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ACROSS ENEMY LINES

A Three Year Offensive against German Morale

by

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French Army

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CHAPTER III

Several Camouflaged Publications

There was a region near the front over which our fliers were always passing and where the wind often carried our balloons: Alsace. Did we have to be satisfied with sending into this province whose heart was French, only the leaflets which had been written in German terms?

Of course, our small German-language papers could do a lot of good in Alsace. They supplied a useful balance to the boasts and blustering of German propaganda. They gave the first grounds for hope to those whose calm confidence was sometimes shaken by the length of the fight and the changing fortunes of war.

But it was sometimes necessary that a special publication bring to the unfortunates living beneath the yoke an echo of the voice of those who more happily had crossed the border in good time and put on once again the uniform of France. Two disguised editions of the Strasbourg Post which we got out in 1916 and 1917 served this purpose, as did some other works of which we will say more later.

The name Strasbourg Post, no doubt, does not mean much to a Parisian, a Breton, or a southerner. But to an Alsatian it symbolizes--or rather it did symbolize--for, on the morrow of the Armistice, the editors of this paper hastened to slip the key under the door and flee back to Germany--something very clear--the Germanifying spirit at work in something which was at once sly and arrogant. Inspired, paid for, at times written by, the brass-hatted, hob-nailed masters of Alsace, it became the herald of the unique German Kultur and preached in one of the most republican countries of the world, what a German of stature was once not afraid to call, "The Sacred Mission of His Majesty the Emperor."

To say that the Strasbourg Post had ever succeeded in its "civilizing" mission would be to push the joke beyond reasonable bounds. The Alsatians read it--it's always good to know what your enemy thinks, especially when your enemy is at the same time your master--shrugged their shoulders and let it talk.... "they let it talk"--we don't quite mean that. They knew how to show, when they wanted to, that they were not dupes. Someone we knew very well amused himself before the war by publicly calling attention to the obstinate errors of this more-than-German paper. This wounded the Teutonic pride of the editors, which gentlemen took themselves very seriously indeed. But they alone did so, as they were shown on more than one occasion.

They were shown so even during the war. On August 29, 1916, in spite of all security systems, in spite of orders and confiscations, a peculiarly heretical Strasbourg Post found its way into Alsace by the most devious means, and gave rise, from Mulhouse to Strasbourg, to several shouts of laughter which were not long in making themselves heard all the way to our little office in Paris.

All the German papers that spoke of this "shameless fraud"---and they were many---were willing to grant us this praise---that the superficial imitation of the Strasbourg newspaper was remarkably good. We are happy to have another chance to congratulate the admirable Paris printers who worked for us; they, with their limited means, accomplished a real tour de force. But we have to admit, with due humility, that this was the only eulogy which the German press gave to our disguised newspaper. Except for this, we got nothing but insults, and the bitterest ones. The collection is so pretty that some day, when we have the leisure, we will catalogue it scientifically for the edification of philologists. Here's one that has not lost its flavor, from the Landesverrater: "Traitor to the Fatherland." This remark is intended for simple minds; an Alsatian traitor is a man who refuses to sell himself to Germany.

What was this newspaper, or, in the words of the Wolff Agency, this "artifice of Alsatian traitors?" It was, with a sometimes flip-pant tone, a serious organ. As in the case of Kriegsblatter, we borrowed in part from the contents of the German-language press. The rest was written in our office.

On the first page one could read a thoroughly documented story on the naval battle in the Skaggerak. Everyone knows the stupid trickery with which German propaganda tried to represent the shameful flight of the German fleet before the British squadrons in June, 1916, as a great naval victory. The German naval staff began by denying the German losses as announced in the British communique. A few days later, they admitted, as though by a clever plan, the loss of one, then of two, of three, finally of seven or eight. At the end of two weeks, anyone who took the trouble to think about it could see that, from the very first day, the British had told the truth about the loss of the German ships as well as their own, and that the Germans, on the other hand, had simply tried to fog and cloud the true facts. This bad faith was too much for even the closest neutral friends of Germany, and the Basler Nachrichten, the paper of the famous Colonel Egli, of pro-German memory, couldn't help saying so in a clear, penetrating article which we felt deserved large circulation. Therefore, we put it on the first page. The Germans never knew how to answer this simple and convincing expose of incontrovertible facts.

