

Chapter I

THE WORLD WAR TO MAY 28, 1918 AND THE ORGANIZATION OF THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

THE WAR BEFORE THE ENTRY OF THE UNITED STATES

FOR some years prior to 1914 the great countries of Europe had been divided into two rival groups. One of these was the Triple Alliance,

which comprised Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy. The other was the Triple Entente, which consisted of France, Great Britain and Russia.

Status of European Powers, August 9, 1914



The Triple Alliance, dominated by Germany, was the first to be formed and was initiated by Germany as a part of an ambitious plan to create a great world empire with herself at its head. In furtherance of this plan Germany had established close relationships with Turkey and some of the Balkan states, had extended her colonies by peaceful means and seizure, and had launched upon a program of military and naval expansion with the idea of becoming supreme on land and sea.

Great Britain, France and Russia, realizing their individual danger if called upon to act alone against a combination of powers such as the Triple Alliance, had formed the Triple Entente.

Belgium was not identified with either the Triple Alliance or the Triple Entente, as her neutrality had been guaranteed by all members of both groups except Italy.

Various incidents which occurred before 1914 had almost caused war between the two groups and each incident had increased to some extent the strain which existed between them.

EVENTS OF 1914

The breaking point came when the Crown Prince of Austria was assassinated on June 28, 1914, while inspecting troops in the Austrian city of Serajevo, near the Serbian border. Austria at once accused Serbia of having instigated the

crime and adopted an aggressive attitude in the diplomatic negotiations which ensued. Serbia went to great lengths to prevent war with her powerful neighbor, and after submitting to practically all the demands made upon her, agreed to arbitrate the others. Austria, however, confident of the support of Germany in a war of aggression, refused to accept the Serbian proposals and declared war against her on July 28, 1914.

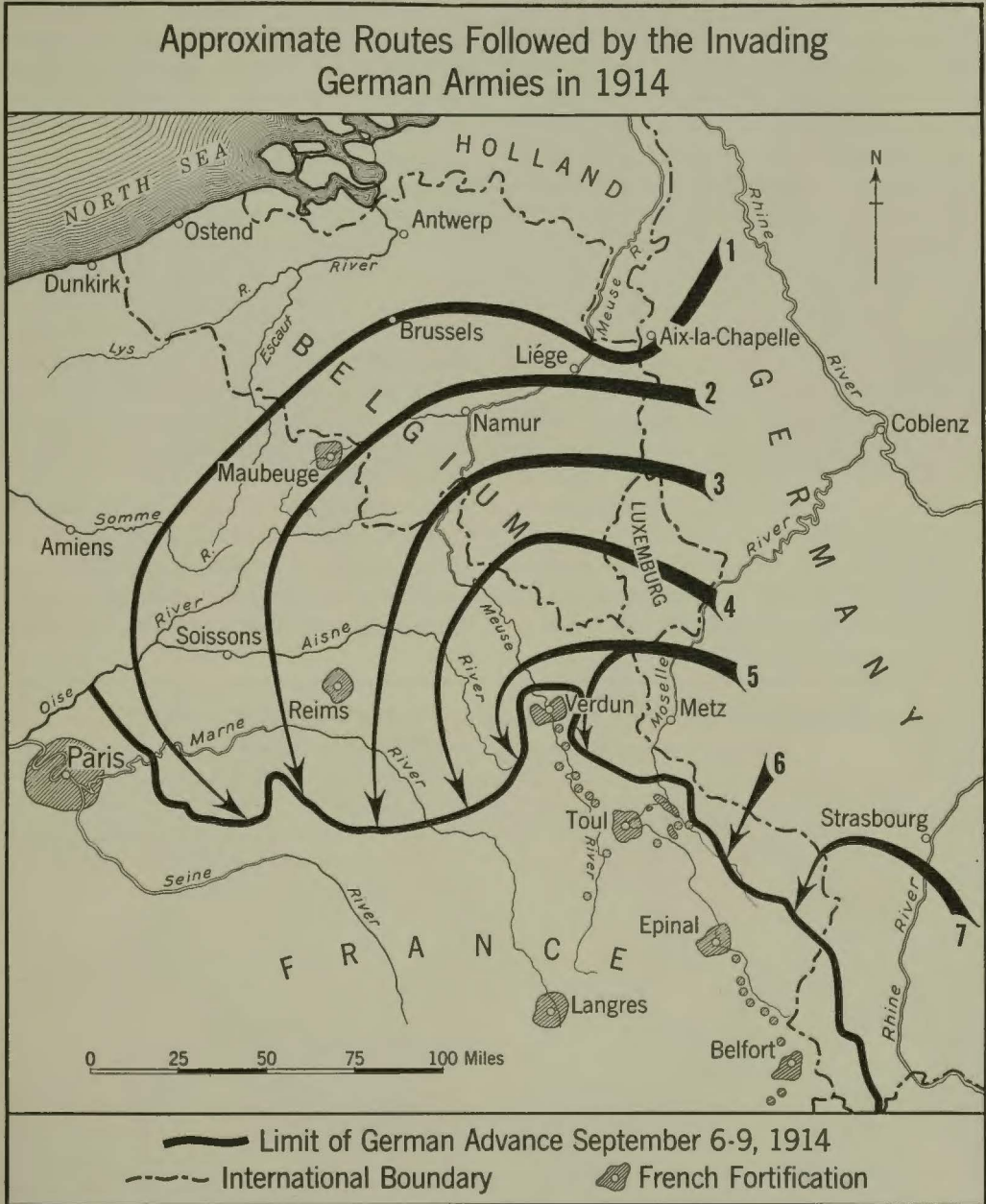
Austria started mobilizing her army and Russia soon thereafter did likewise. Germany demanded that the Russian mobilization cease at once, and at the same time sent an ultimatum to France requiring that nation to state immediately her intentions in case of a Russo-German war. Receiving no reply from Russia, and a statement from France that she would do what her own interests dictated, Germany declared war against Russia on August 1 and against France on August 3.

Italy asserted that her agreements as a member of the Triple Alliance did not compel her to take part in a war of aggression and announced her neutrality. Great Britain did not enter the war until August 4, when it became certain that Germany had violated Belgian neutrality by invading that country regardless of her solemn agreement not to do so.

By that date, therefore, Germany and Austria-Hungary, commonly known as the Central Powers, were at war against

German Cavalry Leaving Berlin, August 1914





the Allies, consisting of France, Russia, Great Britain, Serbia and Belgium, which were joined by Montenegro a few days later. Four of these nations, France and Russia of the Allies, and Germany and Austria of the Central Powers, were able to place large, well trained armies in the field at once. Serbia, Belgium and Montenegro had relatively small armies and Great Britain's organized power was

mainly centered in her navy which at that time was the strongest in the world. Believing that in the event of war Russia would mobilize her forces much more slowly than France, Germany, prior to the opening of hostilities, had made plans to crush the latter by a sudden and powerful offensive. According to these plans Austria and comparatively small German forces were to engage Russia on

the east until France could be defeated, after which the combined strength of the Central Powers was to be sent against Russia to impose the same fate on her.

