



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. Written 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 the ones below made it difficult for many Germans to accept defeat.

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### I. The Battle of the Marne

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

Berlin, September 1, 4:00 am. (W.T.B.) [Wolff Telegraph Service] 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.

Despite being outnumbered, the army of Colonel General von Bülow completely defeated a French army near St. Quentin, having previously captured an English infantry battalion during its advance.

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

Continuing its crossing over the Maas, the army of Duke Albrecht of Württemberg initially overran the enemy with vanguards, but in the course of its advance had to partially retreat behind the Maas because enemy forces were stronger. The army then retook the Maas crossings and is now advancing toward Aisne. Fort Les Ayvelles, which lies behind this army, has fallen.

The army of the German crown prince continues its advance towards and across the Maas after taking the commander of Montmedy and the complete garrison of the fort prisoner during a sortie. 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 previously reported victory of the army of General von Hindenburg on the eastern border is of much greater significance than was realized at first. Although new enemy forces intervened via Neidenburg, the enemy's defeat is now complete. Three army corps have been destroyed! Sixty thousand prisoners (including two

commanding generals), as well as lots of heavy artillery and banners have fallen into our hands. The Russian troops remaining in the northeast of East Prussia have begun retreating.

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

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service]. Berlin, September 4, 12:50 am. An attack directed towards 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 continues its advance toward the Marne. Some of its vanguards have already reached it. 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 subsequent to Verdun; the enemy is now being pushed back 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 general battle is presently underway near Paris. It is said that the French left flank has met 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 and 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 was ordered to retreat. The enemy did not follow at any point.

It has been reported that so far fifty enemy guns and several 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. At 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 fended off during 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: The battle fought between Oise and Maas has still not been decided. 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. Sorties attempted from Verdun on the right bank of the Maas were easily fended off.

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 advance of French Alpine troops at the crest of the Vosges in Vallée de la Bruche was averted. 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, 1:50 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 is now part of the frontline and the French were forced to return our fire. It is lamentable that the city is being damaged because of this. Instructions have been given to spare 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 armed forces.

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

## **II. The First Battle of Flanders**

*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. Dixmuiden was stormed. Approximately 500 prisoners of war and about nine machine guns fell into our hands. Further to the south our troops advanced across 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