We had a pamphlet--an extract from the Inferno, a brand new novel by the German writer Stilgebauer. The part we quoted told of the horror of the days of the attack along the Yser, the Germans mowed down as they advanced to the banks of this small Flenish stream, the tragic explosion of mined bridges at the very moment when the shock troops crossed. It was a vision of blood and fire, of superhuman and inhuman efforts joining in a frightful massacre, and while one certainly can't class Stilgebauer among the great writers of all time, it's clear that this passage was written well enough to give one an almost physical horror of the senseless slaughters. The novel, Inferno, had appeared in Switzerland, where its author had gone, an honest man who did not subscribe to the hypocrisies and lies of the German government. The book was not merely unknown, but banned in Germany. What was more natural than to give it some publicity?

There were more fundamental articles too. One of these, assembled completely from quotations, showed that, beginning in 1916, certain apostles of German Imperialism had lost hope of bending the enemy to their will. Another, less solemn, tenderly described the family life of the Emperor and his dear ones in the midst of universal mourning. A short time earlier, the Wolff Agency had announced to a thunder-struck world the promotion to the grade of Lieutenant, of one of the Emperor's grandsons, 10 year-old Prince Wilhelm. We thought it a good idea to devote a few emotional sentences to this touching ceremony, and we do not see why the Press, which we call "Wilhelmine" today, used this as an example of our impoliteness, sacrilege, and impiety.

We even ran a literary supplement in our newspaper--signed, naturally, as all the literary supplements of the Strasbourg Post by the poet-professor, F. Lienhard. How often had they told us that to find the most direct and the purest impression of German Genius, we should consult German folk song? We consulted it, and found in the popular war literature some beautiful cries of naive cannibalism. We quoted them. They would have liked to get hold of us for that on the other side of the Rhine. But why? We were only making a contribution to the scientific study of German Genius.

It was quite to be expected, for instance, that we would quote a popular poem set to music by Pfitzner. Pfitzner was then the German director of the Strasbourg Conservatory and professed, not just harmony and counterpoint, but the most uncompromising Pan-Germanism. He gave a sample of the Genius, when he published, at the outbreak of war, a poem in which he labelled as "swine," the foreign artists who, before the war, had been celebrated by the German people and who, however, after August, 1914, showed themselves to be such ingrates that they failed to approve German aggression (Hodler, Jacques-Daleroze, etc.). His newest production was a poem in which German malignity let itself go on the subject of the tragic death of Lord Kitchener; at last, this no-good, this scoundrel got the just reward of his misdeeds.

And it was an explosion of similar ferocity which another poem contained, dedicated to the unhappy town of Badonviller. L'illustration published this so-called poetry, which had been found on a prisoner, and in which an anonymous Boche sang with savage joy of the massacres and fires which this French village suffered. There, really, we had beautiful samples of the war-like folklore of Germany.

Finally, our Strasbourg Post contained some local news. Who would have guessed that this inoffensive Alsatian chronicle would inspire most of the insults? What could the accounts of small events at Colmar, Mulhouse, Guebwiler, do to the journalists of Cologne, Frankfurt, and Berlin, or rather to the propaganda offices which gave these newspapermen their pre-fabricated materials. And why did they waste their time in reading the notices on the 3rd page which one ordinarily hardly bothers to look at?

That was because these notices were done in an ironical tone. Now, the Boche has never been able to forgive the Alsatian for his good humor, the mocking calm which he maintains in the midst of the worst troubles. With an outraged eye, the impotent censors read the allusions in the Strasbourg Post to the undisciplined love which the German mayor of Guebwiler felt for the wines of Alsace, or the parody of the complicated prescriptions which governed the use of food ration books. To slander a German bureaucrat or the German organization itself-- that was the unexpiable crime!