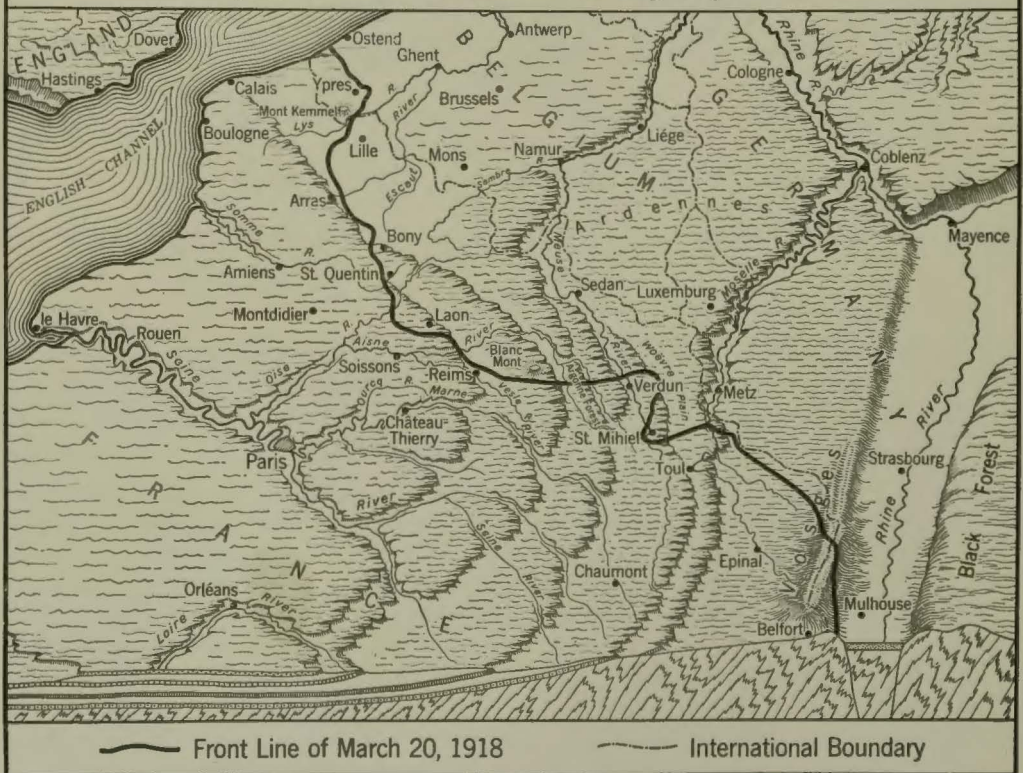
Immediately after the declaration of war the German Army began the invasion of France, using all natural avenues of approach, including that through neutral Belgium. In spite of heroic resistance by the Belgians, and the vital aid rendered the French by Great Britain's comparatively small expeditionary force, the Allies were forced back rapidly to the general line of the Marne River. Making a determined stand in early September, they withstood further attacks and so threatened the enemy's right that his armies were compelled to retire to a position behind the Aisne River.

Following this battle both sides realized that the war would not end quickly and each, knowing the supreme importance

to future military operations of the ports of northwestern France, ordered certain of their units to secure possession of these ports with all haste. If they had fallen to the Germans, not only would British military operations have been badly hampered, but Germany would have secured excellent bases for naval activities. In this famous "race to the sea" the Allies succeeded in retaining all ports southwest of Ostend.

At the end of these operations neither of the contending forces on the Western Front had sufficient superiority to undertake a major offensive, and each began to stabilize its position by the use of every artificial means available. Elaborate trench systems, defended by unprecedented numbers of machine guns and other quick-firing weapons, were built along the front and broad belts of barbed wire were constructed. These continuous

Diagrammatic Sketch of Western Front Showing Certain Topographical Features of Military Importance





A Gas Attack on the Western Front

defenses, with the hostile lines separated in many places by only a narrow strip of ground, resulted in the type of fighting known as "trench warfare".

During the advance of her armies toward Paris, Germany became greatly alarmed at the speed of the Russian mobilization and the progress of that country's offensive against East Prussia. This situation caused the German High Command, even before the Battle of the Marne, to weaken the force invading France by withdrawing approximately 90,000 men from its right wing—where they were so badly needed later—and starting them eastward to meet the Russian threat. The units withdrawn almost equaled in numbers the strength of the British Army in France at that time.

Generals von Hindenburg and von Ludendorff came into prominence in August when they were ordered to the German Eastern Army as Commander and Chief of Staff, respectively. The succeeding operations under their direction were characterized by rapid movements and crushing attacks, in which the losses inflicted on Russia were stupendous. The Russian Armies were hurled out of East Prussia by the decisive German victories at Tannenberg and the Mazurian Lakes, and farther south were soon thereafter pushed, back toward Warsaw. Still farther south,

however, the Russians succeeded in driving the Austrian troops west of the passes through the Carpathian Mountains.



Turkey entered the war on the side of the Central Powers in November 1914, thus threatening Great Britain's communications with the East by way of the Suez Canal. As a result, many thousands of Allied soldiers, always badly needed on the French front, were employed throughout the war in operations near the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea.

Germany was in a very strong position at the close of the year. She had inflicted staggering losses on the Russians; was in possession of practically all of Belgium and of industrial areas in France which contained about three fourths of the French coal and iron deposits; and although the German colonies were virtually lost, her home resources had not been damaged by invasion and were still intact.

EVENTS OF 1915

Italy entered the war in May 1915 on the side of the Allies. This caused a large proportion of Austria's strength to be withdrawn from the eastern and southeastern theaters of operations and be sent from there for service on the Italian front.

During the year the French and British launched several offensives against the Germans, the most important being the attacks begun in September by the French and British Armies north of Arras and by the French Army in the Champagne. These operations however did not produce any material change in the military situation on the Western Front.

On April 22, 1915, poison gas was used for the first time during the war when the Germans employed it against French troops serving in the line near Ypres.

Germany was again victorious against Russia in a series of desperate battles. Bulgaria, which entered the war on the side of the Central Powers in October, joined in the offensive that overran Serbia and Montenegro, while the Allied expedition to the Dardanelles was shattered and withdrawn immediately after the close of the year. The British Fleet held the mastery of the seas, but the submarine blockade which Germany had established in February was becoming a serious menace to Allied supply, both civil and military.

EVENTS OF 1916

The Central Powers, believing they had nothing to fear from Russia, planned a vigorous campaign in the west for 1916. In February they began intensive assaults against Verdun, which continued for months, only to dash themselves to pieces against French heroism. The German pressure at Verdun was relieved as a result of the British and French offensive on the Somme which began on July 1 and resulted in enormous losses to all armies engaged. It was during this battle that tanks were used for the first time, being employed by the British in an attack on September 15.

The German Fleet made a sortie in May and met the British on the North Sea in the Battle of Jutland, the principal naval engagement of the war. This battle resulted in the loss of several vessels on each side, but was not decisive. It terminated when the German Fleet withdrew to its fortified harbors, which it did not leave again in force during the war.



Large German Gun in Action on the Western Front. © G



British Tank Set on Fire by German Flame Thrower
Note German trench and soldiers in foreground. © G

Russia astonished the world by her powers of recuperation, and in June practically destroyed the Austrian Army of Galicia. When the Austrian Army in Italy was defeated in August, and Rumania entered the war against the Central Powers in the same month, it became necessary that Austria be rescued without delay. Germany, quickly passing to the defensive in the west, started the eastern offensives which not only marked the beginning of the end for Russia but resulted in the elimination of Rumania before the close of the year.

In August General von Hindenburg was appointed Chief of the General Staff of the German Field Army. Offers of peace made by the Central Powers in the month of December were spurned by the Allied Governments as insincere.

EVENTS OF 1917 TO APRIL 6

The German High Command decided to remain on the defensive in the west during 1917. To further this purpose, it

greatly disrupted the Allied plans by devastating a large area in the vicinity of Péronne and by withdrawing from that area to a previously-prepared defensive position of great strength.

Germany renewed unrestricted submarine warfare in February and her U-boats were making alarming inroads on Allied shipping when the United States entered the war.

Meanwhile the Allies had decided to undertake offensives on a large scale. In April, a few days after the United States declared war, the British began the Battle of Arras, and the French the Second Battle of the Aisne. These attacks gained some ground but the losses suffered by the attacking troops were very great, especially in the battle on the Aisne. The results created a serious situation in the French Army and brought grave discouragement to the Allies. With Russia's strength waning fast, this was almost final proof that without additional help the Allies would be unable to defeat Germany.



Sinking by the Germans of the American Bark *Kirby*



Sinking of the British Ship *Messanabie*—Torpedoed Twice by a German Submarine



British Hospital Ship *Gloucester Castle*—Torpedoed in the Mediterranean, April 1917

REASONS FOR THE ENTRY OF THE UNITED STATES INTO THE WORLD WAR

THE United States was in every respect a neutral nation at the beginning of the World War. The sympathies of the American citizens were naturally divided, but as the causes which brought on the conflict were considered by the mass of the people to be of no direct concern to the United States, the attitude of the country as a whole was one of neutrality.

Early in the war, however, the activities of the warring nations on the high seas began to interfere with American maritime trade. Allied interference with American commerce caused an exchange of vigorous diplomatic notes with Great Britain while differences with Germany over the use of the submarine became particularly irritating. It soon developed that Germany intended to disregard a fundamental principle of international law which up to that time in history had remained unquestioned. This was that neither merchant vessels of the enemy nor those of neutrals could be lawfully sunk without first taking steps to remove the passengers and crew.

