed and Belgian morale ran high. He added that further engagements were expected.² However, high Belgian morale, some people in the Belgian Government had an excellent appreciation of the situation as it began to unfold. In a message later in the day Whitlock related that plans were afoot to move the seat of government from Brussels to Antwerp.³

Liège, a manufacturing city situated on both banks of the Meuse River, lies some fifty miles to the east and slightly south of Brussels. It had been of strategic importance since the Medieval period. The age of the railroad enhanced its importance since it lay on the trunk line between Berlin and Paris.⁴ Liège also guarded the corridor between the

¹Page to State Department, 5 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/114. National Archives.

²Whitlock to State Department, 5 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/173. National Archives.

³Whitlock to State Department, 5 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/147. National Archives.

⁴Pollard, A Short History of the Great War, p. 18.

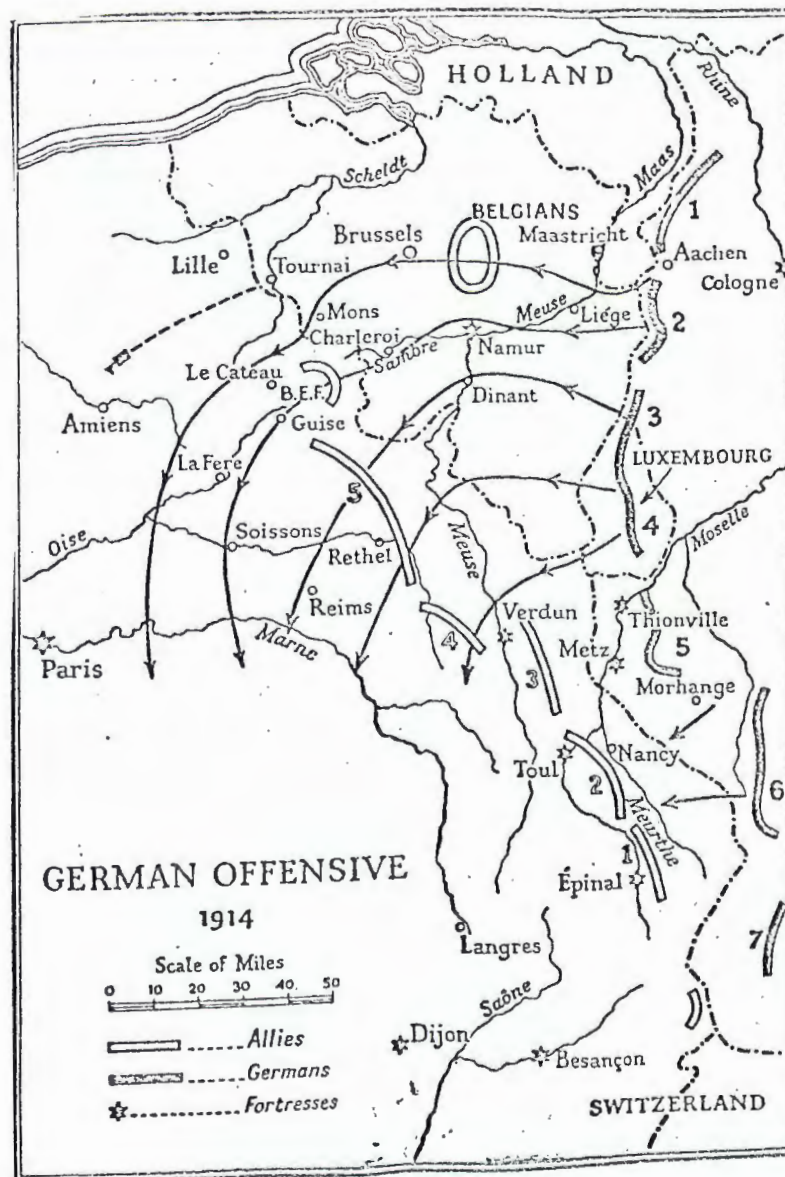


FIGURE 1

GERMAN OFFENSIVE 1914

Falls, The Great War 1914-1918, p. 43.

Ardennes and the Dutch frontier. In the first days of August, the German First Army of General Alexander Von Kluck and the German Second Army of General Karl Von Buelow poured down this corridor. A specially trained German task force attempted to break through the outer ring of forts on the 5th but met with unexpected resistance. It was this engagement that Ambassador Whitlock reported to Washington. But Major General Erich Ludendorff soon rallied the attackers and succeeded in penetrating the defenses on the night of August 5th - 6th. The Germans then brought up their big surprise, huge 42 cm. howitzers that reduced the ring of forts to rubble. Liège surrendered on the 16th and the Germans, safely over their first major hurdle, now swept west and south.

Some five thousand Germans were caught in Belgium by the sudden outbreak of the war. Full of fear and in many instances short of funds they came to Brussels and were housed in convents and whatever other shelter was available. Through the initiative and organization of the United States Embassy and the good offices of the Belgian Government these people were fed and taken care of until transportation was arranged for them to Holland. From there they were provided transportation to Germany through the efforts of the United States Embassy at the Hague.¹ Such feelings of compassion and sympathy for unfortunate humanity soon ranked among the early casualties of the war now being unleashed in its full fury.

The gentleman responsible for the successful completion of the operation described above was United States Ambassador Henry Van Dyke.

¹ Whitlock to State Department, 7 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/230. National Archives.



FIGURE 2

GENERAL ALEXANDER VON KLUCK

Shartle, Report of Captain Samuel G. Shartle, C.A.C. Military Observer with the German Army December 20, 1914-April 6, 1915, p. 19.



FIGURE 3

GENERAL KARL VON BUELOW

Shartle, Report of Captain Samuel G. Shartle, C.A.C. Military
Observer with the German Army December 20, 1914-April 6, 1915, p. 18.

A poet, a Presbyterian minister, a former professor of theology at Princeton University, and a widely published author Van Dyke was sixty-two at the time. He claimed among his numerous friends Mark Twain, James Whitcomb Riley, former President Grover Cleveland and, of course, President Woodrow Wilson. Van Dyke resigned his post in 1916 because he could not reconcile his strong feelings in favor of the Allied cause with being a minister to a neutral country and took a commission as a Lieutenant Commander in the Chaplain Corps of the U.S. Navy.¹

Despite the strength and speed of the German juggernaut crashing through Belgium, few Frenchmen seemed aware of the ordeal that awaited them. Ambassador Herrick reported from Paris on 8 August that the French were confident. Mobilization had come off without a hitch and they considered German offensive operations thus far unsuccessful. Frenchmen everywhere, regardless of party or place in society, were united in the defense of their country.²

In Berlin Ambassador Gerard thought that German forces might also invade the Netherlands.³ Van Dyke at the Hague saw a garbled version of Gerard's message and sent one of his own to the State Department expressing his disagreement.⁴ Actually if Count Von Schlieffen had still been Chief of the German General Staff, Gerard most probably would have been right.

¹Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. X, pp. 186-188.

²Herrick to State Department, 8 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/234. National Archives.

³Gerard to State Department, 9 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/255. National Archives.

⁴Van Dyke to State Department, 10 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/308. National Archives.

As already mentioned, the original plan had called for the mighty right arm sweep of the German armies in the West to pass through the Netherlands as well as Belgium. Moltke's elimination of the Netherlands invasion was the first of several modifications he made to the grandiose plan of his predecessor. In the meantime, however, Dutch Queen Wilhelmina declared martial law in her provinces bordering on Belgium; Limburg, North Brabant and Zeeland.

As the struggle continued in its early stages, the Germans still had hopes that the Belgians could be persuaded to cease their resistance and allow the passage of German troops across Belgium. On 9 August Ambassador Whitlock notified the State Department that he had received a message from Ambassador Van Dyke at the Hague repeating the German proposals made in the original ultimatum to Belgium. The only difference was that the Germans took pains to praise the Belgians for their martial spirit. Germany still insisted that Belgium allow passage of her troops, permit her to use Liège as a base of operations, and detach herself from France. Whitlock asked for instructions from the State Department as to the propriety of passing this proposal on to the Belgian Government. He pointed out that the Belgians had already flatly rejected a similar proposal. Whitlock on his own initiative allowed the Belgian Foreign Minister and his advisers to take a look at Van Dyke's message. Their remarks concerning the proposal strongly indicated that if the United States, in its neutral role, presented such a document to the Belgian Government, the Belgians would be deeply resentful. Ambassador Gerard in Berlin apparently thought that it would be a good idea for Whitlock to present the proposal but the weight of opinion was against him. As Ambassador Whitlock said, "It is not a proposal for peace but of new alliances for war."¹

¹Whitlock to State Department, 9 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/252. National Archives.

At the other end of the European continent German diplomacy was to be infinitely more successful than it had been in the West. The Germans, in the years before the outbreak of war, had developed considerable influence in Turkey. When the war broke out the pro-German faction in the Turkish Government was not quite strong enough to bring Turkey in on the side of the Germans. But with time they would.

Now it so happened that one Admiral Wilhelm Von Souchon commanded a German squadron operating in the Mediterranean in 1914. The squadron consisted of the battle cruiser Goeben and the light cruiser Breslau. Souchon's mission was to show the flag in peacetime and be prepared to interfere with French troop movements in case of war. He was having the boilers of Goeben repaired at Pola, the Austrian naval base on the northeastern coast of the Adriatic, when the news of war came. Souchon took his battle cruiser quickly out of Pola and through the Adriatic to keep the Allies from bottling him up. The Italians refused him coal at Brindisi and with Goeben still only partially repaired the chances of reaching the Atlantic were slim. The German Admiralty ordered merchant ships to meet the squadron at Messina. Breslau fell in with Goeben at Taranto and the two ships took on coal and acquired a German merchant ship as a tender.

The squadron left Messina at 1 A.M. on 3 August and steamed west for the French embarkation ports of Bone and Philippeville on the Algerian coast. The squadron bombarded these ports and then made for Messina again to take on more coal. The Allies planned to intercept Souchon on his way into the Atlantic, but Berlin gave him another mission. En route to carry out his bombardment orders the German Admiralty directed Souchon to take his squadron to Constantinople! The Germans passed a British

squadron on the way back to Messina but since Germany and Great Britain were not as yet at war preventive action did not ensue. London ordered the British ships to shadow the Germans until Grey's ultimatum expired at midnight.

As time passed, the Germans outdistanced the pursuing British ships and finally lost them in the darkness and fog. After coaling frantically at Messina from German merchant ships, Souchon set off on his fateful voyage. A British cruiser located him at the eastern end of the Straits of Messina and dogged his wake. Admiral Souchon planned to meet a German collier off Cape Malea in Greece. So the Germans tried to shake off their shadow and at one point Breslau dropped back and traded shots with the Britisher with no damage to either side. Finally the British Admiral Commanding in the Mediterranean, Sir A. Berkely Milne, called off the chase and Souchon was able to meet his collier in private. After coaling, the German squadron made for Constantinople and the Turks allowed them to enter the Dardanelles.¹

The United States ambassador at Constantinople was fifty-eight-year-old Henry Morgenthau, a lawyer by profession, whom President Wilson appointed in 1913.² He reported the arrival of Goeben and Breslau to Washington on 11 August, added that ships, officers, and crew would be transferred to the Turkish Navy and correctly surmised that Turkey would soon come in on the German side.³ Heretofore, Morgenthau had reported

¹Tuchman, The Guns of August, pp. 161-187.

²The New Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia, p. 8632.

³Morgenthau to State Department, 11 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/477. National Archives.

on the behind-the-scenes struggle in the Turkish Government between the pro-Germans and those officials who wanted to wait a bit to see how the fight would go before committing themselves.¹

The arrival of Goeben and Breslau tipped the scales in favor of the pro-Germans. Thus Germany had acquired another weak ally, one that had recently lost two wars, but one that would be of enormous strategical importance to the Central Powers because of her crucial geographic position at the crossroads of Europe and Asia Minor. The belligerents thus far in 1914 were for the Central Powers Germany and Austria-Hungary with Turkey to come in on their side in early November. For the Allies: France, Russia, Great Britain, Belgium, Serbia, Montenegro and Japan. The latter declared war on Germany on 23 August for the purpose of picking up German holdings in China and Germany's Pacific islands.

We come now to a curious but highly interesting report on the events leading to the war in Europe. It came from Major George T. Langhorne, Military Attaché in the Berlin Embassy, who sent it to the War College Division of the U.S. Army General Staff.² Since his appointment to this post, Langhorne got along very well with his German hosts -- no doubt too well. In addition to being pro-German Langhorne tended to stray from military affairs into politics, diplomacy and policy-making. While these tendencies ultimately led to Langhorne's relief early in 1915, his reports are valuable for the purposes of this study since they present the view from Berlin as seen through the eyes of an American representative.

¹Morgenthau to State Department, 7 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/439. National Archives.

²Report from Langhorne dated 12 August 1914, subject: Notes, Army War College File Number 8690-15. National Archives.

Langhorne's position on the origins of the war runs as follows: The plot which the Serbians formulated and executed against the Archduke Franz Ferdinand had the approval and assistance of members of the Serbian Government and Army. The Crown Prince of Serbia was closely connected with the plot, therefore, the Austro-Hungarian Government issued an ultimatum to Serbia that was completely justified. Among the Austro-Hungarian demands were the following: Serbia should punish the conspirators; suppress the secret societies responsible for pan-Serbian agitation; publish in an official paper the true story of the assassination, and dismiss and punish the army officers implicated in the plot. When Serbia refused these just demands war followed.

Major Langhorne went on to relate that an American, not further identified, traveling from England through Germany told him that Russia was going to mobilize and this would bring about the great war that people had been reading about for "forty years!". It was impossible to believe that the Great Powers of Europe should go to war because of the actions of some assassins and hard to believe that the Allies would take Serbia's part in the dispute. The unnamed American said his information came from an unnamed Englishman, who traveled extensively in the Balkans. It was all a plot against Germany and Russia was behind it.

According to Langhorne, Germany made every effort to keep the dispute localized between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Russia asked Germany to mediate but then began to mobilize. The Kaiser requested the Czar to cease mobilization since this would prejudice diplomatic efforts. The Czar assured the Kaiser that it was only a partial mobilization, a precautionary measure. The Kaiser was also in touch with King
V
George of England through his brother Prince Henry of Prussia, who was

at that time in London. Wilhelm II earnestly tried to head off a clash between Russia and Austria-Hungary when the Russians announced general mobilization. Germany sent an ultimatum to Russia with a twelve-hour time limit demanding that she cease mobilization, since this was a hostile act directed toward Germany. When it was discovered that the message was unclear or garbled Germany gave Russia an additional six hours in which to answer.

Langhorne's report continues in this vein: On 31 July Germany declared martial law when "everything in Germany automatically passed into the hands of the Army".¹ On 1 August Germany ordered general mobilization which began the next day. France mobilized after having given an unsatisfactory answer to Germany concerning the question of her ultimate intentions in case of a Russo-German war. England said that if Germany invaded Belgium she would take extreme measures. Langhorne added that England could have avoided the war between France and Germany. He did not think that France wanted to fight Germany and he was sure that Germany did not wish to fight France.

Major Langhorne repeated some of these same points as he described the earliest days of the war as seen from the German viewpoint. Russia mobilized against Austria-Hungary, he reported, but he added that this action also threatened Germany. The latter, which had not shown the slightest desire to fight or to be aggressive, had to mobilize in self defense and support Austria-Hungary. France mobilized to fulfill her treaty obligations and offered to keep her troops six miles in back of

¹Ibid., p. 3.

the frontier but violated this proposal even before the Germans had an opportunity to accept it. Russian troops had already crossed the border in several places so Germany was attacked by two countries.

Langhorne attended the Reichstag on the afternoon of 4 August and saw the unanimous vote for war credits. He noted that the peace-loving Social Democrats supported the Government and joined the rest of the house in cheering the Kaiser. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg in a speech announced that the French were massing troops southwest of Belgium and that French officers had already passed through Belgium thereby violating Belgian neutrality. It was necessary for the German Army, therefore, to pass through the southern part of Belgium to meet the French.¹

In Langhorne's view Germany and Austria-Hungary were fighting to punish assassins and suppress anarchists whereas Russia was fighting to protect fellow Slavs. The British thus found themselves in the position of aiding the cause of assassins and anarchists and fighting as an ally of their true enemy, the Russians. Actually, it was all the result of an international plot laid by the other European powers who were envious of Germany and her wonderful achievements in arts, science, and industry. Carried away by his enthusiasm for his host country, Langhorne wrote:

I wish that the Americans at home could see the situation as one sees it here in Germany. In a matter of fact as if going to church, the Germans have started in this war which is a fight for their existence as a nation and I think that every American if he knew the true story, would sympathize with Germany.²

On the first day of mobilization Major Langhorne went to the German War Office and asked if it would be possible to see the Prussian

¹Ibid., p. 5.

²Ibid.

War Minister, Erich Von Falkenhayn. The War Office was quiet and seemed to be running normally. When admitted to the presence of this handsome General, Langhorne apologized for bothering him at such a time. But Von Falkenhayn replied that it was quite all right since he really did not have much to do. The German organization was so thorough and the plans so complete that all that was needed was the order to go ahead and carry out the operation. Falkenhayn told Langhorne that Germany did not want to fight but that since France's neutrality could not be guaranteed and since mobilization was an act of war the German plans would have to be executed.

Langhorne rhapsodized further about German mobilization and described how the people were working together, how everything was going like clockwork with much enthusiasm but with little excitement. Not all of the men were called to the colors because the government exempted many to handle vital services and carry on business. Men past military age filled in for those who were called up. Older men, women, boys and girls rallied together to get in the harvest which was bountiful. The army had over a million volunteers which it could not use immediately. Troops left for the front in an orderly manner.

On 9 August, Major Langhorne, by permission of General Falkenhayn, visited some of the railroad stations in Berlin to see the troops off. He described the orderly and well-planned loading of supplies, equipment and horses so that upon arrival at the appointed destination everything would be immediately ready for action. The Germans loaded officers and men as carefully as they did equipment and horses so that complete unit integrity would be maintained.

Columns of troops in their new field grey uniforms passed through the streets, a battalion of infantry here a battery of artillery there.

Everywhere people cheered the troops. As they marched along, large crowds followed them to the station and pressed gifts of coffee, cake, lemonade, sandwiches and cigars onto their heroes. The soldiers sang lustily as they marched, "Es braust ein Ruf wie Donnerhall" and "Deutschland Ueber Alles". Langhorne was particularly impressed by the appearance of the German cavalry but dubious of the military value of the lances they carried and critical of their carbines. He terminated his report by relating that all of the Kaiser's sons had gone to war. The Crown Prince commanded a corps,¹ Prince Eitel Friedrich commanded the First Regiment of the Guards, and another son went into the Navy.

Ambassador Gerard also had some comments regarding the German scene during the first days of the war. In a long telegram to the State Department dated 18 August he, like Langhorne, described the cheering crowds and public enthusiasm for the war. But he told too of demonstrations against the Russians and French including a mob that threatened the Russian Ambassador and his staff with sticks on the occasion of their departure. A mob also broke all the windows in the British Embassy after Britain declared war against Germany. The authorities arrested many Americans as Englishmen and there were complaints of mistreatment at the hands of excited crowds.² The press did not help the situation by urging the public to be on the lookout for spies thus increasing the danger to all foreigners from excited Germans.

Excitement and ugly incidents were not confined to Berlin. Gerard relates in his report that the Russians sacked the German Embassy in

¹Langhorne is in error here. Actually the Crown Prince commanded the Fifth Army.

²Gerard to State Department, 18 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/830. National Archives.

St. Petersburg and that a mob beat an employee to death. Charles Wilson in St. Petersburg confirmed this story.¹

Americans were very popular with both the German Government and the public. Gerard says that the officials at the Foreign Office were ultrafriendly and the press urged the German public to show every kindness to Americans. This attitude, however, would change drastically before the year was out.

Ambassador Gerard concluded his report by saying that the German press contained stories of French forces crossing the frontier and occupying the towns of Gattethal, Metseral and Markkirch. The press also carried stories of French officers found in Germany dressed in Prussian uniforms and of French aviators who had violated the neutrality of the Netherlands and Belgium. According to the newspapers a French airship was reported to have dropped bombs on Nuremberg. In Gerard's opinion the German public was enthusiastic over the fall of Liège and the press reported that it had been taken with little German loss. At the end of his report the Ambassador stated that the press was also full of stories of Belgian cruelties to German noncombatants.²

The reports from United States representatives in Europe as the crisis of 1914 developed and exploded into war are on the whole rather fragmentary. The exception to this general statement are those filed by Major Langhorne. The quality of the reports seem to vary according to how well the various American representatives got along with their hosts. Langhorne, who found the Germans to his liking, submitted informative and

¹Wilson to State Department, 5 August 1914. State Department File Number 701.6261/6. National Archives.

²Gerard to State Department, 18 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/830. National Archives.

detailed reports. Brand Whitlock in Belgium apparently got along well with Belgian officials and his reports show it. Walter Hines Page in London was on a par with Whitlock in quality and ahead in volume.

There are several reasons why the reporting during the period discussed in this chapter was not as extensive as it might have been. One was the suddenness with which the storm exploded over Europe. Some American officials were simply caught off base. Another restrictive factor was the large volume of business that U.S. Embassies and Consulates were expected to conduct with a small staff on a day-to-day basis. When war broke out, stranded Americans descended by the thousands on U.S. Consulates and Embassies all over Europe seeking help and advice. Then when the various nations discontinued diplomatic relations and went to war an additional burden fell on United States representatives abroad. For they now had to aid thousands of citizens and subjects of the belligerent countries in addition to assisting their own people. Under such circumstances the job of keeping Washington adequately informed was accomplished as well as could be expected.

CHAPTER III

ARMIES ON THE MARCH IN THE WEST

The German armies in the West launched their operations immediately upon the declaration of war with France based on the modified Schlieffen Plan. The assault on the Belgian fortress city of Liège has been suggested briefly in Chapter II of this study. Major Langhorne in a report dated 29 September 1914 described the action at Liège.¹ He noted at the outset that there seemed to be an impression in the United States that Liège, and later the fortresses of Namur and Maubeuge, were able to hold up the German advance for some time. This idea, he contended, was completely false. Such fortifications needed a covering mobile field force to keep the enemy from setting up his siege artillery as the Germans did.

The Belgians constructed these forts between 1888 and 1891. Massive concrete structures which mounted five to six cupola turrets, they looked like huge Indian burial mounds from a distance. An iron watershed kept water from running down between the cupola and the barbette. The guns in the forts consisted of 21 cm mortars with a range of eight thousand yards, 15 cm rifles with a range of ten thousand yards, and 12 cm rifles with a range of two thousand yards. The muzzles of the guns did not project beyond the turrets. A steel observation tower, provided with a spotlight, stood on the highest point of the fortification. This tower

¹Report, dated 29 September 1914, subject: European War Lessons From the Belgian Forts About Liège and Namur and the French Forts About Maubeuge, Army War College File Number 8690-58, National Archives.

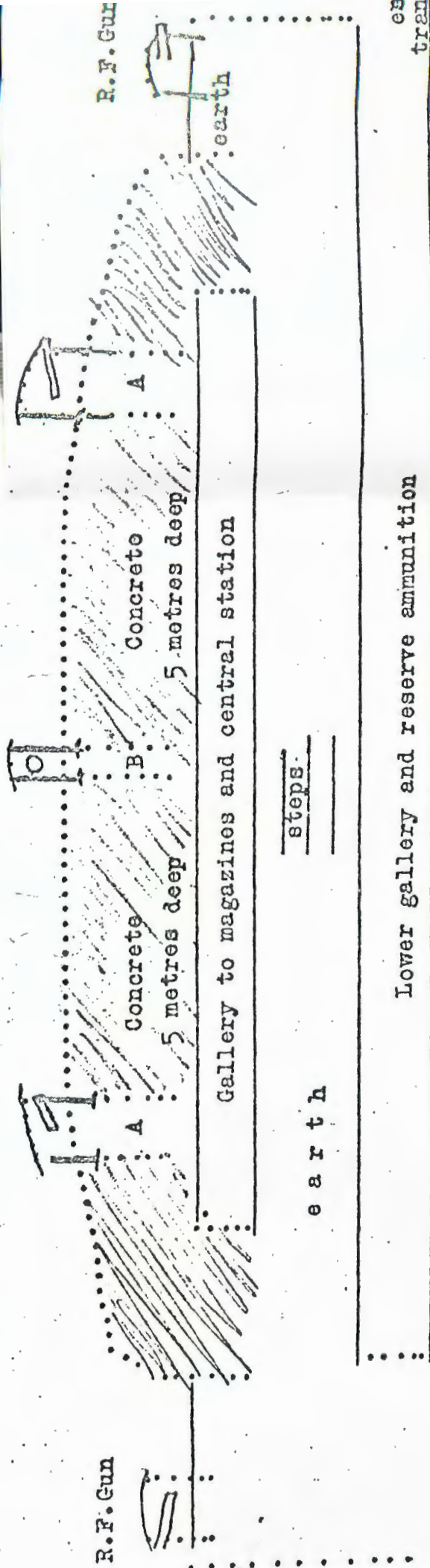


FIGURE 4

DIAGRAM OF THE BELGIAN FORTS

Langhorne, European War Lessons from the Belgian Forts About Liège and Namur and the French Forts About Maubeuge.

could be lowered into the casement when necessary. Ventilating shafts through the concrete brought fresh air to the officers and soldiers below. Under the turrets a gallery led to the fire control room and the magazines. A dry moat thirty feet deep and covered by small rapid-firing guns in turrets surrounded the forts. 'These forts can therefore be likened to a stationary battleship',¹ wrote Langhorne. Liège and Namur were ringed by these forts some eight to twelve kilometers from the center of the city. About four hundred men, half artillery and half infantrymen, constituted the garrison of each fort.

