

**The History of the Twentieth Century**  
**Episode 123**  
**“Something Wrong with Our Bloody Ships”**  
**Transcript**

[music: Fanfare]

By 1916, the battles of the Great War are not, for the most part, being fought in the hope of gaining a strategic breakthrough in the enemy line, as had been the objective in 1914 and 1915. Individual battles are now often being fought as part of a grand strategy of weakening the enemy across the front, either by exhausting the enemy’s ability to supply his own forces with arms and ammunition, or by bleeding the enemy army until it runs out of soldiers.

But the two sides are still locked in stalemate, and every offensive exhausts the attacker as much as the defender. And the end of the war is still not in sight.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 123. Something Wrong with Our Bloody Ships.

This is the third episode in our series on the Great War in 1916. Remember that last time, we ended with the French and the Germans still fighting bitterly over Verdun. Elsewhere on the Western Front, the British are gearing up for a summer offensive against the Germans, and on the Eastern Front, one Russian offensive has failed, but another one is in preparation, intended to help take the pressure off the French.

But before the Russians get their offensive under way in early June, there are two important events occurring in May of 1916 on two other fronts that we need to cover first. So let’s begin on the Italian front.

I last talked about the Italian front back in episode 120, and I noted that during 1915, there were no fewer than four Italian offensives against the Austrians in the region of the Isonzo River valley. Early 1916 saw the Fifth Battle of the Isonzo River, which ended inconclusively, just like the first four. But by this time, the Austrian Chief of Staff, our old friend General Franz Josef

Conrad von Hötzendorf, is turning *his* strategic attention to the Italians. Conrad, like most German and Austrian military leaders, believed in early 1916 that Russia had been beaten so badly that it no longer posed much of a threat. Even Russia's brief offensive in March did little to change anyone's mind about this. The fact that the latest Russian offensive had failed so quickly only seemed to underline their army's helplessness.

You'll recall that things also went pretty badly for General Conrad in 1914 and early 1915, including a Russian conquest of most of Galicia and a complete Austrian failure to subdue the small nation of Serbia, and the blame for a lot of this has to be laid at Conrad's own door. The second half of 1915, on the other hand, went better, once the Germans pitched in and helped. The Germans have pushed the Russians out of Poland, which also meant the Russians had had to withdraw from Austrian Galicia, so that embarrassment has been undone. Also, Austria, with help from Germany and Bulgaria, has at last subdued Serbia. And General Conrad at last persuaded his longtime paramour, Virginia von Reininghaus, to divorce her husband and marry him.

So Conrad is feeling pretty good these days. Only, with Serbia defeated, and the Russians apparently incapable of going on the offensive in the near future, Conrad's thoughts inevitably turned toward Italy. Perhaps he was looking to salvage his reputation. The Russian Army was still too big and too strong for Austria to take on all by itself, and so he devised a plan under which Austria would crush the Italian Army and force Italy out of the war.

His thinking went something like this: with the bulk of the Italian Army on the Isonzo River front, in the east, Italy would be vulnerable to an Austrian assault south from the Tyrolean Alps. Austria holds a salient in the mountains there that stretches south almost to the lowlands of the Po River valley. A surprise assault here might drive the Italians back and allow the Austrians to sweep south into the foothills of the Alps in the Asiago region, noted for its eponymous cheese (I think the best cheeses are eponymous, don't you?) and thence onto the lowlands of the densely populated Po valley, Italy's most important agricultural and industrial region, and thence on to the cities of Vicenza, then Padua, and on to Venice. This would isolate the Italian forces in the Isonzo region and force the Italian government to sue for peace.

