

SHORT HISTORY OF THE WAR

(From The Charlotte Observer)

The war historians will naturally refer to the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, the heir apparent to the Austrian throne, and his wife, in a little Bosnian town on a memorable day in June, 1914, as the cause of the nighty night just ended, and they will as naturally make record of a mistake. It was the excuse for the war, not the cause. The incident afforded Germany an opportunity to resume a war that was interrupted with the defeat of the French army in 1871, 45 years previously, and which left Germany's desire for conquest and power yet unsatisfied—her war aims only partly fulfilled. The Imperial Government of Germany had but been given a taste of blood and through all the succeeding years its appetite was becoming more ravenous. Germany's conquest of unprepared France gave her territory and riches. She gained access to the French as German assets, the resourceful Province of Alsace-Lorraine, and in addition to that levied indemnity upon the French government in the sum of 4,851,046,678 francs, or \$970,000,000. And German troops were to remain in military occupation of France until the last franc of this enormous indemnity was paid. To the admiration of the world, the French people were successful in raising the last of this blood money within the remarkably short time of two years. It was handed over to the German Government and French soil was rid of the presence of the hated German soldiery. The same peace manifested by the French people in getting rid of German bondage was later to come into evidence in helping rid the world of all danger of another exactation by German imperialism.

The war which Germany precipitated on France in 1870 was as inexcusable as was the war which she precipitated on the world in 1914. There had been a diplomatic meeting between Napoleon III and Bismarck in connection with the cession of a small bit of southern Germany to France, in which Napoleon had passed a written proposal to Bismarck. Later a dinner was arranged and at this dinner Bismarck altered the note Napoleon had left with him by elimination so as to make it appear that the French Emperor had delivered a deadly insult to the Imperial Government of Germany. It was upon the strength of this garbled note that Germany declared the war of 1870-1871 with France, and for which, after 47 years, Germany is being made to pay in full and with interest. When the Archduke was assassinated in 1914, Austria at once made demands upon the little Government of Serbia. All these demands, except one and the final demand, were accepted and pressure by England, France and Russia were about to prevail upon Austria, when Germany stepped into object. The demand Serbia declined was that the assassin of the Archduke be tried by a court composed of Austrian judges in a Serbian court-house. Russia was inclined to take the part of Serbia, when Germany sent her warning to keep out of the affair. While Serbia was trying to get before the Hague Tribunal for adjustment of the trouble, Germany saw her chance. She sent a message to France asking what France intended to do in case Austria declared war on Russia, and got the immediate answer that France would act in accordance with what seemed to be her best interests. Without waiting to make declaration of war, Germany at once rushed her armies toward the French border, and then began the infamous ravaging of the neutral country of Belgium. Germany's object in smashing her way through that country was found in later revelations of the plans for a war of conquest.

Germany knew that neither England nor France was prepared for war, and it was her plan to get at France by a quick rush through Belgium, bring France to terms, then hurry back and meet the Russian Army as it made its

way to the German border. Germany had calculated that she could finish the job with France within six weeks. Then she could almost as quickly settle with Russia. After that she would have time to give attention to England, and subjugating that country, Germany would take up the account with the United States. Whipping this country, the conquest of the world might be reasonably considered in sight for the German War Government.

It was when the big German cannon began roaring at the modern forts protecting the Belgian border that the world waked to a realization of the fact that Germany had been spending all these years in preparation, while other countries were sleeping in fancied safety, with never a suspicion of the breaking of the storm of war. The unexpectedness came with a force of startling suddenness in manner that almost paralyzed the senses. The Belgian Government had protected its frontier with a system of steel and concrete forts which were supposed to be "impregnable." Germany, however, knew better. The German War Lords knew of these forts and laughed at them, but they concealed their mirth from the outside world. The exact location of each fort was as well known in Germany as in Belgium, and for its reduction the German Government had constructed behind the protecting secrecy of the Krupp shops a pattern of cannon, enormous in caliber and carrying a shell such as had never been dreamed of. The location these guns should be brought up to had been fixed and the ranges had been figured out with mathematical accuracy—and on the first round these Belgian forts were blown up like toadstools.