The German plan of attack was to reduce two of the forts with siege artillery, capture the battered positions with infantry, move into the city, and from there reduce the other forts. The Germans employed monster 42 cm howitzers to subdue the forts at Liège.² This merciless pounding shattered the watersheds and the fragments fell between the turrets and the barbettes jamming the turning mechanism. Shells penetrated the concrete under the barbettes and upon exploding killed the crews in the turrets and made the galleries untenable. At Fort Loncin one of the heavy shells crashed down the magazine ventilator shaft, blew up the magazine leaving a crater fifty feet deep, and completely wrecked the fort. Almost the entire garrison was killed.³

Captain A. H. Sunderland, U.S. Army, who was in Belgium during the latter part of 1914 in connection with Belgian relief work, visited many

¹Ibid., p. 2.

²Ibid., Langhorne erroneously calls the 42 cm howitzers 49 cm. At Namur the Germans used 30.5 cm Austrian Skoda siege guns.

³Ibid.



FIGURE 5

FORT LONCIN AT LIÈGE

Shartle, Report of Captain Samuel G. Shartle, C.A.C. Military
Observer with the German Army December 20, 1914-April 6, 1915, p. 79.



FIGURE 6

42 cm HOWITZER EMPLACEMENT AT LIÈGE

Shartle, Report of Captain Samuel G. Shartle, C.A.C. Military
Observer with the German Army December 20, 1914-April 6, 1915, p. 44.

of the battle scenes. His impression of the destruction at Fort Loncin follows:

Each of these (cupolas) is within about 75 feet of the center of the pit formed by the explosion of the main magazine. It appeared to me that this explosion probably caused the ammunition in secondary magazines or handling rooms near this and another cupola to explode blowing out the supports and allowing them to fall into their present positions, as both cupolas are damaged in a very similar manner. I do not believe that each of these was damaged by a separate shell as my guides (German officers) tried to make me believe.¹

Captain Sunderland added that the Germans advertised their siege guns prominently. It appeared, he thought, that they used the bombardment of Fort Loncin as a "demonstration" for the purpose of intimidating personnel of other fortresses they might besiege in the future.² Sunderland also mentioned in passing that only three or four localities in Liège suffered damage from the attack. In each case this was some house which had been burned by the Germans because civilians fired on German troops in the streets after Belgian troops had left.³

As the German armies poured across Belgium toward the French border several instances of destruction in retaliation for alleged civilian sabotage or sniping took place. In most instances the destruction was accompanied by German execution of hostages. On 23 August, the little town of Vise, scene of the first clash in the West, was destroyed. On his visit to Belgium in November of 1914, Sunderland reported that Vise was entirely in ruins. He did not see a house that was not destroyed.

¹Report, dated 19 December 1914, subject: Notes on Belgium, Army War College File Number 8984-1, p. 5, National Archives.

²Ibid., p. 8.

³Ibid., p. 9.

According to the Germans, this destruction was in retaliation for the firing of civilians on German detachments after the main body of troops had passed through. Sunderland related that the American Consul in Liège, a Mr. Heingartner, told him that the measure was taken only after three such shooting incidents had taken place.¹ Further on in his report he added: "The once picturesque little city of Dinant is practically wiped out." Dinant is a small city located astride the Meuse River approximately fifteen miles due south of Namur. Sunderland said that the buildings on the west side of the river were destroyed by artillery fire while those on the east side were burned.²

The incident which raised the greatest furor was the burning of Louvain. This ancient university city, famous for its library, is located fifteen miles to the west of Brussels on the Dyle River. Sunderland agreed that of all the Belgian cities Louvain showed the greatest amount of destruction. Based on his knowledge from former visits he estimated that one third of the city had been burned over. This included many of its better parts. He was told that Louvain had been untouched by war when the Germans first entered. When the main body of troops had passed on, guards remained at the railroad station. On a signal civilians rushed the station which was subjected to heavy firing from nearby houses and streets. This attack on the rail station coincided with a sortie on the Germans by the Belgian field army based on Antwerp. The Germans held

¹Ibid., p. 2.

²Ibid., p. 10.

the station and were relieved by troops returning from the main column.¹ The destruction began on 25 August.

In February of 1915, Captain Samuel G. Shartle, U.S. Army, a member of a team of U.S. military observers, also visited Louvain. It was his opinion that the earlier reports of the destruction in the city were exaggerations. The team drove through most of the city and visited the destroyed section which, according to Shartle, was mainly the street leading from the rail station to the town hall. At least eighty percent of the city, he thought, was undamaged. Shartle noted that the true story of what happened at Louvain would have to wait for the historian because neither Germans nor Belgians could give an unprejudiced account.²

On 1 September, Ambassador Gerard transmitted a message composed by Major Langhorne which related the same story concerning Belgian civilians firing on German soldiers that Sunderland reported. Langhorne added, however, that the activities of the Belgian civilians must have been organized by the Belgian Government and that any other stories of the Louvain incident were "absolutely untrue".³ On the 15th and 17th of September, American newspapermen accompanying the German Army got out a dispatch which affirmed that they had witnessed neither wanton brutality,

¹Ibid., p. 11.

²Report, dated 18 June 1915, subject: Report of Captain Samuel G. Shartle, C.A.C., Military Observer with the German Army, December 20, 1914 to April 6, 1915, p. 24, Army War College File Number 8713-22. National Archives.

³Gerard for Langhorne, 1 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72116/17. National Archives.



FIGURE 7

THE STREET BETWEEN THE TOWN HALL AND THE RAILROAD STATION IN LOUVAIN

Shartle, Report of Captain Samuel G. Shartle, C.A.C. Military
Observer with the German Army December 20, 1914-April 6, 1915, p. 26.



FIGURE 8

GERMAN SOLDIERS ON THE MARCH IN BELGIUM

Shartle, Report of Captain Samuel G. Shartle, C.A.C. Military
Observer with the German Army December 20, 1914-April 6, 1915, p. 35.

destruction nor drunkenness on the part of German soldiers. According to these observers, German discipline was excellent. Incidentally, one of the cities mentioned in this dispatch was Louvain.¹

Hugh S. Gibson, the Secretary of the U.S. Embassy in Belgium, was in Louvain on the afternoon of 28 August with other members of the diplomatic corps. He observed the activity there that day and was asked later by both the Germans and the Belgians to make an official statement of what he saw that afternoon. Gibson was reluctant to give testimony since he was present only on the last day of what was a three-day operation. Ambassador Whitlock was of the opinion that any official testimony given by Gibson would violate America's neutrality.² His private feelings in the matter are best expressed in a telegram to the State Department.

The time has not come and the occasion will not permit me to report on the excesses of German soldiers in Belgium. While there may have been exaggerations in the published stories they are in spirit true and at a later date I shall make a comprehensive report on this dreadful subject.³

Both sides were anxious to tell their story to the world and in particular to the United States. In Rome the German and Belgian representatives gave their versions of the Louvain incident to the United States Ambassador and requested that their statements be published in the American press. Ambassador Page declined to fulfill their request but instead

¹Gerard to State Department, 16 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72116/41, 17 September 1914, State Department File Number 763.72/1039. National Archives.

²Gibson to State Department, 29 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72116/60. National Archives.

³Whitlock to State Department, 29 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72116/53. National Archives.

forwarded the documents to the State Department for such action as the Secretary saw fit. The stories, of course, had already been carried in the European press.¹

In the meantime, the German Army continued its march through Belgium. On 18 August, Ambassador Whitlock reported that the Belgian Government and the royal family, minus the King who had remained with his army in the field, ^{had} moved from Brussels to Antwerp.² The reason the Government withdrew from the capital, as Whitlock reported the next day, was because German cavalry was advancing on the city in considerable numbers. The Military Governor, with what Whitlock described as a totally insufficient force, was going to try to defend the city and the Burgomaster offered the Americans refuge in the fortified area. Ambassador Whitlock, however, politely declined.³

The German IV Army Corps, General Sixtus Von Armin commanding, occupied Brussels on the afternoon of the 20th. The evening before the U.S. and Spanish Ambassadors had persuaded the Belgian Military Governor not to offer a futile resistance on humanitarian grounds. He complied and as a result the occupation was orderly and quiet prevailed in the Belgian capital.⁴

¹Page to State Department, 9 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72116/4, National Archives.

²Whitlock to State Department, 18 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/496. National Archives.

³Whitlock to State Department, 19 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/517. National Archives.

⁴Whitlock to State Department, 25 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/599. National Archives.

Von Armin wasted no time in taking advantage of his situation. On the same day the German's occupied Brussels he levied a forced loan of fifty million francs on the city and one for four hundred fifty ^{million} on the Province of Brabant. The city "loan" was promptly paid but the provincial "loan" was too steep and Mr. Gibson reported that it would probably have to be reduced. In addition to money the Germans also went after food supplies. Gibson accurately predicted that the food requisitions coupled with the isolation of Brussels by war would soon produce a serious situation for the population.¹

During the last days of August the German right wing armies had reached France and had begun to achieve the same reputation in that country that they had gained in Belgium. Ambassador Herrick notified Washington on the 21st that the French Government charged the Germans with violating the Hague conventions. They asserted that the enemy bombarded the unfortified village of Pontamousson without warning and that they also bombarded a hospital. Then, too, the French claimed to have found a German bandolier with ~~odum~~ dum bullets in it.² Herrick was back on the wire on the 24th, the 26th and the 29th with more tales of alleged German outrages. Specifically, the French charged the Germans with the wanton burning of villages, shooting ~~non~~ combatant inhabitants of the villages, attacks on French Red Cross personnel by wounded Germans, and using ~~odum~~ dum bullets. Mr. Herrick did not make any judgments or

¹Gibson to State Department, 25 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/615. National Archives.

²Herrick to State Department, 21 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72116/4. National Archives.

comments on the French charges but simply passed them on to the State Department as they had been given to him.¹

The 30th of August proved a busy day for Mr. Herrick. To begin with a reliable source told him that the French Government was moving the mint from Paris to Bordeaux.² Here was a sure indication of official French assessment of the military situation then unfolding. Next the British Ambassador told Herrick that seventy thousand British troops had successfully held two hundred thousand Germans but had finally been forced to retire when the French failed to reinforce them. He went on to say that French reinforcements had finally arrived and the situation looked more "hopeful".³ This was the garbled version of the Battle of Mons, fought on 23 August, which reached Paris. Unfortunately for the British Ambassador, even as he talked to Herrick, both British and French forces were in full retreat before General Von Kluck's oncoming legions.

The situation was far from "hopeful" for the Allies. Some feeling of impending calamity had penetrated the French capital because in the same message containing the British Ambassador's story, Herrick noted that even if the government and the rest of the diplomatic corps left Paris for Bordeaux or elsewhere he proposed to remain. He remarked that

¹Herrick to State Department, 24 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72116/6; 26 August 1914, State Department File Number 763.72116/11; 29 August 1914, State Department File Number 763.72116/13. National Archives.

²Herrick to State Department, 30 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/677. National Archives.

³Herrick to State Department, 30 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/678. National Archives.

the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, René Viviani, received this suggestion most cordially. To round off this busy day an aerial messenger from across the Rhine visited Paris and deposited several bombs on the city. The only reported casualty was one woman killed.¹ The German airplane returned the next day and dropped more bombs as well as some proclamations wrapped in a German flag. Herrick and his "committee" held that these actions violated the Hague Conventions and the rules of civilized warfare.²

As the German armies began to close in on Paris Mr. Herrick remained at his post reporting the latest news to Washington and preparing for the worst. A dispatch, dated 2 September, noted that Lord Kitchener, the British Secretary of State for War, had been in Paris the day before. Kitchener was in France to buck up Sir John French, the Commanding General of the British Expeditionary Force. Sir John was reluctant to cooperate with the French after the Battle of Mons but Kitchener brought him back into line.³ British troops blew up a bridge over the Oise at Compiègne behind them as they continued their retreat. The French Government was to depart Paris for Bordeaux that night accompanied by the diplomatic community minus Mr. Herrick, who reported the Germans advancing from the east as well as the north. It looked bad for Paris, but Paris would be defended.⁴

¹Herrick to State Department, 1 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/685. National Archives.

²Herrick to State Department, 1 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72116/15. National Archives.

³Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History, p. 937.

⁴Herrick to State Department, 2 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/749. National Archives.



FIGURE 9

GERMAN SOLDIERS IN FRANCE

Burt, Report of Observations with the German Army, p. 19.

A German bomber flew back again on the afternoon of the 3rd. Herrick related that a fusilade greeted the German but he went away unharmed. On 5 September, Mr. Herrick, anticipating the arrival of the Germans in Paris, requested Washington to ask the German Government to respect American property in the city. He had even gone so far as to draft a poster which would be placed on American property identifying it as such to the German occupation forces.¹ The streets and boulevards were empty. Traffic was gone. The tourists were gone.

For one August in its history Paris was French -- and silent. The sun shone, fountains sparkled in the Rond Point, trees were green, the quiet Seine flowed by unchanging, brilliant clusters of Allied flags enhanced the pale grey beauty of the worlds most beautiful city.²

Though he could not know it at the time, Herrick would not see the Germans marching through the Arc de Triomphe. On the same day he sent out his dispatch the Battle of the Marne began which ended then and thereafter the German threat to Paris.

As the battle raged to the east of Paris, Herrick and his staff observed the city preparing for a final fight. The French strengthened old fortifications, they dug rifle pits by the Porte Maillot, while a significant portion of the population followed the Government south. German airplanes no longer roared over the city because French planes now patrolled Paris skies. The Ambassador and his staff were fully occupied with their plans for protecting American property. They were also troubled by requests for protection from people whose own diplomatic representatives were in Bordeaux. Herrick noted that the situation raised embarrassing

¹Herrick to State Department, 5 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/792. National Archives.

²Tuchman, The Guns of August, p. 416.

questions.¹

By 11 September the immediate results of the Marne had become obvious. In a message that day Mr. Herrick reported:

The advance of the Allied forces has been considerable today bringing them nearer the point where it would seem that a decisive battle is to be fought within the next day or so. The more conservative opinion fears that the retreat may be a ruse and that a determined effort will be made to cut through the French line aided by the Crown Prince's Army which is said to be marching to the south.²

The situation had become clearer a day later as the Germans continued their retreat. Inhabitants of the little villages around Paris began to return to their homes confident that the "Hun" had been turned back this time.³

The German retreat began to come to a halt in the middle of September when they dug in north of Soissons to resist the Allied pressure on them. The fighting continued on into the end of September with the French reporting some progress on their "left" but with no decisive action. It was the beginning of the so-called "race to the sea" as each of the belligerents tried to find the other's flank and failed. A major cause of this failure was that neither side had an overwhelming advantage in transport and maneuver which would allow them to execute such an operation successfully. As September came to a close Herrick reported: "Little change in military situation in past few days. Tone of Allies sanguine."⁴

¹Herrick to State Department, 6 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/797. National Archives.

²Herrick to State Department, 11 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/847. National Archives.

³Herrick to State Department, 12 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/850. National Archives.

⁴Herrick to State Department, 29 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/1000. National Archives.

Down in sunny Italy Ambassador Thomas N. Page described the political situation in that country as "unsteady". The Italian Government was firmly maintaining its neutrality while quietly making military preparations such as calling up reserves to the tune of two hundred forty thousand men to augment the regular army of two hundred thousand. The Government was also beginning to stockpile supplies. Public opinion in Italy at this time was pro-French. Page remarked briefly that the most dangerous situation lay in the Balkans. Roumania was quiet but might not remain that way while Turkey was showing great unrest and had failed to disarm Goeben and Breslau. The Ambassador also cited the danger of a general rising of all Islam.¹

German confidence in the initial phase of the war was graphically expressed by Hans Von Flotow, the German Ambassador to Rome, in a conversation with Thomas N. Page near the end of August. He said that President Wilson's offer of mediation was a bit premature although later everyone would be grateful for such an offer.² Flotow stated that German victories had substantially decided the war and that while Germany would not claim any territory in France she would probably demand some colonial compensation.³

On 8 September, Ambassador Page dispatched a letter to the Secretary of State in which he analyzed the situation in Italy. The Italian

¹Page to State Department, 22 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72111/345. National Archives.

²August 4, 1914. "Good offices of President Wilson in the interest of European peace." The message was transmitted through the State Department to the U.S. Ambassadors in the principal belligerent nations. All of them politely declined the offer.

³Page to State Department, 25 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72111/355. National Archives.

Government was giving assurances that it intended to maintain its neutrality and the business community was hardly seconding this posture, he reported. But beneath the official stance there was,

...an undercurrent of expectancy that in the future and, perhaps, before long there may be a change and that the Italian people, especially those in the North, may force the hand of the Government and declare in favor of the Allies. However this may be, Italy has undoubtedly made preparations, and could place in the field immediately a good army.¹

He was correct concerning the undercurrent of pro-Allied sentiment among the Italian people. The irredentist movement for the redemption of the Trentino and Trieste was strong, particularly in northern Italy.² Then, too, evil memories remained of Austrian rule in Italy.³ A newer source of friction was Italian fear of Austro-Hungarian designs on the Balkans and around the Adriatic Sea.⁴

Yet when Page wrote about Italy's "good preparations" and her ability to "place in the field immediately a good army", he was clearly short of the mark. Italy indeed was frantically trying to stockpile food and the necessary materials of war but these preparations were by no means near completion when Page sent his message. The Italians had not recovered from their war with Turkey in 1911 to 1912 and the Italian Army was short on equipment and training.⁵

¹Page to State Department, 8 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/903. National Archives.

²Page, Italy and the World War, p. 110.

³Ibid., p. 112.

⁴Ibid., pp. 219-220.

⁵Ibid., pp. 150, 161, 171.

The concluding portion of the letter to the Secretary of State deals with Italian public sentiment regarding Germany. Page said that feeling was as much against Germany as it was against Austria-Hungary because of the reported atrocities in Belgium. The German Embassy had tried to reverse this attitude with an extensive press campaign but apparently to little avail. By the end of September Page notified Washington that Italy could not remain neutral much longer.¹

The months of August and September looked very rosy from Berlin, judging by the reports sent home from American civil and military observers. Ambassador Gerard reported great public enthusiasm over an announcement that a French Army corps at Belfort had been defeated. Two days later on 12 August the German press proudly proclaimed a great victory won at Muelhausen.² The German Government released an official statement on 19 August which denied that German ports were under blockade and specifically denied that the German Navy had mined the North Sea.³

The Germans were particularly sensitive about the mine question. The Allies charged the Germans with laying mines in the open sea contrary to the provisions of the Hague Conventions. Both Brand Whitlock in Belgium and Walter H. Page in Great Britain reported the allegation to Washington. In their dispatches both Ambassadors seemed to give some weight to the charge.⁴

¹Page to State Department, 25 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/965. National Archives.

²Gerard to State Department, 18 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/830. National Archives.

³Grew to State Department, 19 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/723. National Archives.

⁴Page to State Department, 11 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/339; Whitlock to State Department, 13 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/372. National Archives.

By 21 August, the German Government was announcing that their armies were victorious from Metz to Vosgesen and that many prisoners and guns had been taken.¹ This announcement referred to the Battle of Lorraine. Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria and General Josias Von Heeringen, commanding respectively the German Sixth and Seventh Armies, conducted the planned withdrawal dictated by the Schlieffen Plan. Then they turned on the French and threw them back on Nancy.

On 22 August, Gerard told Washington that the Germans were not accepting neutral military observers in the battle areas but that in response to War Department requests he would broach the matter again.² A few days later he reported that a French force of eight army corps had attacked Saarbruecken but had been defeated and thrown back with a loss of over ten thousand prisoners and fifty guns. The Germany Army, he added, was completely equipped down to the smallest detail, and performed as if it were on maneuvers. Aircraft were active on both sides.³ On the evening of the same day Ambassador Van Dyke in Holland informed Washington that a German Zeppelin had bombed Antwerp. Although it dropped only seven bombs and the total damage was rather negligible Europeans considered the action outrageous. Of course, the Continent was not quite ready for this new kind of warfare. Concluded Van Dyke, "No notice of this bombardment was given in advance."⁴

¹Gerard to State Department, 21 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/568. National Archives.

²Gerard to State Department, 22 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72118/5. National Archives.

³Gerard to State Department, 25 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/612. National Archives.

⁴Van Dyke to State Department, 26 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/628. National Archives.

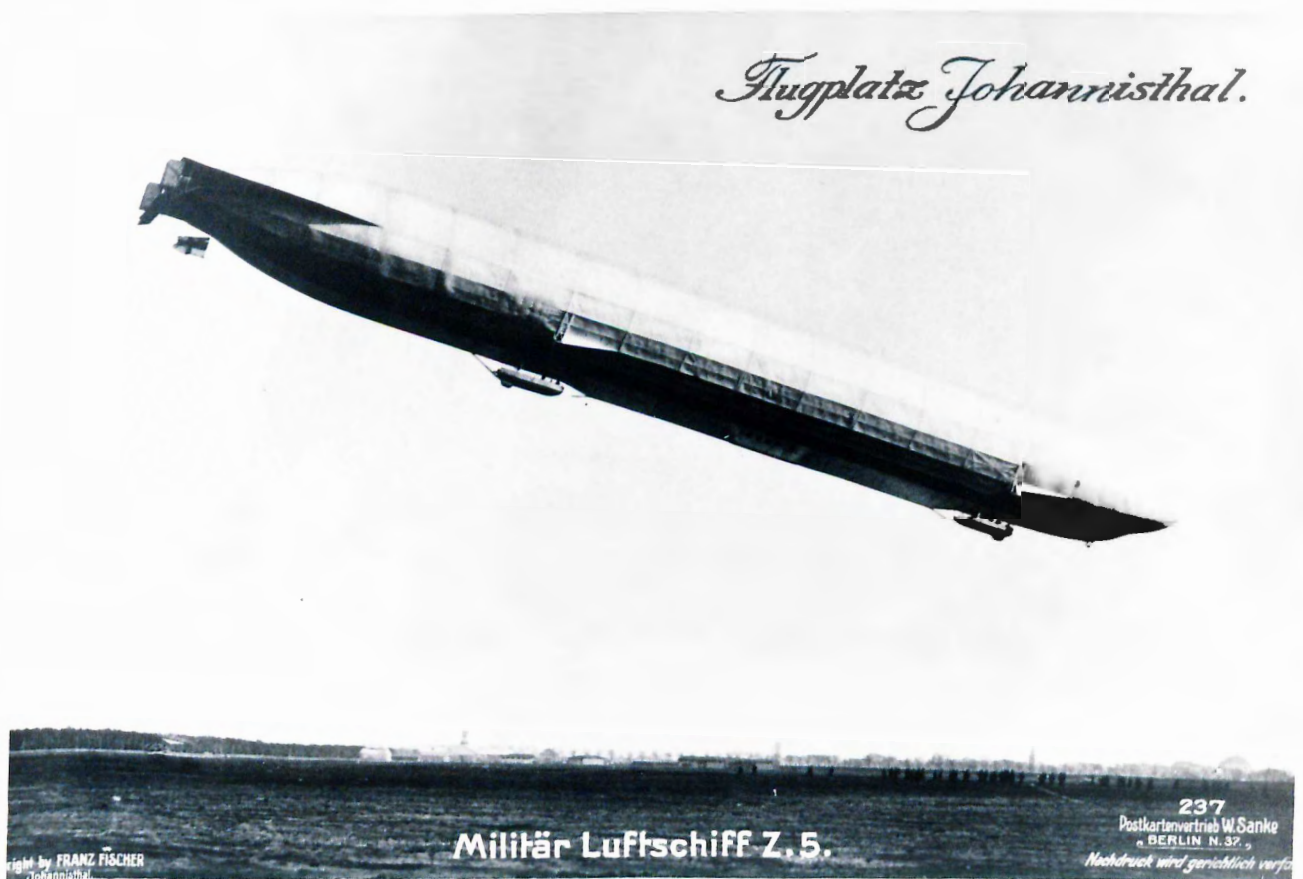


FIGURE 10

ZEPPELIN

Burt, Report of Observations with the German Army, p. 60.