The first serious difficulty with Germany arose when on February 4, 1915, she proclaimed that the waters surrounding Great Britain and Ireland would be regarded as part of the war zone in which enemy merchant vessels would be destroyed and in which even neutral vessels were in danger of destruction without assurance that the passengers and crew could be saved. The United States strongly protested this action which would endanger American lives and property, reminding Germany that under the conditions which existed her sole right under international law in dealing with neutral vessels on the high seas was limited to that of visit and search.

The German reply was unsatisfactory, stating in effect that the German Government would not be responsible for the consequences to neutral ships if they entered the waters announced by it as

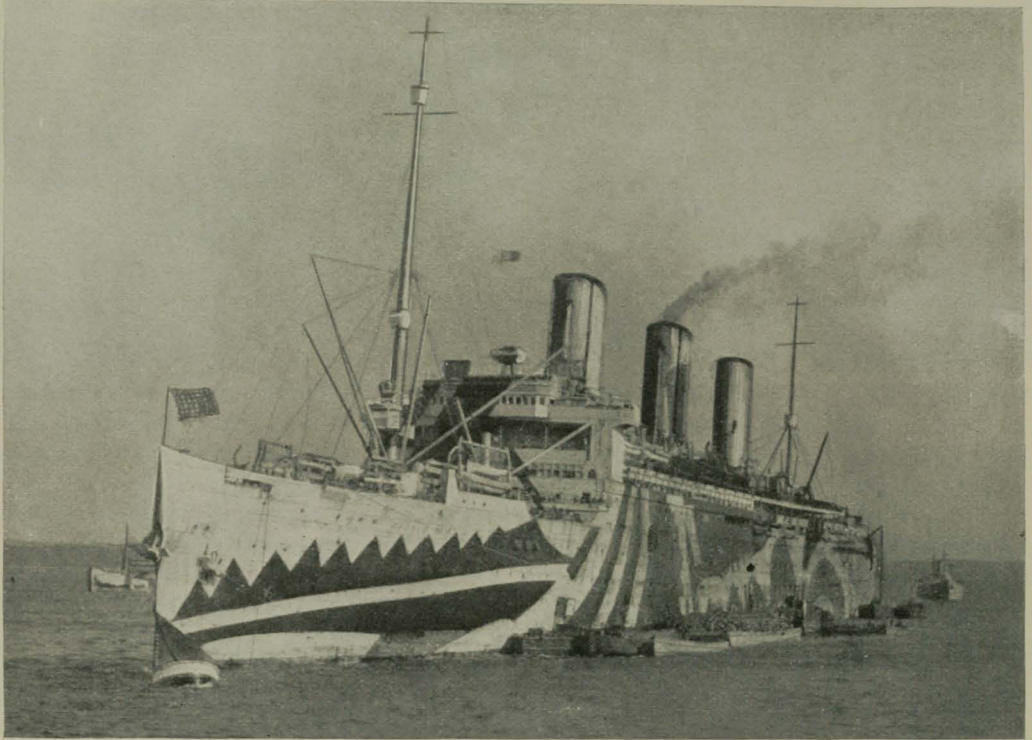
closed. The sinking of unarmed vessels soon occurred without any attempt being made to save those on board. This destruction of people innocent of any connection with the war reached its climax on the afternoon of May 7, 1915, when the British liner *Lusitania* was sunk, without warning, by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland. 1,195 lives were lost, including 124 Americans and 94 children, of which number 35 were infants.

The United States protested on May 13 and, in answer to the German Government's reply, reiterated its position on June 9, 1915, stating that the United States was contending for something much greater than mere rights of property or privileges of commerce—that it was contending for the rights of humanity.

On July 8, 1915, Germany assured the United States that American ships would not be hindered in the prosecution of legitimate shipping and that the lives of American citizens on neutral vessels would not be placed in jeopardy provided there was no contraband on board. This reply failed to meet the real issue and Germany was informed that a repetition by commanders of German naval vessels of acts in contravention to the rights of the American Government, where they affected the lives of American citizens, would be considered as deliberately unfriendly to the United States.

On August 19, 1915, the British steamer *Arabic* was sunk without warning and two American lives were lost. Germany disavowed this act but offered an indemnity.

The events up to this time had brought a gradual change in the attitude of the people of the United States toward the war. The violation of Belgian neutrality by Germany, in spite of her definite written pledges to respect it, naturally had an unfavorable reaction on the majority of the people in America and left them with the impression that the German



The *Leviathan*, Formerly the German Liner *Vaterland*,
Being Used as an American Transport

Government would stop at nothing to gain its ends. This idea was strengthened by Germany's submarine policy pursued in utter disregard of the property and lives of neutrals engaged in peaceful pursuits. Other contributing factors were the persistent reports of alleged German atrocities, acts of German sabotage in the United States, the first use of poison gas in warfare, considered at that time as an inhuman weapon, by the German Army on April 22, 1915, and patently false propaganda emanating from the German Embassy at Washington. This propaganda became so obnoxious to the press of America that they complained to the President with the result that the member of the German Embassy staff responsible for it was forced to return to Germany.

During the early part of 1916 the destruction of unarmed ships continued and on April 18 the President notified Germany that unless she at once abandoned her methods of submarine warfare against

commercial vessels, diplomatic relations would be severed. Germany then promised that passenger ships would not be sunk, that due warning would be given to all other vessels which her submarines might seek to destroy, when no resistance was offered or escape attempted, and that care would be taken that the crews were given a reasonable chance to save themselves in their life boats.

This promise relieved the tension and relations between the two countries became more nearly normal during the next nine months. The situation, however, again grew critical when on January 31, 1917, Germany revoked her pledges to the United States and announced that it was her purpose to use submarines to sink every vessel which sought to approach either the ports of Great Britain and Ireland or the western coasts of Europe or any of the ports controlled by the enemies of Germany within the Mediterranean. President Wilson at once broke off diplomatic relations. He did

not, however, then recommend a declaration of war, stating to Congress that he could not take such an extreme step unless the German Government should actually carry out its threat of sinking ships under the conditions to which the United States expressly objected.