Then another thing was revealed to the country. The German Government, in anticipation of the coming of the day when it would launch this destroying avalanche of war upon an unsuspecting world, had established lockers in the armories and arsenals which dotted its Empire, and in these lockers for years had been hanging a complete uniform, with gun and equipment for each man of military age in Germany and for every subject of the German Government living in another country. Each uniform bore the name of the man for whom it was intended, and all this was in addition to the standing Army the world knew Germany maintained. It was in this way that Germany was enabled to rush an overpowering Army to the front almost before the country knew that a war was in progress. But later on the world was to learn something more of the years Germany had made study for the effective prosecution of a war that was to bring her world-power. In the rapine and destruction wrought on innocent Belgian people and territory, the country was given notice of the ruthlessness of the warfare Germany had embarked on and that it need express no surprise at any new form of barbarity that should be developed. The Zeppelin was the first engine of the air in the German program of war of destructiveness. But the world had heard of the Zeppelins and their appearance did not create the degree of terror many had counted on. Germany, however, was not disappointed, for she had other surprises to spring on the Nations banded together in unpreparedness.

Germany swept over Belgium and across France like a mighty tidal wave of destruction, and this sweep developed the new and barbarous agency of gas. The way in front of the advancing German troops was cleared by the poisoning of the air so that no soldier could exist in it. The British and Belgians and French were pushed back not by bullet or shell or bayonet, but by a new and invisible agency of which the world had never known. Meantime, civilization had received a shock through the operations of another agency which had been occupying the diabolical ingenuity of the German War Government—the submarine. The terrors of

life in towns within the war zone were added to by the appearance of the bombing planes, which soon almost entirely succeeded the Zeppelins. All these devices for the destruction of life and property and all the new monsters in the machinery of war were the products of over 40 years of application to ceaseless study on part of the German military and naval authorities. It was to be recorded that within less than three years the resourceful British and French had come forward with inventions which were capable of overcoming the 40-years' devotion of the military arts by Germany had been able to produce. Still later came the United States with machinery of war against which the best that Germany had been able to produce operated as but toys.

In the sixth month after the United States got into the war, Germany had been brought to her knees and the war was over. America had sent across an Army the like of which Germany had never dreamed and the Americans brought along with them a few surprises which Germany had not believed possible. When the Germans met the Americans with various forms of gas, the Americans gave them samples of a gas of a greatly superior quality; when the Germans would fire a big gun at the Americans, the artillerymen from the United States would turn loose a shell that would wipe out a regiment of Germans at a time; when the German airplanes would undertake to sail over the Allied lines, a larger and faster and more deadly form of bombing plane, driven by the engineering marvel of the world—the Liberty motor—would set out in pursuit, and the German stock of airplanes was quickly reduced to the point when it became negligible. All the German product in destructiveness and frightfulness which she sprung on the world as the fruits of more than 40 years of invention, were nullified by the inventive genius and resourcefulness of the Allied Nations within the short time of four years.

Germany's well-laid plans to make swift and complete conquest of France and Russia and Italy and Great Britain were counteracted by the most magnificent display of bravery and gallantry by the defending armies of which there is any not in history. There was quick recovery from the surprise of the resistless momentum of the German Army, and then Paris had been almost reached, there developed the battle of the Marne, out of which a turning back movement started for the German Army to a point where the Allied forces held them while waiting for help from America. This country had no Army to speak of, but it set to work to create one, and the creation, equipment and transportation of this Army across the sea proved the most brilliant accomplishment in the military history of all Nations. For over three years the British, French, Belgians and Italians held the Germans north of the Marne, and held them there while division after division was being brought up from the Russian front to strengthen the mightiest aggregation of brute force that civilized Army ever encountered. Germany hurled more than a million fresh troops against the entrenched Allied Armies and hurled them in vain. Britain and her Colonies, France, Belgium and Italy, held firm and it was this matchless exhibition of determination and courage which made the winning of the war ultimately possible. These Allied Nations held the enemy until America could come and give the finishing touches.