The German attack in the West was proceeding successfully in all of the army areas by the end of August. But by this time Moltke had allowed another modification of the Schlieffen Plan. According to the original blue prints the German left wing was to fight a withdrawing action into Germany when the French launched their attack in Lorraine. The strategy behind this withdrawal was to suck the French strength into the Reich so that Joffre could not use all his forces to parry the powerful thrust of the German right wing as it crashed across northern France. In the meantime, the German center would hold as a pivot while Kluck's and Buelow's forces smashed the French ever southward. But Von Moltke saw the chance for victory on the left wing as well and permitted his armies in that area to attack. These strong German thrusts soon brought the French, who had been attacking "a"outrance" in Lorraine, to their senses in time to enable Joffre to withdraw his troops before they had been too badly mauled and in time to assist those forces which would soon be fighting on the Marne.¹

It was during this period, too, that Von Moltke detached two corps from the all-important right wing and sent them East to help repel the Russian menace in East Prussia. The only thing Von Moltke accomplished by this maneuver was to weaken the decisive punch against France. The troops he dispatched arrived after the Battle of Tannenberg had eliminated the Russian threat.

Major Langhorne, submitted a report to the War Department in early October in which he arranged a table of events covering this period that

¹Among other works on this famous battle see the recent studies by Georges Blond, The Marne and Robert B. Asprey, The First Battle of the Marne.



FIGURE 11

GERMAN MACHINE GUN GOING INTO ACTION ON THE WESTERN FRONT

Shartle, Report of Captain Samuel G. Shartle, C.A.C. Military
Observer with the German Army December 20, 1914-April 6, 1915, p. 40.

leaves the reader with the impression that the Germans, with a few minor losses, were sweeping everything in front of them.¹ The German Crown Prince won a great victory at Longwy. Namur had fallen by 25 August and an English cavalry brigade had been defeated. The British and eight French brigades were forced back by the Germans near Maubeuge. By the 28th the German Government was reporting that three French divisions and the British Army had been completely defeated near Maubeuge with much material taken and that the town of Manonviller had fallen. French forces evacuated the city of Lille and, as already noted, German airplanes flew over Paris. The first trophies of war appeared in Berlin in the form of Russian battle flags and Russian, French and Belgian guns. Montmédý fell, Givet gave up the ghost and the Germans defeated ten French corps near Reims. The Germans were pushing on San Quentin when the French Government removed itself from Paris to Bordeaux. September 4th and 5th were particularly big days as German cavalry moved near Paris and occupied Reims, while Rouen and Boulogne were reported evacuated by the French and two of Maubeuge's ring forts fell. September 7th saw the storming of Nancy in the presence of the Kaiser. But Nancy did not fall. Maubeuge did cave in on the 7th with the recorded booty of four generals, forty thousand troops, four hundred guns and much other assorted war material.

Yet dispatches from the American diplomats confirmed Major Langhorne's report of the unfolding drama as seen from Berlin. The Secretary of the Embassy, Joseph C. Grew, then thirty-four, sent a letter to the Secretary of State in which he emphasized, "the Germans are walking

¹Report from Langhorne, dated 2 October 1914, subject: Table of Events, Chronologically Arranged, European War 1914. Army War College File Number 8690-67. National Archives.



FIGURE 12

UHLANS

Burt, Report of Observations with the German Army, p. 45.

through the French, British and Belgian armies." He also mentioned that he had been giving some thought to possible German demands after the successful conclusion of the war.¹

Ambassador Gerard was on the wire to Washington on 4 September, to inform the State Department that the German General Staff had released a report claiming some ninety thousand prisoners taken in battle in East Prussia,² while in France the towns of Hirson, Les Ayvelles, Condé, La Fere, and Laon had fallen to the German armies. German cavalry too had almost reached Paris. In the West the German armies had crossed the Aisne River and were advancing to the Marne. The French Army near Verdun had been forced south by the German Crown Prince commanding the German Fifth Army. Fighting was in progress in upper Alsace and the armies under the Bavarian Crown Prince and General Von Heeringen were being opposed by strong French forces. An attack was at that time in progress toward Reims.³

During the hectic days of early September Gerard relayed a message to President Wilson from Kaiser Wilhelm. The Kaiser had complained of atrocities committed on wounded German soldiers by Belgian civilians, the Ambassador reported, and the Belgian Government was urging the civil

¹Grew to Secretary of State, 2 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/888. National Archives. Joseph C. Grew had a long and distinguished diplomatic career abroad and in the State Department. He was appointed Ambassador to Japan in 1932 and remained at that post until the outbreak of war in 1941.

²The Battle of Tannenberg, August 26-31.

³Gerard to State Department, 4 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/791. National Archives.

population to conduct illegal warfare against German occupation troops. Wilhelm, too, was particularly upset by the idea that Allied troops were using dum-dum bullets in violation of the Hague Conventions.¹ As previously noted from Ambassador Herrick's reports from Paris the French charged the Germans with the same violation. Both sides produced evidence, or at least some bullets, in an attempt to prove their case to the rest of the world, particularly to the United States. Captain Shartle provided a clue to the truth behind these charges and countercharges in a report he submitted to the War Department in the spring of 1915:

Among other exhibits were ... original packages of dum-dum ammunition captured at Maubeuge (sic) and Longwy; ... Doubtless the dum-dum ammunition was for use in colonial wars, on the same grounds as led the United States to adopt a .45 caliber pistol.²

Captain Shartle's conclusion regarding the dum-dum bullets appears sound. The British, the French and the Germans all had colonies in the "uncivilized" portions of the world. There was nothing in the Conventions against using dum-dums on "savage" warriors. When the war came suddenly dum-dum ammunition was probably issued inadvertently along with regular ammunition. And certainly in the stress of combat the ordinary soldier, even if he knew of the prohibition of the Hague Convention, was not going to forego the use of perfectly good ammunition just because a bullet had a flat nose.

¹Gerard to State Department, Message from Kaiser to the President, 7 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72116/27. National Archives.

²Report of Captain Samuel G. Shartle, C.A.C. Military Observer with the German Army, December 20, 1914 to April 6, 1915. Army War College File Number 8713-22. National Archives.

One of the most important battles of the twentieth century was fought between the 5th and the 10th of September 1914. Actually the "battle" consisted of a continuous series of actions that went into the history books under the collective name, "The Battle of the Marne".

General Von Kluck's First German Army had defeated the British Expeditionary Force at the hard-fought battles of Mons on 23 August and Le Cateau on 25 - 27 August. In Von Kluck's estimation those battles had eliminated the British from further consideration. The British Army formed the left flank of the Allied line and Von Kluck now thought he had the situation in control. Though the Germans had hurt the BEF and put the fear of God in General French, Von Kluck had not eliminated that "contemptible little army" and he was in for a nasty surprise.

General Joseph J. C. Joffre, the French Commander in Chief, ordered the Fifth French Army under General Charles Lanrezac to shift its front westward to attack Von Kluck's left flank thus easing the pressure on the British. This move resulted in the Battle of Guise which the two forces fought on 29 August. The initial attack was unsuccessful but Lanrezac's I Corps hit and stopped Von Buelow's Second Army and forced him to call for help.

In the meantime General Joffre was assembling a new Sixth Army under General Michel Maunoury near Paris and a new Ninth Army under General Ferdinand Foch behind the embattled Fourth and Fifth French Armies. When Von Buelow called for help Von Kluck discarded what was left of the Schlieffen Plan and began his turn to the east on a line of march that would take him to the east, or in front, of Paris rather than to the west. Von Kluck thought that the French Fifth Army represented the extreme Allied flank and that by falling on it he could roll up the

line and win the war. He was unaware of Maunoury's Army building up in the Paris area. Nor did he give serious consideration to the British.

Von Kluck's premature turn presented the flank of the German forces to Maunoury's Sixth Army and Joffre lost no time in exploiting the opportunity. He issued his attack order on 4 September, directing the Sixth Army to move from the Paris region eastward toward Chateau-Thierry. The British Army and the Fifth French Army, supported by the French Ninth Army were to focus on Montmiral. Joffre also ordered the Fourth French Army to hold and the French Third Army to advance westward from Verdun. Thus the German right wing ran the risk of being caught in a double envelopment.

The French Sixth Army moved out of its assembly area and hit Von Kluck's open flank on 5 September. The Battle of the Ourcq, as this particular action is called, lasted until 7 September and opened Von Kluck's eyes to his difficult situation. To save himself he pulled the bulk of his army back across the Marne River, counterattacked Maunoury and forced the French to assume a defensive posture.

When Von Kluck shifted his front to the west to meet Maunoury, a gap opened between his army and Von Buelow's Second Army. The British, whom he had thought little about, and the Fifth French Army moved into the gap and attacked part of Von Buelow's Army on the Petit Morain. General Foch's Ninth French Army encountered the bulk of Von Buelow's Army at St. Gond and was struck in the right flank by General Max Von Hausen's German Third Army. A savage battle ensued and ended temporarily in a draw.

On 8 September Von Moltke sent one of his general staff officers, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Hentsch, to get a first hand look at the

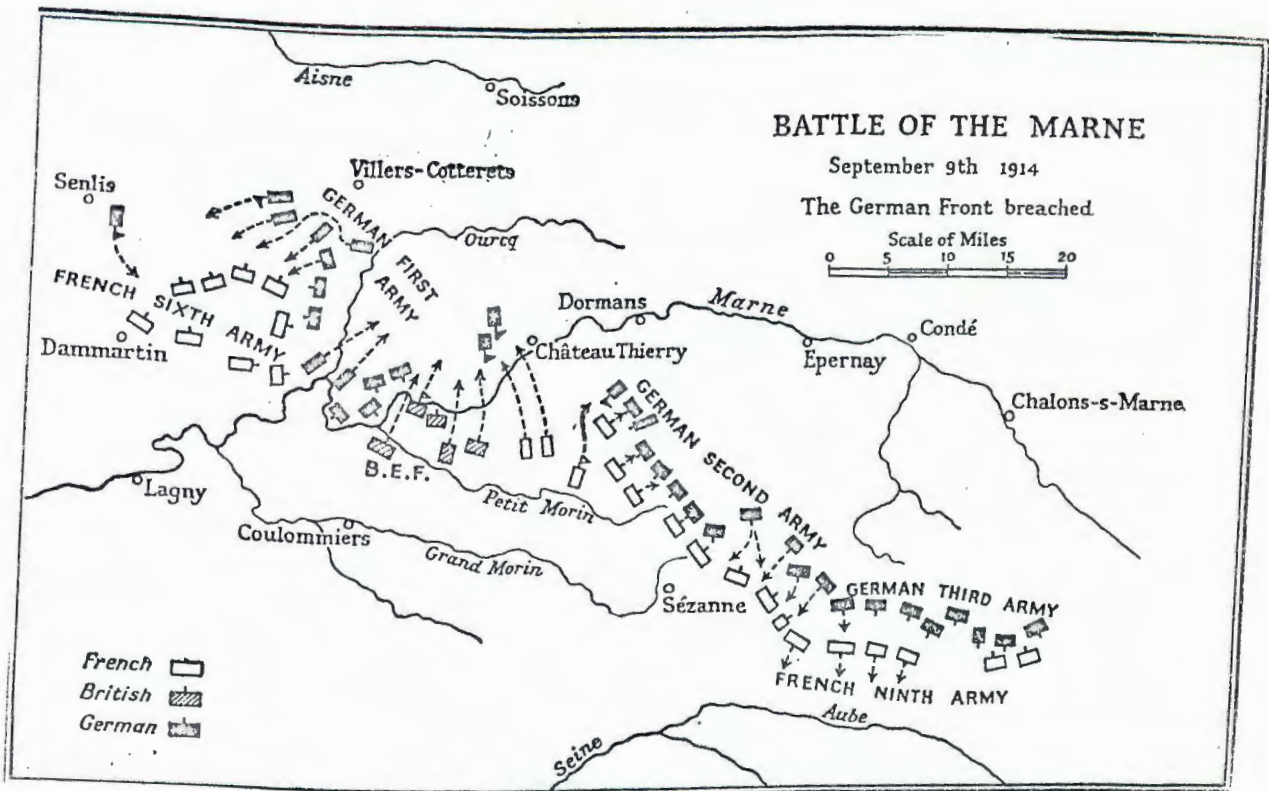


FIGURE 13

BATTLE OF THE MARNE

Falls, The Great War 1914-1918, p. 69.

situation. Hentsch arrived at Von Buelow's headquarters in time to be greeted with the news that the Second Army's right flank had been turned by the French Fifth Army. Von Buelow wanted to retreat and Hentsch approved his decision. The pesky British were advancing deeper into the gap between the two German armies and threatening Von Kluck's left flank and rear. Colonel Hentsch, acting for Von Moltke, ordered Von Kluck to retreat as well. Von Moltke, realizing that the great offensive had failed, ordered a general retirement which ended with the Germans dug in along the line of the Aisne River.¹ With their failure on the Marne the Germans had missed a golden opportunity to knock the Allies out of the war that autumn.

A vivid picture of the carnage and destruction wrought in this great battle was left to posterity in reports forwarded to Washington by Major Spencer Cosby, Military Attaché at the United States Embassy in Paris. The first of these reports recounts a trip Major Cosby made to the scene of action on 12 - 13 September at the invitation of General Joffre.²

At the beginning of the journey the French took Cosby to Joffre's headquarters at Chatillon-sur-Seine, some one hundred sixty miles south-east of Paris. On the basis of first-hand observations he described General Joffre as,

¹Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History, pp. 937-939.

²Report from Cosby, dated 7 September 1914, subject: Visit to Battlefields of the Marne. Army War College File Number 8690-36. National Archives.

...a man of 63, with white hair and moustache, above the medium height, not very soldierly either in carriage or dress, rarely smiling and too pale to look robust, but with the calm manner and steady eye of one who knows just what he wants and is not to be turned from his purpose.¹

After a short conversation with the French generalissimo, a staff officer briefed Cosby on past and current operations. At the conclusion of the briefing Major Cosby and his French escorts started for the Marne battlefields. He recorded his first view of the area in these words:

At Mailly, 35 Km south of Chalons, we came upon the first signs of battle, several of the houses being damaged by shells, but the real battle field begun at a little village 7 Km further on, where not more than one out of every three houses was left standing. Just outside it the fields on each side of the road were dotted with little parties of soldiers burying the dead, many of whom, however, could still be seen lying in all directions. The German dead could be made out with difficulty, but the red trousers of the French enabled them to be discerned at long distance. This was another confirmation of what the French have frequently told me, that the invisibility of the bluish grey field uniform of the Germans has given them a great advantage. We could hardly advance 100 yards along the road without passing a dead horse in the ditch, in an advanced stage of decomposition, and many others could be seen in the fields. I saw many trenches constructed by both armies on each side of the road. These were all in the form of hasty entrenchments and appeared to have been thrown up by small bodies of troops, as the majority were not over from 50 to 100 feet in length, and I saw no long or continuous lines, yet the country was flat and afforded little shelter except occasional small stretches of forest.²

In the city of Chalons the inhabitants told Cosby stories of Germans looting abandoned stores and houses during their occupation. The Mayor acknowledged that some of the looting had been done by the "riff-raff" of the city who took advantage of the situation. The Germans also demanded 30,000,000 francs as a war indemnity from the Department of the

¹Ibid., p. 2.

²Ibid., pp. 4-5.

Marne of which Chalons is the capital. They only got 506,000 francs before they began their retreat.¹

Major Cosby spent the night of 12 September in Chalons and departed the next morning for La Fere Champenoise. Here is his description of the trip:

The whole road from Chalons to this town had been one continuous battlefield; burial parties were at work everywhere and the fields were dotted with the results of their labors - fresh earthen mounds, large and small, some marked by little crosses made of two twigs fastened together, others by a stick driven in the earth with a soldier's battered cap on top, but most without marks of any kind. Everywhere we found the French hard at work repairing the railroad and telegraph lines, many of which were already in use.²

The balance of Cosby's report was filled with stories of German atrocities as told to him by the inhabitants of the towns he visited.

Eric Wood, an attache in the Paris Embassy, visited portions of the battlefield between 11 and 13 September. Major Cosby submitted a report to Washington containing the notes Wood made during his trip.³

The report is not written in a formal style but in a series of word sketches:

Our road passed through the position held by the Germans during this attack. Here beside the road lay three dead Germans in the short grass, side by side, each in exactly the same position on his back. Each had the shirt torn from the front of his chest, and the bare spot was marred by a clotted mass of closely grouped bullet marks. Their arms were doubled under them all in the same way - an unnatural way. A closer inspection showed that their arms had been tied behind them at the elbow. We then realized

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., pp. 5-6.

³Report from Cosby, dated 7 October 1914, subject: Battle of the Marne. Army War College File Number 8690-49. National Archives.

that we were on the scene of a military execution. It seemed that these three had been among the prisoners taken in the charge of the 17th (French Infantry Regiment), and that loot had been found on their persons. They had been summarily executed by the French.¹

Further along the road Wood and his party came upon the Vitry position, approximately sixty miles east of Paris. He described the French defensive positions on a plateau of wooded, rolling hills made doubly strong by the broken, swampy terrain in front of it. The Germans assaulted this position with an estimated two hundred thousand men.

Among the German units was the Imperial Guard. Wrote Wood:

I should say that the Imperial Guard does not exist to-day, judging by hearsay and by the number of their dead and wounded which we saw. The battlefield was approximately comprised within the towns of Champaubert, Coligny, Pierre-Morains, Clamanges, Sommesous, Gourgaucon, Corroy and Sezanne. Of the village of Pierre-Morains nothing remained but a few smouldering chimneys and bits of walls. At Clamanges was a French hospital. All the French wounded had been taken away to the south of France, but there were 1,300 German wounded in the little village. Every house was full of them. The church was packed - they lay in long rows.²

One scene that Wood described in his notes is of particular interest because it spotlights a weapon heretofore lightly regarded - the machine-gun. Wood called the weapon by its old French name, "mitrailleuse":

Just outside of Ecury, on the brow of the hill, was the German defensive position ... The French infantry charged across an open field ... coming from some woods where they had been themselves intrenched. The Germans ... were not in real trenches. They were in the outside edge of a potato field, and each man had pushed up a little pile of earth and potatoes in front of him. When the French began to charge the Germans ... fired until the French got within about a hundred yards, hitting a score of men. Then the Germans ran. This led the French into a 'charge home' in line. They had not observed, however, the little trench ...

¹Ibid., p. 2.

²Ibid., p. 3.

skillfully hidden by fresh cut boughs and turf. When the French line came opposite, a group of mitrailleuses (machine-guns) in this trench fired, striking every man but one in the French battalion. Sixty dead still lay in one straight row like the sweep of a mowing machine. The wounded, which are perhaps to the dead, as four of five to one, had been removed. The moment the mitrailleuses 'opened' the German infantry which had only been playing at running away, turned 'right about' and charged back, fell upon the one survivor and filled him full of bayonets. He lay fifty yards ahead of the 'row', in a patch of trampled potato field.¹

Near the end of his narrative, Wood made some interesting personal evaluations concerning weapons and European marksmanship:

I personally consider very strongly that the bayonet, the sabre and the lance, all profusely used in this war, are absolute anachronisms. I believe that half the losses we saw were perhaps due to the obsession for cutting which European nations all seem to possess more or less, and which crops up whenever they get into any sort of action.

The shooting of the infantry was exceedingly bad. In one place German infantry lying down in skirmish order, in the edge of a potato field (apparently one company) had fired about ninety rounds a man at about an equal number of French two hundred and fifty yards away in the edge of a wood. The ground between was as flat and unobstructed as a billiard table. The French had fired about sixty rounds a man. This makes a total of some 15,000 rounds for the Germans and 10,000 for the French. All this shooting had resulted in the killing of three Germans and six French. The mortality among the trees around the French was, however, one hundred percent!²

The American diplomatic and military dispatches originating in the European capitals provide instructive pictures and on-the-spot reflections of the war on the western front. Yet curiously enough they reveal little or no understanding or knowledge concerning the magnitude of the German setback on the Marne. This was especially true of those reports coming from Berlin where confidence in the future continued unabated and

¹Ibid., pp. 4-5.

²Ibid., pp. 11-12.

where stories of victory constituted a steady diet for the German public.

The German mood is reflected in Gerard's dispatch to the State Department on 30 September. In fact it sounds as though Major Langhorne had either composed it or had supplied the information on which it was based. The report told of a German advance in front of Toul, a small city approximately twenty miles west of Nancy, and related that the Kaiser's troops were eager and in good condition. The heavy artillery pounded out its grisly score and the best of teamwork existed everywhere. The German people, Gerard affirmed, made a big success out of the "game".¹

However, a note lacking the usual sunshine and glory for the Germans came from the pen of Major Langhorne in February of 1915. The subject of the report was military organization and preparedness and Langhorne, in trying to prove a point, let the cat out of the bag. He related that a General Staff officer from the German Third Army told him that in the advance to the Marne and subsequent retreat to the Aisne, his unit in twenty six engagements had lost between sixty and seventy percent of its personnel in casualties. The officer cited two regiments, one artillery, the other infantry, where one hundred percent replacement was necessary. Major Langhorne went on to say that the casualties had been terrific and that this information should be given publicity in the United States to make the American public realize what war really meant. The loss in the German officer corps was particularly serious.²

¹Gerard to State Department, 30 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/1021. National Archives.

²Report from Langhorne, dated 8 February 1915, subject: A Study Interrupted by the Present War. Army War College File Number 8690-141. National Archives.

As the "race to the sea" began, the problem of Antwerp and the Belgian Army behind the area of operations demanded quick solution by the German High Command. The city had to be taken and the threat posed to German communication by the Belgian field army eliminated. The Germans were evidently a bit sensitive to the extensive criticism their methods in Belgium had aroused throughout the rest of the world because they went out of their way to be as "correct" as possible in the case of Antwerp. First the Germans, acting through the U.S. and Spanish Ambassadors, agreed to spare the historic monuments in Antwerp if the Belgians agreed not to use any of them for military purposes.¹ After the Germans decided that a bombardment of Antwerp was indeed going to be necessary they asked for the good offices of the Spanish and United States diplomatic officials to warn the local authorities of the impending action in accordance with the Hague Convention. Both the Spanish and the Americans declined to act as requested by the Germans. However, mindful of the noncombatants in the city and after discussing the problem between themselves the Spanish Ambassador sent his naval attaché to the city authorities to inform them unofficially of the impending assault.² The bombardment began on 1 October and the city surrendered eight days later. The Belgian King and his Army got away down the coast and took their place in the Allied line facing the Germans.³ The U.S. Consul General, Mr. Henry W. Diederich, witnessed the assault on the famous port city and in a message to the State Department

¹Whitlock to State Department, 30 October 1914. State Department File Number 763.72116/63. National Archives.

²Whitlock to State Department, 11 October 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/1072. National Archives.

³Liddell Hart, The Real War 1914-1918. p. 66.

through Berlin reported as follows:

After a frightful night of bombardment I had to leave Antwerp on account of my family Thursday morning early arriving Ghent late at night and shall return tomorrow Saturday morning if possible. The last view had of Antwerp after crossing the Scheldt showed the petroleum oil tanks over each of which the American flag was floating were ablaze.¹

The last phase of the "race to the sea" took place in Flanders during the months of October and November. The two most important actions were the First Battle of the Yser, lasting from 18 October to 30 November, and the First Battle of Ypres lasting from 30 October to 24 November. Ypres, now called Iper, is a small city in the southern part of Flanders. The First Battle of Ypres was a particularly bloody one. In this battle the original British Expeditionary Force was practically wiped out in its successful effort to save the Channel ports from German capture.² Captain Allan L. Briggs, the U.S. Military Attaché in Vienna, passed on a report to Washington concerning these battles in Flanders. The report, written by German war correspondent Armand Feheri, gives the picture from the German side in the days before the trench stalemate began.³

According to Feheri the struggle for the east coast of the English Channel was fought in an area that could be roughly divided into four sections: (1) the inundated district of Nieuport; (2) the terrain south of Nieuport; (3) a range of low hills between Ypres and Armentières; (4)

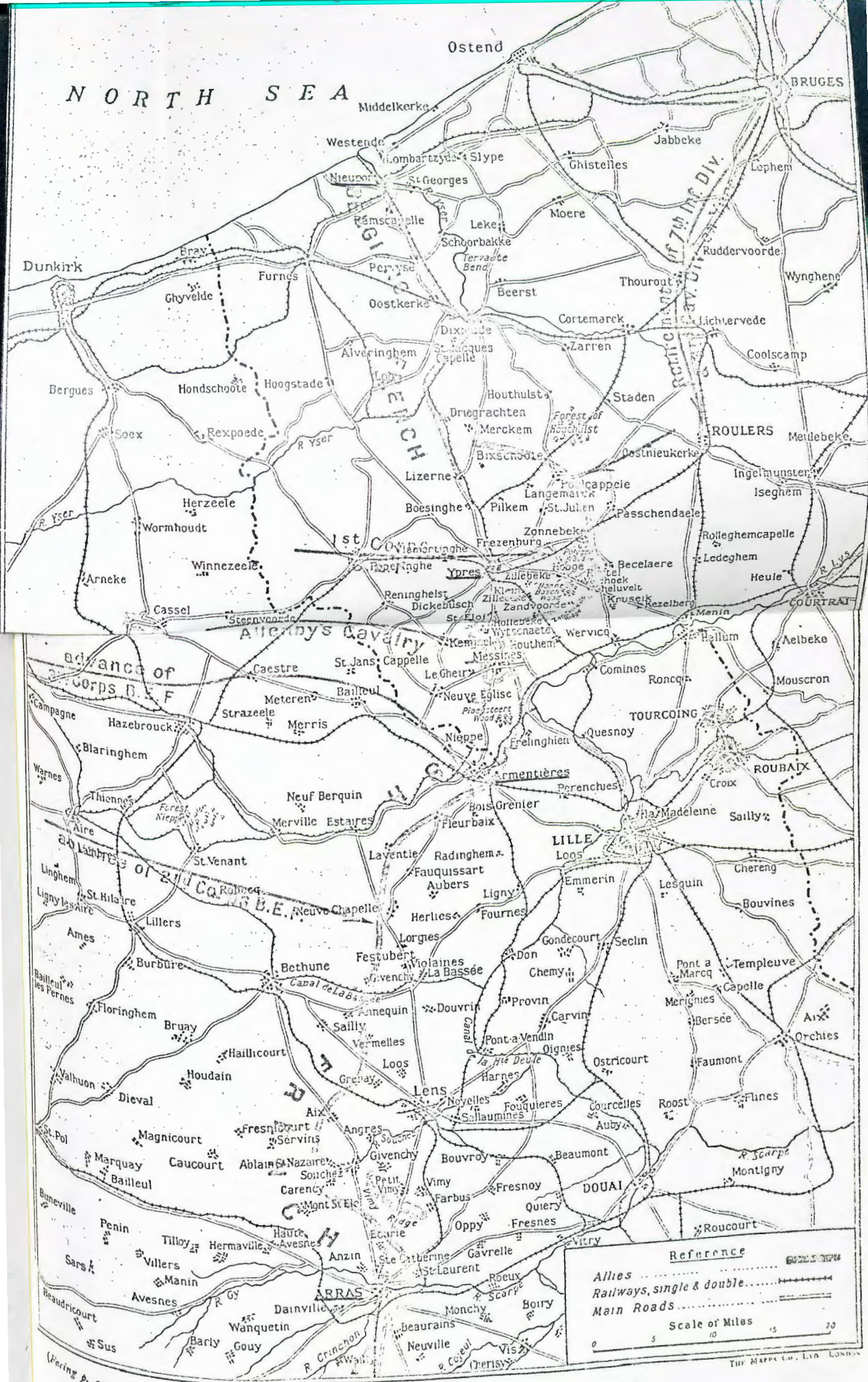
¹Report from Consul General Antwerp through Berlin Embassy to State Department, 9 October 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/1066. National Archives.

²Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History, p. 940.

³Report from Briggs, dated 24 November 1914, subject: Position Combats on the North Sea. Range Finding by Aeroplane. Army War College File Number 8690-95. National Archives.

and the area from Armentières to Lens. The inundated district made troop movements impossible. The terrain to the south of the inundated area as far as Ypres was cut up considerably by canals. The most important of these canals was the Yser-Ypres canal because its width and the flood dams constituted a powerful defensive obstacle. This area was also broken up with many small copses of woodland, small villages, isolated farm houses and meadows. In fact it presented the Germans with the most difficult terrain problems encountered in the entire campaign on the western front. South of Messines there are sections suited for defense but none were as important as the line of the Yser-Ypres Canal. The hills between Ypres and Armentières rise to the west and their dome shaped summits provide good defensive artillery positions. The area between Armentières and Lens is flat and is divided by the Lys River which flows northwest and by the La Lawe canal which extends between Esthaires and Bethune in a north-south direction.

The flood dams (dikes) in the northern part of the battlefield formed a natural line of defense from 10 to 20 meters high. A disadvantage to this position was that in case of retreat by the defending forces, the field of fire would not be very good. This is probably why the British and the French defended key points on the east bank of the canal instead of withdrawing behind it. The Allies defended their positions tenaciously but they fell to the Germans except for the city of Ypres. The Allies then set up their defensive line along the canal. The Germans advanced along the front to this line. The Allies had converted the flood dams into infantry trenches and provided some portions of the line with concrete shelters. The attacking forces could also take advantage of the open terrain.



After a thorough reconnaissance the Germans cleverly concentrated strong forces by night at places deemed suitable for crossing the canal. They assembled bridging material and when the time came their infantry crossed the canal "with lightning like rapidity" and pushed the Allies out of the first line of trenches at the crossing points. The Germans crossed at five different places and reinforced to consolidate their gains. Behind the first line of trenches on the west side of the canal the Germans discovered further Allied field fortifications. In the wet meadows, cut up by many ditches, the German advance was described as "difficult". Hostile artillery, including ship guns used by the British, kept the whole area under "terrific" fire. The Germans had to entrench themselves and wait until their own heavy guns came up to silence the Allied batteries. The many ditches and streams made discovery of the Allied guns, which were "cleverly mounted in low ground behind embankments" impossible for regular patrols.

This being the case the spotting of the enemy batteries was done almost completely from the air. As soon as a flyer located a battery he tried to photograph it. The photograph had to contain some prominent point or terrain feature that could be identified by the German battery officers from their own positions. After taking pictures the flyer immediately returned to his base where photo personnel quickly developed the picture. A copy of the picture was then rushed to the appropriate battery commander. The Germans computed the distance to the location of the enemy guns from their position by the following method:

The line from the position of the German battery to the visible auxiliary aim (church steeple, windmill, etc.) made one side of a triangle which could be accurately measured by means of the range finder. The second side of the triangle was formed by a line drawn on the photograph from the auxiliary aim to the position of the hostile battery; the

length of this line was found without difficulty by multiplication of the distance on the photo between the two just mentioned points with the scale of reduction. Two sides of the triangle being known the third side, that is the distance between the German and the hostile batteries was accurately ascertained.¹

The report goes on to say that this procedure was necessary because the superiority of German artillery was in the accurate high level fire of their heavy batteries. With these guns it was possible not only to silence the enemy positions but to destroy them completely with one shot. "A shell from one of these batteries (42 and 21 cm siege guns), a colossus of iron, strikes a hostile battery, in most cases nothing is left of it, guns as well as men."² As soon as the Allied batteries had been silenced the German heavy artillery moved up in the night to take up its new positions. The Allies, however, kept preparing yet other defenses to their rear so that the procedures described above had to be endlessly repeated. This is why the German advance was so slow.

In the engagements fought between Ypres and Armentières the fighting was of a different nature. The German lines had advanced beyond St. Eloi, Wyrchaete and Messines towards hill 156 near Mt. Kemmel which commands the surrounding area. The advance constituted a succession of assaults against fortified Allied positions on high ground. The artillery played an important role on this part of the front too by silencing the enemy guns and preparing the fortified positions for infantry assault. Feheri says that the broken, hilly ground gained the attacker some advantage by providing cover to moving troops and affording protection against hostile fire. Between Armentières and Lens the country is flat

¹Ibid., p. 2.

²Ibid.

and the German offensive west of Lille made a powerful advance beyond La Basse toward Bethune. There were no serious obstacles on this section of the front and, even though the Allies opposed the advance from trenches and fortifications, German superiority in tactics, training and morale proved more effective than in the other sections where the Allies were able to establish themselves in defensive positions behind natural terrain features.¹

The Allies slowed the German drive and halted it by the end of November. In fact they went over to the offensive along the line from Nieuport to Verdun. The attack started on 14 December and terminated Christmas Eve without breaking the German line. The French opened an offensive in the Champagne on 20 December. The First Battle of Champagne still raged as the year drew to a close but with little prospects of French success. Operations on the Western Front up to this time had cost the Allies and the Germans almost a million casualties apiece.²

The quality of the reports and dispatches filed by American representatives improved slightly as the war developed. The most interesting reports covered in this period came from Major Langhorne in Berlin and Major Cosby in Paris. For dramatic impact and acute observation Eric Wood provided the best. Definite tones of pro-Allied sympathies can be detected in the dispatches from Ambassador Whitlock in Belgium and Ambassador Herrick in France. This tendency would grow and have a decided impact on American thinking both public and private.

¹Ibid., p. 3.

²Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History, p. 940.

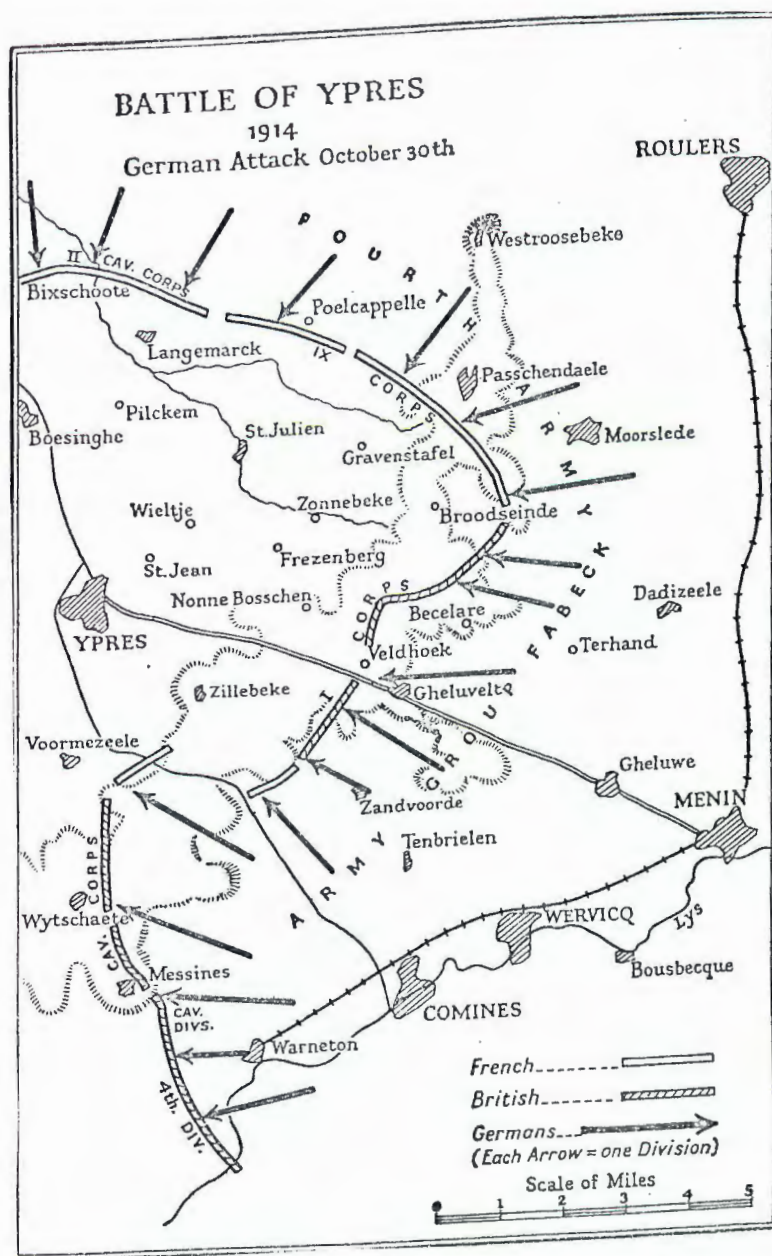


FIGURE 15

BATTLE OF YPRES

Falls, The Great War 1914-1918, p. 81.

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The relative absence of dispatches from Ambassador Walter Hines Page in London does not indicate that he was not busy. Page was very much occupied maintaining good relations between the United States and Great Britain. Nor was his task always easy. Most of Page's reports dealt, as one might expect, with U.S. - British relations, whereas the focus of this chapter has been on the Continent. Page, however, did not labor in vain and his efforts, like those of Herrick and Whitlock, would eventually bear fruit to the detriment of the Central Powers.

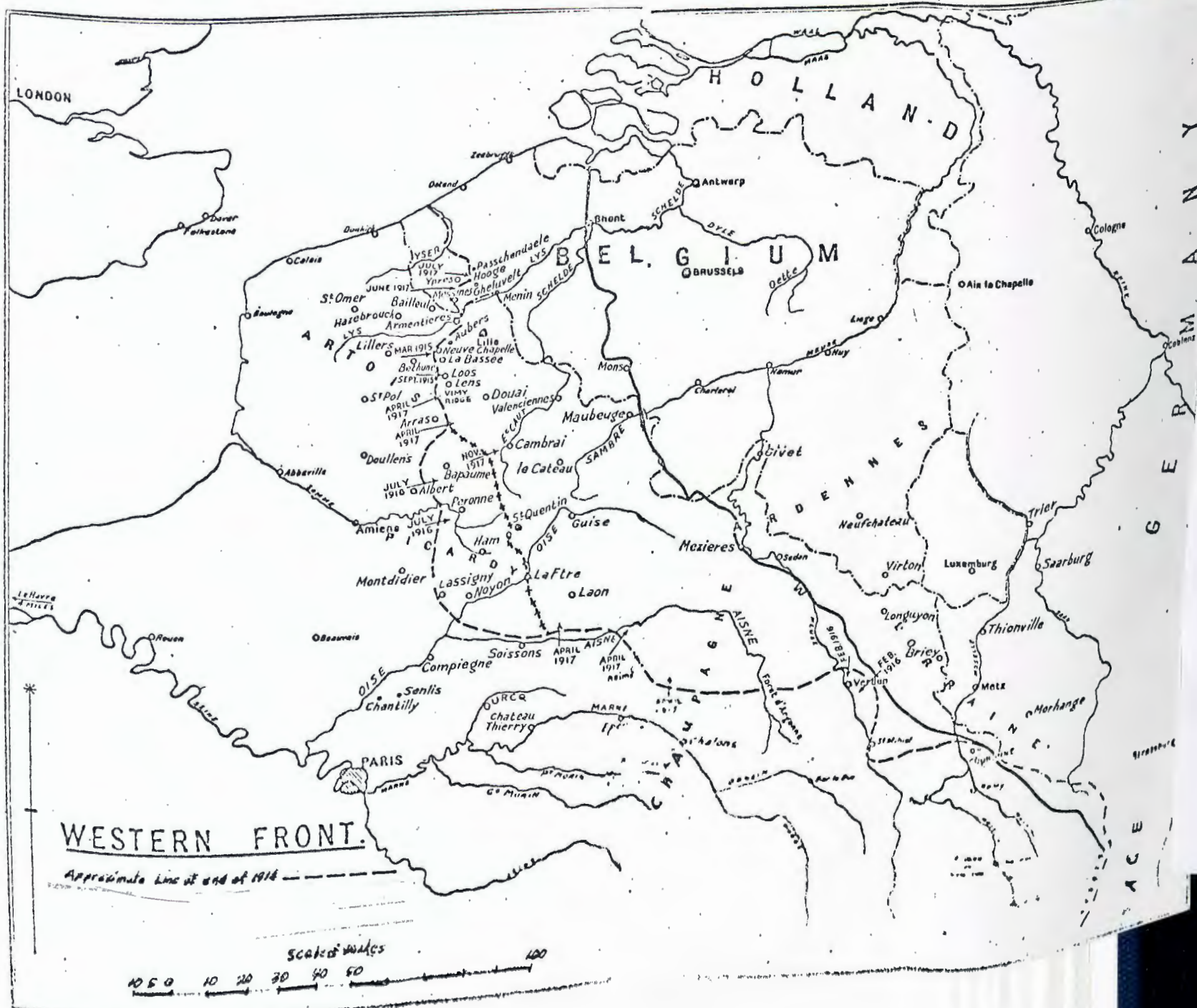


FIGURE 16

WESTERN FRONT AT THE END OF 1914

Liddell-Hart, The Real War 1914-1918, p. 60.

CHAPTER IV

TANNENBERG AND THE EAST

On Germany's eastern flank the war opened with a Russian invasion of East Prussia. The Russian advance had been foreseen by Von Schlieffen and included in his plan. The Germans had a single army, the Eighth, under General Max Von Prittwitz covering the Eastern Front to delay the Russian advance until the Western Allies had been defeated. Then the full power of the German Army would be transferred over their efficient railroad system to crush Russia.

Two things interfered with the operation as planned. First the Russians advanced before they completely mobilized, thus moving faster than the Germans had anticipated. The precipitate Russian advance was made in response to urgent pleas from France. The second item was psychological. In theory the Germans were prepared to give up a slice of East Prussia in their holding operation but when it actually came to surrendering German soil, even temporarily, they found it difficult to bite the bullet.

On 17 August, General Pavel K. Rennenkampf's First Russian Army clashed with the German First Corps under General Hermann K. Von Francois at Stallupoenen, a town in northern East Prussia near the Russo-German border. Rennenkampf had the worst of it and retreated to the frontier while Von Francois retired on the town of Gumbinnen. The Russians advanced again and fought the Battle of Gumbinnen on 20 August. General Von Francois hit the Russian right flank hard but the other German attacks were not as successful. In reality the battle ended in a draw. As a

result Von Prittwitz telegraphed Von Moltke that he was going to withdraw to the Vistula River and asked for reinforcements to hold that line. Von Prittwitz was afraid of Rennenkampf's superior numbers and the threat to his right flank presented by the Russian Second Army under General Alexander Samsonov. Von Moltke's answer came quickly and firmly: he relieved Von Prittwitz from command of the German Eighth Army.

Von Moltke then called General Paul Von Hindenburg out of retirement to take over in the East. The man selected to be Chief of Staff for the Eighth Army was General Erich Ludendorff, who had done so well at Liège. As Ludendorff started his journey eastward he studied all messages concerning the situation in East Prussia. He then telegraphed orders ahead for a concentration against Samsonov while leaving a holding force against Rennenkampf. Upon joining Von Hindenburg, Ludendorff reported his actions and Von Hindenburg approved. When the two generals arrived at Eighth Army Headquarters they discovered that Lieutenant Colonel Max Hoffmann, brilliant Chief of Operations, had already prepared for the same movements and troop dispositions that Ludendorff had ordered. This incident is an excellent example of the training that German General Staff officers received. When confronted with a certain situation the two officers working independently came up with the same solution. The stage was now set for one of the really epic battles of history--Tannenberg.¹

General Samsonov's Second Russian Army advanced northwestward in Poland without reconnaissance and ran head on into the German XX Corps on 24 August. The Russians were unable to dislodge the Germans from their

¹For an old but interesting study of this engagement, with many excellent maps, see General Sir Edmund Ironside's book, Tannenberg.



FIGURE 17

GENERAL PAUL VON HINDENBURG

Shartle, Report of Captain Samuel G. Shartle C.A.C. Military
Observer with the German Army December 20, 1914-April 6, 1915, p. 27.

positions. The XX Corps withdrew to Tannenberg and the rest of the Eight Army joined them on their left and right. The Germans knew the exact location of all the Russian Second Army units, and what their orders were because the Russians sent them in the clear.¹

The real action began on 26 August, when the Germans hit Samsonov on the left, the right and in the center. The battle raged for three days and Von Francois's I Corps succeeded in turning the Russian left flank. On the night of the 29th Von Francois had maneuvered into the Russian rear and the encirclement was complete.² General Samsonov was badly beaten and he committed suicide. Besides one of their leading generals, the Russians lost some one hundred twenty-five thousand men and five hundred guns. Whereas Allied confidence in Russia diminished German morale surged so high that the failure at the Marne two weeks later was virtually overlooked.³

Major Langhorne submitted a report on the Battle of Tannenberg which merits attention for two reasons: First, the narrative contains some excellent detail; Second, it presents the battle as it appeared from the German viewpoint.⁴ The following pages are a paraphrase of Langhorne's Tannenberg account.

The Russians sent strong forces out from Kowno, Olita and Grodno to the north. This was Rennekampf's First Russian Army. The Germans had

¹Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History, p. 942.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Report from Langhorne, dated 10 February 1915, subject: The Battle of Tannenberg. Army War College File Number 8690-134. National Archives.

their First Army Corps at Gumbinnen, the XVII Army Corps south of Gumbinnen, and the First Reserve Corps south of the XVII. The XX Army Corps was on a line from Lautenburg, through Neidenburg to Willenberg. While Rennenkampf was pressing the Germans in front of him the Russian Second Army under General Samsonov was moving northwest toward the Neidenburg-Willenberg line from Warsaw. As the Germans fell back in front of Rennenkampf, Generals Von Hindenburg and Ludendorff arrived to take charge. They planned to leave a light screen facing Rennenkampf and deal with Samsonov, who was approaching from the southeast in great strength. The screen consisted of the fortress troops from Koenigsberg, the First Cavalry Division, and some Landsturm and Landwehr troops. Their mission was to hold Rennenkampf and cover the march of the First Army Corps, the XVII Army Corps, and the First Reserve Corps.

The Russian Second Army was advancing on line in the following order from south to north: the VI Army Corps, the XIII Army Corps, the XV Army Corps, the XXIII Army Corps, the I Army Corps, and detachments from the Guard Corps. The Russian cavalry was south of Gorzno¹ in large numbers but achieved nothing of significance at this time or later.

The German First Army Corps moved by rail from Insterburg through Koenigsberg to an area southeast of Deutsch Eylau and detrained around the towns of Ratowitz, Rattlau, Hartowitz and Tillitzken. The German XVII Army Corps marched west to Friedland, reaching it on 25 August and then turned south through Schippenbeil. The German First Reserve Corps marched west to Bartenstein then south to Seeburg, reaching it also on the 25th. The German XX Army Corps in the south was covering a front of

¹Langhorne no doubt meant Grodno.

some thirty-five kilometers which spread it too thin to stop any strong attack launched by the Russians. Fortress troops from Thorn under General Muhlmann were brought up to reinforce it.

On 23 August, the Russians launched an attack on the German 37th Division (XX Corps) at Bigaken. This attack continued for three days and eventually forced the division into retreat.¹ The Germans were afraid that the Russians would make a "strong bayonet attack" and destroy the whole division. But the Russians did not press their advantage vigorously and the 37th Division was able to withdraw successfully to a new position. In the meantime the 3rd Reserve Division had moved to Hohenstein and taken up its position there. The new position occupied by the XX Army Corps ran from Ostrowitz through Logdau, Frulen, Muhlen, Potzdal to Drobnitz. The position at Muhlen was particularly strong. During this period a Landwehr division had been brought in from Mecklenburg by rail and placed at Biesselden. The Russian VI Army Corps moved on Bischofsburg and the Russian I Army Corps with elements of the Guards attached moved on Soldau. Allenstein was the objective of the Russian XIII Army Corps while the Russian XV and XXIII Army Corps were driving the German XX Army Corps backward.

By the evening of 25 August the German preparations were complete. The thin screen that the Germans had left behind in the north to occupy Rennenkampf was succeeding admirably. Actually, he did not make a threatening move during the entire Battle of Tannenberg.² The Germans gave

¹Ibid., p. 3.

²Rennenkampf had no idea of what the Germans were doing. He was afraid to turn south for fear that the Germans would attack his flank. Also there was supposed to be a personal quarrel between Rennenkampf and Samsonov. See Tuchman, The Guns of August, pp. 323-324 and p. 327.

their First Cavalry Division much credit for keeping close tabs on Rennenkampf while the bulk of their forces dealt with Samsonov to the south.

By the 25th Germany's I Corps had completed its rail movement and had taken up a position on the right flank of the XX Army Corps. The troops from Thorn moved from Lautenburg to Soldau where they met the oncoming Russian I Army Corps, stopped it dead, and forced it back but did not destroy it. The German XVII Army Corps struck hard at the Russian VI Army Corps south of Bischofsberg forcing the Russians to retire. On the 26th the Germans started moving their right wing forward using the strong point of Muhlen as a pivot. On the 27th General Muhlmann's troops moved out from Lautenberg bound for Ruttkowitz. The whole German I Army Corps moved on Neidenburg while the 41st Division of the German XX Army Corps marched on Bansborn and Thureau. As a part of this massive operation the I Reserve Corps pressed toward Passenheim-Kukukswalde while the XVII Army Corps advanced on Kobulten and Mensguth. The Russians had succeeded in occupying Allenstein because the German 3rd Reserve Division covering that city had not been strong enough to keep them out. Part of the I Reserve Corp which was not involved in the forward movement was ordered to Patrichen to help cover this area.

The German I Army Corps as it moved toward Neidenburg on the 28th deployed as follows: The 41st Division marched east toward Bigaken; the 37th Division moved on Hohenstein; and troops from the Graudenz fortress hurried onward to help the 41st Division attack Bigaken. As the enveloping movement developed the Germans presented the following order of battle: General Muhlmann's troops were at Soldau; the I Army Corps was located between Usdau-Neidenburg and Muschaken with its cavalry at Willenberg;

from south to north around the circle the XX Army Corps, the 3rd Reserve Division, the Mecklenburg Landwehr Division, the I Reserve Corps, and the XVII Army Corps. In the middle of this concentration of German strength lay the Russian XXIII, XV and XIII Army Corps.

When night had fallen on the 29th the enveloping movement was complete and the three Russian Army Corps were surrounded in a ring of fire and steel. Many Russians were killed by the German artillery when they sought cover in some woods in the middle of the circle. The Germans captured over ninety thousand prisoners with all of their equipment and two of the corps commanders.¹ General Samsonov went off into the woods and committed suicide. During the fighting on the 29th the Chief of Staff of the German I Corps received a message that one or more Russian Army Corps was moving on Neidenburg from Mlaw. If this were true then the I Corps would be caught between the advancing Russians and the Russians trapped in the circle. The Germans decided, largely on the poor performance of the Russians in attack, to ignore the threat from the outside and continue to press the enveloping operation. The Russian threat never materialized, thus justifying the German decision.²

According to Langhorne's report, during the whole gigantic action which resulted in the destruction of the Russian Second Army, the German cavalry and aviators performed in an outstanding manner. The Russian cavalry, on the other hand, was mediocre. The Russians erred seriously when they broadened their front and sent their VI Army Corps against Bischofsberg and the XIII Army Corps to Allenstein. Of course, the most serious blunder made by the Russian High Command was the failure of

¹Ibid., p. 6.