And if only the newspaper had confined itself to criticizing the German people and German affairs! But it went so far as to imply that everything was better in France. That was the crowning blow. The German Press minced no words over us: this was high treason.

Re-reading today--at a distance of some years--these little unpretentious articles, we find the nervousness and excitement of the Boches in 1916 all the funnier. They were beside themselves over the simple story of a French holiday at Saint-Amarin. That was because they recognized a parody on the style which the correspondents of the Strasbourg Post used when they described the holiday of January 18, the Emperor's birthday:

"SAINT-AMARIN: We are quite willing to recognize, even in Germany, that the French have a certain superficial culture, a certain tact. But here in the 'Wetterle Corner', in that part of Alsace which, everyone knows, groans once more under the French oppression, one can see no sign of it. It would have been natural, for example, to expect that the French government, if it had the slightest politeness and the least delicacy, would have organized here at the very least, a modest celebration of the Kaiser's Anniversary. But they did nothing of the sort. While the Kaiser's Anniversary passed without notice, the French

national holiday, which they call the "Quatorzschullieh" was celebrated here--just as at Than, Massevau, Daunomarie--as much by the authorities as by the civil population, in a way that constitutes real defiance. Parades, school ceremonies, distribution of prizes to children, all of whom speak French--displaying flags, to the point of exaggeration, on the houses--nothing was lacking which would have made of this day a popular holiday, in every sense of the word.

"The population joined most enthusiastically in the celebration. Oh, now, really, that population! When it's a matter of crying 'Vive la France', of singing the Marseillaise, of speaking French and drinking red wine, its capacities stagger the imagination. Even though these people have no bread cards, or meat cards, and, as a result, are deprived of all organization, they appear to be quite happy, and when one sees that, one begins to wonder if their origin is really so deeply, so honestly German."

When the managing editor has gathered all the political and literary articles he needs, when he has added local news and foreign affairs, the newspaper is still not quite ready for printing. He still must take care of the advertisements. They are very important as every good administrator knows. But we were far from Strasbourg. It was inconvenient to handle the publicity needs of the firms there. What could we do? We did what anyone would have done in our shoes: we made up some filler. Among the ads which we had photographed here and there, we had gleaned a few which weren't altogether devoid of humor.

Bad luck overtook us. The Cologne Gazette of November 10, 1916, compared us to an "old dog which waits to bite Germany slyly in the calves, but has neither strength nor teeth, and can do nothing but slobber on Germany's shoes." In what cavalierly terms did they couch that! But would anyone get so angry if he did not feel a little bitten?

Our Alsatian friends laughed wholeheartedly at the rolling of eyes, the gritting of teeth, which our jokes caused on the part of their occupiers. For a long time, they themselves had been making a joke of the extravagant advertisements which, on the back page of newspapers, recommended skillful substitutes for all the products which Germany missed more and more: textiles, leathers, fats, oils, etc. A whole snake-oil literature flourished in Germany and one hardly had to exaggerate to arrive at a statement like this one, which we inserted in our paper: (see illustration).

That wasn't all. An orthopedist offered the public artificial legs on which people who had to stand in line "could wait much more easily, and much longer for the opening of food stores." A leather establishment recommended as an ersatz for non-existent meat, milk, and eggs: "Extra-sized belts which one can pull to the last hole," etc.

Obviously, we knew that these flippancies would bring on some in-
vective. But our success exceeded our hopes.

The German press finally, a year later, paid us the compli-
ment of declaring that, after all, that issue of 1916 contained several
fairly funny passages. But that was said in order to attack more
effectively the issue we put out in 1917. We had, they said, slipped
a lot from one year to the next. The editors, or, rather, the editor,
for there was only one--had used up his wit in the first number; he had
nothing left for the second. That was one idea. There were two sides
to the question--an Alsatian and a Prussian.

If we waited a whole year to republish, it was not for lack of
material, but only for lack of time. The issue which bore the date
October 16, 1917, and which was brought into Alsace on that very day,
was, like its predecessor, part serious and part funny.

