

TRENCH & CAMP

Published weekly at the National Camps and Cantonments for the soldiers of the United States.

National Headquarters
Room 504, Pulitzer Building

New York City
JOHN STEWART BRYAN
Chairman of Advisory Board of Co-operating Publishers

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Published under the auspices of the National War Work Council, Y. M. C. A. of the United States, with the co-operation of the above named publishers and papers.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE GREAT WAR

Four years ago—on June 28, 1914, to be exact—the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir apparent to the Imperial throne of Austria-Hungary, was murdered with his wife on the streets of Serajevo in Bosnia.

That royal murder, the act of a madman, was the immediate excuse for the world war. It was not the REASON. The word "excuse" is chosen deliberately.

Germany was the reason. Her pan-Germanic policy was predicated upon war; but a pretext for the war was not at hand until the madman's shots rang out in Serajevo. Then Germany seized the opportunity and prepared to set Europe in flames.

As early as July 5 she had won a decision from her ally for war; but not until July 23 was the ultimatum sent by this vassal, Austria, to the Serbian Kingdom. With elaborate precaution Germany had made plans to conceal the fact that the great decision had been reached eighteen days before. If the solidarity of the German people were to be preserved, if their enthusiasm were to be aroused, it must be made to appear that the sword had been thrust upon Germany and that she was battling only for the defense of the Fatherland.

Five days after despatching the ultimatum, Austria-Hungary declared war upon Serbia. It was just one month to the day after the Serajevo murder.

Then began the collapse of the so-called concert of Europe.

Were some Martian visitor, unfamiliar with the circumstances culminating in the tremendous world drama, to read this recital of dates and facts, he would miss much of its great significance. Many young Americans, enrolled in the National Army are perhaps quite as unfamiliar with the war's background as would be the visitor from our sister planet. Thousands of men who quite understand why America is now projected into the world struggle cannot comprehend the causes of the war in the first instance.

Back of the war was a philosophy of Empire, a philosophy that was taught for forty years until the mental attitude of a whole people had been altered.

While the other nations of Europe and of the Western world were prospering in industrial and commercial pursuits, the German people were being taught that peace was but an expedient "Ye shall love peace, as a means to new wars; and the short peace better than the long" was the teaching. The warrior was idealized, almost idolized.

WHAT NIETZSCHE TAUGHT

Nietzsche, one of the leading philosophers, was teaching:

"It is more illusion and pretty sentiment to expect much (even anything at all) from mankind if it forgets how to make war. As yet no means are known which call so much into action as a great war, that rough energy born of the camp, that deep impersonally born of hatred, that conscience born of murder and cold-bloodedness, that fever born of effort in the annihilation of the enemy, that proud indifference to loss, to one's own existence to that of one's fellows, to that earthquake-like, soul-shaking which a people needs when it is losing its vitality."

Through the school, the pulpit and press the German mind was being prepared for the day when Germany should come to grips with other powers for world-dominion.

In 1866 Prussia defeated Austria and by its victory brought close together twenty-five duchies and principalities. The foundations of the Empire had been laid four years before when King

William of Prussia had invited Otto von Bismarck to the cabinet. On September 30, 1862, Bismarck had told the committee on the budget that Austria's influence was a problem which could be solved only by "blood and iron."

Bismarck deliberately provoked the war with Austria, acknowledged his instrumentality and insisted that he was finishing the work of Frederick the Great.

By the treaty of Prague, Austria consented to "a new organization of Germany without the participation of the Empire of Austria." At the same time Austria transferred to Prussia all her rights in Schleswig-Holstein. In the following year the Emperor of Austria was crowned King of Hungary.

Then began the unifying of the German principalities. There were many interests wholly divergent and within the empire there was no possible basis of complete unification. Napoleon III had viewed with growing alarm the increase in the prestige and power of Prussia. He demanded certain "compensations." Bismarck saw his opportunity and, having witnessed the benefits of the victory over Austria, prepared for a war against an enemy without as the best means of consolidating the interests within.

The war was brief and decisive. It cost France Alsace and the larger part of Lorraine and it gave to Bismarck the realization of his dream of Empire.

From 1871 to 1914, the year of the outbreak of the present war, was an era of industrial and commercial expansion for Germany.