²Ibid.

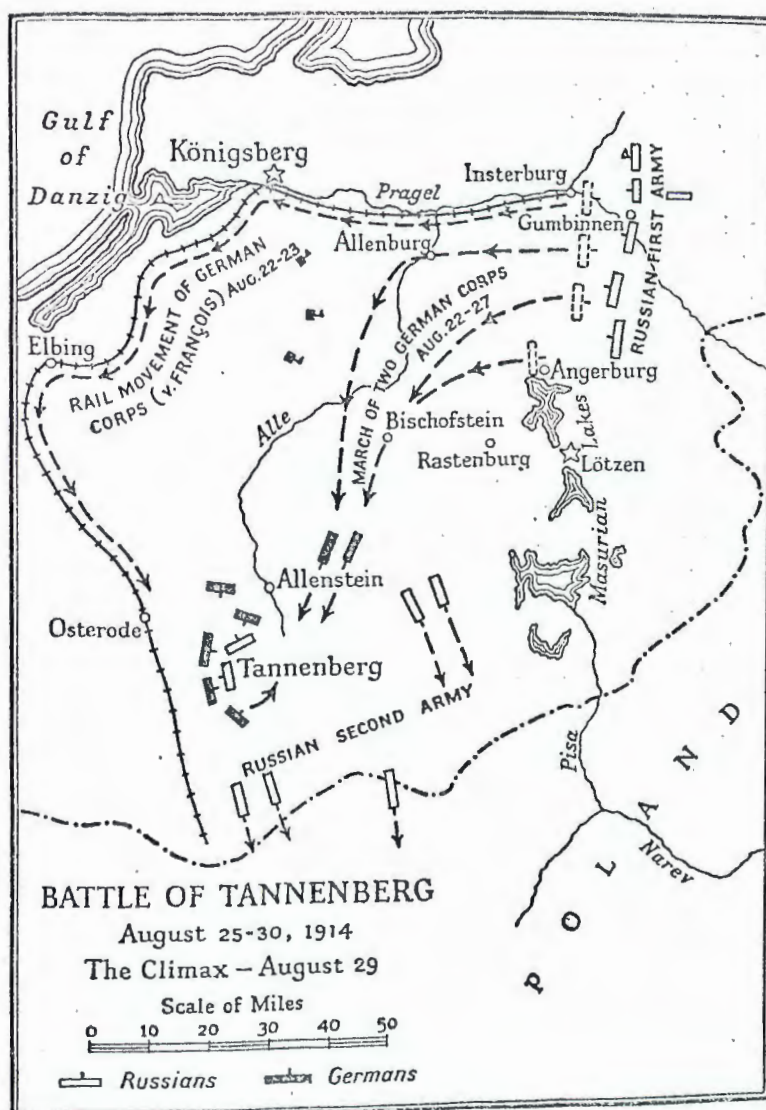


FIGURE 18

BATTLE OF TANNENBERG

Falls, The Great War 1914-1918, p. 57.

Rennenkampf to coordinate with Samsonov. Had they done so the Russians could have taken a large bite out of East Prussia before the Germans could have gathered sufficient forces to oppose them effectively.

As soon as Samsonov and his Army had been eliminated at Tannenberg, the German I Army Corps, XVII Army Corps and the I Reserve Corps turned on the left, or southern, flank of Rennenkampf's First Army. The latter had managed to push his cavalry as far west as Wormditt south of Koenigsberg, and had briefly occupied Rastenburg and some villages north of that city.¹ But German pressure from the south was powerful enough to force Rennenkampf into hasty retreat over the frontier in a series of actions that cost him some thirty thousand prisoners plus large numbers of killed and wounded. This phase of the campaign saw the arrival of two additional German corps from the west by rail, which attacked Rennenkampf in the front while he was being assaulted on the southern flank.² After Rennenkampf had been chased back across the border the Germans paused to reorganize.

During this delay in the campaign the Eighth Army was given to General Von Francois and a Ninth Army was formed under the command of General Von Hindenburg. Langhorne's report states that a Russian Army Corps usually was made up of forty thousand men. Three Russian Army Corps were destroyed at Tannenberg with the resultant loss of one hundred twenty thousand men killed, wounded and captured. Together with the losses suffered by Rennenkampf this indicated that the Russians had been hit hard.

¹Ibid., p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 8. These were the two corps dispatched from the Western Front by Von Moltke when it looked like the Russians were going to advance far into East Prussia.

While the Russians were suffering a heavy defeat at the hands of the Germans in the north, to the south they did much better. Conrad Von Hoetzendorf, the bellicose Austrian Chief of Staff, launched his forces consisting of three armies north and east from Lemberg toward the Russian frontier. The Russians met the Austro-Hungarians with their Southwestern Army Group under General Nikolai Ivanov. The Austrians were successful on their northern flank and in the center. On the southern flank, however, the Russians hurled the Austrians back on Lemberg the capital of Galicia. This action put the Austrians on the defensive all along the line. Soon the Russians broke through the Austro-Hungarians at Rawa-Ruska, about thirty miles north of Lemberg, in a crucial series of battles from September 3rd to the 11th.

Hit very hard, disorganized and demoralized, the Austrians abandoned Lemberg and retreated one hundred miles to the line of the Carpathian Mountains. They left a strong garrison in the fortress of Przemyśl to hold it until the fortunes of war changed and looked to the Germans for help.¹ In the meantime the Russians occupied most of Austrian Galicia.

Another Langhorne report, dated 8 February 1915, contains detailed information concerning the operations conducted by the Germans and the Austro-Hungarians after the Tannenberg campaign.² Once again, in the following pages, the war in the East is described from the German side.

After the Russian invasion of East Prussia had been repulsed with heavy losses, including the destruction of one of the invading armies,

¹Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History, p. 943.

²Report from Langhorne, dated 8 February 1915, subject: Events in the Eastern Theater of War Since the Middle of September 1914. Army War College File Number 8690-129. National Archives.

the bulk of the German forces in that theater were freed for new operations.

The Austro-Hungarian Army was at this time in retreat over the San River, in western Galicia, after having been mauled by the Russians, who were in pursuit. The German forces, who had defeated the Russians in East Prussia were not ordered south to assist their allies in mounting a counter offensive to halt the Russian drive. The German mission was to strike at the rear elements of the Russian force which was crossing the San in pursuit of the retreating Austrians. The latter moved what available troops they had to the north bank of the Vistula River to cooperate with the German forces concentrating for the counter offensive. The rapid movement of the German troops from the Prussian frontier in East Prussia to their new positions in southern Poland was a tribute to the German military railroad administration.

Six divisions of Russian cavalry had been operating on the western bank of the Vistula but the German intervention had forced them back with heavy casualties. By the end of September the immediate objective of the German forces to relieve pressure on the retreating Austro-Hungarians, who were retiring between the Carpathians and the Vistula River, had been achieved. Strong Russian elements had broken off their pursuit of the Austro-Hungarians and were moving in a northerly direction east of the Vistula along a line running from Lublin to Kazimierz.

As October began the Russians crossed the Vistula between Sandomierz and Josefow intending to engage the center of the advancing German-Austrian forces. Other Russian troops were to advance over the river at Ivangorod and flank the German left wing. But the Russian plan came to naught when the Germans launched a surprise attack with superior numbers. On 4 October, the advance guard of the Russian forces was thrown back across the Vistula



FIGURE 19

GERMAN TROOPS IN POLAND

Burtl, Report of Observations with the German Army, p. 21.

east of Opatow. Further down the river the Russians made attempts to cross at several places but were repulsed with heavy losses. While these actions were taking place the Austro-Hungarians had succeeded in checking and then forcing into retreat the Russian Army which had entered Galicia. They were pushed back over the San River and the fortress of Przemysl, which had been threatened by the Russians, was relieved. Then the German-Austrian formations, which had succeeded in holding the Russians to the line of the Vistula, ran into trouble.

The Germans received information that the Russians were building up heavy troop concentrations in Warsaw and had established strong bridge heads between Lowicz-Skierniewice and Grojec and the Pilica River. All of this gave strong indications that the Russians were preparing an offensive against the German left wing from the direction of Warsaw. These suspicions were confirmed by certain papers found on the body of a Russian officer.¹ The actual Russian plan was for five army corps to hit the Germans on the Vistula above and below Ivangorod. The major portion of the Russian formations, ten army corps with reserves, was to break the German left on a line from Warsaw to Georgiewsk, a town 25 miles northwest of Warsaw. The only way to stop the Russian offensive was to anticipate them by opening a German drive on Warsaw. If the Russians could be held at the Vistula then the Austro-Hungarians from the San would have sufficient time to swing north and hit the Russian left flank.

The German Command left a light screen to hold the river line at the anticipated points of crossing, and launched their main force in the

¹Ibid., p. 2.

direction of Warsaw. The Germans had beaten the Russians to the punch and quickly overran their weak forces in the fortified positions west of Warsaw. In the meantime the screen of troops left at the river had succeeded in holding the Russians but could not prevent one crossing below Ivangorod. The fighting in all areas was long and bloody and did not end until 20 October.¹ By this time the Russians had built up a troop strength of four times the number of the attackers in front of Warsaw and succeeded in holding the Germans.

The American Consul in Warsaw, Mr. Hernando de Soto, thought the city would fall to the Germans.² The British Consul agreed and left the Polish capital so Mr. de Soto assumed responsibility for British interests. The city officials were also certain of imminent German occupation and asked de Soto to take the city under the official protection of the United States Government. Naturally this request was far beyond the latitude of action granted to a Consul, so he had to refuse. The Russian Government itself apparently thought the city doomed and approached the United States informally, requesting that the Americans use their influence to save Warsaw from destruction.³ The German reputation, whether based on realities or propaganda, had preceeded them from the West. The Secretary of the United States Embassy in St. Petersburg, Charles Wilson, told Washington:

Reported informally to Foreign Office requests (for U.S. protection) received from Warsaw, was told informally and

¹Ibid., p. 3.

²Wilson to State Department, 12 October 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/1076. National Archives.

³Ibid.

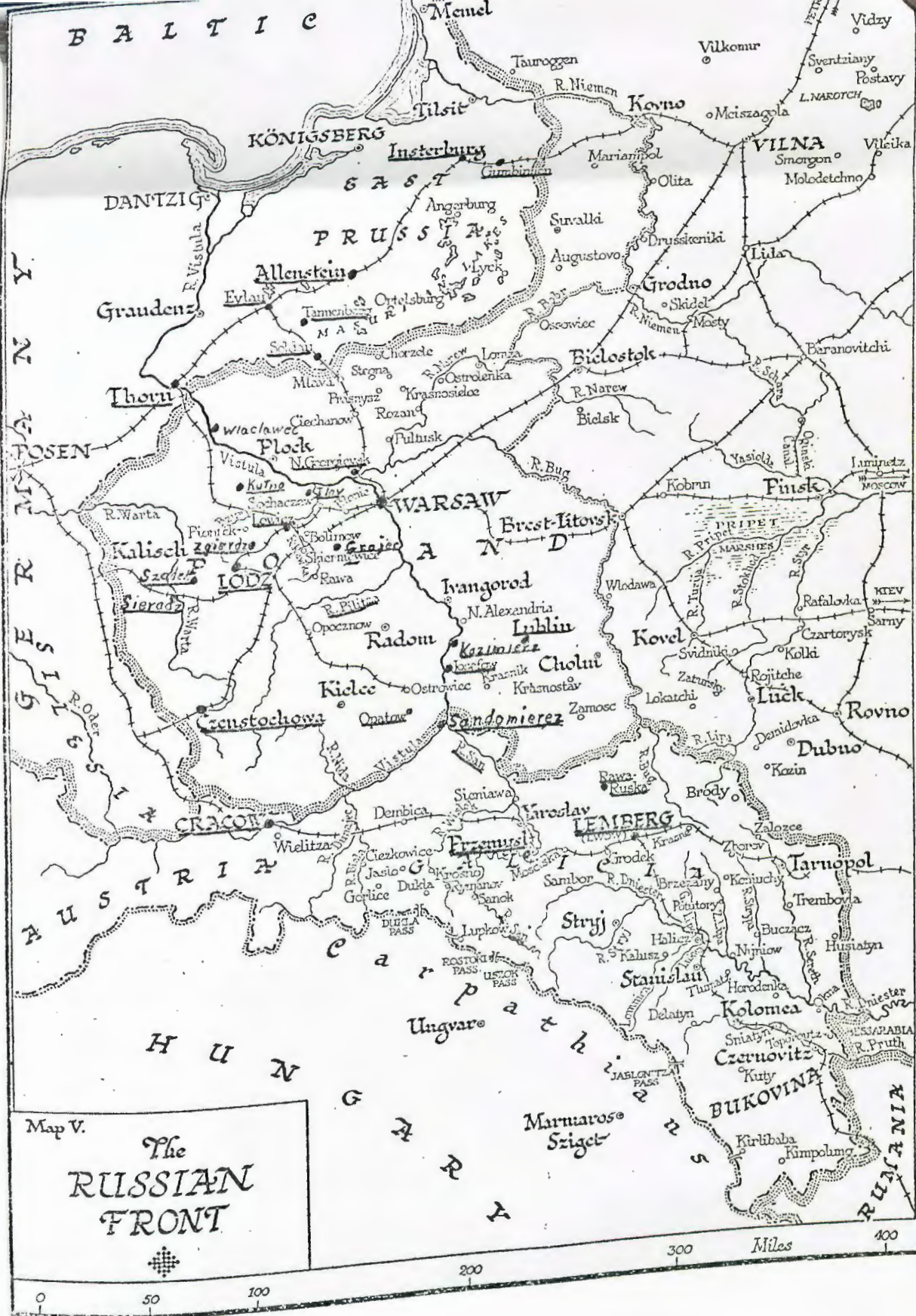


FIGURE 20

THE RUSSIAN FRONT

unofficially that Russian Government would be pleased if America could on its own account intimate unofficially to German Government that destruction of Warsaw and same treatment as Belgian towns would cause painful impression in America.¹

There is nothing to indicate that the United States Government took the action requested by the Russian Government. The best conjecture would be that the Americans refused because of the very strict interpretation of neutrality that the United States Government was operating under during this period. In any event the Germans did not take the city at this time.

The Germans employed their air arm on the Eastern Front as well as in the West. The beleaguered Mr. de Soto in Warsaw notified Wilson at the U.S. Embassy in St. Petersburg that this final trial had been thrust upon him:

Consul Warsaw reports German airships have dropped several bombs over city, one exploding close to Consulate. Has displayed flag.²

The German drive stalled in front of Warsaw and their Austro-Hungarian allies did no better to the south. Major Langhorne's report goes on to outline the subsequent operations on the Eastern Front.³

Russian resistance in Galicia described as "stubborn" in the report, kept the Austro-Hungarians from pushing in the Russian left flank. The situation of the Germans in Poland became precarious. Any chance of the Austro-Hungarians getting far enough north to cooperate with the Germans had gone glimmering. The screen left on the Vistula

¹Ibid.

²Wilson to State Department, 16 October 1914. State Department File Number 763.72116/84. National Archives.

³Report from Langhorne, dated 8 February 1915, subject: Events in the Eastern Theater of War Since the Middle of September 1914. Army War College File Number 8690-129. National Archives.

could no longer contain the Russians and they crossed the river.

To counter the Russian threat the Germans planned to attack an enemy force which had crossed the river near Warsaw by using one German army corps currently located above and below Ivangorod. Thus German troops would be replaced by Austro-Hungarian troops moving up the left bank of the Vistula. In the meantime, German troops in front of Warsaw would pull back. The troops moving up from the south were to take the pursuing Russians in the flank. The Russian attacks on the prepared positions into which the German troops had retired were repulsed with heavy losses. The German force from Ivangorod had scarcely begun its movement when the Russians broke the Vistula line with superior forces and at the same time concentrated a large formation against the German left flank. As a result the Germans were threatened with envelopment.

Russian pressure thus compelled the Germans and the Austro-Hungarians to cease operations on the whole San-Vistula front from Warsaw to Przemysl and to fall back.¹ By the end of October they had retired to a line from Cracow through Czenstochau to Sieradz. During the retreat the Austrian and German forces systematically and thoroughly destroyed all highways, railroads and telegraph facilities. The devastation slowed the advancing Russians down enough to allow the German and Austrian armies to withdraw in an orderly fashion. Some of the Russian forces penetrated further into Galicia while the main body followed the course of the Vistula in a south-southwesterly direction. Another Russian force advanced on Thorn, a city one hundred/ten miles northwest of Warsaw, on both sides of the Vistula River.²

¹Ibid., p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 5.

The Germans recognized that the only way to stop the Russian offensive was to attack and destroy the Russian formations. Purely defensive measures would result in inevitable defeat because of the overwhelming superiority in numbers which the Russians enjoyed. The Austro-German plan was to attack the Russian forces advancing along the Vistula east of Cracow while holding the Russians in defensive actions on the wings in East Prussia and Galicia.¹ It was necessary to strip as many troops as could be possibly spared from other parts of the front to build up the attacking force. So the Austro-Germans created strong formations near Cracow and on the Upper Silesian frontier.

The Germans concentrated a large force of their troops on the frontier near Thorn and placed it under the command of sixty-five-year-old General August Von Mackensen.² The task of Von Mackensen was to defeat the Russian forces advancing on the southwestern side of the Vistula and then take the main Russian force in the flank. The Germans placed a small force near Soldau, sixty miles east of Thorn, to prevent any Russian incursion into East Prussia.

By the middle of November the Russian formations from the East Prussian border, down the Vistula, and into Galicia numbered some forty-five army corps with reserve divisions in abundance. The Russians brought troops in from Siberia and the Caucasus to contribute to the huge offensive which soon began along the whole line.

¹Ibid.

²Von Mackensen successfully commanded the Austro-German forces in Western Galicia during 1915 and was made a field marshal. He lived to the age of ninety-six, dying in 1945. The New Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia, Vol. 22, p. 8056.



FIGURE 21

GENERAL AUGUST VON MACKENSEN

Burt, Report of Observations with the German Army, p. 11.

But the German defenders beat the Russians back from Soldau after some stiff fighting. In a battle lasting from the 13th to the 15th of November the Germans defeated three Russian army corps at Wloclawec and at Kutno. They took twenty-eight thousand prisoners and captured many machine guns and artillery pieces.¹ A detachment from Von Mackensen's army pursued the remnants of the Russian formations while his main force turned south as planned and defeated another Russian army corps. Von Mackensen's threat to their right flank forced the Russians to shift their Second Army around until it faced northwest instead of west. Most of the Russian Fifth Army soon took up positions along the line of the Second Army thus opening a large gap between the Fifth Army and the Russian Fourth Army to the south of it.

Von Mackensen's advancing troops moved toward Lodz and took the road center of Zgierz on the 17th of November. On the 18th the Germans forced the Russian right wing back and compressed the Russian Second and Fifth Armies into a restricted area around Lodz. During the next few days the German left wing closed in on Lodz from the east and southeast. Other German forces consisting mostly of cavalry closed in from the west and southwest. It began to look like the Germans and Austro-Hungarians were going to accomplish much more than their original objective of blunting the enemy offensive. For a brief period it seemed that destruction of the encircled Russian armies by the still outnumbered Austro-Hungarian and German troops was possible. The Russians, however, succeeded

¹ Report from Langhorne, dated 8 February 1915, subject: Events in the Eastern Theater of War Since the Middle of September 1914. Army War College File Number 8690-129. National Archives.

in relieving their surrounded troops by punching through from the south-east. Some of the Russians from the East Prussian frontier along with a corps from the Russian First Army, which was falling back north of the Vistula, combined with the right wing of the Russian Fourth Army to push through the covering German troops and to surround them. General Von Morgen, advancing on Lowicz, could not assist the endangered German troops because he had started to run into serious resistance from hostile forces in superior numbers.

The situation of the surrounded German troops located east of Lodz looked hopeless. They, however, did not think all was lost and proceeded to prove it by breaking out to the west on the night of 24 November. Not only did they elude the Russian trap but they also succeeded in taking with them some twelve thousand Russian prisoners of war as well as considerable amounts of captured equipment including artillery and machine guns. They also brought all of their wounded out.¹ Langhorne calls the operation a tribute to the training and resolute attitude of the German soldiers and a fine example of capable and inspired leadership. By 26 November these troops (XXV Reserve Corps, General Reinhard Von Scheffer-Boyadel)² had made contact between Lowicz and Lodz with General Von Mackensen's army moving in from the north.

The German lines by this time ran from Kazimerz to Szadek, south of Lodz, to the area around Lowicz.³ Against this line the Russians

¹ Ibid., p. 6.

² Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History, p. 944.

³ Report from Langhorne, dated 8 February 1915, subject: Events in the Eastern Theater of War Since the Middle of September 1914. p. 8, Army War College File Number 8690-129. National Archives.

launched a series of heavy assaults from the middle to the end of November. Even so, they failed to break the German line and in the process suffered many casualties.

So the Germans went over to the attack as December began, even though their troops were near exhaustion from three weeks of continuous combat. The German right wing succeeded in breaking through a weak point in the Russian line and surrounded the Russian position at Lodz. This turn of events forced the Russians to order the evacuation of the city, an operation they successfully completed on the night of 5 December.

Russian attempts to reinforce their hard pressed troops in the north from their southern armies were foiled by the Austro-German forces operating in that area. The left wing of Von Mackensen's northern army started to close in on Lowicz; the Austro-Hungarian forces pushed out of the Carpathians and Galicia on the Russian left wing. The offensive of the Germans and Austro-Hungarians along the whole Eastern Front forced the Russians to give way, first in West Galicia and then in Poland.¹ The original objective of the German operation had been accomplished, namely to blunt the Russian offensive and keep them out of East Prussia and Silesia. The Germans and the Austro-Hungarians took one hundred thirty thousand Russian prisoners of war during this period along with considerable numbers of artillery pieces, machine guns and other war material.

Langhorne winds up his report by giving credit for the successful campaign to the bearing of the Austro-German soldiers and to their outstanding leaders. He said the troops maintained a strong confidence in

¹Ibid., p. 9.

themselves and a consciousness of the objectives to be accomplished. For five months they fought and marched without rest in an area devastated and depopulated by war and at the end hampered also by adverse weather conditions. Through it all their morale remained high and their offensive power unimpeded.¹

A report that Major Langhorne submitted on the 25th of February 1915 contains some interesting observations and comments by the Germans concerning the Russians and the battles on the Eastern Front.² The German General Staff by this time had concluded that they had overestimated the Russians and had underestimated the British. The Germans when opposed to the Russians could win against three to one odds. Anything greater than that usually called for a German retirement. The Russians fought quite well but could not properly mount an attack. Russian artillery operated very effectively and was supplied with good guns and shells. The Russian Army was well clothed and well equipped. Some of the Russian leadership was good but instances such as the failure of Rennenkampf and Samsonov to cooperate severely crippled their operations. Russian combat intelligence was poor and they were not able to maneuver rapidly. During the Lodz campaign a Russian battalion overran a German battery, wiped out the gunners in the process, and then meekly surrendered to other nearby German troops.³ Langhorne said that during a trip he took along the Eastern Front the Germans told him numerous stories about the willingness of the Russians to surrender. In some instances the

¹ Ibid., p. 10.

² Report from Langhorne, dated 25 February 1915, subject: Notes on the Armies. Army War College File Number 8690-149. National Archives.

³ Ibid., p. 2.



HUSSARS-

FIGURE 22

GERMAN HUSSARS

Burt, Report of Observations with the German Army, p. 46.

Russian soldiers tried to surrender without weapons but the Germans would not accept their surrender until they went back and got some rifles.

The report goes on to say that the Russian trenches were well constructed but that they placed the officers in a separate position to the rear of the trenches occupied by their troops.¹ The Germans remarked that captured Russian troops told stories of being deserted by their officers. A German general told Langhorne that during one attack the Russian soldiers advanced without any artillery support in a bayonet charge. The Russian charge was allowed to approach close to the German line and then was decimated by artillery, rifle and machinegun fire. The German general who related this story to Major Langhorne characterized the Russian leadership in this instance as criminal.²

Near the end of this report Langhorne expressed his opinion of the performance of the German Army thus far in the war:

Mere numbers do not count in modern war. It is difficult to find words to describe the performances of the German armies in this war. They seem to be better trained, better instructed, better equipped, and better led than any armies the world has hitherto seen. All descriptions of them, as far as I have seen, are filled with superlatives.³

Unfortunately there was no U.S. military attaché in Russia until Lieutenant Sherman Miles, U.S. Army, arrived at the end of October 1914.