The editorial demonstrated, with the help of statistics, how far
from realization were the hopes that had been raised by the U-boat
campaign. On the second page, appeared a translation of the heart-
rending appeal addressed by the women of Belgium to the women of neutral
countries. We hope, for the honor of the women of Germany, that more
than one of them shuddered while reading this lament, which was at once
so dignified and so moving, and which showed how coldly the German
General Staff had changed free Belgium into a prison for women, young
girls, and children. We have often read, in the German press since the
Armistice, great fiery protests against the purported "slavery" which
the insatiable Allies wished to inflict on Germany, according to the
plumb, rosy-cheeked German publicists. But, despite the passage of the
years, we have yet to find a single word of regret on the efficient
slavery which the Germany Army imposed for four years on the starved and
weakened innocents of Belgium and France.

Once more we borrowed from a novel by the fecund writer Stilgebauer,
who, deep in Swiss retreat, never stopped urging on his countrymen the
ways of humanity and justice. This time, the part we selected told of
the crimes of the U-boats, the massacre of young, beautiful girls.

We filled the third page with these local items which got the
Boches who had established themselves in Alsace so angry. They were
written in our office, but that does not mean they were pure fiction.
We knew very well what was happening in Alsace, and we could give news
like the following:

"Do people really say that the Mayor of Colmar and his loved ones
help themselves first when the food trains arrive? But in these epic
times when all Germany struggles for the existence of him who by the
Grace of God is her Emperor, each citizen must take what he can when he

can. People criticize His Honor the Mayor for having bought, at a laughable price, fine Burgundy wines from the cellars of French families whose trustee he is, but there again His Honor was impelled by pure German patriotism. These wines had matured in the land of the hereditary enemy, under a French sun. If His Honor had not been so devoted, these wines would have been bought at auction by the good bourgeois families of Colmar; it would have been drunk by those "French lovers," who included, in other days, Elumenthal, Wetterle, and Hansi with their fellow-citizens, and, God only knows what an explosion of anti-German sentiments has been prevented by the disinterestedness of the Honorable Mayor."

That was the tone in which we framed this article and others like it.

Further on, under the heading Niederbronn, the reader could find an ironical imitation of those accounts of trips that so-called representatives of the neutral press had made in Alsace to prove to themselves how German Alsace was. During one period, the press of Germany's neighbors was flooded with these prejudiced accounts. We told, in ours, how neutral journalists had dined with members of old Alsatian families, such as the brigadier of Gendarmerie, his honor the Station-assistant, the 3rd class Counselor Dopperrmann, and that they got at this meeting the very clear impression that these representatives of the Alsatian population wished to remain German. And, to make fun of the profusion of these news items concerning the travels of neutrals, the same notice appeared a little further along under the heading "Ensisheim," telling of the presence there of these old Alsatians: His Honor, the chief prison warden; the local brigadier of Gendarmerie; and another counselor of the 3rd class...

Under the heading "Westhalten"---a village renowned for the breeding of donkeys--the reader could find the recent astounding experience of Veterinary Dr. Lehmann (a well-known nickname for William II): "A well set-up, strong donkey of the European species (*Asinus centralis* Linnaei) was put under a special regimen by His Honor, the District Veterinary. His victuals were reduced daily by 10.5 grams. When the victuals reached the minimum of 250 grams daily, Dr. Lehmann brought from Berlin to Westhalten 93 loaders of German science to show them the result of his treatment and to prove, thereby, that a German donkey's ration can be reduced indefinitely. At the end of the second month, the last 10 grams were suppressed, and the animal had to satisfy himself by observing, from a proper distance, his ration book. But then there occurred a disaster which, anyone can see, has no relation, neither intellectually, nor casually, neither objectively nor subjectively, with the learned experiments of the veterinary. The donkey suddenly departed this life for reasons which still are obscure. The success of this experiment proves that the British plan to starve Germany hasn't a chance in the world."

