

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 86

“Paris Cannot Hold Out”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

A powerful German knockout blow, delivered through Belgium, was key to the German strategy of quickly defeating France and avoiding a two-front war.

Although resistance in Belgium was stancher than anticipated, the German “right hook” has broken through, and is advancing into northern France.

Meanwhile, a French counteroffensive farther south has ended in disaster: huge casualties and nothing to show for them. The French Army is spent, and is in retreat. And the German Army is looking as strong as ever.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 86. Paris Cannot Hold Out.

When we last looked in on the Western Front, the situation was grim. That the Germans might try a huge flanking maneuver through Belgium was not unexpected. The French thought they were prepared for this contingency. But the German offensive in the north was far larger than anyone had imagined. The French response, to hit the German center, on the theory that a strong German flank meant a weak center, but that had failed badly during the Battle of the Frontiers, as we saw in episode 84.

In fact, in one day during the height of the Battle of the Frontiers, August 22, 1914, 27,000 French soldiers were killed, making that the bloodiest day in all of French military history. For all the awful bloodshed that is still to come in the Great War, this terrible record will never be equalled. By August 24, the French Army was in retreat along the entire front.

The other French strategy for answering a German offensive through Belgium was to swing the French Fifth Army, the northernmost of France’s five armies, farther north into Belgium. There, according to the plan, the Fifth Army would coordinate with the British and the Belgians. The six divisions of the Belgian Army plus the six divisions of the British Army together would create a

force approximately equal to any of France's five armies. This force would protect the French left flank and be the anvil that would absorb the hammer blow from the east.

Except that, as we have seen, the Belgian Army opted to move north and protect Antwerp rather than link up with the French, while the British took longer than expected to get into position, and when the German offensive reached them, they too were soon beaten and retreating, just like the French.

Let's pause for a moment here, and get caught up on the British piece of this story. Back on August 5, Britain's first day in the war, a Cabinet committee met with Britain's top military commanders to discuss the first step. That's right, whereas every other army in Europe has a mobilization plan in a safe ready to be implemented as soon as a war breaks out, Britain has...a Cabinet committee.

Among the members of this Cabinet committee was the newly appointed war minister, Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, the first active duty soldier to serve in a Cabinet position since the seventeenth century. New to the job, Kitchener had never been a party to the planning between Britain and France over the past ten years, in which the two governments had informally agreed that in the event of a German offensive against France, such as was now unfolding, the six standing divisions of the British Army in the British Isles would be immediately deployed to France to assist the French Army. And now that the plan had been explained to him, he wanted nothing to do with it.

Kitchener was the one senior military commander in Europe able to see beyond mobilization timetables and dreams of the rapid offensive that would end the war in weeks, to grasp the big picture. Kitchener's reasoning went like this, as he explained it to the Cabinet committee. The Western Front was essentially 70 or so German divisions marching against 70-ish French divisions. The Germans were trying to strike fast and hard and outflank the French, toward the goal of ending the war quickly. Assuming the best-case scenario, the French are able to stabilize the front line. But that means that afterward, we shall be left with two large armies, 70 divisions each, locked in a grim stalemate. If the British government sought to use the British Army to break that stalemate, six infantry divisions and one cavalry division aren't going to be able to do the job. Britain would need to deploy a 70-division army of its own. Only then would Britain and France together have the strength to drive the Germans back.

The meeting erupted in turmoil. Everyone began talking at once. Britain did not have mass conscription. It did not have a 70-division army; it had a seven-division army. To conscript, train and equip 70 divisions, that would take years! Yes, Kitchener agreed, two to three years, in fact.

It took a moment for this to sink in. A huge, grinding war with millions of soldiers fighting for years in a bloody stalemate before Britain could mobilize on a scale large enough to turn the tide...perhaps by autumn of 1917...?

And that's not all. In Lord Kitchener's view, the key to building this 70-division army as rapidly as possible was to use the trained and experienced officers and men of the existing seven divisions as the framework for building the larger force. These soldiers should be seeded among the green troops, where they would share their training and expertise. Sending them off to France to be killed was just wasting them in a battle they had no hope of turning.

And Kitchener had another point to make. The Germans had been so keen on moving through Belgium that they had risked declaring war on an innocent country *and* tipping Britain decisively into alliance with France. The Germans would not have created all these problems for themselves merely for some modest diversion or half-hearted flanking maneuver. If the Germans were this committed to this route, it could only mean that the offensive through Belgium was the centerpiece of the German strategy. That implied that the German force now moving through that country was massive, and placing the small British Army square in its path would likely lead to its destruction.