¹Major Langhorne accepted what the Germans told him without question. A U.S. military observer, Captain Samuel G. Shartle, who visited this front in March of 1915 had a different explanation. Shartle said that the trenches in the rear were for reserves. Report of Captain Samuel G. Shartle, C.A.C., Military Observer with the German Army, December 20, 1914 to April 6, 1915. Army War College File Number 8713-22, p. 29, National Archives.

²Ibid., p. 3.

³Ibid., p. 4.

The Russians had rejected the United States Government's request that military observers be attached to the Russian armies in the field,¹ so there are not any comparative reports from the Russian side concerning operations on the Eastern Front. Langhorne's reports are very good on detail and faithfully record events as they really took place. As always, however, when reading Major Langhorne's reports his pro-German bias must be taken into account.

Captain Allan L. Briggs, the U.S. Military Attaché in Vienna, submitted a report on the Austro-German retreat at the end of October 1914.² His account is generally a broad treatment of the events recounted in detail by Langhorne. But Briggs was not reluctant to write about adverse conditions within the armies of the Dual Monarchy.

The Austrian armies took up a position between the fortresses of Krakow (Cracow) and Przemsyl and in the Carpathians south-east of the latter fortresses. Precise information as to the positions of the armies is not at hand. The retreat was covered by a division of the Austrian troops which must have suffered considerably, particularly in the stand made at the Lysa Gora mountains as the hospitals in Vienna received hundreds of wounded at that time.³

The written observations of U.S. representatives concerning the military events occurring on the Eastern Front in 1914 were as complete as those concerning the war in the West. Charles Wilson in St. Petersburg was handicapped by not having a military attaché until late in the year. Wilson in fact did not mention the decisive Battle of Tannenberg once in

¹Wilson to State Department, 18 August 1914. State Department File Number 763.72118/2. National Archives.

²Report from Briggs, dated 20 November 1914, subject: The German and Austrian Retreat of October 29th. Army War College File Number 8690-88. National Archives.

³Ibid.

any of his dispatches. The nearest thing to a report from the Russian side of the battleline was the meager bits of news from Warsaw furnished by Consul de Soto. Captain Briggs in Vienna depended on the Austrians for his information, except for occasional comments like the one quoted above. Major Langhorne submitted the most detailed reports but they suffered from his lack of an analytical approach. A good portion of Langhorne's information was obviously derived from the German General Staff and he simply passed it on without critical comment. Major Langhorne did visit the battlefields under the auspices of his German hosts. His reports, however, do not indicate that he took proper advantage of the opportunity to make professional observations. Certainly Langhorne's reports do not compare with those of Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Kuhn, his successor as attaché which were objective, more precisely written and stuck to the business at hand.

The military reports from the Eastern Front in 1914 were at best mediocre and lacked a true professional touch. The diplomatic dispatches were of a better quality but were too few and too brief. One receives the impression that some of the American observers lacked sufficient background to understand the historic events unfolding before them. Perhaps they were not as highly motivated as they might have been.

CHAPTER V

WAR ON THE WATERS OF THE WORLD

Of the several factors creating antagonism between the German Empire and the British Empire, naval rivalry was not the least important. To be sure, commercial and colonial competition contributed to ill feeling as well as the traditional British policy against any Continental nation establishing a hegemony threatening the European balance of power as Germany seemed to be doing. But the potential menace of a big German Fleet was something readily understood by virtually every Englishman. He comprehended the threat to an island kingdom which imported the very necessities of life by water and he paid the taxes which enabled the British Fleet to maintain a position of superiority. The press kept the public well informed on naval matters and the seed bed of anti-German feeling was prepared for some incident like the invasion of Belgium.

Thus in August of 1914, the two principal naval antagonists among the belligerents were Germany and Great Britain. The only other European powers with fleets worthy of the name were France and Italy. The French battle fleet, by previous agreement with Great Britain, largely confined its activities to the Mediterranean and Italy was neutral. The other warring nations who possessed warships were negligible quantities by comparison. The bulk of British naval striking power was concentrated in their Grand Fleet and by the Germans in their High Seas Fleet. Both countries, of course, had various squadrons and individual warships scattered around the globe when war came. The British had the preponderance

of power as exemplified by their twenty-eight dreadnoughts and battle cruisers compared to Germany's eighteen.¹

Lieutenant Commander W. R. Gherardi occupied the post of U.S. Naval Attache' at the Berlin Embassy in 1914. Unlike his military counterpart, Major Langhorne, Commander Gherardi managed to report the situation from Germany as he saw it, and the German viewpoint on affairs, without losing his neutral detachment. Much of his information, like that of other U.S. observers, came from official sources, newspapers and personal contacts. Commander Gherardi's reports are both interesting and enlightening.

Naval activity on the high seas began with the operations of Admiral Souchon and his Mediterranean squadron as has been related elsewhere in this thesis.² The political significance of the escape of Goeben and Breslau to Constantinople and the subsequent activities of those ships outweigh the strictly naval importance of Souchon's actions. On 4 August the ex-Hamburg-American liner Konigin Luise, employed as a minelayer by the German Navy, was sunk off of the English coast by a British squadron.³ So first blood in the naval war went to the British.

The first fleet type action in the conflict took place on 28 August in the area of Heligoland Bight. The Germans had been sending strong scouting forces out into the North Sea and finding no opposition had become a trifle too bold. The British laid a trap for them consisting

¹Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History, pp. 933-934.

²See Chapter II, pp. 30-32.

³Report from Gherardi, hereafter identified as "Z", 1914-1915, subject: Sinking of German Minelayer "Konigin Luise". Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 5278 F-6-d. National Archives.

of a destroyer force as a decoy backed up by battle cruisers and sprang it on the enemy in "thick weather". The Germans took the bait and chased the British destroyers into the mist, becoming somewhat separated in the process. Because of poor visibility the pursuing German light cruisers never saw the British battle cruisers until it was too late. In the ensuing action the Germans lost the cruisers Ariadne, Mainz, Koeln and the accompanying torpedo boat V-187.¹

Koeln was engaged at five hundred meters by the battle cruisers and was put down in six minutes with the loss of all hands except for a single stoker. Among those lost on Koeln was Rear Admiral Maas, Second Admiral of the Scouting Ships.² Mainz was badly damaged by gunfire and all of the officers above deck were killed or wounded. The cruiser had taken one torpedo hit but was still buoyant enough that her capture by the British seemed highly probable. To prevent such a disgrace Ober-Leutnant Wolf Von Tirpitz, the son of Admiral Von Tirpitz, ordered the magazine detonated. This action succeeded in sinking the ship thus preventing her capture. Young Von Tirpitz and other survivors of Mainz were taken prisoner by the British.³

Some of the survivors from the torpedo boat V-187 had an exciting tale to tell:

¹Report from "Z" dated 31 August 1914, subject: Loss of Cruisers "Ariadne", "Mainz", "Koeln" and "V-187". Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 6684 F-6-d. National Archives.

²Report from "Z" dated 14 September 1914, subject: Naval Battle of Heligoland, August 29, 1914. Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 6684 F-6-d. National Archives.

³Report from "Z" dated 22 October 1914, subject: Loss of the German Cruiser "Mainz". Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 6684 F-6-d. National Archives.

After the crew of 'V187' had had to leave her, the British destroyers which had been firing at her put out their boats to rescue the survivors. Ober-Leutnant Jasper and four men were picked up by a boat in which were an English officer and four English men at the oars. While the rescue was going on, a German cruiser appeared and opened fire. The British destroyers then made all haste to get their boats and escape. When the boat with Ober-Leutnant Jasper in it came alongside, the British officer and men got on board their destroyer and then ordered the Germans out. The Germans kept fast in the boat. To a repeated order, Ober-Leutnant Jasper replied that under no circumstances would they go on board the destroyer. As it was evident they would not move, they were fired upon by English officers, several shots from revolvers, and a seaman picked up a shell and threw it at them. To prevent being hoisted in with the boat, the Germans cut the boat falls and the boat line, so that the boat drifted clear and, the destroyer making off to save herself, the boat with the five Germans in it was picked up (by) the cruiser 'Stettin'. The British boat itself is now in Wilhelmshafen.¹

The fight put up by Ariadne excited the admiration of the British. Aboard one of the British cruisers (not identified) a half dozen of the survivors were being given "three cheers" when they saw a German cruiser approaching. Before the third cheer could be sounded the Germans jumped overboard and swam away. The British cruiser moved off and the swimming men were picked up by the German cruiser Strassburg.²

The first major naval engagement had ended with a clear-cut British victory. The Germans lost another warship, this time in the Baltic Sea area, as August drew to a close. The cruiser Magdeburg grounded in the Bay of Finland near the island of Odenholm in a thick fog. Efforts to release the ship proved to no avail and when Russian naval units appeared on the scene and took Magdeburg under fire the German crew blew her up to

¹Report from "Z" dated 22 October 1914, subject: Loss of German Torpedo Boat "V187". Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 6684 F-6-d. National Archives.

²Report from "Z" dated 24 October 1914, subject: Notes on the Loss of the German Cruiser "Ariadne". Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 6684 F-6-d. National Archives.

prevent possible capture. Help had been summoned by radio but the fog prevented a timely rescue.¹

The German Navy struck back in a very telling blow on 22 September when the submarine U-9 in the course of a single hour sank three British cruisers with great loss of life. Early that morning U-9, in a calm sea and clear weather, was proceeding on a southwesterly course about twenty miles from Hoek Van Holland. At approximately 0600, three large British cruisers were sighted approaching in a line abreast going in the opposite direction to that of U-9. The U-boat immediately made a torpedo attack on the center cruiser Aboukir. Mortally damaged the British cruiser sank in a matter of minutes. The other two cruisers made for the spot where Aboukir had gone down. This gave Kapitan-Leutnant Otto Weddigen, U-9's commanding officer, the opportunity for another quick attack. He made the most of it and Hogue quickly joined her sister on the bottom of the North Sea. Then Cressy came charging up only to be greeted by two torpedoes which capsized her. Cressy floated for a bit and then sank to join the other two.²

Commander Gherardi submitted a short report on the sinking of the cruisers:

The following, which is from an authentic source, gives some idea of the state of mind and nerve of the commanding officer of the German submarine during the destructive attack on the three British cruisers:

¹Report from "Z" dated 29 August 1914, subject: Loss of German Cruiser "Magdeburg". Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 5282 F-6-d. National Archives.

²Report from "Z" dated 27 September 1914, subject: German Submarine U-9 Sinks British Armored Cruisers "Aboukir", "Hogue" and Cressy". Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 5196 F-6-d. National Archives.

After Lieutenant Weddigen, commanding the 'U-9', had struck two of the British cruisers and emerged his periscope a third time to get his bearings for attacking the third cruiser, he saw the work of rescue going on and the wreck was so dreadful that a strong revulsion of feeling swept over him so that he turned away from the periscope and was about to make off, leaving the third cruiser untouched. During his indecision, his Second in command touched him on the shoulder and said: 'Remember, Captain, that those wretches incited the Japanese against us.' And that was sufficient to decide Lieutenant Weddigen to attack the third ship.¹

The incredible part of the whole incident to the modern eye is that after Aboukir was hit, the other two cruisers set about rescue operations as if they were dealing with some peacetime maritime disaster. And as the quote above indicates even after Hogue was sunk, Cressy persisted in attempting to pick up the survivors from the other two cruisers instead of taking off or attempting to find and sink the U-boat. The British were to learn quickly that one did not tarry long in an area where a U-boat was operating and one certainly did not stop dead in the water and present a stationary target.

But the British could play the submarine game too. For example, the German cruiser Hela was returning to her base after a night patrol in late September off Heligoland when she was caught by the British submarine E-9 and sent to the bottom. A Hamburg 'coasting steamer' was in proximity and witnessed the action. The steamer had spotted the sub and tried to warn the cruiser but was too late.²

¹Report from "Z" dated 22 October 1914, subject: Notes on the Sinking of the "Cressy", "Aboukir" and "Hogue" by the German Submarine "U-9". Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 5196 F-6-d. National Archives.

²Report from "Z" dated 5 October 1914, subject: Sinking of "Hela" by British Submarine. Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 5274 F-6-d. National Archives.

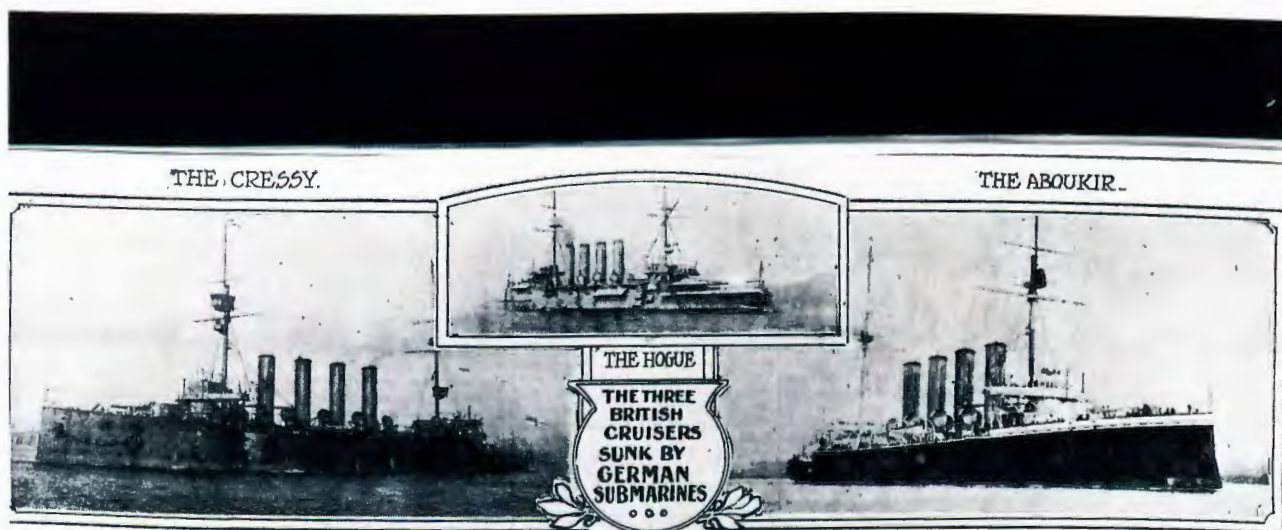


FIGURE 24

H.M.S. CRESSY, HOGUE AND ABOUKIR

Gherardi, Report from "Z" 27 September 1914.

A word should be said at this point about Koenigsberg and Emden. The former was a German light cruiser stationed off the East African coast when the war broke out. She was soon in action and on 6 August sank her opposite number, the British light cruiser Pegasus off Mombasa. This was her moment of glory. But she was harassed by superior British naval strength and finally driven up the Rufigi River in German East Africa in October 1914. Koenigsberg was sealed in her refuge by the British who sank a ship across the river channel. There she remained until the British got around to destroying her in July 1915 by using monitors to get close enough up the shallow stream.

In August, Admiral Count Maximilian Von Spee commander of the German China Squadron, detached the light cruiser Emden for independent operations in the Indian Ocean. Under her Captain Karl Von Muller the cruise was highly successful as Emden took twenty-one prizes and bombarded Madras on 22 September. She finally met her end under the guns of the Australian cruiser Sydney in the Cocos Islands on 9 November.¹ On the 21st of that month Ambassador Gerard at the request of the German Government notified Captain Von Muller, then a captive, that he was the recipient of the Iron Cross First and Second Class. The Iron Cross Second Class was conferred on all officers and petty officers, and on fifty seamen to be selected by Captain Von Muller.²

On 1 November, the German surface fleet scored its biggest victory of the war. Admiral Von Spee brought his China Squadron across the Pacific and off Coronel, Chile, met the British squadron under the command of

¹Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History, p. 945.

²Gerard to State Department, 21 November 1914. State Department File Number 763.72114/85. National Archives.

Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock. Von Spee had with him the heavy cruisers Scharnhorst (Flagship) and Gneisenau, and the light cruisers Leipzig, Dresden and Nuernberg. Cradock's squadron consisted of the heavy cruisers Good Hope (Flagship) and Monmouth, the light cruiser Glasgow and a converted merchant auxiliary cruiser Otranto. Admiral Cradock also had under his command an old battleship, Canopus, but he left her behind because of her slow speed.¹ A letter from Count Von Spee tells the story.

November 2, 1914.

Yesterday was All Saints Day and a day of fortune for us. I was en route with the squadron, passing southward on the coast, when I got wind that an English cruiser had entered the small coaling harbor of Coronel near Concepcion. As according to the general rules of international law a ship of a belligerent power entering a neutral harbor will have to leave again within 24 hours. I made up my mind to capture her. I had distributed the places in such a manner that 'NUERNBERG' was to go to the harbor to see if the cruiser was still there, the other ships took up positions outside. To save coal the ships had only steam up for 14 knots, but were otherwise clear for action. My ships were distributed about 4.25, only 'GNEISENAU' in immediate vicinity when it was reported to me that in west south west two ships were sighted. I made towards them and ordered the other cruisers to come to me, for it was clear to me that I had adversaries before me, namely the armored cruiser 'MONMOUTH' and the small cruiser 'GLASGOW'. Shortly after the auxiliary cruiser 'OTRANTO' made her appearance and after a little while the armored cruiser 'GOOD HOPE'. The enemy attempted several maneuvers by which, according to my opinion he would have come nearer to the coast and would have gained the weather gauge, which would have been very injurious to me. I had at once given orders to 'SCHARNHORST' and 'GNEISENAU' to have all boilers in action and in a quarter of an hour I ran with 20 knots against a heavy sea and with good fortune reached a position parallel to the enemy. But I was so far alone and had to wait for the arrival of the other ships. The enemy was kind enough not to disturb me, the distance amounting at that period about 9 miles. When my ships were about together at 6.10, except the 'NUERNBERG' which was not yet in sight, I

¹Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History, p. 945.



FIGURE 25

ADMIRAL COUNT MAXIMILIAN VON SPEE

Gherardi, Report from "Z" 2 November 1914.

commenced to lessen the distance and when I was about 5 miles (1 sea mile=1.8 km.) I gave orders to open the fire. The battle had commenced and in the main I directed the line quietly with very little change of the course. The sun in the West I was able to outmaneuver so that I was not troubled by sunlight. The moon in the east was not yet full, but promised good illumination during the night, rain bows being visible in different places. My ships fired rapidly and had good success with the large ships. 'SCHARNHORST' fired against 'GOOD HOPE' (Flagship Admiral Craddock), 'GNEISENAU' against 'MONMOUTH', 'LEIPZIG' against 'GLASGOW', 'DRESDEN' against 'OTRANTO'. The last ship left the line after a while and escaped as I supposed. Fires broke out on 'GOOD HOPE' and 'MONMOUTH' and on the first ship a strong explosion took place which against the evening sky looked like brilliant fire works. I had the belief that the ship must now sink but it kept afloat and the fight continued. Darkness broke in, and having lessened the distance at first to about 4500 metres I turned so far that the distance was increased. The fire continued towards the ships which could only be made out by the flames raging on them and when the gunners could not aim any longer I stopped the firing. Firing from the enemy had ceased before. I ordered the small cruisers to take up the pursuit, as the enemy however had evidently extinguished the fires there was nothing to be seen. The artillery fight had lasted 52 minutes. About 8.40 minutes I observed at a great distance ahead, about ten sea miles, artillery fire. I made towards it to give assistance if necessary. It was the 'NUERNBERG' which could not make connection in the first place and which had now met the 'MONMOUTH' lying heavily to starboard. The 'NUERNBERG' approached closely and gave her the rest with gun fire. 'MONMOUTH' capsized and sank. It is very much to be regretted that the heavy sea forbade any work of rescue, besides the 'NUERNBERG' believed the 'GOOD HOPE' to be in the vicinity which was probably an error. It is very probable that the 'NUERNBERG' took one of the large cruisers to be the 'MONMOUTH' in the moonlight and the great distance. I do not know what became of the 'GOOD HOPE'. Lieutenant G. who had time to make observations was of the opinion that she had listed to starboard heavily and if I recall the picture I believe it to be possible. She was put out of action and it is very possible that she sank. 'GLASGOW' was hardly to be seen, she is supposed to have received several hits, but made her escape. Thus we have come out victorious on all sides, and I think God for it.¹

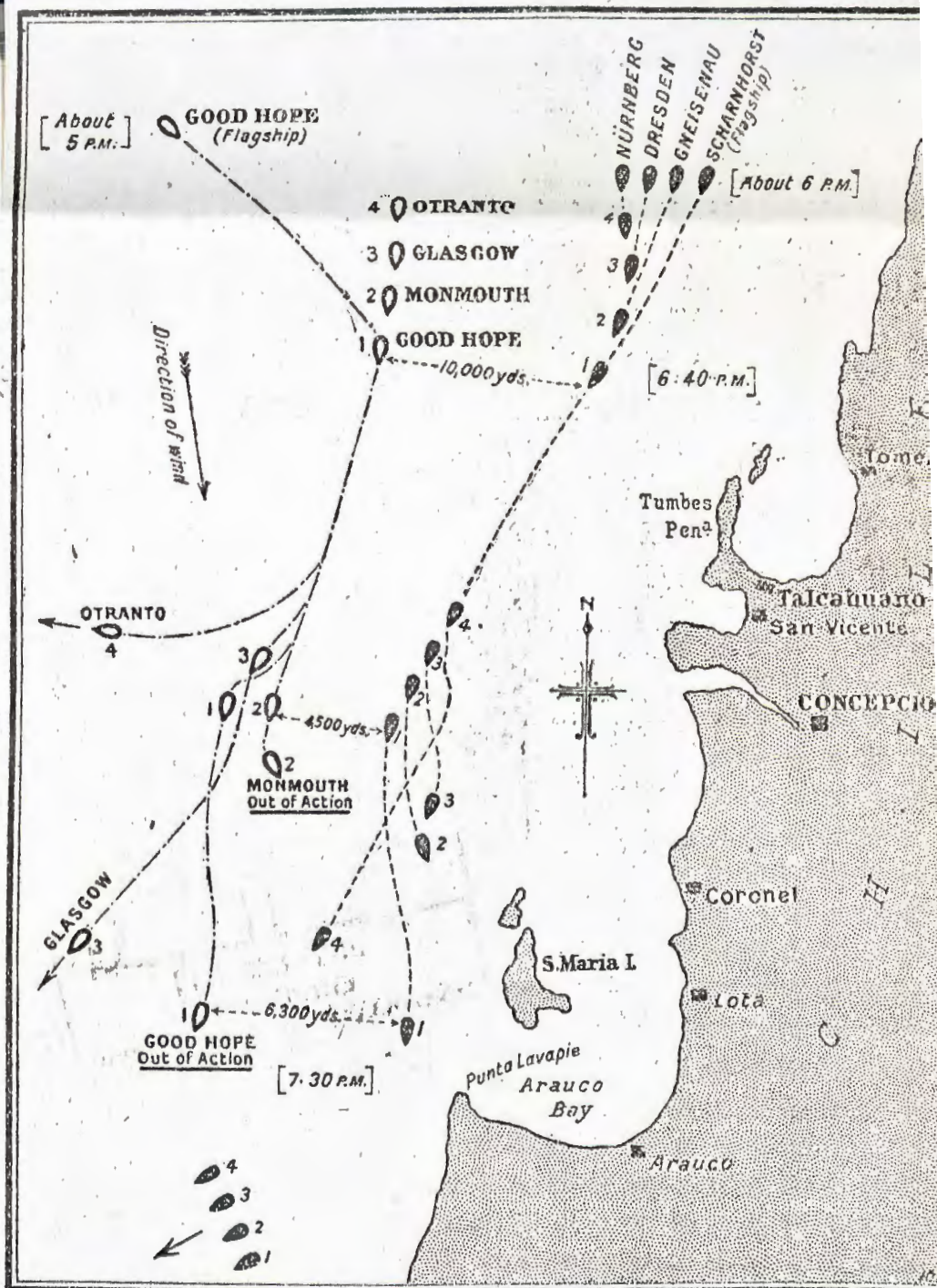
Admiral Von Spee was still not sure that Good Hope had sunk in the darkness and indicated that he was going to look for her the next day.²

¹ Report from "Z", Letter from Count Von Spee dated 2 November 1914. Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 4648A F-6-d. National Archives.

² Ibid.

THE BATTLE IN THE PACIFIC.

POSITIONS OF THE TWO SQUADRONS.