Conrad reached out to his German counterpart, Chief of Staff Erich von Falkenhayn, to ask Germany to lend him German soldiers for this offensive. Now, this is in the middle of the Verdun offensive, Falkenhayn's master plan to bleed the French Army into capitulation; you can imagine how he reacted to Conrad asking him to divert German soldiers to a different front. Conrad has been nothing but trouble for Germany from the beginning. His failures have already forced Germany to divert units from the more important Western Front to bail him out against Russia and Serbia, and now he's looking for a way to tie down more German troops against Italy? Falkenhayn angrily refused this request.

There was also a little diplomatic problem with this idea. Italy had declared war on Austria in May of 1915 and on the Ottoman Empire in August of 1915, but she hasn't actually gotten around to declaring war on Germany just yet. Italy will declare war on Germany later this year, in August to be exact, but for the time being, the two countries are technically at peace. Why exactly would Germany want to change that?

Conrad was disappointed by this answer, but not ready to give up just yet. He drew up a new plan for a Tyrolean offensive, this time using Austrian troops only, diverted from the Russian front, along with concentrations of heavy artillery. Artillery was a weakness of the Italian Army, and potentially one of Austria's strengths, since she had the Škoda Works in Bohemia, one of Europe's leading manufacturers of arms and artillery, and in fact Conrad would be able to assemble over 500 heavy artillery guns in the Alps for this offensive. The Italian forces facing them had exactly 36.

But Falkenhayn didn't like this idea any better, even if it didn't require explicit German assistance. He had wanted to borrow those Austrian artillery pieces himself for his offensive at Verdun for one thing, and Conrad was pitching his latest brainchild as an all-Austrian project, but since it involved redeploying Austrian soldiers away from the Russian front, in Falkenhayn's mind this invited another Russian offensive, which would then require Germans to be redeployed from the Western Front to bail the Austrians out once again, so all this was merely a way of forcing Germany into assisting in Conrad's offensive without explicitly admitting to it. Falkenhayn also judged that the eighteen divisions Conrad was allocating to this offensive just weren't enough to carry out so ambitious an attack. As we've already seen, Conrad has a history of expecting too much from his army.

The Austrian offensive began with a short but concentrated artillery bombardment just before dawn on May 15. You see, the Austrians, too, were adapting to the new style of war. The bombardment was devastating to the Italian units entrenched in the mountains. Artillery explosions triggered rockslides that buried Italian soldiers in their trenches. The Austrians had also gotten their hands on Italian code books and were able to intercept and decode Italian wireless transmissions which helped them react speedily to Italian countermoves.

The Italian *Alpini*, or Alpine units, were and are Italy's elite mountain troops. They are mostly recruited from mountainous regions of the country and specially trained and equipped for mountain fighting. They fought skillfully, but to no avail. In three weeks, the Austrians pushed forward along a 50-kilometer front into the Asiago region in the southern foothills of the Alps and by early June they were threatening the city of Vicenza, which was important because a rail line runs through here that is crucial to keeping the Italian armies on the Isonzo front supplied. For one brief, shining moment, Conrad looked like a genius.

But then it all came crashing down. The Austrians were advancing along the 50-kilometer front of their offensive, but Italian forces on the flanks held their positions in the mountains, which

drew away Austrian soldiers, who had to protect the flanks of the offensive against an Italian counterattack. The Austrians did not have the soldiers and materiel to begin a diversionary offensive along the Isonzo, which made it possible for Cadorna to redeploy units from the east to the Alps, and he was aided in this by Italy's railroad network. Conrad's heavy artillery, meanwhile, the big guns that had been so effective in the opening days of the offensive, had proved very difficult to move through the mountainous terrain. They fell behind the advancing Austrian infantry and were unable to support it.