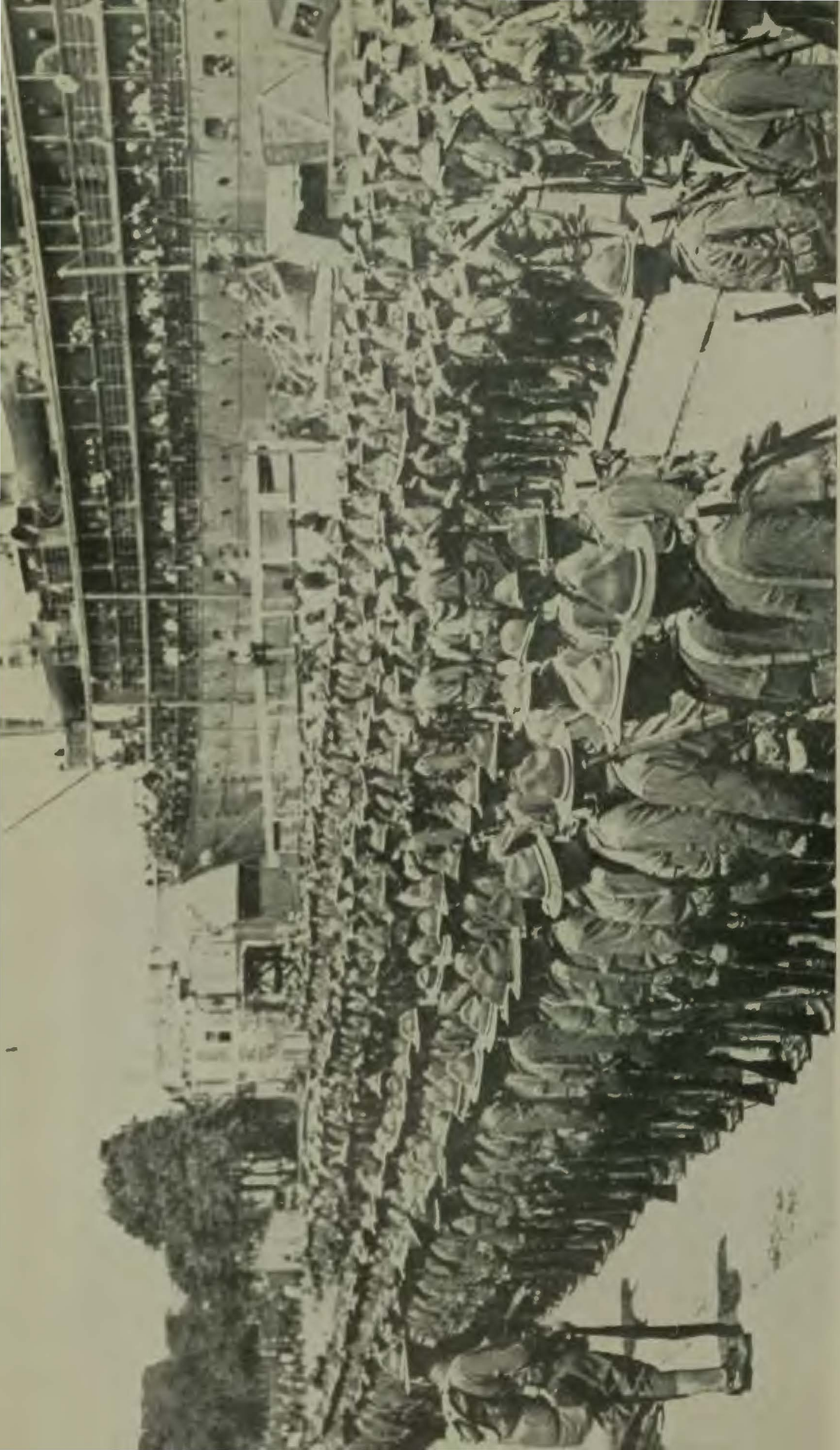
Events which drove the United States into war now developed rapidly. On February 26, 1917, the President requested Congress to give him authority to equip American merchant ships with defensive arms should that become necessary. Two days later the President gave to the press the contents of a telegram which had been intercepted by the British Government late in January. This telegram had been sent by the German Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Arthur Zimmermann, through the German Embassy in Washington to the German Minister in Mexico City. It proposed that, in the event of war between the United States and Germany, an alliance be formed between Mexico and Germany

and that Mexico endeavor to persuade Japan to desert the Allies and align herself with the Central Powers. Mexico was to be allowed "to reconquer her lost territory in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona". The effect of the publication of this telegram upon the American people was instantaneous and widespread. It seemed to crystallize public opinion into a strong feeling of hostility toward Germany. The House of Representatives promptly passed the bill to authorize the arming of merchant ships and, although due to a filibuster the measure failed to pass the Senate before its adjournment on March 4, it was clear that the overwhelming sentiment of Congress was in favor of the passage of the bill.

After the sinking of American ships by German submarines had actually occurred, the President addressed a special session of Congress on April 2, 1917, saying that under Germany's new policy "Vessels of every kind, whatever their flag, their character, their cargo, their

General Pershing Landing at Boulogne, June 13, 1917. © B





The First American Troops Arriving at St. Nazaire, June 26, 1917



German Zeppelin Forced Down at Bourbonne-les-Bains, October 1917

destination, their errand, have been ruthlessly sent to the bottom without warning and without thought of help or mercy for those on board, the vessels of friendly neutrals along with those of belligerents. Even hospital ships and ships carrying relief to the sorely bereaved and stricken people of Belgium . . . have been sunk with the same reckless lack of compassion and of principle." He further stated that he was not "thinking of the loss of property, immense and serious as that is, but only of the wanton and wholesale destruction of the lives of non-combatants, men, women, and children, engaged in pursuits which have always, even in the darkest periods of modern history, been deemed innocent and legitimate . . ." He then advised that war be declared against the Imperial German Government. Congress, with but few dissenting votes, approved this recommendation and war was declared against Germany on April 6, 1917.

Diplomatic relations were severed with Austria-Hungary two days later, but war was not actually declared against her until December 7, 1917.

The President took great care in his speech to Congress on April 2, 1917, to announce the aims and attitude of America. He said: "We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifice we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind . . . We enter this

war only where we are clearly forced into it, because there are no other means of defending our rights."

Both the sincerity of his statement and the correctness of his interpretation of the national aims and ideals of the United States were forcibly proved to the world, when, at the peace table in Versailles many months later, the American Government demanded neither one dollar of indemnity nor one square mile of territory from the defeated nations.

American Troops Parading in London,
August 15, 1917

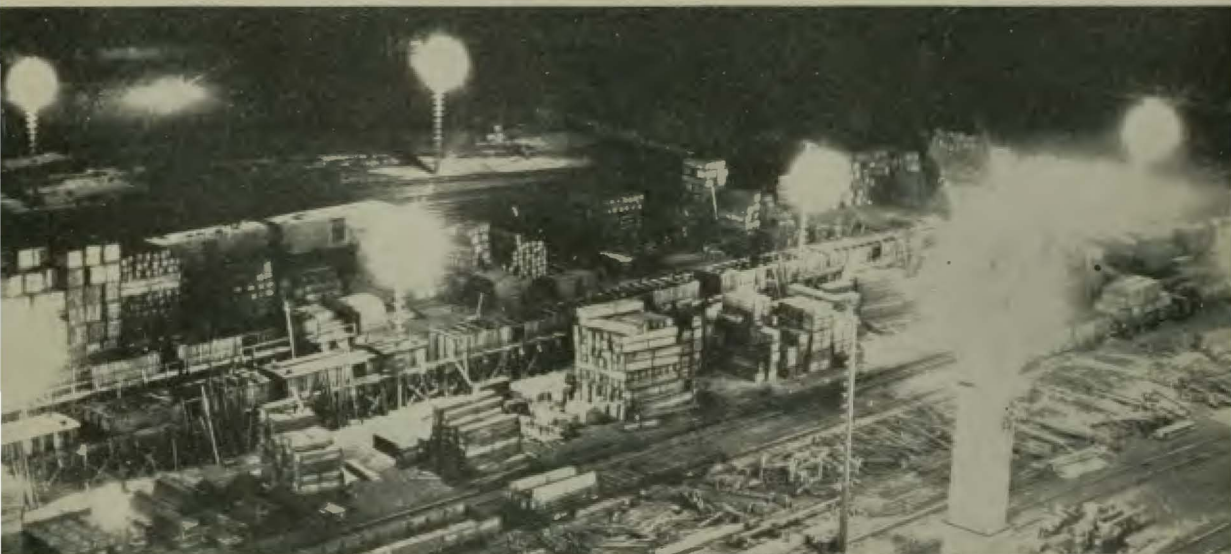




American Aviation Field at Issoudun



Storage Dam at Savenay Being Constructed by American Engineers



American Plant and Storage Yard at La Rochelle, Illuminated for Night Work

ORGANIZATION
OF THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES
AND FORMATION OF ITS COMBAT ARMY

THE great task facing the United States when she entered the war was to place on the front as quickly as possible an American army sufficiently strong to give the combined Allied and American forces a decisive superiority over the Central Powers. It was evident that considerable time would elapse before America could actually have more than a nominal force in the battle lines, as her very small Regular Army, numbering less than 135,000 men, was scattered in weak detachments throughout her home territory and outlying possessions. There were no complete and permanent units larger than regiments, and even these units were not suitably equipped and organized for major operations.

The Allies asked, however, that immediate help be rendered by other means, and upon their request the United States loaned them huge

sums of money, sent them great quantities of food, and assisted against the submarine menace both by the use of her

Navy and by building commercial ships to replace losses. The Allies also urged that an American unit be sent over at once for

the effect on the morale of their armies and people. Accordingly, the 1st Division was formed from existing organizations and sent to France where most of its elements landed on June 26, 1917.

Major General John J. Pershing¹ was designated Commander-in-Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces effective on May 26, 1917, and served continuously in that capacity until the Armistice was signed and the Army was demobilized. He landed in France on June 13, 1917, accompanied by a small staff, and immediately plunged into the preliminary work of organizing the A. E. F.