Now, Kitchener was a household name, famous for his exploits in the Sudan and in the Boer War. In 1914, he was the highest ranking and most senior active duty soldier in the Realm. The Prime Minister and the civilian Cabinet politicians had brought him in to lend his prestige and cachet to the British war effort. He had not been brought in to overturn years of coordinated planning with the French and rewrite the whole British war plan on the fly. And the General Staff didn't want that, either. So Lord Kitchener did not get his way, although he did manage to talk the government into holding two infantry divisions in reserve in Britain for self defense, for in those early days the prospect of a German invasion of Great Britain itself was still considered possible. So, four divisions to France at once, with the fifth to follow later, maybe, and the rest to be held in Britain indefinitely.

Then spoke Field Marshal Sir John French. He was the second most senior soldier in Britain, after Lord Kitchener. You will remember Sir John from episode 12, in which he led the British cavalry in a dramatic end run around the Boer line to relieve the siege of Kimberley. Sir John had been designated the commander of the British Expeditionary Force, or BEF as it was often called for short. Like Lord Kitchener, he was there for his good name as one of the few British heroes of the Boer War, although his own subordinates had doubts about whether he was up to the job. His first suggestion was not encouraging. He wanted to deploy the BEF to Antwerp to link up not with the French, but with the Belgians, and help them try to hold that city.

The General Staff didn't like this idea any better than they liked Lord Kitchener's. The trains and transports were already lined up to ship the BEF to France, they objected, and the French were scheduling trains to meet them when they arrived and move them forward from there. Then the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, clinched their argument by telling the Cabinet committee that the Royal Navy was prepared to guarantee the safety of transports crossing the English Channel, but the passage to Antwerp was longer, and would bring the ships that much

closer to the German High Seas Fleet. The Navy could not guarantee their security under those conditions. And so the matter was dropped, much to the relief of most of those in the room.

Over the next four days, August 6 through 10, as the Germans were besieging Liège and the French were taking and abandoning Mulhouse, the BEF was transferred to the continent. Kitchener had cautioned French that he should in no way consider himself subordinate to French officers, or accept French command. Kitchener also got his way in the BEF's rather leisurely initial deployment, at the French city of Amiens, about halfway between Paris and the Belgian border.

I should mention at this point in the narrative that it is right here, as the BEF heads for the front in mid-August, that we already get the first report of British soldiers—specifically, an Irish regiment—singing the 1912 music hall song, “It’s a Long, Long Way to Tipperary.” Its lyrics tell the story of an Irishman in London who misses his girlfriend Molly, back home in Tipperary, Ireland. The song has nothing to do with the war, and was composed two years earlier, but the theme of being separated from your sweetheart is one that speaks to soldiers everywhere, and this song will become inextricably associated with the British Tommies of the Great War.

[music: “It’s a Long, Long Way to Tipperary”]

Sir John arrived in France himself on August 14, and proceeded to Paris, where he met the next day with the French President, Raymond Poincaré. Poincaré was surprised and more than a little disappointed to discover that his guest, despite owning a summer home in Normandy, and having a French son-in-law, and, you know, being literally *named* “French,” could only speak a few dozen French words and pronounced those quite unintelligibly. He seemed distinctly unmilitary to the President as well, and distinctly lacking in *élan*. Poincaré was stunned when French told him that although the BEF was already on French soil, it would not be ready to fight until August 24, ten days from now. The next day, French met with General Joffre, the French commander in chief—the two men took an almost instant dislike to each other—and after that, on August 17, he met for the first time with General Lanrezac, the commander of the French Fifth Army.

You’ll recall that Lanrezac commands the army on the left flank, the one stuck with the unenviable task of meeting the German offensive. This was at the time when Lanrezac was sending increasingly strident warnings to Joffre and his staff about the size of the German force coming at them through Belgium, and was not yet being taken seriously. He greeted French with this pronouncement, “At last you’re here. It’s not a moment too soon. If we are beaten, we’ll owe it to you.”

Lanrezac didn’t speak English any better than French spoke French. The two pored over a map of Belgium. French pointed to the Meuse River and asked in broken French whether Lanrezac thought the Germans were going to cross it. Lanrezac replied sarcastically, “Tell the Marshal I think the Germans have come to fish.” Henry Wilson translated for him. “He says they are going to cross the river, sir.”