Does any of this sound familiar? This has been the fate of many an offensive in the Great War. The attacking army can't move forward fast enough, or defend itself against flank attacks from the enemy positions on either side. Next, Falkenhayn's worst fears became real in June when the Russians began their own offensive against the Austrians in the East, forcing Conrad to abandon his Alpine offensive, withdraw, and transfer soldiers back to Galicia. I'll have much more to say about that offensive in the next episode, believe me. But by July, the Alpine front was right back where it started. The only long-term consequences of Conrad's offensive were that the embarrassment of the initial Austrian advance would bring down the government of Italian Prime Minister Antonio Salandra. Salandra would be replaced by the 78-year old Paolo Boselli. Boselli had held a seat in the Italian parliament for many, many years; he was one of Italy's oldest deputies. His political career, though long, was not particularly distinguished; he was chosen because his age and his long résumé made him a stabilizing compromise candidate.

There would be five additional Battles of the Isonzo River in 1916, bringing the grand total up to nine so far, and bringing the 1916 casualty totals on the Italian front to something like 300,000 Italians to 230,000 Austrians. In one of these offensives, the Italians would actually capture the city of Gorizia, on the Isonzo River, the gateway to the Karst Plateau in Austrian-controlled Slovenia, though once again, the Italian offensive would peter out.

[music: *The Wand of Youth*]

In those early days of General Conrad's offensive against Italy in the Alps, in May, when the offensive was pushing the Italians back and Conrad was looking like a genius, the Italians promptly turned to the Russians to ask for help. Obviously, they have been getting pointers from the French, who you'll recall have been making a habit of asking for Russian help whenever things get dicey in the West. Once again, the Russians will answer the call for help from their allies, even, arguably, at the expense of Russia's own interests.

Because of course it would be in Russia's interest to begin her big offensive of 1916 everywhere along the front at once. But the Italians needed help and the Russian commanders in the north remained adamant that it would be another month at minimum before they were fully prepared for their offensive, so Stavka turned to General Brusilov, the commander of the Russian Southwest Front, who had offered to attack without any additional resources, and asked him to attack the Austrians now, on his own. After all, it was the Austrians who were attacking the

Italians, so it was here that a counteroffensive would do the most good. And the Austrian offensive against Italy suggested that soldiers and supplies had been diverted there, meaning that the forces arrayed against Brusilov probably had been stripped of troops and materiel. Brusilov could expect to have an advantage in numbers of soldiers and in artillery.

Brusilov balked at going ahead on his own and reminded everyone that his offer, which we heard about last week, had been to act as part of a coordinated offensive with the fronts to the north. And when, exactly, do these northern commanders expect to finally be ready? June 14, he was told. After some haggling, Brusilov agreed to begin his offensive a little sooner, but insisted that it be no more than ten days sooner. Very well, then. June fourth it is.

The day before the offensive began, Brusilov got another call from his superiors at Stavka. What exactly was he up to with his offensive plans? Because it was clear by now that Brusilov's Southwest Front was engaged in some very unorthodox preparations, not at all like the sort of preparations under way in the north. Would the general like to postpone his offensive for a few days, in order to reorganize it into something a little more by the book?

No, the general would not. Instead, Brusilov offered his resignation. Stavka said, and I quote, "Whoa, dude, there's no need to take it like *that*," and agreed to let him go ahead with the offensive in his own special way.

But before we get into Brusilov's offensive, which will be known to history as "The Brusilov Offensive," we have to take a detour to examine an important battle on yet another front: the naval front. Surely you remember navies?

Well, maybe you don't. Not much has been going on in naval combat for some time now. To appease the United States, the German Navy has abandoned the U-boat war on civilian ships, and we haven't heard anything out of Germany's High Seas Fleet since the Battle of Dogger Bank, episode 106. That was in January of 1915, over a year ago now, and I mentioned at the time that the German defeat in that encounter led to the commander of the High Seas Fleet, Friedrich von Ingenohl, being replaced by Admiral Hugo von Pohl, and that the Germans had concluded from their wartime experiences that higher quality ships were needed and that these might be able to offset a disadvantage in numbers. The Navy spent the next year upgrading their ships' armor, and by spring of 1916, was ready to try again.