We were also engaged in publishing the secret orders of certain administrations, and thus, in this issue, we were able to quote an unusual regulation by the Imperial Post Office authorities at Strasbourg. The reproduction of this significant little document will not be without interest. Here it is:

"Since the samplings made by the postal control officers of the field armies have established with complete reliability that the great majority of letters from Alsace-Lorraine (more than 80%) are either completely hostile to Germany, or, at least, not kindly disposed to her; therefore we find it necessary to watch even more closely the correspondence from Alsace-Lorraine, if we were only to pass, by this means, that small percentage that is favorably disposed. This step must be carefully concealed from the neutrals."

We will be excused for not going right down the list of all the articles in the paper. We will quote in addition, an excerpt inspired by the furious campaign which the whole German Press was then waging against the English and against their reputed intentions of the French channel coast. There was a time when two out of three Germans were firmly convinced that the English would never leave Dunkerque or Calais. This noise, childishly spread by the official propaganda agencies (see the whole file of Gazette des Ardennes on this subject), finally reached even the press of Alsace-Lorraine. Here is the commentary made on it by our paper.

"The Catholic Volksblatt of Metz, on last August 12, thought it would let its readers know that French officers and officials, of high rank, had admitted, some with the liveliest indignation, others with a deep dejection, that in the course of the past three weeks England had taken a lease on Calais for the next 99 years. We are ready to confirm beyond question this practically unbelievable news. Our correspondent recently talked in Switzerland to a high ranking French officer, whose home is in the neighborhood of Beaucaire, and who told him with tears in his eyes and every other sign of deepest despair that he had with his own eyes seen the lease drawn up between the English and the city of Calais. The rent comes to 285,000 pounds sterling a month; it is payable in advance on the first. Since receiving this sum, the mayor has distributed it among the people of the town. The cost of illumination, street-cleaning, the obligation of spreading sand on the sidewalks when they are covered with ice, falls to the tenants; on the other hand, the lessor must pay all the costs of repairs. Both contracting parties may break the lease on condition of a 9-month notice... See how France has been forced into this humiliation before Perfidious Albion! But if the good citizens of Calais think that the fine German hero will deliver them from the clutches of the English, that race of shopkeepers, they are quite mistaken. We've already tried once; surely we aren't going to try it again."

Finally, we once more played on the back page several delightful advertisements. There was one about which the German Press, even the most loyal, maintained complete silence, for even the slightest allusion would have laid them open to a charge of lese-majeste. This was only a cinema billing. But the hero's name lent itself to a very dangerous confusion. To understand this thoroughly one must remember that in Germany the stage name of the famous movie actor, Charlie Chaplin, is not Charlot, as in France, but Lehmann. If one also recalls that, as we noted a little earlier in talking of the Westhalten donkey, the same name, Lehmann, was sometimes used to designate Wilhelm II, one can understand the silence of our usual critics:

"Lehmann--read the title of the film comedy announced on the back page of our paper--Abdicate, Abdicate, Lehmann. And the first act was described: "Lehmann in situations and roles that stagger the imagination: admiral, poet, general, historian, crusader, painter, musician, porcelain manufacturer, preacher, front-line soldier, etc. The second act brings Lehmann before Paris, where he succeeds in advancing his front lines most ingeniously to the rear. He is later seen in a role which the word 'slacker' describes very inadequately--'Etappenschwein' (Gold-bricking quartermaster). "The third act was described simply in the words: "I didn't want that....."

Isn't that rash, people asked us, and aren't you simply running the danger of uselessly offending the dynastic sympathies of the Germans? We will show in a later chapter that on the date in which this issue of the Strasbourg Post appeared, the German people were ready to listen to the most disrespectful ideas about their emperor--even ready to make those ideas their own. But here we were addressing ourselves particularly to the Alsatian public, and we know very well that from Mulhouse to Wissenberg there was not one son of that country who would object to our rather unorthodox estimate of his majesty.