And that catches us up to the Battle of the Frontiers, and the French retreat. The BEF did manage to advance itself into Belgium by August 23, just in time to meet the Germans and be driven back at the Battle of Mons. The British fought well enough in their first engagement with European soldiers since the Crimean War, but were outnumbered by the German First Army.

The commander of the German First Army, by the way, was the 68-year old General Alexander Heinrich Rudolph von Kluck. He was born in Münster, in Westphalia, the son of an architect and a veteran of the Franco-Prussian War. Von Kluck was an able and aggressive commander. Command of the First Army meant he was in command of the far right flank of the German Western Front, so the duty fell to him and his soldiers to make the most rapid and sweeping advance across northern France, which, according to the Schlieffen Plan, would culminate in the First Army moving in a wide circle, likely behind Paris, with the goal of surrounding and eliminating the French left flank, collapsing the French Army and leading to a rapid victory in the West, much as had happened in 1870.

The Germans knew that the BEF had landed in France, but were completely in the dark about when and where it was going to deploy. This was due to the strict secrecy the British maintained. The British kept everything so secret that even their allies didn't know what they were up to, much to the annoyance of the French, but it did the trick. The first indication the Germans had of the location of the BEF when von Kluck and his First Army ran smack into them at the Mons Canal as they were speeding across Belgium.

Von Kluck outnumbered the British two to one, and his first impulse was to widen his front, particularly to the right, in an effort to outflank the smaller BEF formation. That would have been just the right thing to do and might possibly have led to the BEF being surrounded and destroyed as a fighting force right there in their first battle. But he couldn't get permission to make the necessary maneuver from the commander of the German Second Army, the also 68-year old Marshal Karl Wilhelm Paul von Bülow. Von Bülow was a very Prussian officer from a very Prussian military family, and he was the senior commander. Von Kluck answers to him.

Now, from the German point of view, you might think that having an aggressive commander on your far right of this mass German offensive is just what you want to execute the Schlieffen Plan properly. Give this guy his head and watch him bulldoze right through France.

But von Bülow didn't see it that way. As commander of the Second Army, he seemed to feel *his* army was the important one, and the First Army's role was to guard his right flank. Von Bülow and his Second Army were the ones right up against the larger French Fifth Army commanded by General Lanrezac at this same time, and he would not allow von Kluck free rein to move so far to the right, because he worried this would open up a gap between their two armies that the French might be able to exploit. As it turned out, though, all the French were exploiting at the moment were the roads back to Paris, and a grand opportunity to knock the British Army out of the war in one battle was lost.

How very unfortunate for the Germans. Let's hope for their sake that von Kluck doesn't overcompensate and make exactly the opposite mistake later, because that might cost Germany her best shot at winning the war. He said ominously.

[music: *String Quartet in F Major*]

But as of August 25, everything is going swimmingly, if you're German. Resistance in Belgium had ended, and British and French troops were withdrawing from that country, with the First, Second, and Third Armies in pursuit. The French counteroffensive had failed. The Schlieffen Plan was unfolding like clockwork.

On the French side, Marshal Joffre surveyed the wreckage of Plan XVII and concluded that the plan was great, but the soldiers had failed. Not enough *élan*. Joffre would continue to make this argument even after the war was over. But for now, he faces a bigger problem. The mantra of "offense to the utmost" was reduced to an empty slogan. The French Army was in retreat. Joffre's new orders were sensible enough. Fight as you retreat, slow the enemy as much as possible, counterattack when weakness presents itself, but above all, keep a continuous line. Do not let the Germans isolate French units; that will spell their doom.

Commanders on both sides must have been consulting their calendars and looking ahead to September 2, now just eight days away. This September 2 would be the 44th anniversary of Napoleon III's surrender at Sedan. Over 100,000 French were taken prisoner that day, including the Emperor himself, clinching France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian war. In Germany, it was an unofficial holiday, known as *Sedantag*, or Sedan Day.

Now, German commanders hoped, and French commanders feared, that History was on the cusp of repeating herself.

When the Belgian Army had peeled off back to Antwerp, that had left the BEF holding the far left flank by itself against a numerically superior German First Army. The broad outline of what the Germans were up to was now becoming clear. They meant to go around or through the BEF and circle behind, cutting off the Fifth Army's retreat and capturing it. After that, the Germans could simply roll up the French line, destroying French resistance, one army at a time.