We give above a diagram representing the naval action in the Pacific, off the coast of Chile, on November 1, when H.M.S. Good Hope and H.M.S. Monmouth were sunk by Admiral von Spee's squadron. The diagram is drawn from particulars supplied in the eye-witness's account of the battle published in "The Times" on December 11, and from material published in the "Union," of Valparaiso, on November 5. The following are the approximate positions:—

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| British Squadron: | (1) H.M.S. Good Hope (Flagship). |
| (White.) | (2) H.M.S. Monmouth. |
| | (3) H.M.S. Glasgow. |
| | (4) H.M.S. Otranto. |
| German Squadron: | (1) Scharnhorst (Flagship). |
| (Black.) | (2) Gneisenau. |
| | (3) Dresden. |
| | (4) Nürnberg. |

FIGURE 26

THE BATTLE OF CORONEL

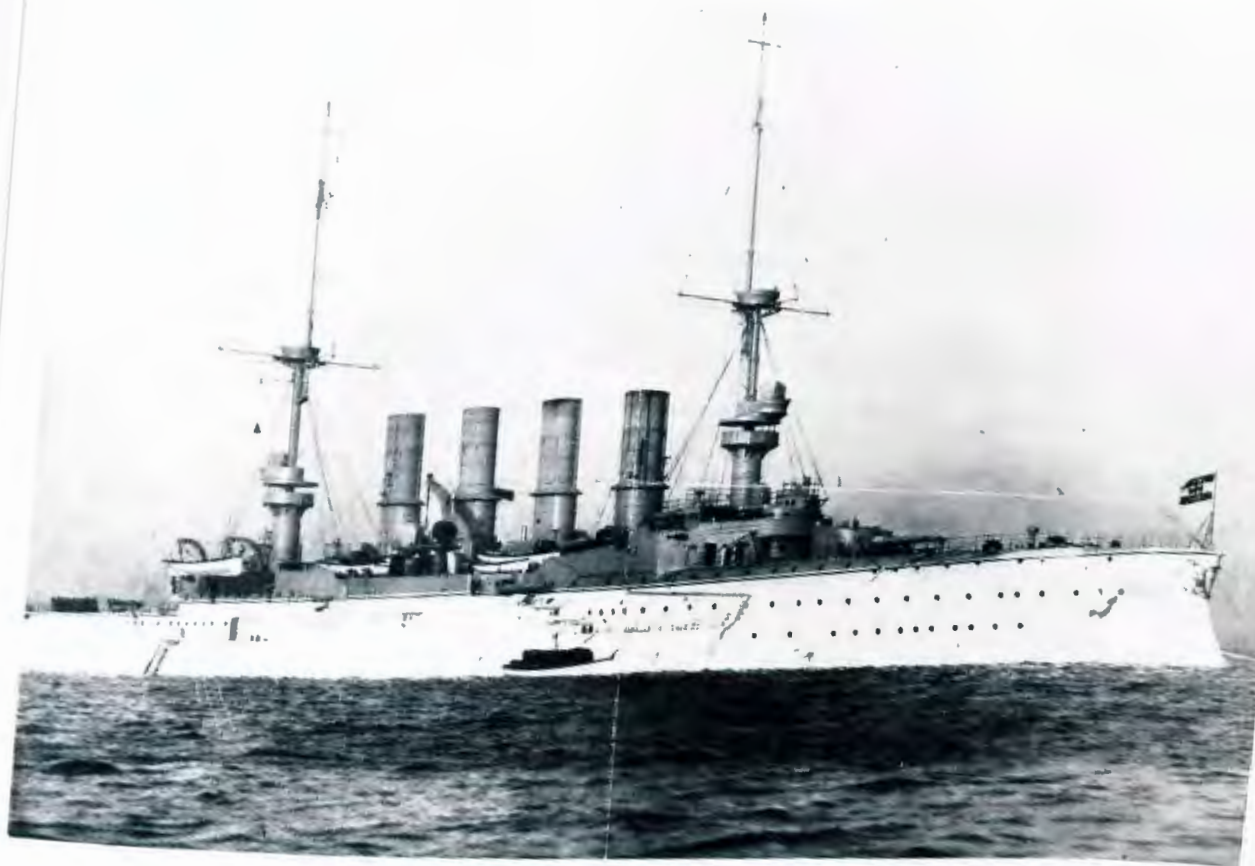


FIGURE 27

H.I.G.M.S. SCHARNHORST

Gherardi, Report from "Z" 2 November 1914.

But Good Hope, like Monmouth, had gone down. Otranto and Glasgow, following orders, broke off action and escaped. The news from Coronel shocked and saddened the British and correspondingly raised the morale of the Germans. "The brilliant success of our East Asiatic Squadron off the Chilean coast has awakened a justifiable joy and satisfaction in the German people."¹

But retribution was near at hand. For the British Admiralty reacted quickly to the defeat and dispatched Vice Admiral Sir F. D. Sturdee with the battle cruisers Invincible and Inflexible to hunt for the German squadron.

On 8 December Von Spee called at Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands, planning to destroy the British coaling and communications station located there. To his surprise Sturdee and his squadron were inside the port refueling. Von Spee retreated and Sturdee came out after him at 0945. At 1220 the British closed in on the German squadron, and keeping at long range, opened fire at 1300. Von Spee ordered his light cruisers to scatter and Scharnhorst and Gneisenau were taken under fire by the battle cruisers. Scharnhorst was sunk around 1400 and Gneisenau went down an hour and forty minutes later. Leipzig was surrounded by the British cruisers Kent, Cornwall and the old Glasgow and put down around 2100 that evening. Two colliers accompanying the German squadron were captured by the auxiliary Macedonia and the light cruiser Bristol. After Leipzig sank, Kent took off in pursuit of Dresden and

¹Report from "Z", Berliner Tageblatt 8 November 1914. Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 4553 C-10-d. National Archives.

and Nurenborg. Dresden managed to escape but Kent caught Nurenborg and sank her.¹ The attitude of the British regarding the destruction of Von Spee's squadron is well summed up by an officer of the battle cruiser Invincible in a letter home.

We have done a very good thing, and a thing that warranted doing without doubt. It is a tremendous thing for the Admiral, but we can't hazard a suggestion as to our next move.

The Germans certainly put up a magnificent fight to the last, but they were outclassed. I am glad that it has taken only a month to avenge the 'Good Hope' and poor old 'Straw'. I am also very glad to be in the first great sea battle of the war, and in the position that I hold. The Admiral was very complimentary last night about the wireless, and tho I say it myself I think we did well to keep the enemy in the dark.

I hope they will call our battle 'The Battle of the Falklands' as it is a rather nice name. This action, which I think may be called a great one, has very much upset a great many preconceived ideas. Many experts said that no modern battle could last more than one short half-hour, whereas we were fighting hard for six hours.²

The German reaction to the loss of their squadron, their admiral and most of their men follows:

With deep sorrow and at the same time with a feeling of pride the German people received the news of the loss of our East Asiatic cruiser Squadron. We must admit that this time the English have completed their work. After the numerous losses which our squadron inflicted on them on the high seas and especially after the brilliant victory off the coast of Chile, the English Admiralty, desiring not to lose the confidence of their country, put forth their utmost endeavors. To this end a fleet of warships of the different Powers was dispatched in pursuit of our cruisers. It is possible that the German Admiral Count Spee could have escaped his pursuers had he remained in the Pacific Ocean. He had already succeeded in rounding Cape Horn and entering the South Atlantic. Destiny overtook him at the Falkland

¹ Report from "Z", Extract from a Letter Written by an Officer of the Invincible, copy dated 9 December 1915. Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 4755A F-6-d. National Archives.

² Ibid.

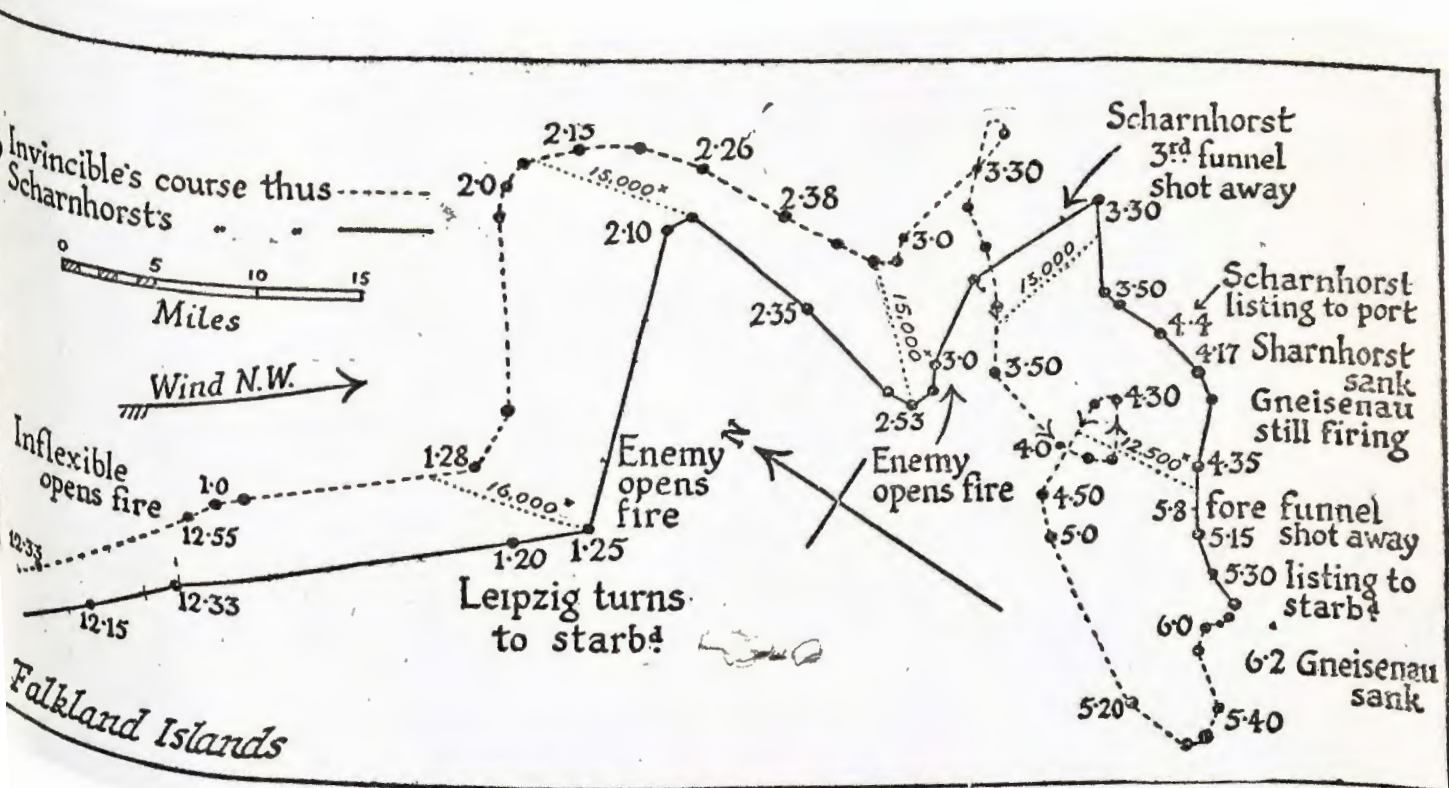


FIGURE 28

THE BATTLE OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

Gherardi, Report from "Z" December 1914.

Islands. We only know at present very little concerning the strength of our enemies which engaged him in battle. It is possible that the English Government will not disclose of what units their fleet consisted and which of them participated in the battle off the Falkland Islands. We can, however, accept two conclusions as definite - first, that our sailors fought with heroic resistance to the last breath, as is evidenced from the fact that the battle lasted five hours, and, secondly, that they were overmatched in the number of guns as well as in speed. This much is gleaned from the official announcements of the English Government, that the ships engaged consisted only of that squadron dispatched from England, as is shown by the name of the English Admiral Sturdee, who was formerly Chief of Staff of the Admiralty. Manifestly Sturdee assembled a fleet of the most modern, large armored cruisers and dreadnaughts which would be superior to the German ships. We accept forthwith that in spite of the above, the enemy suffered material injury but we must admit, whether willing or not, that our squadron is destroyed. The hope that at least the small cruisers 'DRESDEN' and 'NURNBERG' should succeed in escaping experienced a sad limitation. The 'NURNBERG' succumbed (sic) to her pursuers. Only the 'DRESDEN' remains. The whole people accompany her with their best wishes. We must always be resigned to the fact that sooner or later the activity of our cruisers in distant seas must come to an end and we should be reconciled to this. This fact will not change the continuance of the cruiser war. It will be decided in home waters. As will also the fate of our colonies be decided not in Kamerum, Kiautschau and East Africa but on the European battlefields.¹

The Battle of the Falkland Islands for all intents and purposes eliminated the German flag from the high seas. To be sure the High Seas Fleet and the Baltic Command still very much existed but their cruisers and battleships remained in port except for hit and run cruiser raids against English coastal towns such as those conducted against Gorleston in November and against Scarborough, Hartlepool and Yarmouth in December. The Germans did have one type of warship, however, that did not remain in port and had already proved itself most effective.

¹Report from "Z", Berliner Tageblatt 13 December 1914. Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 4553 C-10-d. National Archives.

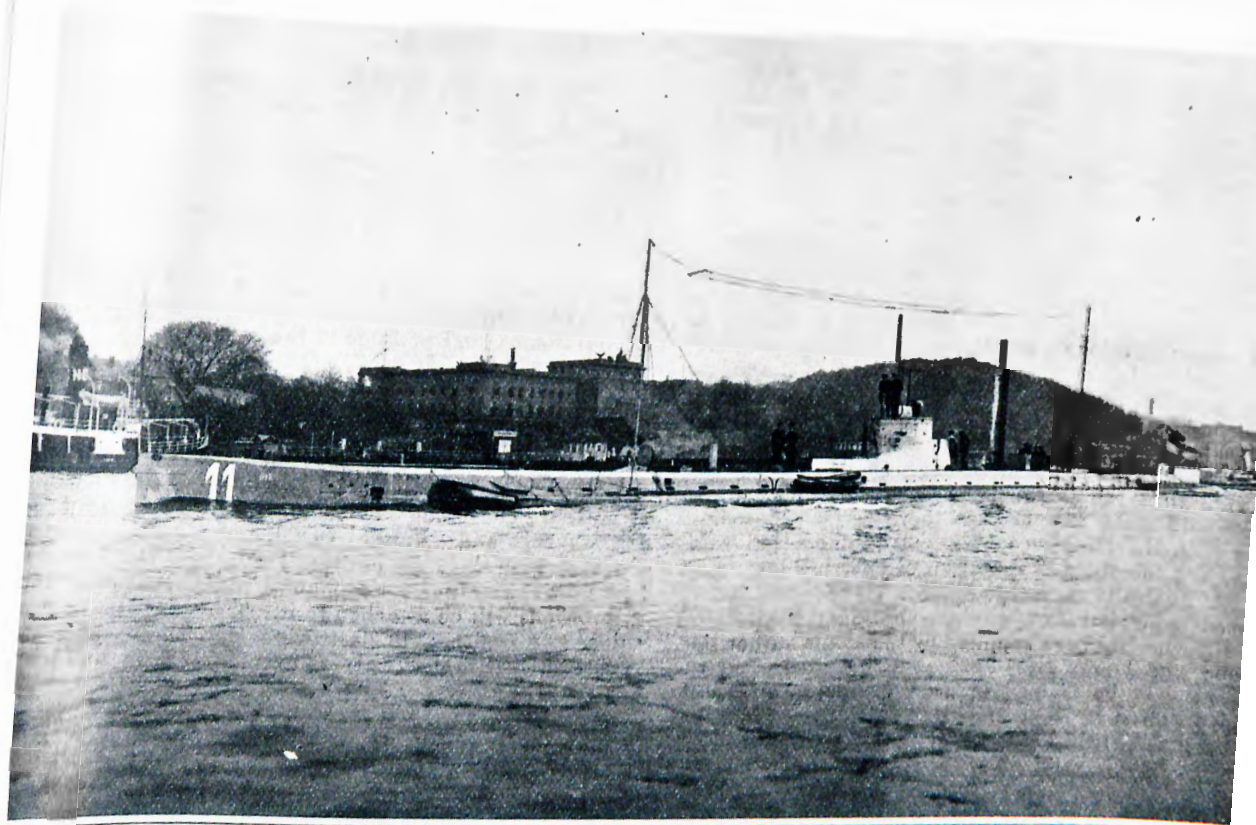
The sinking of the three British cruisers by the submarine U-9 in September has already been mentioned. Earlier in the month, on the 5th, the British cruiser Pathfinder was torpedoed and sunk by U-21. Then, too, the Russian cruiser Pallada fell a victim to U-26 on 11 October. Pallada on this occasion was accompanied by the cruiser Bajan who did not stop to assist her stricken sister as the British cruisers had done in September.¹ The Allied navies were beginning to learn about U-boats. The British lost yet another cruiser, Hawke, on 15 October to U-9. Hawke and the cruiser Theseus were on patrol in the North Sea when attacked. Theseus managed to outmaneuver the U-boat but Hawke was hit amidships, a tremendous explosion followed, and she went down in four minutes.² On 31 October it was the turn of Hermes, an old light cruiser which had been converted to a seaplane tender.³ The Germans were coming alive to the great potential of the undersea raider as 1914 waned and they were displaying a remarkable ability in its employment.

What sort of a creature was this "under sea boat"? Commander Gherardi submitted a report to the Navy Department in December of 1914 which gives an excellent description of the type of craft in use during the early phase of the war. The example Gherardi cited was U-32. This submarine was fifty-six meters long and displaced nine hundred tons

¹Report from "Z", Vossische Zeitung 15 October 1914. Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 4637 AA F-6-d. National Archives.

²Report from "Z", dated 18 October 1914, subject: Sinking of the English Cruiser "Hawke" by the German Submarine. Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 5273 F-6-d. National Archives.

³Report from "Z", dated 3 November 1914, subject: German Submarine Sinks English Cruiser "Hermes". Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 5275 F-6-d. National Archives.



GERMAN SUBMARINE, "U. 11."

The Navy (Eng) Sept 1914

FIGURE 29

GERMAN U-BOAT

Gherardi, Report from "Z" 1 December 1914.

submerged. U-9 made over sixteen knots on the surface and ten knots submerged. She had four torpedo tubes. From bow to stern the submarine was compartmented in the following fashion: Compartment I - Bow compartment with collision bulkhead. Compartment II - Forward torpedo room with two torpedo tubes aimed forward. Compartment III - Officers cabin. Compartment IV - Commanding Officer's cabin. Compartment V - Berths for two junior officers or warrant officers. Compartment VI - Crews quarters. Compartment VII - Crews quarters. Compartment VIII - Operating and diving compartment, and radio room. Compartment IX - Diesel engine room. Compartment X - Electric engine room. Compartment XI - After torpedo room, two torpedo tubes aimed aft.

U-32 carried six 54 cm. torpedos. Four of these were loaded in the tubes and the two spares were slung on chain hoists in the rear of the forward tubes. A gun was carried in a closed hatch in the forward area. The conning tower housed three personnel, the commander, the executive officer and the helmsman. The conning tower was fitted with glass ports equipped with shutters for submerged running. There was no bridge or weather screen on top of the conning tower. Two of the three periscopes with which U-32 was equipped came into the conning tower while the third one went into the operations and engineering compartment. The periscopes were raised and lowered by a hand gear from periscope wells provided to house them when they were not in use. The periscope collars were marked in degrees and when aiming the periscope was set at 0°. When it pointed at the target the bow tubes were fired. In addition the Germans were also beginning to use angle firing techniques.

In case of emergency, unconnected with enemy action, the U-boat was fitted with a buoy in a recess provided for it just forward of the

conning tower. The buoy contained a light and a telephone and could be released from inside the craft. There were four other buoys in their own recesses, two forward and two aft, attached to lifting shackles. If the boat got into difficulties while submerged these buoys could be released and the submarine could be lifted to the surface by a submarine tender. U-32 carried a crew of twenty-eight officers and men, and could stay underwater for three days before the crew started suffering from ill effects.¹

With the virtual elimination of the German Navy from the waters of the world and the slow but deadly effect of the Allied naval blockade just beginning, the Germans turned more and more to the U-boat to redress the naval imbalance. The submarine was to be Germany's hope and prayer yet at the same time one of the reasons for her eventual defeat. The new weapon was most effective, particularly since the Allies had yet to develop any countermeasures or tactics. However, the very newness of the submarine also meant that there was no international opinion, official or unofficial, on how it was to be employed. To the public in Allied and neutral countries there seemed to be something sneaky and underhanded about the U-boat. Battleships and cruisers they could understand and appreciate but not some little creature of the deep that crept up on its unwary victim and struck without warning. And when the Germans turned to commerce destruction later in the war as an answer to the blockade, world opinion outside the Central Powers became one of outrage and horror. The

¹ Report from "Z" dated 1 December 1914, subject: German Submarine "U-32". Office of Naval Intelligence File Number 4734 P-10-E. National Archives.

world was no more ready to accept unrestricted submarine warfare than it was to accept unannounced bombardment of cities by gun or from the air. The effective employment of the only naval weapon of value left to the Germans only succeeded in ranging world opinion against her and eventually added immeasurable strength to her enemies.



Wasserjähle beim Auftreffen des Torpedos auf einen Dampfer.

FIGURE 30

VICTIM OF A U-BOAT

Gherardi, Report from "Z" 1 December 1914.

CHAPTER VI

ROUNDING OUT THE YEAR

As the war progressed, Ambassador Page in London worked very hard to keep relations between the United States and Great Britain on an even keel. This was not an easy task as the conflict expanded. However, two factors were in his favor. First, Page and the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, got along well together. Second, Ambassador Page, despite his protestations to the contrary, was pro-British and his reports reflected it.

In a dispatch, dated 7 September, he informed Washington of the British determination to end their problems with Germany once and for all:

The agreement between the Allies published today that no one will consent to end hostilities till all three consent is England's declaration to the Kaiser that no peace proposals will be entertained till one side or the other is completely exhausted. The English are preparing for a long war. They mean to fight till pro-militarism is utterly crushed.¹

He elaborated on this theme further as a result of a conversation with Grey. Page reported the Foreign Secretary as saying that he had exhausted every means to preserve peace and Germany had refused his suggestions. Grey also told Page that no peace could be made with a power that violated treaties and in making war assaulted civilization itself. England regarded the Kaiser and his system of government the same way she once regarded Napoleon--as "a world pest and an enemy of civilization". Added Grey,

¹Page to State Department, 7 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72119/20. National Archives.

"there can be no permanent peace till he and his system are utterly overthrown."¹

On 11 September, Page was back on the wire to Washington with tales of German atrocities in Belgium and France:

The violators of the Belgian treaty, the sowers of mines in the open sea, the droppers of bombs on Antwerp and Paris to kill anybody they may hit, have taken to heart Bernhardt's doctrine of the glorious enjoyment of war. It is impossible longer to doubt the wholly barbarous conduct of the Prussians.²

The controversy between Great Britain and the United States concerning the rights of neutrals on the sea became sharper in October. Page sent a message through the State Department to President Wilson on the 15th in which he wrote:

...I cannot help fearing we are getting into deep water needlessly. The British Government has yielded without question to all our requests and has shown a sincere desire to meet all our wishes short of admitting war materials into Germany. That it will not yield. We would not yield it if we were in their place. Neither would the Germans. The English will risk a serious quarrel or even war with us rather than yield. This you may regard as final.

Since the last lists of contraband and conditional contraband were made such articles as rubber and copper and petroleum have come to play an entirely new part in war ... I have delayed to send this perhaps too long for fear I might possibly seem influenced by sympathy with England and by the atmosphere here. But I write of course solely with reference to our own country's interest and its position after the reorganization of Europe...³

¹Page to State Department, 10 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72119/22. National Archives.

²Page to State Department, 11 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/838. National Archives.

³Page to State Department, 15 October 1914. State Department File Number 763.72112/164. National Archives.

While Ambassador Page struggled to maintain cordial relations between the United States and Great Britain, important events took place on the Continent. Ambassador Gerard notified the State Department on 12 October that he had been told on "good authority", (not further identified) that Turkey would soon be at war with Russia. The Turkish Fleet, consisting mainly of Goeben and Breslau, (renamed respectively Midilli and Javas Sultan) was to attack the Russian Fleet in the Black Sea thereby precipitating hostilities.¹ The Turks had already closed the Dardanelles with mines at the end of September and declared that they would stay closed as long as Allied warships interfered with Turkish ships. The Allies in return stated that all Turkish ships having German officers or sailors aboard would be treated as German ships. Ambassador Morgenthau said that he considered the situation critical.² Conditions grew more critical toward the end of October and the British and Russian diplomatic officials began to make preparations to leave Constantinople.³

Soon the Turks took action. On 29 October their fleet bombarded the Russian port of Odessa. The next day they attacked Sevastopol and

¹ Gerard to State Department, 12 October 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/1190. National Archives.

² Morgenthau to State Department, 27 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72111/378. Morgenthau to State Department, 29 September 1914. State Department File Number 763.72111/401. National Archives.

³ Morgenthau to State Department, 24 October 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/1124. National Archives.

Turkey was in the war on the German side.¹ An interesting little tale came to Ambassador Morgenthau's ears concerning the incidents which brought Turkey into the war.

I am informed that the Minister of Finance called on French Ambassador late yesterday evening and stated that the naval engagement took place without the knowledge of the Ottoman Government, intimating that the German officers in the Ottoman Navy had forced the issue.²

With Turkey's entrance into the war on the side of Germany, Russia was cut off from her Allies through the Straits, the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. This harsh geographic factor was to have momentous consequences in the next two years.

On the western front the war was taking on somewhat of a brighter aspect for the French. Ambassador Herrick reported on 21 October:

I am reliably informed that French Government contemplate returning to Paris on the fifteenth of November next in case Dunkirk is not taken by the Germans. There appears to be good reason to believe that Allied forces in north are stronger than opposing forces and they seem to be making progress.³

The optimism expressed in the last portion of this dispatch was illusory. The war of movement in the West had almost ended and four years of bloody stalemate lay ahead.