Up to June of this year, the Allied forces were prosecuting a defensive system of warfare. It was in that month when Pershing, with only a portion of his Army at hand, asked permission to strike in on what had been regarded as the really "impregnable" portion of the German line—the salient which denied in the Allied lines at Chateau-Thierry. General Foch was inclined to remonstrate against the proposition, but General Pershing was insistent. He wanted to put the American idea of warfare into immediate operation, and he was finally given permission. With the order for his men to advance, the turning point of the war was marked. The American troops stormed the German positions at Chateau-Thierry and drove the Germans out of their trenches into the open, where the Kaiser's men were given their first dose of open-field fighting. They were routed and driven back. The Americans occupied Chateau-Thierry and then something new happened in the history of the war. The Americans held the place. The German expectation was that the United States forces would fall back to their trenches and resume what up to that time had been the regular routine of warfare—to again assault and fall back. Notwithstanding the fact that the Americans were practically flanked by the Germans, they held their conquered ground.

And it was from this very incident that The Observer took counsel of itself and publicly established its contention that the war would be brought to an end in 1918. For, out of Pershing's capture of Chateau-Thierry, there came adoption by the Allied commanders of the new policy of a progressive offensive. The plan of holding the Germans by a continuation of the trench system of defensive fighting was then abandoned for good. It marked the beginning of the general offensive by the Allied commands and relegated the proposition of holding for "a great Spring offensive." It will be remembered that just before Pershing's capture of this place, word had gone forth from general headquarters of what was to be expected when the Allied forces should begin their "great offensive in the Spring of 1919." The performances of the Americans at Chateau-Thierry changed all that and brought the war to an end in the Fall of 1918, instead of in the Spring of 1919.

From the day of that performance, the Germans have been on the losing side. They had scored their last advance in the direction of Paris and the Channel ports and every step they made at any point of the line from the North Sea to the Swiss border was backward in the direction of the German frontier. It was the German defeat by the Americans at Chateau-Thierry that decided the fate of the German Army on the western front. It was the American capture of St. Mihiel and the obliteration of the formidable salient there which sealed this fate and made more sure than ever the termination of the war in 1918. It was along about this time that the first effect on other branches of the German Army was developed, when Bulgaria sued for peace and when Turkey was whipped to a condition of helplessness, and the foundation of the German military structure in the east had crumbled away. Then came the Austrian-Hungarian movement to drop out, and the end of the war was practically announced when the Emperor made formal plea for an armistice and an immediate cessation of hostilities. The "sequence of events" is easily and unmistakably traced from the granting of permission to the American general to hurl his forces against the entrenched Germans. It was upon the active entrance of General Pershing's Army into the fighting and the application of American ideas of prosecuting a battle that The Observer based its prediction for the winding up of the war in 1918. In this contention The Observer had but few supporters, and even after the surrender of Austria-Hungary the voice of the scoffer was to be heard, but in diminishing volume.

The story of the German war is the story of the most barbarous atrocities against humanity in the history of wars. On land and sea, murder and destruction were the main characteristics. The pillage of Belgium, the atrocious treatment of the women and children, were parallel transgressions to the offenses against civilization on the seas, although the women and children involved in the submarine murders escaped with the lighter fate in that the Huns had no opportunity to desecrate their bodies. Their saturnalia of excesses on land went the full lengths of savagery. Not only was the very land itself destroyed and laid waste, but the homes of the people were burned or blasted and there was revelry in the very taking of human life. Hospitals, protected under the rules of international warfare, were the special objects of German vengeance, and doctors, nurses and wounded men alike were torn to atoms by shells and bombs deliberately aimed for the purpose. For the very barbarity of the war there surely must be an accounting with the culprits and there is a reasonable expectation that particular offenders against the rules of common humanity, from the Kaiser to the humblest satrap, are to be delivered to the Allied Powers to deal with.