Meanwhile though, Admiral von Pohl had fallen ill with liver cancer, which would claim his life in February 1916. His successor was the 52-year old Reinhard Schneer. Schneer had a much more aggressive temperament than his predecessors and soon after his appointment, he had persuaded the Kaiser that it was time for the High Seas Fleet to go on the offensive once again.

Unfortunately for Schneer and the High Seas Fleet, though the year's delay may have gained the German Navy a qualitative edge, the Royal Navy was able to use the time to increase its quantitative edge. At one point, during the first winter of the war, the British Grand Fleet was

down to a mere one battleship advantage over the Germans, and early 1915 would have been Germany's best opportunity to win a decisive naval victory. But the Germans did not know this, and the opportunity slipped away.

In the spring of 1916, the Grand Fleet was up to 37 battleships against 27 for the High Seas Fleet. Obviously, a full confrontation between these two fleets would be not necessarily to Germany's advantage, and so Scheer returned to the strategy of 1914, which was to attempt to lure a portion of the British fleet into a position where it could be ambushed and attacked by the full German fleet.

One such attempt occurred on April 25. On that day, a German battlecruiser squadron under the command of Admiral Franz Ritter von Hipper bombarded the coastal towns of Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth on the east coast of England. These bombardments were timed to coincide with the Irish Rising and the targeted towns were bases for British minelayers and submarines, respectively. The main purpose of the raid, though, was to lure a British naval force into intercepting the German battlecruiser squadron while the main High Seas Fleet lurked nearby, ready to ambush. Unfortunately for the Germans, though, bad weather prevented the Royal Navy from reaching the scene in force, and the ambush failed.

That very day, April 25, was the day the Kaiser had ordered the end of U-boat attacks on civilian ships, pursuant to the Sussex Pledge, which we talked about last week. All German U-boats on patrol against British shipping returned to base, and Scheer hatched a plan to take advantage of this new asset.

At this time, the main body of the British Grand Fleet was tucked safely away at Scapa Flow, in the Orkney Islands. It was under the command of Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, a cautious officer, indeed, someone often criticized for his caution, although his caution is understandable, given that the preservation of the Grand Fleet and the maintenance of its blockade against Germany was the single most important priority of the war. As Winston Churchill would later put it, Jellicoe was the only person on either side "who could lose the war in an afternoon."

The Royal Navy also kept a portion of the Grand Fleet, including its battlecruisers, at Rosyth, in Scotland. These ships were under the command of Admiral David Beatty. Battlecruisers, you'll recall, are lighter, faster ships than dreadnoughts, and the point of this separate battlecruiser squadron was to be a sort of rapid response force in the event of German activity in the North Sea. Beatty was a much more aggressive commander than Jellicoe, which was totally in keeping with the nature of his assignment.

And that was the inspiration for Scheer's plan. On May 17, he sent 19 U-boats to station off the Firth of Forth, where Beatty's battlecruisers were based. The original plan was to have Hipper's battlecruisers bombard the town of Sunderland in northeast England, then ambush Beatty's ships when they responded. Bad weather made this plan too risky, and at the last minute, Scheer ordered a switch to the backup plan, which was to have Hipper's battlecruisers proceed to the

Skagerrak. This is the body of water between Denmark and Norway. There they could provoke the Royal Navy by attacking British shipping. Unfortunately for the Germans, most of the U-boats did not receive the message ordering the redeployment.

But Room 40, the British Admiralty's cryptanalysis operation, picked up that the Germans were engaging in some sort of major operation in the North Sea, but by this time the Germans have learned to be more discreet in their wireless messages, so Room 40 isn't sure exactly what they're up to, and because of a miscommunication, it was falsely reported to Jellicoe and Beatty that the bulk of the High Seas Fleet was still in port in Germany.