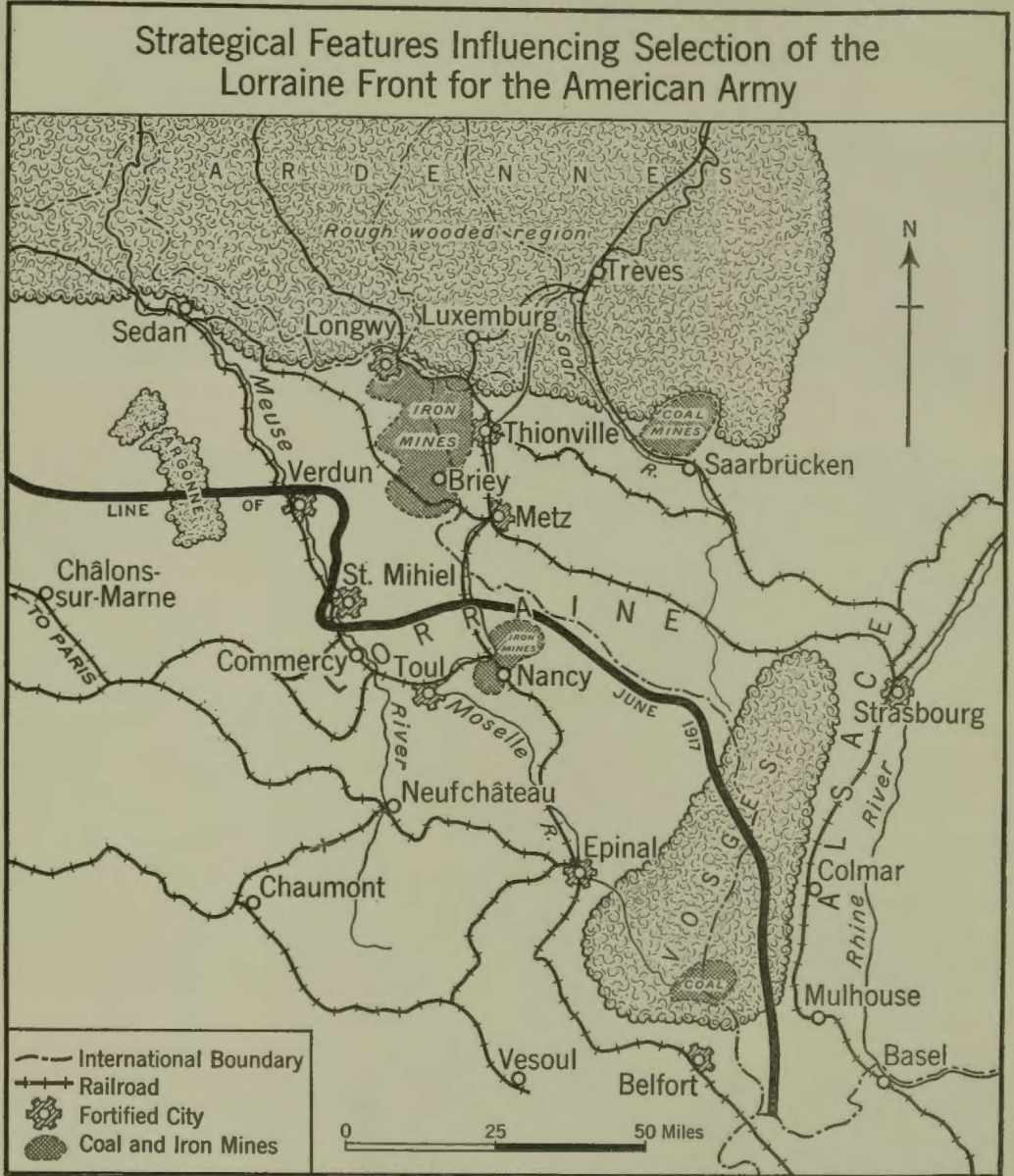
After a thorough study of the situation, General Pershing cabled the War Department early in July that every effort should

be made to have an American army in France of at least 1,000,000 men by the

¹ Appointed to the rank of General, October 8, 1917.



General John J. Pershing
American Commander-in-Chief

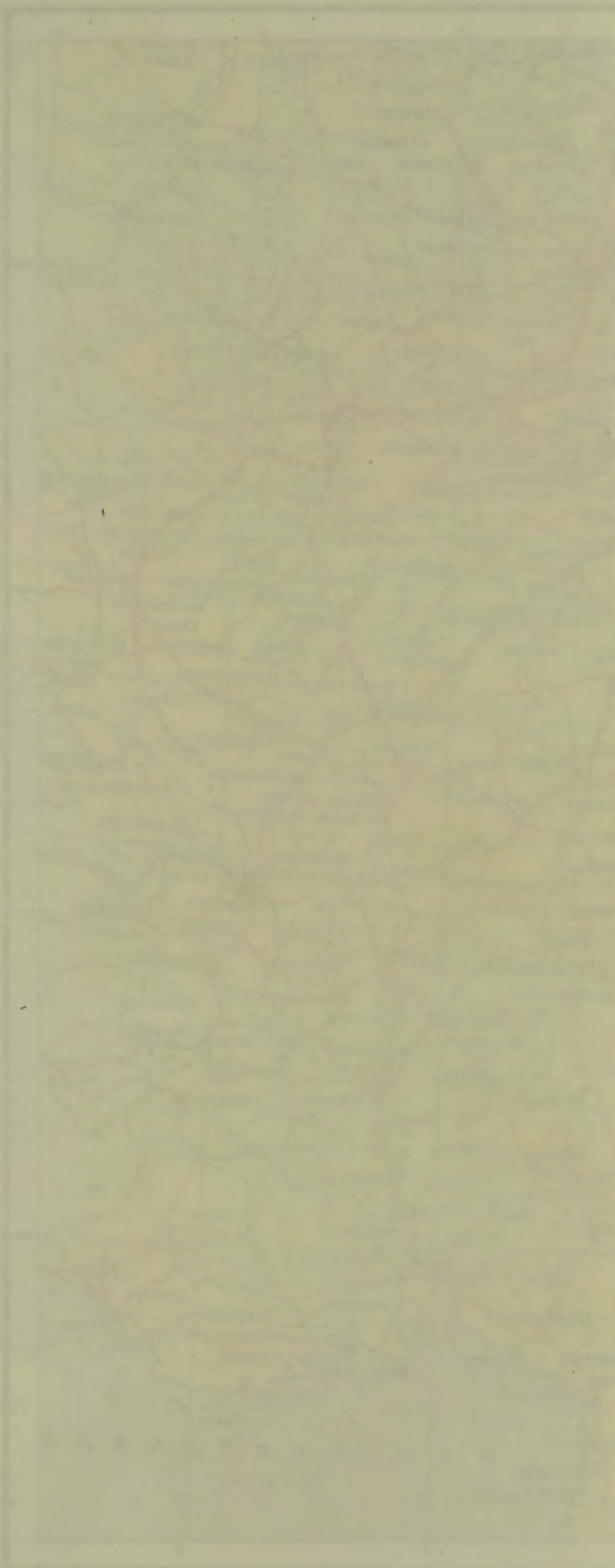
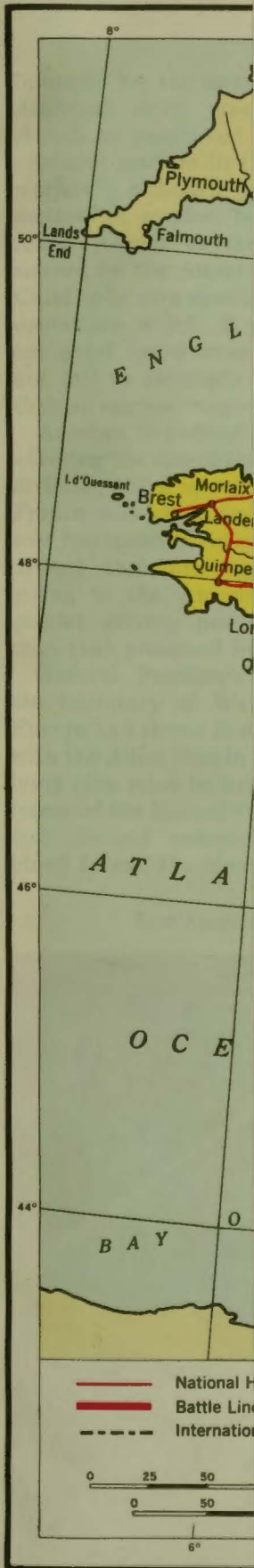


following May. He pointed out that this figure did not represent the total number required, and recommended that plans for the further development of the military forces of the United States should contemplate placing 3,000,000 American soldiers in the field in Europe.