And the biggest problem for the French is, as their front line retreats from Belgium, the need to keep the front continuous will require that the French left flank move to the south, ever farther away from the Channel coast, which opens up a bigger and bigger space for von Kluck and his First Army to slip right through.

There was only one answer. Joffre ordered the formation of a Sixth Army. The nucleus of this new Army would be the Army of Lorraine, which had been created for the failed offensive there. The Army of Lorraine would be redeployed to the left of the BEF, and would be filled out with mobilizing reservists and the colonial units that were still arriving from North Africa. This new

Sixth Army would then be deployed to meet the threat. Joffre meant for this new army to be ready to fight by Sedan Day.

In the meanwhile, the retreat went on. But as they retreated, the mood among the rank and file of the French Army shifted. It was one thing to be abandoning positions in a foreign country. Now, as they drew rearward, day after day, they were marching past fields and farms and towns that were part of their native country, in some cases even some soldiers' *own* towns and their *own* homes. Bitter indeed was the knowledge that the French lands they marched through today would be controlled by the Germans tomorrow. And bitter too was the sight of French civilians taking to these same roads toward Paris that the soldiers were using, carrying their children and their elders and a few prized possessions in their motorcars, or wagons, or wheelbarrows, depending upon the family circumstances.

And hard won was the French army's new skills in digging trenches, which they did every afternoon at the end of each day's march in the hot August weather, to guard against any German attempt to overrun them in the night. Some nights French soldiers could make out in the distance Germans looting and setting fire to French homes, and sometimes shooting French civilians. But when each morning came, the Army would withdraw from its entrenchments, pack up, and retreat farther to the rear. The common soldiers began to balk at the seemingly endless withdrawal. When are we going to stand and fight?

The man with the answer to that question was their commander-in-chief, Joffre. Joffre's plan was for the French left to make their stand along the rivers Somme and Aisne, a line roughly parallel to the Belgian border and roughly halfway to Paris.

That was farther back than most soldiers would have liked, but President Poincaré and the French Cabinet in Paris wondered if it wasn't too optimistic. So far, every one of Joffre's plans had turned out to be way overoptimistic; would stopping the Germans along the Somme prove to be the same? A glance at a map will show you that if the Army fails to stop the Germans at the Somme and the Aisne, the next defensible position behind that one would be...the Seine. Which would put Paris itself on the front line.

And speaking of Paris, what are the plans to defend France's largest city and capital? This was not a question of especial concern to Joffre. He argued that Paris was just a point on the map and far less important than preserving the Army. The civilian government officials in the Cabinet, in the capital, differed. With perhaps a greater sensitivity to the political dimension, they felt that to surrender Paris was tantamount to capitulation. How would the French find the strength to fight on after the Germans had pillaged the City of Lights?

The French mobilization plan called for defensive positions in front of Paris to be built and ready for soldiers to garrison by August 25...oh, wait. That's today, isn't it? So how's that going? Well, it turns out that there wasn't much enthusiasm for constructing these defenses, since it involved cutting down trees, demolishing homes, and digging fortifications in the Parisian

suburbs, which would be expensive, unpopular with the local property owners, and hey, Joffre says our counteroffensive is going to crush the Germans any day now. So, the work had barely gotten started. And now that the French Army is in retreat, the engineers back in Paris judged the job would take until...September 15.

On August 26, the French war minister, frustrated with the lack of progress in fortifying Paris, appointed the 65-year old General Joseph Simon Gallieni military governor of Paris. Gallieni had a long career in the French Army, including a stint as a German prisoner of war in 1870. He had been one of the soldiers captured on Sedan Day. Gallieni had retired from active duty just a few months earlier and had been widowed in July. His last posting before his retirement was commander of the Fifth Army, in fact; he was the commander replaced by our friend Lanrezac. Gallieni conferred with the war minister, reviewed the information coming in from the front and announced, “[Y]ou may expect the German armies to be before the walls of Paris in twelve days.” That would be a full week before the city’s defenses would be ready.

Gallieni declared that the proper defense of Paris would require three army corps, and insisted that the war minister pledge to provide them as a condition of his accepting the post of military governor of the capital. The war minister agreed, then found out that Joffre had just redeployed the two reserve divisions garrisoning the capital to his new Sixth Army. The war minister protested to the President, who tried to stop the transfer, but it seemed the units were already *en route*.