Two interested spectators in the Franco-Prussian War were Austria and Italy. Smarting under her own recent defeat, Austria would have welcomed an opportunity to align herself against Prussia. But another and more powerful nation was also an interested spectator. The attitude of this other nation, Russia, actually prevented the participation of Austria and Italy and won from Emperor William an expression of his lasting gratitude to the Czar.

Following the conclusion of peace, Bismarck looked to strengthening the position of the newly created Empire of Germany. Bismarck, even before the Prague treaty of 1866, had looked to the day when peace would be declared with Austria, and he writes, "With regard to Austria I had two courses open to me after her defeat, either to destroy her entirely or to respect her integrity and prepare for our future reconciliation when the fire of revenge had died out."

BISMARCK IS CUNNING

Bismarck turned the eyes of Austria towards southeastern Europe and especially towards the acquisition of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the Congress of Berlin after the Russo-Turkish War of 1878, at which Bismarck presided, this promise was redeemed for it was provided, "That the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina shall be occupied and administered by Austria-Hungary." It was not provided that these provinces should actually be annexed.

But even before this Congress, Bismarck had succeeded in forming an alliance with Austria. As early as 1872, only six years after the treaty of Prague, a League of Emperors, or the Dreikaiserbund, had been formed. This had brought together Berlin the Emperors of Germany, Austria and Russia. There, was no formal covenant but it was decided that the

Dreikaiserbund should act in concert for the Peace of Europe.

Of this alliance Russia soon tired. The presence of a powerful and united empire as a neighbor found much less pleasing than the presence of a loosely-held-together confederation. France had reorganized her military and in 1875 another Franco-German war seemed imminent. With more of its characteristic cunning, Germany sought to learn from Russia whether the semi-benevolent neutrality as that of 1870-71 might be depended upon. But Russia was non-committal; and her failure to give Germany the requested assurances portended a Franco-Russian alliance.

The termination of the Russo-Turkish War opened the eyes of Russia, which had expected the support of its allies in the Dreikaiserbund. Bismarck, as president of the Congress of Berlin, failed utterly to satisfy Russia, which was looking for a commercial outlet in the Aegean and thence to the Orient. He announced that he would "refrain from taking sides with any of the contending parties and would confine himself to playing the part of an honest broker."

Bismarck, scrupulous in his fulfilment of his promise to Austria, ignored the letter of his Imperial Master to the Czar Alexander II, and Russia was compelled to make many concessions and to find her victory more dearly-bought even than she had feared.

ENTER THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE

The Dreikaiserbund was no longer possible and a new alliance directed against Russia was formed. This was the so-called Triple Alliance with Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy as the members.

Russia and France were thus thrown closer together. The coalition was greatly feared by Bismarck and he made an effort to revive the Dreikaiserbund. This effort proved abortive. In 1890 a secret treaty with Russia that had been negotiated by Bismarck was allowed to lapse because the Czar Alexander III knew the duplicity.

The Triple Alliance represented so great a coalition that France and Russia found it necessary to come together. The Czar of Russia had little faith in the Government of France. He knew, too, the smouldering hatred of the French for the Germans and hesitated to ally his government with that of the French because he felt that the existence of the alliance might induce France to provoke a war with Germany. The Alliance was eagerly sought by the French but it was many years before it was consummated, and when it was actually effected it did not afford the joy to the French people that they had anticipated.

In 1904-5 the Russo-Japanese War resulted in a tremendous drain on the resources of Russia. The Triple Alliance seemed to France to be too powerful a coalition to be resisted only by the Republic and an enfeebled ally like Russia. So France looked toward England and the so-called ENTENTE CORDIALE was effected.

While France had been bulwarking her position through her covenant with England, Germany had noted with eager interest the succession of disasters to Russian arms in Manchuria. One year before Germany and England had exchanged many expressions of good will and King Edward and Emperor William had visited each other's domain. Germany now assumed the aggressive.

The German Emperor landed at Tangier and is reported to have promised his aid to the Moroccan Sultan in resisting French control. It was during the same year that the Kaiser made his theatrical pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The idea of world dominion was becoming the ruling passion of his life.

The Moroccan dispute assumed large proportions and war between France and Germany again seemed imminent. A French Cabinet crisis was precipitated but war was averted.