Decisions affecting the organization, size and equipment of various units; methods of training to be followed; the priority in which troops and supplies of

various classes should be sent; and the requirements of the army in special equipment and personnel were cabled to Washington. These cables formed the basis of the War Department's policies in mobilizing the great National Army in 1917 and 1918, and enabled the authorities in the United States to proceed with their tasks in such a way as best to meet the needs of the fighting forces in France.

One decision which had a marked



influence on the later operations of the American Army was that all training should be conducted in preparation for offensive warfare in the open. "Trench warfare", although practically the only method of combat being taught in the Allied Armies at that time, was considered by the American Commander-in-Chief only as a special phase of military operations which, if allowed to assume too great importance in training, could not fail to inculcate a defensive rather than an aggressive spirit in the army.

Another important decision was that affecting the size of the American combat division, which as organized for service in France was about twice the strength of any European division. Under the conditions then existing this resulted in giving to the American division much greater driving power in the offensive than that possessed by any other.

General Pershing's instructions from the Secretary of War upon sailing for Europe had stated that he must cooperate with the Allies "but in so doing the underlying idea must be kept in view that the forces of the United States are a separate and distinct component of the combined forces, the identity of which must

be preserved". These instructions were faithfully carried out by General Pershing who insisted throughout the war, in spite of the greatest pressure from the Allies, each of whom was influenced to some extent by its own special interests, that the forces under his command should constitute an American army under its own flag and its own commander. This basic idea was kept constantly in mind in organizing the American Expeditionary Forces and proved to be a decisive factor in the defeat of Germany.

Agreements had to be reached very quickly with the Allies as to where the American Army should be located, in order that the necessary preparations for its development and use could be initiated. With the British forces placed to cover the channel ports and the French Armies committed to the protection of Paris, the transportation systems in these regions were heavily burdened. The necessity for the supply and movement of additional forces made it essential for the American Army to choose a less crowded area where roads and railways were relatively free. The fact that there were few troops in Lorraine and that rail facilities, although extending across the

First American Troops to Land in France Parading in Paris, July 4, 1917



entire width of France, were available for transporting men and supplies from the French ports south of Le Havre to the Lorraine sector, were important considerations which finally decided its choice as the American front.

Another factor in the selection was the determination of the Commander-in-Chief to place his forces where their employment would decisively affect the outcome of the war. The coal and iron mines near Metz, the fortress itself and the essential railway systems at Sedan and to the southeast, all made the area protected by the Lorraine front of vital importance to Germany. Of the territory within striking distance of the Western Front, this was the area which she could least afford to lose, because on its retention depended her ability to maintain the German Armies west of the Rhine. The American Army in Lorraine would, therefore, be admirably located to strike at the most important German strategic area near the battle front.

The lack of vessels seriously retarded the transfer of troops to France, and the question was one of grave concern to the American Commander-in-Chief. At the beginning of 1918 agreements were made by him with the British for the use of a portion of their tonnage as they controlled most of the world's shipping at that time. It, however, took the crisis caused by the German offensive in March of that year to bring out the amount of Allied shipping that made possible the

remarkable increase of American arrivals to a maximum in one month of over 300,000 officers and men.

This crisis interrupted the formation of an American army as the succession of German drives in the spring of 1918 required the use of every available American and Allied division if defeat was to be avoided. It was at this time that General Pershing went to General Foch and freely offered him the use of every American man and gun in France.

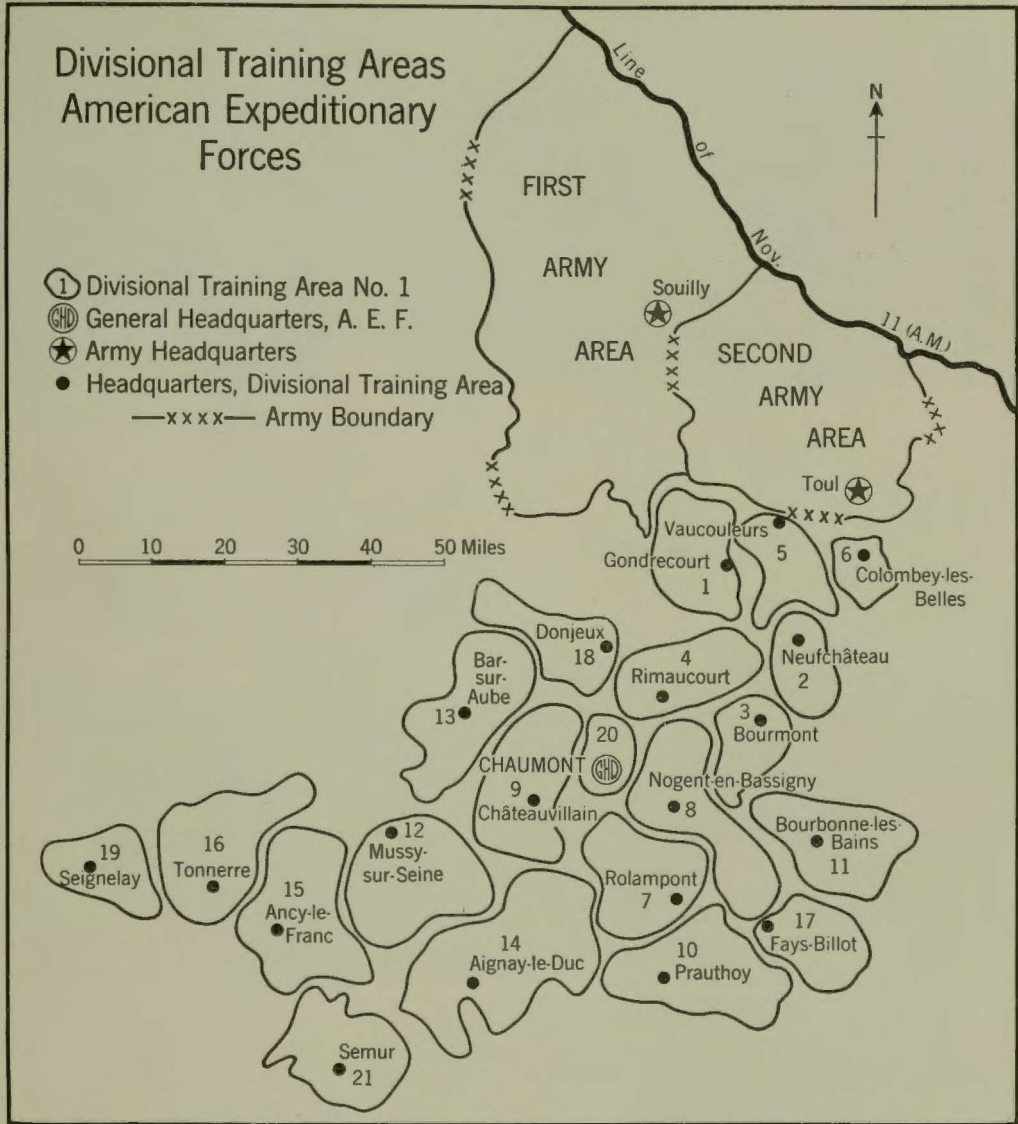
When the American divisions had completed their part in the emergency and had assisted in the subsequent counter-offensive which turned the tide in favor of the Allies, the American Commander-in-Chief, despite renewed opposition on the part of the Allies, again insisted upon their assembly into one force, and soon thereafter this was resumed.

The American First Army was organized on August 10, 1918, and immediately started preparations for the reduction of the St. Mihiel salient, which was to be its first large offensive operation.