All that was left in Paris was one reserve cavalry division and three Territorial divisions. Territorial divisions were third-string units, undersized, and definitely not up to the job of defending the capital by themselves. There was also a colonial division from Algeria that had just debarked in the south and was heading north. This unit was quickly diverted to Paris.

It was nothing like the force Gallieni had asked for. The Minister of War did work up the nerve to send Joffre a telegram, instructing him that in the event his line at the Somme failed to hold, Joffre was to send at least three corps to the defense of Paris.

By this time, news of the defeats of the Battle of the Frontiers and of the large scale retreats that were underway was becoming public knowledge in Paris. Calls arose for Joffre and the Cabinet to be sacked. Rene Viviani’s shaky coalition was no longer enough, and a new government was formed, a “sacred union” as it was called, a broader coalition inviting into the government many of France’s elder statesmen, including our old friends Alexandre Millerand, and Théophile Delcassé. But the eldest of the French elder statesmen, Georges Clemenceau, declined to take part. “In a fortnight, you will be torn to ribbons,” he told Viviani. Clemenceau would remain a trenchant critic of the French government’s war policies for years to come.

[music: *String Quartet in F Major*]

While the French were retreating, reshuffling, and fortifying Paris, the British Expeditionary Force was also in retreat, and its commander, Sir John French, was in despair. The wisdom of Kitchener's words at that Cabinet committee meeting were now plain as day. The French were collapsing and the entire German First Army, a formation twice the size of the BEF, was in pursuit. In French's mind, the battle for France was already lost, and the only goal that still mattered was evacuating these experienced and valuable soldiers back to Blighty.

These feelings were not shared by the rank and file. The common British Tommies felt they had fought well enough at Mons and chafed at the daily orders to retreat and retreat and retreat again. French made it worse by ordering long days of forced marches in the August heat and nights of very little rest, until soldiers began falling asleep on their feet. The Germans, for their part, pursued the BEF vigorously, but couldn't get close enough to engage them, which won the British their grudging respect.

The BEF was divided into two corps. On the evening of August 25, I Corps reached the French town of Landrecies, where they intended to spend the night. There they encountered a unit of soldiers dressed in French uniforms, who called to them in French as they approached. But when these soldiers got close, they lowered their bayonets and charged into the British. They were German soldiers from the First Army. In the twilight confusion, the I Corps commander, General Douglas Haig, normally a steady, level-headed type, judged they were under a much heavier assault than was actually the case and ordered a hasty retreat. He sent a panicked telegram to Sir John, begging for help.

The reaction to this telegram at BEF HQ was equally panicky, as this attack seemed to confirm their worst fears. The Germans seemed to have the BEF on the brink on annihilation. Worse news came from II Corps the following morning. They had spent the night at the French town of Le Cateau, only to discover that the Germans had seized the high ground around the town. With British stragglers still arriving and the roads south clogged with civilian refugees, the II Corps commander, General Smith-Dorrien, judged he had no choice but to accept battle. HQ contacted him by telephone at dawn and told him, "If you stand there and fight, there will be another Sedan." Smith-Dorrien replied that the battle had already begun.

The battle raged until late in the afternoon. The British gave a good account of themselves, and this time von Kluck's aggressive stance didn't work for him. Although he had superior numbers, his flanks were spread too far apart to make good use of them, and so he only had about three divisions with which to engage the three divisions of II Corps. The desperate British stand at Le Cateau had disrupted von Kluck's effort to envelop the whole of the BEF.

But the British paid a high price: almost 8,000 casualties, about 20% of II Corps and more than double the British casualties at Mons. The Germans suffered about 3,000 casualties. Among those British casualties were 2,600 taken prisoner. The losses seemed worse than they actually were at first. Thousands of soldiers from II Corps had been cut off, but found their way through

German-held territory back behind the front, or had made their way to Antwerp, which the Belgian Army still controlled. For a time, HQ had lost communication with II Corps altogether and had thought the entire unit destroyed.

Marshal Joffre met with Sir John afterward. The BEF was not formally under French command, so Joffre could not *order* Sir John to hold his ground, so he did his best to *explain* the importance of the BEF maintaining a continuous front with the Fifth Army. Sir John told him that the BEF was in full retreat, and so was the Fifth Army. They were already out of contact with the Fifth Army, both flanks exposed, and his troops too beaten and exhausted to do anything but retreat farther. Joffre concluded that as a fighting force, the BEF was spent.