Thus far the coalitions in Europe that had been achieved were the Triple Alliance on the one hand; and agreements with France and Russia, and with France and England, on the other. Between England and Russia there was no entente.

In 1907 an agreement between England and Russia was effected and in 1908 it was strengthened by a visit of King Edward to the Czar.

BALKANS ARE STORM CENTRE

The Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente were calculated to preserve the peace of Europe; but the seething cauldron of the Balkans was still to be considered.

In 1908 the Young Turkish Revolution restored the Constitution and turned the eyes of Europe toward the smaller states and to the Ottoman Empire. It was felt that any changes in Turkey would react upon the Balkan states. Europe did not have to wait long. Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria declared himself Czar on October 5 and two days later the Emperor

Francis Joseph announced the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It was feared for a time that this action would precipitate a general European war. Serbia and Montenegro were bitterly stirred. Much depended upon Russia. But she was only too recently recovering from war's prostration to engage in a general conflict.

In March of 1909 the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg, with an autograph letter from the Kaiser, presented himself to the Czar. Russia immediately reversed herself. She adopted the view of Austria and Germany. Bulgarian independence under Czar Ferdinand was recognized and compensation for the Sultan's rights in the province was agreed upon. With this came the conclusion of the Young Turk's revolt in the deposition of Abdul Hamid II.

The settlement of the dispute over Bosnia and Herzegovina was seen to be but a temporary adjustment. More significant than all else was the sudden emergence of Germany as the arbiter of Europe.

Germany had sanctioned the violation of international law. She had shown that "no dependence could be placed upon her own or her allies' observance of treaty obligation, for Austria's whole procedure was in violation of international agreement.

Little Serbia, roused by the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, towards the acquisition of which she had looked for the development of a greater Serbia, made representations to the powers. She hoped to gain some concessions. But she was met only with stern refusals, and it was not until March 31, 1909, that she finally accepted terms of a conciliatory declaration suggested by Britain.

In 1911 Morocco again demanded Europe's attention and German aggression almost brought about the war. Germany insisted that the French military occupation was unjustified and she demanded territorial concessions elsewhere. To reinforce her demand she sent a gunboat to Algieria.

England became involved. She made a formal protest that she had not been consulted and declared she would recognize no agreement in which she did not have a voice. Feeling against England ran high in Germany and diplomatic exchanges continued for many days. Then Lloyd George condemned the exclusion of England from the negotiations and declared that peace at that price would be intolerable.

GERMANY DEFERS THE WAR

Germany soon afterward announced that she had no intention of establishing herself in Morocco and repudiated the idea of injuring British interests. Finally France's protectorate was recognized but she ceded some Congo basin territory.

The incident disclosed two facts—first, that the Entente between England and France was no illusory thing but an actual alliance; second, that Germany, while obviously eager to begin the great war had determined it wiser to wait. England looked to the naval programmes and found Germany building with frantic haste.

First Morocco; then the Balkans—this seemed to be the order, and in 1912 Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece mobilized against Turkey. The powers of Europe, balanced by the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente, served notice on the belligerents that the territorial status quo must remain unaltered. But it was soon apparent that this could not be, for Turkey's collapse was complete.

The great powers could not look on disinterestedly with such a division of spoils. Austria prepared for mobilization; Russia took similar steps. Then Turkey asked the powers to mediate.

An armistice was declared; but no agreement seemed possible and hostilities were resumed. In March of 1913 the terms offered by Turkey were accepted by Turkey. The war was declared ended. But Serbia and Greece declared war on Bulgaria. In June of that year peace was finally arranged by the intervention of the Czar of Russia.

The Balkan situation now found Serbia with a new national enthusiasm, with a strengthened military prestige and with increased territorial holdings. Her new national enthusiasm inspired commercial ambitions and a consequent desire for a port on the Adriatic.

When the Archduke was killed in Sarajevo it was not to avenge his death that the ultimatum was sent to Serbia. Germany had decided that the moment was at hand to strike. Austria was almost completely her vassal. So Germany whispered that Serbia was a menace. Germany goaded Austria into war.

For Germany was ready!

S. O. S.

Napoleon said, "An army fights on its belly." Waste of food over here will mean shorter rations over there.