Meanwhile, in spite of the handicaps of a foreign country and language and the long line of communications to the United States, a multitude of tasks had been accomplished in order that the American forces could begin operations when the divisions became available. Staffs had been organized and trained; docks, railways, roads, depots, hospitals, bridges, and telegraph and telephone lines had been built; ammunition and supplies

German Infantry Advancing Through Hermies
After Its Capture in March 1918. © G





had been collected; intensive training schemes had been put into effect; and plans for the future military operations of the American Army on the Western Front had been studied and perfected.

The Commander-in-Chief, having foreseen that a considerable part of the artillery, airplanes and tanks necessary for a large force could not be obtained from American sources for some time to come, had made arrangements to purchase large quantities of them from the Allies. The wisdom of this is evident when it is con-

sidered that, except for four 14-inch naval guns on railway mounts, the American First Army throughout its entire service on the front did not fire an American-made cannon or shell, and that no American-made tank was ever available in Europe for use in battle.

Finally, after months of patient and unremitting labor, during which obstacles of every nature had been met and overcome, the American Army was ready on the morning of September 12, 1918, for its first great attack as an independent army.

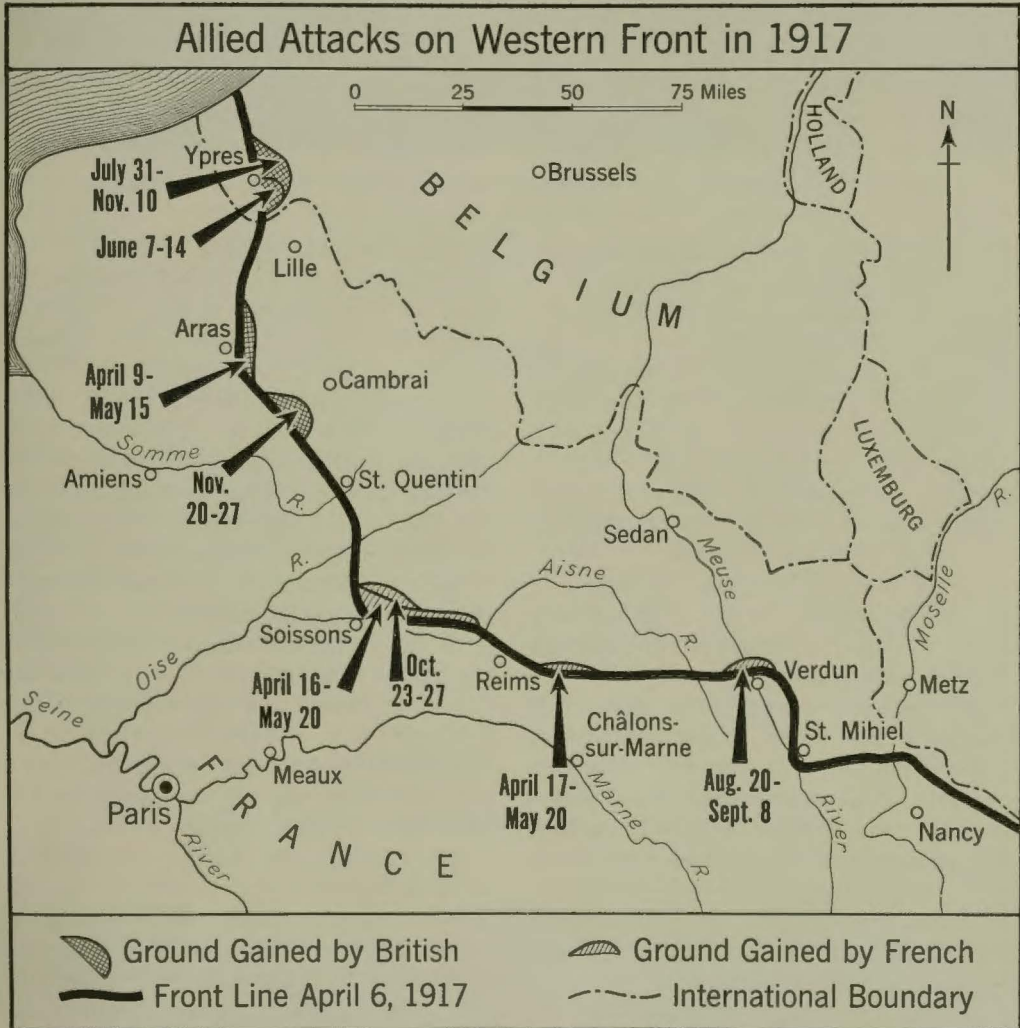


Germans Defending Against a British Tank Attack
The tanks are under fire from field and anti-aircraft artillery and trench mortars
Middle picture shows a direct hit on a tank. © G

MILITARY SITUATION IN JUNE 1917 AND SUMMARY OF EVENTS TO MAY 28, 1918

THE military situation in June 1917 was very favorable to Germany and her morale was high. Practically all her offensives, with the exceptions of the Battle of the Marne in 1914 and the Verdun operations in 1916, had been crowned with

The sacrifice by France of a large proportion of her man power, and the presence of hostile armies on her soil for three years, had caused deep discouragement among her civil population. This was aggravated by the severe reverse which her



great success. Her battle lines, save for a small section in Alsace, were on foreign territory, her own resources were untouched by hostile occupation and wherever attacked by the Allies her armies had inflicted tremendous losses upon them.

armies had suffered in April on the Aisne, which had resulted in a veritable wave of defeatism sweeping over the country and over the French military forces.

Great Britain, except for morale, was scarcely better off than France. Much of



American Troops Marching Through Neufchâteau on Their Way to the Battle Line

her best blood had been poured out on the battlefields; and like her allies, she had expended vast sums in the conflict. She retained command of the sea, but the German submarine campaign was reducing food and other supplies to the point where her very existence was threatened.

Italy was having great difficulty in financing the war, and grave deficiencies existed in her armies, as the events of the autumn of 1917 were to show.

The revolution in Russia, which had occurred in March, made it practically certain that the Allies could not count on effective help from that country.

The Germans were frankly scornful of America's ability to exercise any real military influence in the war and evidently believed it impossible for any considerable American force to be organized and transported to France before the defeat of the Allies could be accomplished. Germany, therefore, looked forward with great confidence to her armies gaining a decisive victory in 1918.

General Pershing's arrival in France, followed in two weeks by the landing of the American 1st Division, greatly improved the French morale.

The Allied conception of the critical nature of the military situation in the summer of 1917, and of the actions to be taken to meet it, are indicated in the conclusions reached by the Commanders-in-Chief of the American, French and Italian

Armies, and the Chiefs of Staff of the French and British Armies at a conference held in Paris during the latter part of July. An extract from their report is given in the following paragraph:

"General conclusions reached were: Necessity for adoption of purely defensive attitude on all secondary fronts and withdrawing surplus troops for duty on Western Front. By thus strengthening Western Front believed Allies could hold until American forces arrive in numbers sufficient to gain ascendancy."

As far as their strength would permit the Allies sought, however, to maintain the offensive on the Western Front during the latter part of 1917 in order to hinder the conquest of Russia by Germany and, if possible, to prevent an attack on the Italian front with German troops.

Accordingly, the British attacked in June capturing Messines Ridge, and near Ypres undertook a series of operations, which began on July 31 and lasted until November 10. Later in November they launched an offensive near Cambrai, in which many tanks were used, and made important initial gains which were largely lost in a German counteroffensive ten days later. These British attacks though very costly in men and matériel had no decisive effect on the military situation.

The Cambrai operation was the first major offensive in which American troops participated. Three American engineer

regiments were serving with the British at the time and one of these was actually engaged in the front-line fighting.

The French conducted carefully-prepared limited attacks near Verdun in August and near the Chemin des Dames in October, both of which though comparatively small were successful.

Russia finally collapsed in early September, and the Italians suffered a disastrous defeat near Caporetto in October, making it necessary to send French and British divisions to their assistance.

An analysis of these events left no doubt in the minds of Allied commanders that Germany would soon resume the offensive on the Western Front, with her armies there augmented by large numbers of divisions drawn from the Russian theater of operations. This transfer of troops from Russia actually started in the month of November 1917.

Notwithstanding Germany's favorable military position at the close of 1917, conditions within the Fatherland and the rapidly growing American Expeditionary Forces made it imperative for her to try to bring the war to a prompt conclusion. We know now that to accomplish this her plans contemplated the destruction of the British Army in the early spring of 1918, after which a crushing blow was to be directed against the French Army.

