

**FINAL REPORT OF GEN. JOHN
J. PERSHING, COMMANDER-
IN-CHIEF AMERICAN
EXPEDITIONARY FORCES**

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Final Report of Gen. John J. Pershing, Commander-in-Chief American Expeditionary Forces by
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JOHN JOSEPH PERSHING

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AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES



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1920

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FINAL REPORT OF GEN. JOHN J. PERSHING.

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES,
September 1, 1919.

To the SECRETARY OF WAR.

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith my final report as Commander-in-Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe.

PART I.

PERIOD OF ORGANIZATION.

1. I assumed the duties of this office on May 26, 1917, and, accompanied by a small staff, departed for Europe on board the S. S. *Baltic* May 28. We arrived at London on June 9 and, after spending some days in consultation with the British authorities, reached Paris on June 13.

2. Following the rather earnest appeals of the Allies for American troops, it was decided to send to France, at once, 1 complete division and 9 newly organized regiments of Engineers. The division was formed of regular regiments, necessary transfers of officers and men were made, and recruits were assigned to increase these units to the required strength.

The offer by the Navy Department of one regiment of Marines to be reorganized as Infantry was accepted by the Secretary of War, and it became temporarily a part of the First Division.

Prior to our entrance into the war, the regiments of our small army were very much scattered, and we had no organized units, even approximating a division, that could be sent overseas prepared to take the field. To meet the new conditions of warfare an entirely new organization was adopted in which our Infantry divisions were to consist of 4 regiments of Infantry of about treble their original size, 3 regiments of Artillery, 14 machine-gun companies, 1 Engineer regiment, 1 Signal battalion, 1 troop of Cavalry, and other auxiliary units, making a total strength of about 28,000 men.

MILITARY SITUATION.

3. In order that the reasons for many important decisions reached in the early history of the American Expeditionary Forces may be more clearly understood and the true value of the American effort more fully appreciated, it is desirable to have in mind the main events leading up to the time of our entry into the war.

1914.

4. Although the German drive of 1914 had failed in its immediate purpose, yet her armies had made very important gains. German forces were in complete possession of Belgium and occupied rich industrial regions of northern France, embracing one-fourteenth of her population and about three-fourths of her coal and iron. The German armies held a strongly fortified line 468 miles in length, stretching from the Swiss border to Nieuport on the English Channel; her troops were within 48 miles of Paris and the initiative remained in German hands.

In the east the rapidity of the Russian mobilization forced Germany, even before the Battle of the Marne, to send troops to that frontier, but the close of 1914 found the Russian armies ejected from East Prussia and driven back on Warsaw.

The entry of Turkey into the war, because of the moral effect upon the Moslem world and the immediate constant threat created against Allied communications with the Far East, led to an effort by the Allies in the direction of the Dardanelles.

1915.

5. Italy joined the Allies in May and gave their cause new strength, but the effect was more or less offset when Bulgaria entered on the side of the Central Powers.

The threatening situation on the Russian front and in the Balkans was still such that Germany was compelled to exert an immediate offensive effort in those directions and to maintain only a defensive attitude on the western front. German arms achieved a striking series of successes in the vicinity of the Mazurian Lakes and in Galicia, capturing Warsaw, Brest-Litovsk, and Vilna. The Central Powers overran Serbia and Montenegro. Meanwhile, the Italian armies forced Austria to use approximately one-half of her strength against them.

In the west, the French and British launched offensives which cost the German armies considerable loss; but the objectives were limited and the effect was local.

The Dardanelles expedition, having failed in its mission, was withdrawn in January, 1916. In Mesopotamia the Allied operations had

not been successful. Although the British fleet had established its superiority on the sea, yet the German submarine blockade had developed into a serious menace to Allied shipping.

1916.

6. Germany no doubt believed that her advantage on the eastern front at the close of 1915 again warranted an offensive in the west, and her attack against Verdun was accordingly launched in the spring of 1916. But Russia was not yet beaten and early in June, aided at the same time by the threat of an Italian offensive in the west, she began the great drive in Galicia that proved so disastrous to Austria.

Roumania, having entered on the side of the Allies, undertook a promising offensive against Austria. The British and French Armies attacked along the Somme. Germany quickly returned to the defensive in the west, and in September initiated a campaign in the east which, before the close of 1916, proved unfortunate for Russia as well as Roumania.

SPRING OF 1917.

7. Retaining on the eastern front the forces considered sufficient for the final conquest of Russia, Germany prepared to aid Austria in an offensive against Italy. Meanwhile, the Russian revolution was well under way and, by the midsummer of 1917, the final collapse of that government was almost certain.

The relatively low strength of the German forces on the western front led the Allies with much confidence to attempt a decision on this front; but the losses were very heavy and the effort signally failed. The failure caused a serious reaction especially on French morale, both in the army and throughout the country, and attempts to carry out extensive or combined operations were indefinitely suspended.

In the five months ending June 30, German submarines had accomplished the destruction of more than three and one-quarter million tons of Allied shipping. During three years Germany had seen practically all her offensives except Verdun crowned with success. Her battle lines were held on foreign soil and she had withstood every Allied attack since the Marne. The German general staff could now foresee the complete elimination of Russia, the possibility of defeating Italy before the end of the year and, finally, the campaign of 1918 against the French and British on the western front which might terminate the war.

It can not be said that German hopes of final victory were extravagant, either as viewed at that time or as viewed in the light of