



Volume 5. Wilhelmine Germany and the First World War, 1890-1918
Bulletins from the Front I (1914)

Newspapers were an important medium for propaganda during the Great War. Under the watchful eye of the military censor, these reports from the German front lines were invariably positive – despite major setbacks, stalemate, and staggering human costs. By casting the course of the war in such an unrealistic light, reports like those included below made it difficult for many Germans to accept defeat.

I. The Battle of the Marne

1. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 201, September 1, 1914:

Berlin, September 1, 4:00 am. (W.T.B.) The army of Colonel General von Kluck used a corps to beat back an attempted flank attack by weak French forces in the area around Combles.

After capturing an English infantry battalion during its advance, the army of Colonel General von Bülow completely defeated a French army with superior forces near St. Quentin.

The army of Colonel General von Hausen has pushed back the enemy at Aisne near Rathel.

Continuing its crossing over the Maas, the army of Duke Albrecht of Württemberg was initially able to overrun the enemy with advanced parties but then had to partially retreat behind the Maas because enemy forces were stronger. The army then retook the Maas crossing and is now advancing toward Aisne. Fort Les Ayvelles has fallen behind this army.

The army of the German crown prince is about to advance again and cross the Maas after taking the commander of Montmedy prisoner, along with the complete garrison of the fort. The fortress has fallen.

The armies of the Bavarian crown prince and Colonel General von Heeringen continue to fight in French Lorraine.

W.T.B. [Wolff Telegraph Service] Berlin, September 1. The victory of the army of General von Hindenburg on the eastern front, which has already been proclaimed, is of much greater significance than was believed at first. Although new enemy forces intervened through Neidenburg, the defeat of the enemy was complete. Three army corps have been destroyed. Sixty thousand prisoners (including two commanding generals), as well as many heavy guns and banners have fallen into our hands. The remaining Russian troops in the northeast of Eastern Prussia have begun retreating.

2. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 204, September 4, 1914:

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service]. Berlin, September 4, 12:50 am. An attack on Reims has begun. General von Kluck's cavalry is already on the outskirts of Paris. Our army in the west has crossed the Aisne line and is advancing toward the Marne. They have already made contact with the enemy's individual vanguards. The enemy is retreating in front of the armies of General von Kluck, von Bülow, von Hausen, and Duke Albrecht of Württemberg to and behind the Marne.

The enemy offered resistance to the army of the German crown prince near Verdun; the enemy is now being pushed to the south. The armies of the crown prince of Bavaria and of Colonel General von Heeringen are still fighting against a strong enemy with reinforced positions in French Lorraine.

3. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 208, September 9, 1914:

Berlin, 9 September (WTB) [Wolff Telegraph Service]: The *Berliner Tageblatt* has received reports from Paris via Rotterdam that a great battle is presently underway near Paris. It is said that the French left flank is in contact with the German right flank. English troops are also said to be participating in the attack on the German army.

According to the *Messagero*, the large battle reported on by the French government is taking place southeast of Paris. In the city, guns and artillery can be heard from this direction.

4. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 210, September 11, 1914:

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service]. General Headquarters, September 10. East of Paris, German army divisions that advanced to and across the Marne in pursuit of the enemy have been attacked by superior forces from Paris between Meaux-Montmirail. In two days of heavy fighting they have checked the enemy and have themselves made progress. When the advance of strong enemy columns was reported, one flank retreated. The enemy did not follow at any point.

It has been reported that over fifty enemy guns and a couple thousand prisoners of war have been captured as battle spoils.

Those parts of the army fighting to the west of Verdun are engaged in continuous battle.

In Lorraine and the Vosges the situation remains unchanged. On the eastern front the battle has resumed.

5. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 214, September 16, 1914:

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service]. Berlin, September 16, 12:24 am. General Headquarters reported on the evening of September 15 that the battles that have been going on for two days on the right flank of our western army spread today to the armies to the east, all the way to Verdun. In parts of the extended battlefield, German weapons achieved some partial successes. In general, the battle continues.

6. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 215, September 17, 1914:

WTB. [Wolff Telegraph Service], Berlin, September 17, 1914, 12:30 am. Official. General Headquarters reported on the evening of September 16: The situation on the western front has not changed since yesterday. At some places on the battlefield, French attacks were turned back in the night from Tuesday to Wednesday and during the course of Wednesday. Individual German counterattacks were successful.

7. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 216, September 18, 1914:

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service], Berlin, September 18, 1914, 1:35 am (official). General Headquarters reported on the evening of September 17: We are still awaiting the final decision in the battle between Oise and Maas. There are certain signs, however, that the enemy's ability to resist is beginning to wane. A breakthrough attempted by the French with great bravura on the far right flank ran aground on its own, without any great effort from our troops. The middle of the German army is slowly but surely gaining ground. Excursions from Verdun on the right bank of the Maas were easily turned back.

8. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 217, September 19, 1914:

W.T.B. [Wolff Telegraph Service] Berlin, September 18 (Official. An addendum to the report from yesterday evening from General Headquarters.) The French 13th and 14th Army Corps and parts of another division were decisively defeated yesterday to the south toward Noyon and lost a number of batteries.

Enemy attacks against various positions on our battlefield collapsed, with a great loss of life. Likewise, the efforts of French Alpine troops at the crest of the Vosges in Vallée de la Bruche were turned back. In the storming of the Chateau Brumont near Reims 2,500 prisoners were taken.

Beyond this, prisoners were taken in battles in open fields, and artillery and guns were also taken – the number of which is not yet known.

9. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 218, September 21, 1914:

W.T.B. [Wolff Telegraph Service] Berlin, September 18, 1:35 am (official). General Headquarters reports on the evening of September 20: Progress has been made in individual positions in our attack against the French-English army. Reims lies in the battlefield and the French were forced to return our fire. It is lamentable that the city has been damaged because of this. Instructions have been given to protect the cathedral to the greatest possible extent.

10. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 222, September 25, 1914:

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service], Berlin, September 25, 4:00 am. General Headquarters reports on the 24th of September: On the western front there was essentially nothing new to report today. Individual partial battles were going well for the German weapons.

From Belgium and the eastern front there is nothing new to report.

II. The Battle of Langemarck

Freiburger Tagblatt, No. 263, November 12, 1914:

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service]. Berlin, November 11. Report from General Headquarters. On the Yser section of the front we made good progress yesterday. We stormed Dixmuiden. Approximately 500 prisoners of war and about nine machine guns fell into our hands. Further to the south our troops forced their way over the canal. To the west of Langemarck our young regiments attacked, singing "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles" while advancing against the enemy lines and taking them.

Translation: Jeffrey Verhey