During this period Ambassador Herrick got involved in a situation concerning the village of Sissone, the Prince of Monaco and German General

¹Morgenthau to State Department, 30 October 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/1155. Wilson to State Department, 29 October 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/1145. National Archives.

²Morgenthau to State Department, 30 October 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/1152. National Archives.

³Herrick to State Department, 21 October 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/1108. National Archives.



FIGURE 31

GERMAN TRENCH ON THE WESTERN FRONT

Burt, Report of Observations with the German Army, p. 37.

Von Buelow. The General was using the Prince's chateau near Reims as his headquarters. The chateau contained many works of art as well as family heirlooms belonging to the Prince. Some broken glass was found on the road near Sissone and General Von Buelow, suspecting sabotage, imposed a fine of five hundred thousand francs on the village. Sissone and some neighboring villages came up with one hundred and twenty-five thousand francs but could raise no more. General Von Buelow then sent a message to the Prince of Monaco telling him that if he did not come up with the remainder of the money the chateau would be burned. The Prince immediately protested this imposition to the Kaiser and to President Wilson. As a result the Prince promised to pay the balance of the fine to the German Government after the war if his chateau remained unharmed.¹ This habit of levying large fines or forced collections in occupied areas stamped the Germans as blackmailers and contributed to their bad reputation in the conduct of modern war.

Italy's attitude during the fall of 1914 as we have seen was one of official neutrality combined with watchful waiting and continued military preparation. Ambassador Page felt that Italy did not feel herself strong enough to "take aggressive action" against her former allies. He also shrewdly observed that the great strength shown by Germany had helped the cause of neutrality in Italy.² Of course, the Germans and the Austro-Hungarians were under no illusions regarding Italy's ultimate course of action. They fully expected her to come in on the side of the Allies when the opportunity seemed ripe.³

¹Herrick to State Department, 27 October 1914. State Department File Number 763.72116/90. National Archives.

²Page to State Department, 12 October 1914. State Department File Number 763.72111/3360. National Archives.

³Ibid.

During November Italy continued her military preparations which included the stockpiling of food and critical material. Mr. Page picked up a story, later borne out by events, that Italy would take the big plunge in the spring of 1915.¹ He also heard that when the present European war was over Germany or Japan would attack the United States.² Major Langhorne got wind of a similar yarn in Berlin but he did not identify the country or countries that were supposed to do the attacking.³

In spite of all expectations public sentiment in Italy began to shift against the Allies as the year 1914 drew to an end. The cause of this change lay in two aspects of the same problem. In the first place, the Allies were attempting to keep strategic materials and food from reaching the Germans and the Austro-Hungarians. In order to accomplish this task they were interfering with neutral shipping, as has already been noted in the case of the United States versus Great Britain. The Germans attempted to take advantage of the situation by sending former Chancellor Prince Bernard Von Buelow to Italy as Ambassador. Von Buelow was an able diplomat and as a former Ambassador to Italy (1893-97) knew the country and the Italians thoroughly. Even so Ambassador Page told the Secretary of State that no one person would be able to change Italy from the course upon which she had embarked which was:

¹Page to State Department, 19 November 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/2221. National Archives.

²Ibid.

³Report, dated 11 February 1915, subject: The General Situation, Army War College File Number 8690-138. National Archives.

...the single idea of furthering her interests. For the present this seems to be along the line of strengthening her position of neutrality, at the same time that she provides for future eventualities by increasing and thoroughly equipping her army.¹

Italy would go to the highest bidder and the Allies could offer more than her former partners in the Triple Alliance.

Yet the Allied blockade of the Central Powers was achieving more than the irritation of Italy and the United States. Ambassador Gerard reported from Berlin on 3 December that a great need existed in Germany for copper, petroleum, rubber and clothing.² In short, Germany at this comparatively early date was already beginning to feel the pinch in the essentials needed to conduct and sustain a modern war.

On 5 December Gerard, in a long report to Washington, described the rapidly growing anti-American feeling within the German Government, press and public.³ This German antipathy toward the United States was caused by the sale of munitions and other war materials to the Allies by American firms. The Germans considered these activities in violation of the United States declaration of neutrality. When Gerard pointed out to the German Government that their armament firms had sold their wares to the various Balkan countries during those wars, the Germans countered with the retort that they had sold to both sides.

¹ Page to State Department, 25 December 1914. State Department File Number 763.72/1391. National Archives.

² Gerard to State Department, 3 December 1914. State Department File Number 763.72112/450. National Archives.

³ Gerard to State Department, 5 December 1914. State Department File Number 763.72111/1292. National Archives.

A letter to Gerard from an American businessman depicted the feelings of the German public on this issue. This particular businessman dealt in farm machinery and equipment. He wrote that his salesmen, native Germans, were being rebuffed by potential customers when they learned where the manufacturer was located. This was just the beginning. The tide of Anti-Americanism in Germany would rise rapidly in the succeeding months.

Meanwhile over in England the U.S. Military Attache', Lieutenant Colonel George O. Squier, had finally received the permission he had been seeking to visit the British Expeditionary Force in France. Squier, like Ambassador Page, got along very well with his British hosts. He was on particularly good terms with the Secretary of State for War, the formidable Field Marshal Lord Herbert Kitchener.¹ On 11 November, Colonel Squier received word that Lord Kitchener wished to see him. Kitchener told him that arrangements had been made with General Sir John French and General Joffre for his visit to the front. Lord Kitchener then gave Squier a letter to Sir John and told him that he was to "disappear" from London. The reason for the secrecy surrounding Squier's trip was that the British Government was not allowing other foreign attaches to visit the front and they did not want to be charged with playing favorites with the Americans.

Squier "disappeared" from London on 16 November in the same rail passenger car with the Prince of Wales. Upon his arrival in Paris

¹Memorandum for the Ambassador, dated 17 October 1914, subject: Interview with Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War from LTC George O. Squier, Military Attache. Army War College File Number 8679-64. National Archives.

permission was obtained from the Military Governor of that city for him to proceed by automobile north to Sir John French's headquarters.¹ Colonel Squier also obtained permission for two U.S. Army lieutenants attached to the Paris Embassy to accompany him on the trip. The two lieutenants were F.W. Honeycutt and Carl Boyd. Both officers, at Colonel Squier's behest, wrote detailed accounts of their trip to British Headquarters and to the front.

The party left Paris to travel to St. Omer, the site of B. E. F. headquarters on the morning of 21 November 1914. Lieutenant Boyd in his report described it as a cold day and an uneventful trip to Amiens where they stopped for lunch. The reader will recall that the Germans had occupied Amiens during the first weeks of the war. The Americans spoke to several of the citizens about the German occupation and were told that the occupation forces were well behaved during their stay. The American observers next proceeded north from Amiens and found snow on the ground. Boyd described the terrain from a soldier's point of view dwelling on obstacles both natural and man-made. The officers spent the night at St. Pol and had some difficulty obtaining lodging because of the crowded conditions in the town. The next morning they set out on the last lap to St. Omer and Boyd again described the military terrain along the way in detail:

At the southern edge of St. Omer we saw the headquarters of the Royal Flying Corps with a number of portable canvas hangars. They have, I understand, 25 to 30 flying machines. Their favorite machine, I am told, is one of their own make, and I regret that I do not remember the name.

¹Letter to Chief War College Division, General Staff, dated 20 November 1914, subject: Military Observer with British Army in France. Army War College File Number 7015-79. National Archives.

We arrived in the town shortly before noon, and no one seemed to want to tell us where we would find the headquarters of General French. They looked at us curiously and either misdirected us or professed ignorance. However, we finally arrived there. Colonel Squier was received by the General himself while his aides Major Watt and Capt. Guest invited Lt. Honeycutt and me to come in and have some port wine, cake and cigarettes with all of which they said they were bountifully supplied.¹

The reluctance of people to tell the American observers where they could find Sir John's Headquarters can be partially explained by an incident which took place during the second day of their stay which Boyd omits and Honeycutt relates. It seems that they were approached by an Intelligence Corps Sergeant who politely asked for their papers. He had been checking the register of the hotel for new arrivals and noted that some parties had registered as American officers. After satisfying himself that they were in fact who they said they were, the Sergeant explained that great care had to be taken because of the numbers of spies about.²

Boyd stated that the orderly calm of the headquarters destroyed his preconceived notions of what an Army headquarters must be like during wartime. They saw a fleet of London buses which were used to transport reinforcements quickly to threatened portions of the front. Boyd, being a cavalryman, was glad to hear that the British cavalry had done good work in the retreat from Mons. He added that the airplane had supplanted cavalry for reconnaissance purposes. Boyd noted that the machine guns

¹Report, dated 2 December 1914, subject: Report on Visit to British Field Army Headquarters. Army War College File Number 9907-1. National Archives.

²Report, dated 2 December 1914, subject: Report of Trip to British Headquarters. Army War College File Number 8706-1. National Archives.

employed by the British were Vickers-Maxim which were the same type used by the U.S. Army.

The town of Bethune was being shelled when the party with a British Liaison Officer reached it on the morning of 23 November. They went from there to the village of Hinges which was the headquarters of the Indian Army Corps. They were briefed at this headquarters and learned:

...that the British Expeditionary Force consists of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Corps, the Indian Corps and the Cavalry Corps. These troops hold a line about 26 miles long running from Wyschaete (south of Ypres) to Festuberg (north west of La Basse').

The cavalry have been holding their part of the line. They leave about one fourth of their men back to care for the horses while the rest, armed with the bayonet, take their position in the trenches. I learn that since the war has degenerated into such a stationary fight much of the French cavalry is being used in the same way ...

The trenches along this entire line are separated from the German trenches by a distance of from 150 to 20 or 30 yards. In many places the English say they can hear very distinctly the Germans digging.¹

One of the more interesting items mentioned by both Lieutenant Boyd and Lieutenant Honeycutt was the "bomb" factory of the Indian Corps. Both men described in detail how the "bomb throwers" were manufactured there in the field and how they were employed. Boyd stated that the English had to employ these weapons because the Germans seemed to be well supplied with them and were using them to good effect on the English trenches. The "bombthrowers" and their "bombs" were of course the precursors of the trench mortar. The observers also mentioned the construction

¹Report, dated 2 December 1914, subject: Report on Visit to British Field Army Headquarters. Army War College File Number 9907-1. National Archives.

They also continued to receive the benefit of the doubt in Major Langhorne's reports. His from Berlin on 6 December began rather strangely. "There was once a German seer who prophesied that the son of a one-armed Emperor should never ascend the throne of the German Empire."¹ Langhorne then added that the Swiss Army representative made a prophesy that Germany would win the war in less than a year. Langhorne admitted that it was risky business to make prophesies but noted as he had so often before that no observer could help but be impressed by the way in which the Germans conducted the war. Their success was due to an excellent army and a completely united people. The troops were well trained and concentrated on the immediate task. Langhorne made the interesting analogy between Germany at war and the United States Steel Corporation at work. The parallel to him was the way each segment sought to attain the maximum performance while being controlled by a central authority that rewarded good performance and stimulated production. Major Langhorne ended his report by repeating an observation made earlier that the German General Staff thought that they had overestimated the Russians and underestimated the British.

In November the German Government had finally granted permission for six U.S. Army officers to come to Germany and go to the front as military observers.² So on 20 December Gerard told the State Department that the officers had arrived in Berlin safely.³ The next day Lieutenant

¹Report dated 6 December 1914, subject: Prophesy and Germany's Prospects of Success. Army War College File Number 8690-92. National Archives.

²Gerard to State Department, 5 November 1914. State Department Number 763.72118/25. National Archives.

³Gerard to State Department, 20 December 1914. State Department Number 763.72118/40. National Archives.



FIGURE 32

GERMAN FIELD TELEPHONE STATION

Shartle, Report of Captain Samuel G. Shartle C.A.C. Military
Observer with the German Army December 20, 1914 - April 6, 1915, p. 53.

Colonel Joseph Kuhn, the senior observer, notified the War College Division of the U.S. Army General Staff to the same effect and added that as soon as they had processed they would leave for the front.¹

Spreading his net as far as possible, Langhorne visited a prisoner of war camp located at Doeberitz some twenty-eight kilometers west of Berlin on 28 December.² Doeberitz was a maneuver and training ground for the German Guard Corps, and the usual arrangement was for one brigade to be in garrison at nearby Potsdam while the other was at Doeberitz. At the time Langhorne visited, the facilities were occupied by depot troops and trainees. The prisoner of war camp was located in an area adjacent to the German contonment. Here were confined Russian, French, British and Belgian enlisted prisoners of war numbering some eight thousand.

The prisoners were housed for the most part in large tents whose original purpose was to be field stables. The individual tent was designed to hold fifty horses, but they could hold many more men. As rapidly as possible the tents were being replaced by one story frame buildings with small rooms at either end for administrative purposes and for the use of non-commissioned officer prisoners. The buildings were heated by small stoves in each of the two large squad bays.³

¹Report dated 21 December 1914, subject: Arrival of Military Observers. Army War College File Number 8679-106. National Archives.

²Report dated 9 January 1915, subject: Prison Camp at Doeberitz. Army War College File Number 8690-107. National Archives.

³Ibid., p. 2.

The camp was commanded by a retired captain of cavalry and each of its four sections was in the charge of a reserve officer. The guard force required was small because of the proximity of the depot troops and trainees. When at all possible prisoners of the same nationality were quartered together and even, in some cases, those from the same unit. Langhorne mentioned two hundred forty men from a British Suffolk regiment who were quartered together under their own non-commissioned officers. He said these non-coms were excellent types with long service in India and South Africa. He spoke to three Highland non-coms dressed in kilts.

When questioned the Germans told Langhorne that the prisoners who gave the least trouble were the French. The best workers were the Russians. A German non-com who had lived in the United States for ten years said:

We are very much disappointed in the English; they apparently are not used to work and don't want to work. They are always wanting to play ball. We gave them an opportunity to play ball on one of the holidays and they played quite well, but they are not as good workers as the Russians; they make more complaints and they are not as clean as the Russians, not only about their persons but about their barracks. The Russian prisoners will quite willingly clean up their barracks, wash their floors and the walls, but this the British will not do willingly.¹

Most of the French prisoners had been badly wounded and were according to the Germans, convalescing. The French were good prisoners. They obeyed the rules and worked hard.

The supply rooms issued bedding, blankets and pillows to the prisoners as well as articles of clothing. Large bathrooms with showers featuring hot and cold running water were also provided. The food was

¹Ibid.

plentiful, various and well prepared. A chapel provided spiritual needs and a small canteen sold tobacco and other small items which helped the morale of the prisoners. They received on an average of eighty sacks of mail a day of which usually seventy were for the British prisoners.

Approximately three thousand prisoners were employed on a daily basis outside of the camp complex. An attempt to find more outside jobs was in progress. Besides housekeeping chores and kitchen police, the prisoners within the compound made straw pads for horses hoofs. These pads were placed inside the horse shoe during winter weather to prevent ice and snow from balling up under a horse's foot.¹

All of the prisoners that Major Langhorne questioned said that considering their circumstances they were well treated, well cared for, and well fed. Langhorne was impressed with the Russian non-commissioned officers and described them as intelligent looking and well clothed. Though the Russian privates did not look so intelligent, they seemed docile, strong and clean.

Langhorne concluded his report by stating that there were many prisoner of war camps like Doeberitz located throughout Germany at training camps or manuever areas. The number of prisoners confined in these camps at the time of the report was given at some six hundred thousand - a high number in a war only four months old.²

In a report, dated 11 February 1915, Major Langhorne summed up the military position as he saw it at the end of 1914.³ Once more as usual he

¹Ibid., p. 4.

²Ibid.

³Report, dated 11 February 1915, subject: The General Situation.
Army War College File Number 8690-138. National Archives.

was impressed with German Army organization and equipment, particularly its excellent transportation system and the businesslike manner in which the officers and troops operated. Langhorne emphasized that the French had lost many men as prisoners of war and suffered many casualties.

On the Eastern Front he observed German and Austrian troops in action. He reported that they were well prepared for winter operations with proper clothing and equipment. Where necessary vehicles had runners to move supplies and equipment over snowy ground. The hard frozen soil, in the absence of snow, supported the light transportation vehicles. The operations in October and November, where mud was a significant factor, demonstrated that the transportation arrangements could operate successfully even under adverse conditions. The Germans, he noted, were particularly pleased with the operation of their motorized transport.¹

The Germans had been quite successful in their battles against the Russians. The campaigns of Tannenburg and Lodz would, according to Langhorne, rank high in the history of warfare. Those campaigns had demonstrated the ability of the Germans to maneuver successfully in difficult country. Langhorne anticipated another highly successful German campaign against the Russians within the near future, one which would seriously hurt Russia and perhaps drive her out of the war. The Germans were confident of success and when the war on the Eastern Front had been successfully concluded they would transfer their troops from there and employ them against the Allies in the West.² This constituted

¹Ibid., p. 2.

²Ibid., p. 3.

a complete reversal of the original Schlieffen Plan.

Langhorne stated that the Germans had one hundred army corps available in reserve, that they were trained almost to the standard of the troops already in the field and led by veteran officers. He stressed again the great confidence felt not only by the military authorities but also by the general public.

According to Langhorne, Germany had at this time no reason for wanting peace since she had been militarily successful on all fronts. The only way that he could see a cessation of the slaughter was for the Allies to propose a reasonable peace. He thought they might receive better terms if they proposed peace early; that is, before Germany reached her full military ascendancy. Langhorne noted that a possibility existed that Russia might make peace soon. In fact he thought that Russian agents had already been at work to this end.¹ The Germans also believed that peace between Japan and Germany was possible. Langhorne noted that this would; "free a nation for an attack on the United States."² Though he did not identify the potential aggressor, the major thought that the United States Government should be alert to the possibility of such an attack and that proper precautions should be taken.³

The problems involved in maintaining neutrality in a world at war were manifest and varied as the United States discovered in 1914. Anti-Americanism in Germany resulted from the sale of munitions to the Allies

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.



FIGURE 33

GERMAN DUGOUT ON THE WESTERN FRONT

Shartle, Report of Captain Samuel G. Shartle, C.A.C. Military Observer with the German Army December 20, 1914 - April 6, 1915., p. 11.

by American firms. On the other hand large segments of the American public were incensed by Allied, particularly British, interference with trade while enforcing their blockade of the Central Powers. Ambassador Page in London did his best to explain the British position to Washington but public pressure, translated into political pressure, finally forced the United States Government to present a strong official note of protest to Great Britain on 28 December.¹

The hard-working Page was back on the wire to Washington five days later in his constant effort to improve Anglo-American relations:

Sir Edward Grey has just read to me quite informally the first draft of the reply that he will make to your note about shipping. This reply is frank and friendly in tone and conciliatory in substance and quite short. He wishes this reply to reach you as promptly as possible. He will submit it to the Cabinet next Tuesday and hopes to deliver it to me Wednesday or Thursday. This general brief reply will be followed later by a longer reply which will present trade statistics and such like things and which will require some time for its preparation.

Sir Edward Grey privately expressed to me his regret that the badly condensed summary of your note leaked out because of the effect it may have in Germany: He said that in so far as it gave the Germans hope that there might be or could be a serious difference between the United States and Great Britain it would by so much tend to lengthen the war.

It is of the utmost importance of course that this whole telegram and all that it contains remain strictly confidential.

I hear from another source wholly and independent of the Foreign Office that the military authorities say that the duration of the war will be in exact proportion to Germany's success in procuring copper.²

¹Note of Protest to Great Britain 28 December 1914. State Department File Number 763.72112/545 $\frac{1}{2}$. National Archives.

²Page to State Department, 2 January 1915. State Department File Number 763.72112/563. National Archives.

This message is a perfect example of how Ambassador Page attempted to influence American opinion in favor of Great Britain. First he noted that Grey's reply to the American note of protest was frank, friendly and conciliatory. Then he stressed the point that any news of a possible breach between the United States and Great Britain would only help Germany and prolong the war. And finally, Page in his last paragraph slipped in a comment regarding the importance of copper to the German war effort. In so many words he was justifying the British position regarding the detention of American ships carrying potentially strategic goods.

The year 1914 ended with no sign of peace in sight. The German armies stood on conquered soil in the East and in the West. Confidence in the future continued in German official circles and among the general public. However, the Germans had failed to knock out Great Britain and France. Russia, though hurt, was still very much in the war especially in Galicia where she had given the Austrians a severe mauling and continued to exert pressure on them. Actually the Austro-Hungarians were proving to be almost as much a hindrance as a help. Except for the German High Seas Fleet, the British had driven the enemy from the surface of the world's oceans and Germany was beginning to feel the pinch in food and raw materials.

On the Western front the Allies were digging in grimly for a long fight, or at least as long as it would take them to defeat Germany. In fact, France and England displayed a quiet, new confidence based on the victory at the Marne and the British successes at sea. But their confidence in the eventual outcome of the conflict was somewhat tempered by the appalling slaughter that had already taken place and by a dim realization of what lay ahead.



FIGURE 34

CHRISTMAS IN THE GERMAN TRENCHES ON THE WESTERN FRONT

Burt, Report of Observations with the German Army. p. 94.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The explosion of war over Europe in 1914 caught the world by surprise. Few people thought that such a catastrophe would jeopardize the promise of the late nineteenth century as expressed in scientific, social, economic, cultural and material advances.

Americans were particularly vulnerable to the shock. Even among the most educated citizens of the United States the affairs, alliances, and intrigues of Europe seemed far away and, at times, slightly distasteful. The reports filed by U.S. diplomatic and military representatives during the fall of 1914 reflect this lack of sophistication. Penfield's laconic message announcing the assassination of the Austrian Archduke is an example. His report contained no assessment of the situation, not a word of background on the Austrian Serbian quarrel, or any comment regarding the possible consequences of the crime at Sarajevo, and none of the other U.S. ambassadors in the major European capitals made a single reference to the dastardly act!

It must not be thought, however, that these reports were without value. In the first place they gave Washington some idea of current events in Europe as the crisis progressed. For the student of history these documents provide a glimpse of the great drama through the eyes of American observers on the spot and at the moment it unfolded. Thus the reader is able to obtain some rapport with the world of 1914 unobstructed and unprotected by the gulf of over a half century of study, analysis and critique. Figures looming large in the perspective of that

era such as the Kaiser, Sir Edward Grey, Bethmann-Hollweg, Lord Kitchener, Von Falkenhayn and others move with deceptive casualness through the pages of these dispatches and reports.

The quality and quantity of information varied from country to country and from person to person. The reporting from Western Europe generally was better on both counts than the reporting from Eastern Europe. Major Langhorne in Berlin submitted long, rambling reports which contained much interesting detail and, unfortunately for him, a lot of pro-German bias. His accounts of the Battle of Tannenberg and the subsequent campaigns of 1914 in Eastern Europe are good. His best report, from a professional standpoint, was the one he submitted concerning the reduction of the French and Belgian forts by German siege artillery. Consider too Ambassador Walter Hines Page who took up his post in London as a confirmed Anglophile. The onset of war and the events which followed only confirmed him in his opinion, and made the United States Ambassador a valuable friend of the British. One could not declare Page's reports consistently objective but they did give the State Department and the President, and later historians, an excellent picture of the British scene and British attitudes.

The paucity of available personnel inhibited the quality, and especially the quantity, of American reports from Europe in the earliest stages of the crisis of 1914. It is sometimes difficult for people reared in our present era of monumental and overlapping bureaucracy to realize that in the not-too-distant past the public services of the United States operated on an austere basis. Many of the early routine messages mention the need to hire extra clerks for the embassies and consulates. In many cases military and naval personnel were forced to

pitch in and help the meager staff of our embassies when numerous Americans, apprehensive about the future, descended on them for assistance. This meant that the armed forces representatives were unable to perform their tasks properly. Another significant fact which further emphasizes the austerity under which the United States Government operated abroad during this period is the rank held by the various military and naval attachés assigned to the American embassies in the European capitals. The armed services of the United States were so small that men with years of service held the comparatively low rank of captain, major and lieutenant commander, and filled positions that today call for officers of a far more senior grade.

After the first month of war, opinion among American representatives in Europe was, with a few exceptions, generally anti-German. The violation of Belgium neutrality and the stories of German atrocities, true or false, in Belgium and France were mainly responsible for this manifestation of anti-German feeling. Then, too, the world was not psychologically prepared for unannounced bombardment from the air, submarine attacks without warning, retaliatory burning of towns, and the execution of hostages. U.S. representatives in the Allied countries recounted these horrors of modern warfare in their dispatches, and these stories were a significant factor in the molding of public opinion in the United States against the Germans.

Most of the American observers in Europe at the end of 1914 offered few if any ideas on the probable outcome of the war, though Langhorne reiterated Germany's confidence in her ultimate triumph. The reports flowing into Washington from Europe at the end of the year had improved considerably over those of July and August. The Americans had recovered

from their original shock, solved most of the problems of their tourists, and hired more people to work in their embassies. They also seemed to have a better awareness of what was going on around them and many, despite the official neutrality of the United States, had privately chosen sides. As the new year 1915 dawned, United States representatives on the continent watched the agony of Europe deepen as she writhed "in the clutch of blind forces".

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