The other advertisements were mostly commercial in nature; one of them, for example, recommended an Ersatz made of sawdust, furniture polish, and distilled water, which was intended to replace Ersatz coffee, itself becoming scarce.

But commerce did not make us forget sentiment; and, like all German papers, the Strasbourg Post contained, in the midst of its advertisements, several serious offers of marriage (authentic offers taken from different German papers). In one, a gentleman made inquiries about the address of a young woman he had met in a railway station; she had been carrying a ham. In another a bachelor reminded young women that the government, very much interested in the birthrate, gave young married couples double rations, and he offered to marry "on account of the ration book."

Among these announcements appeared the official text of a law which gave the Germans even less pleasure than any of the rest--this was--in the form of, and in place of the official German announcements--a translation of the French law of February 17, 1917, declaring that all seizures and sales of goods arranged by the Germans in the occupied provinces or in Alsace-Lorraine, were null and void. This mark of French confidence in the just reparations to come was, we know, of great comfort to our countrymen across the Vosges.

The German Press, as we have said, behaved very squeamishly and sounded quite finicky. This, said the authentic Strasbourg Post of October 30, 1917, "was the pitiful way in which Hansi,* Zislin, and Wetterle tried to fight Germanism in Alsace before the war." Oh, yes, doubtless. We tried that way of fighting because it had worked. If the Germans honestly thought it was so pitiful, would they ever have taken the trouble to try the author of "My Village" before the Supreme Court at Leipzig for high treason?

In June, 1917, a new trick. The suggestion this time came from GHQ. The object was to reach no longer simply the Alsations, but the German soldiers in general, and, if possible, their families too. The principal aim of the publication we planned was to let the German public know the fearful effects of our new heavy artillery.

All this time, the German soldiers had thought themselves safe in the deep works which their leaders had dug on all the fronts where the condition of the soil was favorable. Their newspapers insisted that France had no cannon which could break down their underground homes, and past experience seemed to corroborate their reassurances. In Champagne, the deep caves cut into the chalky ground gave the frontline fighters a practically perfect shelter; at the height of bombardments the troops went to ground in their holes and calmly waited for the storm to subside.

But in the spring of 1917, new artillery pieces made their appearance on the French front: the 400 mm. guns. Their shells had more penetrative and destructive power than the German 420s. And from that time on, the safety of front-line troops became just a myth. Once these bombardments started, the ground was slashed and turned over to great depth, and the cave dwellers were always running the risk of being buried alive in the collapse of their works.

Mt. Cornillet was the most striking example of this. On the slopes of this chalky hill, the Germans had dug a long tunnel in which a

*That was the only time the Germans came close to guessing the source of the blows they were feeling.

thousand men could gather without difficulty. This was a complete underground garrison. Rooms for officers, barracks for the men, hospital, provision stores, munitions dumps, nothing was missing. There were three different entrances to this tunnel, in which many battalions had lived, on the front-line, a few hours of comparative comfort and perfect peace, attacks launched in April against this strong position had failed despite the violence of the preliminary barrage.

But on May 20, the 400 mm. shells did their work. They broke the thick crust under which the Germans took refuge, closed the entry-ways, and filled the whole interior with deadly gas. The Germans did not have time to get out. The whole garrison, more than 700 men and officers, was annihilated with the exception of two or three unfortunates who were found groggy and practically out of their heads following the terrifying ordeal they had just undergone.

The story of this barrage, which then appeared in L'Illustration and several other publications, attracted a lot of attention. The public at large then realized that we were beginning to have available weapons that were at least as good as the enemy's. Our soldiers were very much encouraged by the powerful assistance which the new artillery would give them. The effect on the German soldier would have been fatally different, but the Imperial Censor guarded against that. Not a single German paper was allowed to mention it. Our GHQ thought it would be a good idea to bridge this gap, and asked us to tell in German, for the enlightenment of our regular readers, the story of the shelling of Mt. Cornillet.