Beatty's battlecruiser squadron raced toward the Skagerrak to figure out what was going on. Some of the German U-boats observed their departure, but none were in a position to attack. Jellicoe's Grand Fleet also departed Scapa Flow, planning to rendezvous with Beatty at the Skagerrak. Beatty was short on battlecruisers at the time, so he had been assigned four regular battleships to make up for the lack, but these ships were somewhat slower, and so when Beatty spotted Hipper's battlecruiser squadron at 2:20 in the afternoon of May 31 and ordered his ships into combat, these British battleships were too far behind. What should have been a ten-to-five British advantage was reduced to a mere six-to-five.

And so began what the Germans call the Battle of Skagerrak and the British call the Battle of Jutland. Per the German plan, Hipper turned his own battlecruiser force south, hoping to draw Beatty toward the High Seas Fleet, which lay out of sight in that direction. Hipper's own ships lay to the east of the British, which made them difficult to see against the gray sky, while the afternoon sun made the British much more visible to the Germans. When the Germans began firing at 3:48, they scored hits on three of the six British battlecruisers in the first few minutes of the engagement, including a serious hit on Beatty's flagship, HMS *Lion*, which might have sparked an explosion and sunk her, were it not for the quick thinking of an officer who ordered the magazine flooded. A few minutes later, a lucky hit destroyed HMS *Indefatigable*, killing all but two of her crew of more than a thousand, and briefly it was the Germans who held the numerical advantage.

Fortunately for Beatty, those four missing battleships caught up a few minutes later, at about 4:15 in the afternoon. But ten minutes later, a salvo of German shells destroyed another British battlecruiser, HMS *Queen Mary*, killing all but nine of her crew. A moment later, *Princess Royal* was hit, and it was believed at first, mistakenly, that this battlecruiser, too, had been sunk. On the bridge of *Lion*, Admiral Beatty at this point in the battle turned to his flag captain and remarked, "Chatfield, there seems to be something wrong with our bloody ships today."

By this time, the German High Seas Fleet to the south had spotted the approaching German and British battlecruisers to their north. In between, a battle erupted between the German and British destroyer escorts. A British light cruiser, *Southampton*, dodged heavy bombardment from the German battleships as her radio shack feverishly transmitted an urgent message to Beatty and

Jellicoe: the main German battle fleet, including sixteen dreadnoughts and six pre-dreadnought battleships, was closing.

This was the first indication the British commanders had of the presence of the German High Seas Fleet. Beatty waited a few more minutes, until 4:40, to see the approaching German fleet for himself, before ordering his own ships to turn 180 degrees and head due north. Out of sight in the distance was the main force of the British Grand Fleet. Admiral Jellicoe signaled his ships to prepare for combat and contacted the Admiralty by wireless to notify them that the grand confrontation between the Royal Navy and the *Hochseeflotte*, the naval battle that had been anticipated since years before this war had actually begun, the biggest battle ever fought between steel battleships, the contest that had the potential to decide the Great War in an afternoon, was about to begin.

The British and German battlecruiser fleets had exchanged roles. Now it was Hipper and Scheer in pursuit, and Beatty luring the unsuspecting Germans into a trap. Unfortunately for Beatty, the communications problems between him and his battleship squadron continued to mount. They did not get the order to turn about until some time had passed and they were slower than the battlecruisers, so they were left behind Beatty's fleet, prime targets for the approaching Germans. On the other hand, as fully armored battleships, they were more able to take the punishment than the battlecruisers would have been. Three of these four ships were hit by German shells. None were sunk, although one, *Malaya*, took serious damage.

The German fleet pursued the British northward for more than an hour and a half. The British scored multiple hits on Hipper's flagship, SMS *Lützow*, while the Germans sank the British battlecruiser *Invincible*. With *Lützow* taking on water and losing electricity, Hipper was forced to transfer to a torpedo boat, intending to board one of his other battlecruisers when the opportunity arose. *Lützow* would eventually sink.