On December 31, 1917, there were 174,884 American soldiers in Europe, of

which the 1st Division alone had served at the front. The British and French desired to hasten the appearance of American troops in the line if only for the effect on the morale of their troops, and urged that the American training be limited to the minimum necessary for trench fighting. They also requested that American troops, in company and battalion units, be assigned to their organizations, pointing out the shortage of man power in their armies as sufficient reason for this request. They contended that the elimination of Russia as a factor in the war, together with the Italian defeat, had so altered conditions for the worse that to withstand the expected German attacks every American soldier in France should at once be made available for service at the front.

The American Commander-in-Chief agreed that every combat unit in France should be made available for front-line service, but remained fixed in his determination to assemble all Americans into an independent army. Any sort of prolonged amalgamation with the Allied Armies would have committed the fortunes of the American forces to alien hands, with no responsibility to the American Government for their proper care, training and employment. Such a step would have met with the decided opposition of the American officers and soldiers and would have been destructive

American Soldiers En Route to the Front





German Infantry Attacking Over a Mine-Crater Area at Ripont in March 1917. © G



German Cavalry Ready for a Break-Through in March 1918. © G



German Engineers Advancing Through Captured British Position, March 1918. © G

to their morale. It would have been strongly disapproved by the American people. There was, on the other hand, no doubt that the effect of aggressive American units in the battle line under their own commanders would produce far greater military results and be far more depressing to the morale of the German Armies and civil population than the presence of small American units under foreign officers in Allied regiments.

The policy of employing the American units as a single force, steadfastly maintained by General Pershing in the face of tremendous opposition from the Allies, unquestionably produced decisive results that could not have been obtained otherwise.¹ Because of this policy, the American Army, welded into one powerful body, inspired by the traditions of its own country, confident in its leaders, and sure of its ability in the offensive, was finally enabled to deliver the terrific blows at St. Mihiel, in the Argonne and along the Meuse which made possible the defeat of Germany.

The Commander-in-Chief speeded up to the utmost the use of American units in the front line. As a consequence, the 1st Division relieved a French division in a sector north of Toul in January; the 26th entered the line with the French north-

east of Soissons in February; the 42d went in east of Lunéville during the same month; and about the middle of March, the 2d entered the line with the French southeast of Verdun.

On March 21, when the first great German offensive of 1918 started, there were approximately 300,000 American troops in France. Of these the 1st, 2d and 42d Divisions were in the trenches and the 26th was ready for service. The 32d and 41st Divisions had arrived in France but had been designated as replacement units, although later, in April, the 32d was redesignated as a combat division.

The German onslaught of March 21 struck the British in Picardy between the Oise and the Scarpe Rivers along a front of about 50 miles, part of which had been recently taken over from the French. Within eight days the attacking troops, sweeping all before them, practically destroyed the British Fifth Army and penetrated to a maximum depth of about 37 miles. The situation was serious and many French Divisions were rushed to aid the British.

During this period the Allies were still further annoyed and troubled when on March 23 the shelling of Paris by a large German gun from a distance of 75 miles was begun.

General Pershing, knowing the gravity of the Allied position, deferred the execution of his plan to form an American army and went to General Foch and said:



Marshal Ferdinand Foch
Allied Commander-in-Chief

¹ Marshal Pétain declared in a public address delivered in Versailles, France, in October 1937 that General Pershing was right in opposing the amalgamation of American troops with the Allied forces.



American Soldiers Advancing to Attack at Cantigny

"I have come to tell you that the American people would consider it a great honor for our troops to be engaged in the present battle. I ask you for this in their name and my own.

"At this moment there are no other questions but of fighting.

"Infantry, artillery, aviation, all that we have are yours; use them as you wish. More will come, in numbers equal to requirements.

"I have come especially to tell you that the American people will be proud to take part in the greatest battle of history."

This message had a stimulating effect

Cantigny After Its Capture, May 28, 1918.



upon French morale. Its confident optimism is an indication of the splendid spirit of cooperation which characterized the personnel of the entire American Army in France throughout the war.

On March 26 General Foch was charged with coordinating the actions of the French and British Armies, and soon afterwards on April 3 was given strategic direction of the French, British and American Armies on the Western Front.

Fortunately the Germans were stopped before capturing Amiens, the loss of which would have separated the French and British Armies and enabled the Germans to operate against each of them separately. In this event the British Army would probably have had to hurry out of northern France or else run the risk of almost certain destruction.

The Germans succeeded in cutting one railroad into Amiens from the south and in seriously impeding traffic on the others, they increased the frontage which the Allies were forced to hold with diminished numbers, they proved that their forces could break through the highly organized defenses of the Western Front, they enormously increased the morale of their own troops and very seriously lowered that of the British and French units.

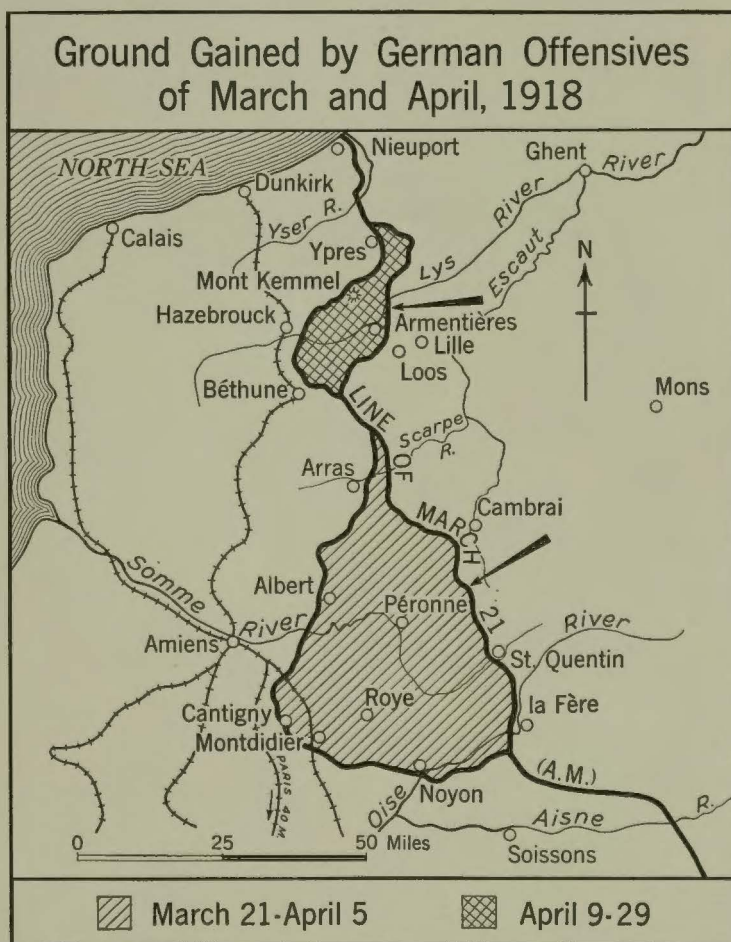
The fighting near Amiens had scarcely died down when, on April 9, the Germans broke through the British lines in Flanders on a 12-mile front along the Lys

River south of Ypres. Their initial advantage was not well exploited but operations were continued there until April 25 when the German troops succeeded in capturing Mont Kemmel, which at the time was defended by French units serving with the British Army.

A number of American medical, engineer and air service units with the British Army took part in the operations near Amiens and along the Lys River.

prevent their being sent later to aid the British, the Germans decided to make an attack against the French Army first.

Immediately following the battle in Flanders the American 1st Division, which had been in sector near Seicheprey, in the St. Mihiel region, took over an exceedingly active portion of the line west of Montdidier. It captured Cantigny on May 28 in a well-planned operation and held that place in spite of violent and



The German High Command believed that one more major attack against the British Army would destroy it. However, since elaborate preparations had already been made to strike the French, an offensive against them could be launched much quicker. As such an attack would use up French reserves, and

sustained counterattacks. This fighting again demonstrated the superb caliber of the American soldier in offensive and defensive combat and since troops from the United States were at that time arriving in France in increasingly large numbers, the Allied Armies and the Allied people could still hope for final victory.



German Infantry Advancing at the Chemin des Dames, May 1918. © G