But should this story appear to be spread by the French themselves? The enemy soldiers would have thought it an invention for the sake of the cause. It would be better to credit the translation to neutrals, or to pacifist Germans living in Switzerland. Furthermore, it happened that we had, just about at the same time, several articles which we had clipped here and there. These were by real Germans, or German-Americans, and we wanted to give them some publicity. We decided to combine the story of the shelling of Mt. Cornillet and several of these other articles in a fake issue of the Frankfurter Zeitung. The issue, completed around the 1st of July, 1917, was distributed towards the end of that month. A sizable number of copies went into Germany across the frontiers, thanks to the help of good friends.

Do we have to repeat again the shouts of virtuous indignation with which the German Press greeted this "shameless fraud?" This time, however, a short note, printed in boldface type at the foot of the first column of the first page, carefully explained to the reader the reasons for the use of the disguise: "The editors--it said--picked this format and this method of distribution because it is the only way

in which it is possible to utter the truth in Germany today." The U-boats and the German pirates had no scruples about showing neutral colors or those of the Allies when they wished to approach a merchant ship and send her to the bottom. Why should the Germans be allowed to use a false flag with human life at stake while we are forbidden to use the same technique when only the spreading of ideas was involved?

The Germans soon ran a fever. It didn't take long for the police to see that a good number of copies had made their way into Germany through Basle. Worse yet, many copies of the paper had been put in the mail at Loerrach, site of one of the most important German espionage offices. You couldn't ridicule the German police more clearly than that. Now the German police--or at least this is what the author of "My Village" thinks--don't understand humor. This time, the police got the German Ambassador to complain to the Swiss authorities. Immediately, the Berne police department put its best detectives on the case. But when he has nothing to rule over, the king doesn't rule--and the Swiss police could find nothing. It was impossible to discover the publisher of the paper, because he wasn't in Switzerland. The police got hold of a couple of distributors who obviously had had nothing to do with the preparation of the newspaper. Since they could not find the guilty man, an innocent would do.

At Berne in those days, a fearless little paper called "Das Freie Presse" was being published. The editors were republican Germans, heirs to the tradition of 1848. They were not afraid to point out the defects of Imperial rule in Germany and were trying to prepare a new Germany, democratic and honest, capable of recognizing its own mistakes and resolved not to commit them again in the future. We shall not claim that all their ideas coincided with those of the defenders of the Entente. These men defended German ideas above everything else, that goes without saying. But they did this with evident loyalty, and, on many occasions, Frenchmen could agree with their opinions. In the matters which concerned us, we were able to take from "Freie Zeitung" many articles in 1917 and 1918 which, reproduced in our trench newspapers, gave the German soldiers a taste of an independent tone of which they had had no past experience.

It happened that our special issue of the Frankfurter Zeitung contained exactly one article borrowed from the Freie Zeitung. We had reproduced with special pleasure the article entitled: "The Problem of Alsace-Lorraine." The organ of the republican Germans refuted the pseudo-historical arguments with which the Imperial government tried to justify the occupation of Alsace-Lorraine. It framed the question as it must be framed: "Here, as everywhere," it said, "the decisive factor is, what do the inhabitants want?" An imprudent bit of honesty, for which the German ambassador wished to make the newspaper pay by trying to suppress it.

The Bern authorities, yielding to the expostulations of M. von Romberg, believed or pretended to believe that the Frankfurter Zeitung had been printed on the presses of the Freie Zeitung and ordered a search of the newspaper offices. They found nothing there, and for a good reason. We hurried to explain to the Bern police that the Frankfurter Zeitung had been published on the banks of the Seine. There was nothing to do but yield to the evidence and abandon the investigation. However, mindful of hints from some quarter or other, the authorities threatened to ban the paper. This suggests that the business of the Frankfurter Zeitung was merely an excuse, and that a powerful influence was trying to silence German republicans in Switzerland. Berne, however, retreated before the protests of all the French and Italian language press and even some of the German. Not, however, without having given itself the satisfaction of half-muzzling the Freie Zeitung which had been guilty of republicanism, by cutting down its paper quota and thus limiting its press run.

So, a German paper took the blows that had been meant for us.