



How Germany Makes Truces



A. THIERS.

France Victim of Hun Perfidy in 1870 When Paris Fell

HAD they come from another government the German proposals for an armistice might have spelled out a genuine desire for peace. Germany expressed willingness to evacuate France and Belgium and all invaded territory, willingness to do almost anything if only a mixed commission might sit to arrange the terms. But the whole decent part of the world applauded President Wilson's rejection of the bid.

Must Be Left to Military Men.

"It must be clearly understood," he said, "that the process of evacuation and the conditions of an armistice are matters which must be left to the judgment and advice of the military advisers of the Government of the United States and the allied Governments, and the President feels it his duty to say that no arrangement can be accepted by the Government of the United States which does not provide absolutely satisfactory safeguards and guarantees of the maintenance of the present military supremacy of the armies of the United States and the Allies in the field."

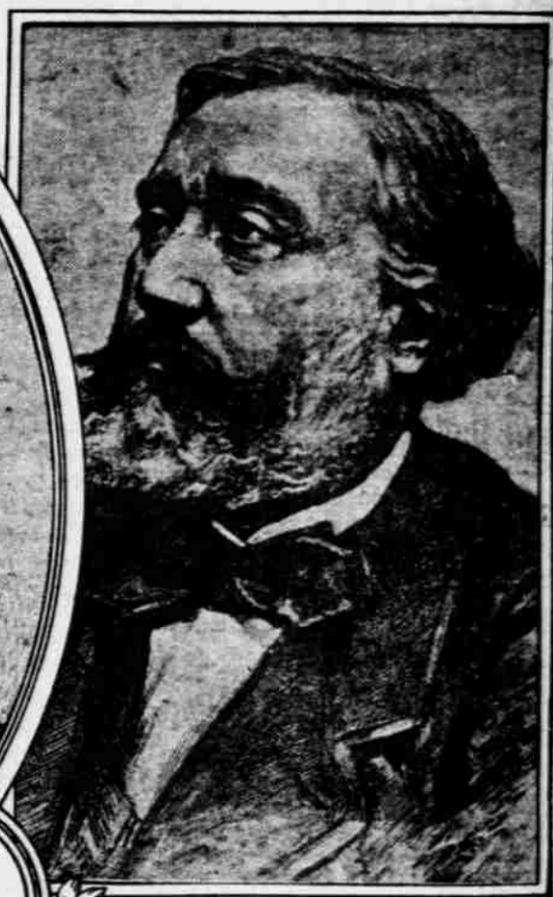
Why this eagerness of the Germans for a mixed commission to talk terms of a truce? And why the insistence of the President that Foch, Haig and Pershing, and not diplomats, shall lay down the conditions if an armistice is agreed to? Because, in general, the ways of the Germans are known. In a narrower and more specific application of that same principle, because of historical precedent.

The Imperial German Government is young in years. So there is but one precedent, the armistice arranged between Germany and France soon after the grandfather of the present Kaiser was proclaimed German Emperor at Versailles in 1871. Then, as now, the Imperial German Government and the German General Staff were one and the



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FAVRE.

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M. GAMBETTA.

Bismarck Concluded Peace With "a Pistol at Victim's Head"

therefore a provisional government had taken charge of affairs in France with Gambetta conducting the war from the seat of authority at Bordeaux and Paris under the control of a handful of men of the Council of National Defence.

The Germans had overrun much of France. Paris had been besieged and bombarded for many weeks, holding out in the hope that the armies in the field would fulfil their promise to redeem the city. French armies in the north and west had been trounced roundly, but still were capable of some show of force. In the east affairs supposedly were going better from the French point of view. Belfort, however, was under siege.

Near End of Its Endurance.

But Paris was near the end of its endurance. The elephant and other animals in the Jardin des Plantes had been eaten, and the last of the remaining horses had been condemned to the shambles—some 8,000 of them to divide among 2,000,000 inhabitants. Out through the gates of the city, therefore, on the morning of January 23 drove a closed carriage. From the

celerity with which it was passed through the German lines it was plain the passenger was of no mean importance. It was, indeed, Jules Favre, who had undertaken to surrender Paris upon the best terms he could get.

His intention when he went to meet Bismarck at Versailles was just that—to surrender Paris, just as any other fortress might be surrendered, and to let the conquering army march in. Perhaps Favre could get terms whereby the garrison could march out with the honors of war. Perhaps not.

Note again the point of this story: When Bismarck spoke he spoke for the General Staff; he was a warrior statesman; he knew everything that was



NAPOLEON III

same. It is from them themselves that we read the lesson that no diplomat, however adroit or persistent, is a match for a Field Marshal in arranging for a truce which shall preserve the military status.

This particular phase of the story of the Franco-Prussian war is not easily got at. Even comprehensive histories give it scant attention. They go into detail of the final peace negotiations, but hurry past the armistice, perhaps on the principle that when a man has been convicted of highway robbery it matters little that he once robbed an invalid of his gruel. Yet it can be dug out, and just now it has point and application.

The time was January, 1871. Sedan was a recent and painful memory, Napoleon III. in captivity.