Meanwhile, Jellicoe knew the Germans were approaching, but he did not have good information on the Germans' exact location and heading. He had to decide whether to deploy his own fleet to the east or the west. West would likely bring them closer to the enemy sooner, but carried a greater risk. East would mean they would be firing on the Germans from a greater distance, but from a better position. The British ships would be in the dark part of the sky, while the German ships would be silhouetted against the setting sun. His decision might well determine the outcome of the battle; the battle might determine the outcome of the war.

Jellicoe chose east. Ten minutes later, at 6:25 PM, or 7:25 PM German time, Admiral Scheer peered out from the bridge of his flagship, *Friedrich der Grosse*, into the darkening haze and smoke. It was almost nighttime, when the big German dreadnoughts would be vulnerable to surprise torpedo attacks from the smaller but fleetier British destroyers. Should he break off pursuit of the British battlecruisers and return to Wilhelmshaven? As he pondered this question, one of the bridge officers relayed to the admiral a wireless message just received from one of the



German torpedo boats. They had picked up survivors from a sunken British destroyer. These British survivors were now taunting the German sailors with the news that the Grand Fleet was bearing down on them. This was the first indication Scheer had had that Jellicoe's ships were anywhere near.

Just a few moments later, Scheer got confirmation of this news when multiple gun flashes appeared along the dark horizon to the northeast. The British were crossing to the southeast and the Germans were headed straight for them. This is the classic "crossing the T" situation, where the British get full use of their broadsides against the German ships, while the German ability to return fire is limited. Scheer immediately ordered his own 180-degree emergency turn.

The entire arc of the horizon from north to east lit up from the flashes of the British muzzles, although the ships were too distant for the Germans to be sure of their positions or headings. In fact, Jellicoe ordered his ships to move parallel to the German withdrawal and to the east, again so that the enemy's ships would be visible against the twilight.

Scheer judged his ships would not be able to escape before nightfall, and in any case he was headed southwest, creating an opening between his fleet and the safety of Wilhelmshaven that the British would surely move into, cutting off his retreat. So at 7:00 he ordered another 180-degree turn. His fleet was now headed back to engage the British. He had little hope of defeating them; his plan was to surprise the British and disrupt their attack in the hope that darkness would fall before the British could regroup. At 7:15, Jellicoe's fleet fired again, under better conditions this time, scoring enough hits to damage several German battleships while taking only minimal damage in return.

With the situation becoming grim, Scheer ordered a third hard-about, then ordered his torpedo boats and the four remaining battlecruisers of Hipper's squadron to engage the British fleet and potentially sacrifice themselves so that the main German fleet could lay down a smoke screen and escape.

Hipper's battlecruisers suffered heavy damage but they were able to distract the British and return to Scheer's fleet after dark. Having lost sight of the Germans, Jellicoe ordered his own ships to turn to port and head south, hoping to keep between the High Seas Fleet and their home port, and thus force the Germans into a second round of combat tomorrow morning. Jellicoe ordered his destroyers to patrol in the rear of the main body of the fleet, to guard against the possibility that the Germans might try to escape by circling behind him.

In fact, that's exactly what the Germans did. They circled behind the Grand Fleet. The destroyers engaged, but somehow, inexplicably, no one notified Jellicoe. Apparently at least some British officers believed that the flashes of light and sounds of gunfire were sufficient notice for Jellicoe to figure it out on his own, but in fact he didn't. The British lost five destroyers in a spirited battle, in which they managed to sink the German cruiser *Rostock* and the pre-dreadnought battleship *Pommern*, which went down with all hands, 839 in all.

At 11:30 that night, Jellicoe received a signal from Room 40. By intercepting wireless signals, Room 40 had worked out the position and heading of the High Seas Fleet. Unfortunately for the British, Jellicoe doubted the information and did not act on it. Room 40 had given him bad information about Scheer's location twice already just today, so he did not believe the third report, which as it happened, was perfectly accurate.