And at the same time, there are others who were acting the part of secret enemies and whose activities involved the Allied Governments in much unnecessary trouble and anxiety, whose bringing to the bar of outraged justice is to be expected. One of the items in Germany's long years of preparation for involving the Nations in bloody war which we have not included in the account, was the placing in the United States and other countries years back of a perfected system of espionage. In America we had one notable spy in the person of the accredited Ambassador from Germany. The crime of Von Bernstorff is one against the civil, rather than the military Government, but he stands convicted not only as a spy but as a traitor. Justice shall go astray should his deliverance into the hands of the Allies by the enemy be an overlooked incident. The murderers at sea and on land—the responsible agents for the deliberate destruction of human life—may be dealt with "each and separately."

The German people we are going to lead and clothe until the time of their rehabilitation, for that becomes a civilized Nation. The incidents of the revolution which overthrew the German throne gives token of the determination of the German people to rid themselves from the serfdom which they have endured under German militarism. It develops that these people had been deceived until the very last by their rulers, and the knowledge of the manner in which they had been duped aroused them to the utmost fury and resulted in the abdication and flight of the Hohenzollerns. There is to be no penalty upon the populace of Germany other than that which will be imposed upon them by the price of the war. Their children to the fifth generation will be paying this debt, and the end may not be in sight.

The matter of indemnities and reparation and restoration will probably find adjustment between the Supreme War Council of the Entente Nations and the new German Government at Versailles, and in that event might be seen a case of poetic historic justice, for it was at Versailles that the German conquerors fastened the infamous terms upon the French Government. Undoubtedly the return to France of Alsace-Lorraine which was confiscated by the Germans, will be one of the first requirements. The restoration of the ruined territory in Belgium and France will be an exaction Germany may not hope to escape. Germany will be made to return the indemnities mercilessly exacted of Belgium; she must restore the loot from treasuries both public and private and she will be bound under years of humiliating obligation involved in the work of reparation and restitution.

The arrangements for armistice are but preliminary to the drafting of terms of surrender. The Allied War Council may not get through the winding up task before the expiration of several weeks. The conditions upon which armistice has been granted afford an intelligent index to the character the terms of surrender will take. Every vestige of military power will be stripped from Germany and she will be made helpless ever again to wage war, and into the peace compact all Nations of the earth will be made partners, to the end that the peace which is to be established will endure through all ages and to the protection of all Nations. The Supreme War Council under whose guidance the peace terms will be formulated is composed of Col. E. M. House and Major General Tasker H. Bliss for the United States; Premier Lloyd George for England; General Cadorna and Premier Orlando for Italy; General Ferdinand Foch and Premier Clemenceau for France, with representatives of the smaller Powers.

A large Army must be maintained in Germany and other Central countries for an indefinite time, but in the course of adjustment of the military affairs of some men will be released for the return home, and we shall shortly see the inbound ships discharging troops who have served their country and who are now welcomed into the peace and happiness and liberty they and their comrades secured for the world. The homecoming of these soldier boys will be the coming of the day which is the history of this country than was the day which signaled the defeat of Germany. Many of these American soldiers will

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ask for continuance of duty in France. (That expression, "in France," came from force of habit. What we intended to say was "in Germany.") For one, The Observer will second the request. It wants them to have the realized satisfaction of a long-felt wish—a Thanksgiving Day on the Rhine and a Merry Christmas Day in Berlin.

The war is over! It is a great day in the history of the world when this can be said. Well may the people rejoice with a great rejoicing, for the world will know no more forever the scenes through which it has been passing for over four years of apprehension, of agony and of terror. The last war has been fought and the last human sacrifice has been offered up to militarism.

The American army had reached a total strength of 3,764,677 men when hostilities ceased according to official figures at the War Department. Of that number 2,200,000 had been sent to France, Italy or Russia. The remainder were under arms in camps in this country.

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