Von Kluck, commander of the First Army had concluded exactly the same thing, and reported confidently to the General Staff that the British were routed and the First Army would soon be rounding them up. Von Bülow, commander of the Second Army pursuing the French Fifth Army, was equally optimistic that his enemy was beaten. The French were retreating everywhere across the front, and the Schlieffen Plan was working perfectly. Von Kluck did complain to Moltke that von Bülow was still holding him back from finishing off the BEF, and asked to be given a fully independent command. Moltke agreed to this.

If there is any hope left for France now, it lies in Joffre's hastily assembling Sixth Army, and also in Paris. The all-but-unfortified capital has to be made into a front-line fortification, and become the anchor between the Fifth and the Sixth Armies, to hold the line in place and fill the role the BEF seemed no longer capable of filling.

On August 28, the Kaiser himself sent von Kluck a congratulatory telegram, expressing the imperial gratitude for the First Army's rapid advance into French territory, averaging some 30 kilometers per day. Von Kluck, perhaps intoxicated with victory, began to suggest that instead of pursuing the now-broken BEF, perhaps it was time for him to turn left and deliver the final blow: a right hook into the flank of the collapsing French Fifth Army, finishing it off, and opening the way to Paris itself.

But the German General Staff had gotten wind of the formation of the Sixth Army. The First Army was ordered instead to the south and west of Paris, where the Sixth Army was forming up, in the hope of breaking it apart before it has a chance to come together. Second Army was ordered to make for Paris, while the German Third, Fourth, and Fifth Armies were ordered toward the River Marne, east of Paris.

The capital was eerily quiet. Gone was most of the traffic. The Ritz was empty; all the foreign tourists had left town. Even Paris's notoriously raucous newspapers were mostly shut down. Raymond Poincaré, the President of the Republic, asked General Gallieni, the military governor of Paris if the government should evacuate the capital. "Paris cannot hold out," Gallieni replied, "and you should make ready to leave as soon as possible."

The French Cabinet met and, over the objections of a few, decided to relocate to Bordeaux. Some ministers offered to remain in Paris, but these offers were declined. If some ministers left and some stayed, well, that wouldn't look very good. The President was told it was also his duty to come along with the Cabinet.

Even Madame Poincaré had to come. She was doing volunteer work at a hospital, and argued that she should be allowed to stay and carry on, as a symbol of French resolve. Her request was refused. Government archives were loaded into trucks and shipped out of the city, or, when this was not possible, were burned to prevent them from falling into German hands.

Later that day, a German airplane appeared in the sky above Paris for the first time. It dropped three bombs, killing two civilians and injuring more. Then it dropped leaflets, announcing that the Germans were at the gates of the city, and Paris had no choice but to surrender.

The government left town on September 2, Sedan Day. General Gallieni was now the highest-ranking military and civilian figure in Paris. With the possible exception of the Prefect of Police. He was new on the job. When the old Prefect of Police had received his orders to remain in Paris, he had resigned his position and fled the city.

General Gallieni would later confess that at this moment, he fully expected he had been left behind to die in the final battle.

We'll have to stop there for today. Thanks for listening. If you like *The History of the Twentieth Century*, like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, and visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com. Tell your friends and family who like history about the podcast. And if you have a few bucks to spare, click on the Patreon button and become a patron of the podcast. Subscriptions start at just \$2.00 a month, and they help keep the lights on around here, so help out if you can. And thank you to listener Martin for becoming a patron. You can also help out by leaving a rating and review at the iTunes store, and thanks so much to those of you who already have left those nice reviews and ratings.

And I hope you'll join me next week on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we turn our attention east to the Russian invasion of German territory in East Prussia. You might think I'm deliberately leaving you hanging here at this dramatic juncture on the Western Front...and, yeah, you're right, I am, but we're also going over to the Eastern Front because events there are going to play an important role in what comes next in the West. The Cossacks are Coming! Next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. As the German armies pressed on toward Paris, the German General Staff was preparing to distribute commemorative bronze medals that had already been struck for the occasion. They hung from a blue ribbon and showed the Arc d'Triomphe in the foreground, with the Eiffel Tower in the distance, and read: "The Entry of German Troops into Paris. 1871. 1914.

One thing you have to give the Germans credit for: they think ahead.

[music: Closing Theme]

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