The High Seas Fleet returned to port the next day. The day after that, June 2, the German Navy released the first public statement about the battle, claiming it as a major German victory. The Germans only acknowledged the sinking of one capital ship, *Pommern*, keeping secret most of their other losses, which would not have been known to the British. German schoolchildren were given a day off to celebrate, and the Battle of the Skagerrak would be celebrated as a German naval victory for the next thirty years.

The Royal Navy made no comparable statement at first, and considered keeping news of the battle a secret, but by the time the Grand Fleet returned to its ports, the British press was already repeating the news that had been reported over German wireless broadcasts. Morale was low among the British sailors, who felt victory had eluded them, and it fell further when they returned home to discover the press had already declared them defeated and worried relatives were sending messages begging to know whether they were still alive.

In fact, the Royal Navy lost nearly 7,000 sailors and fourteen ships out of a total of 150, including three battlecruisers, while the Germans lost 3,000 sailors and eleven ships out of 99, including one battlecruiser and one pre-dreadnought. Numerically, it was a significant German victory, all the more so considering that they had gone into the battle with a smaller fleet.

But in fact, the Battle of Jutland was no Trafalgar, no Tsushima Strait. Far from being the decisive battle naval strategists had been looking for, it had left the strategic situation entirely unchanged. The British had held substantial naval superiority before the battle; they continued to hold it afterward. Scheer's experience convinced him that any further attempts to engage the Grand Fleet would be futile, and no more attempts will be made. No one knew it at the time, but Jutland would be the biggest and the last naval battle of its era. The next time a naval battle would be as momentous as Trafalgar or the Tsushima Strait, it would be fought not with battleships, but with aircraft carriers.

Debate over the Battle of Jutland continues to our time, mostly over the assessments of Admirals Jellicoe and Beatty. Jellicoe is often criticized for being too cautious, Beatty for being too reckless. And communications foul-ups impaired the ability of both men to seize opportunities when the battle presented them. To give either man too much blame, though, would be to minimize the credit due to Admiral Scheer, who commanded his own ships skillfully in a very difficult situation. In our time, Jutland is generally regarded as a draw, the naval equivalent of Ypres, or Gallipoli, or Verdun, a bloody, inconclusive battle emblematic of this bloody, inconclusive war.

We'll have to stop there for today. Thank you for listening, and a special thanks to Leslie for making a donation, and to Keirra for becoming a patron of the podcast. New donors and patrons are both welcome and appreciated, so I invite you to head on over to [historyofthetwentiethcentury.com](http://historyofthetwentiethcentury.com) and click on the PayPal button to make a one-time contribution, or the Patreon button to become a patron. And thanks once again to all of you who already have.

And I hope you'll join me next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we finish out the military events of 1916. Brusilov's Offensive, the Battle of the Somme, and the poet who wonders, "What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?" That's next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. One of the British ships involved in the Battle of Jutland was the armored cruiser *Hampshire*. Three days after returning to Scapa Flow after the battle, she was assigned the task of transporting a British delegation, including the War Minister, Lord Kitchener, to Arkhangelsk in Russia, where they would participate in high-level talks with the Russian Emperor and his ministers. Only a few hours out to sea, in stormy weather, *Hampshire* struck a German mine and sank in a matter of minutes. Kitchener and his entire delegation were killed. There were only twelve survivors out of 749 aboard. David Lloyd George would succeed Kitchener as war minister.

The sudden and unexpected death provoked despair in some quarters. The King ordered army officers to wear black armbands for one week. On the other hand, newspaper magnate Lord Northcliffe, no fan of Kitchener's, greeted the news with the declaration that "[t]he British Empire has had the greatest stroke of luck in its history!"

In southern Ontario, the city of Berlin, so named because its original settlers were Pennsylvania Germans, and then later it drew many German immigrants in the nineteenth century, they had already decided to change its name. By the end of the month, the townspeople voted to adopt "Kitchener" as the city's new name, and so it is known to this day.

[music: Closing War Theme]