

APPENDIX No. 12.

GERMAN DIARIES FOUND AT RABAUL.

It may be interesting to consider the raid on Rabaul, and the circumstances in which it took place, from a German point of view. When a few weeks later Rabaul was finally occupied by Australian forces, the diaries of two German officials were discovered and preserved; and their contents not only disclose the actual situation at the time of the raid, but give an interesting picture of life in a small isolated enemy settlement in war-time, and throw some light on the question how far the Berlin authorities had prepared for war and had forewarned their subordinates abroad.

The less detailed of the two diaries is that written by a minor official in the Government service, Kerler by name. Its contents are mostly copies of Government notices and of press messages received by the wireless station from Yap or Tsingtao; but one or two dramatic touches make the man human:—

The declaration of war arrived here on 5/8/14, 10 15 p.m. at the post-office.

The declaration of war became known in the evening. Midnight. Conference lasting two or three hours. Government and Treasury removed to Toma. All cash was accounted for. . . .

PROCLAMATION OF 6/8/14, 9 A.M.

War has broken out between the German Empire on the one side, and England, France, and Russia on the other.

The Protectorate finds itself in a state of war.

The military forces of the Protectorate consist of the Expeditionary Force and the Europeans attached to it. The distinctive mark of membership of the military forces is the wearing of a green band on both upper arms, or the wearing of a military head-dress with an Imperial cockade.

The police forces of the outstations, and that section of the Rabaul police-force which is to remain there for the maintenance of peace and safety, do not belong to the military forces. Their distinguishing badge is a white band on each upper arm, and white cap-covers.

The seat of Government is removed to Toma.

The militia had its little difficulties:—

CALL TO ARMS!

6/8/14, 10.30 a.m.—All soldiers at present on furlough are ordered to report at the Government Offices at 4 p.m. to the senior officer for the time being, First-Lieutenant Berghausen.

2-3 p.m.—Sharpening my sword.

4 p.m.—Parade. A single troop formed of 29-30 men. Articles of war read. Cheers for the Kaiser.

At 7 a.m. on 7/8/14 the troop falls in, and is given leave till 3 p.m. (Berghausen didn't turn up). The European troops must ration themselves for eight days. Rifles to be brought where possible.

Among other notices, discontinuing private telegraphic and telephonic traffic from the afternoon of the 6th, prohibiting the departure of vessels lying in Blanche Bay, forbidding "Chinese, Malays, and natives" to carry weapons, etc., is one of special interest:—

NOTICE.

English, French, and Russians at present in the Rabaul district are forbidden to leave their dwellings or the town limits respectively until further orders. In urgent cases, the permission of the District Officer must be obtained.

This rather clumsy phrasing meant that residents inside the town limits might move about within them freely, but all outside those limits must stay at home. This comparative freedom was of short duration; on the 7th a false alarm that an enemy ship was approaching caused the arrest of all Englishmen (Messrs Jolley,¹ Louri, Miller,² and two White-mans) and their deportation to Vlavolo on the shores of Talili Bay. On the 9th, however, they were brought back. The alarm of the 7th also caused the issue of a local notice "that upon the approach of the enemy or upon the landing of any enemy force, no opposition is to be made." This restriction, it must be noted, was signed by the local District Officer, Tölke, and applied only to his particular district.

¹ Jolley subsequently enlisted in the A.I.F., serving with the 4th and 58th Bns (Capt. F. R. Jolley, British Consul for German New Guinea; of Sydney and Rabaul, b. Prahran, Vic., 3 Jan., 1883.)

² Miller subsequently received commissioned rank in the AN & MEF (Lieut F J Miller Accountant, of Sydney, b. Marrickville, N.S.W., 24 Sept., 1879. Died of illness, at Rabaul, 16 Feb., 1918.)

The description of the raid is brief but dramatic:—

12/8/14.—At 6.45 a.m. three destroyers (Australian) entered. The *Warrego* tied up to the jetty. "Where is Mr. Whiteman? Where is the wireless station? Where the —— is everything?" Inquiries for beer and flour. Schuppert was caught in the *Talasea* (two shots). At 2 p.m. the *Warrego* came back and destroyed the post-office. Besides the three destroyers there were apparently two battleships (*Australia* and *New Zealand*)⁴ and one other large ship there.

12-13th.—On night ride to Toma.

On the 16th Kerler made a pencil-note, "Rumoured that Australia will send troops." The rest of his diary consists of multiscrypt or typescript copies of the usual press messages of the time—great sea-fights in the North Sea, "Rumours of an imminent conflict between America and Japan," "At Ghent the Crown Prince is said to have fallen," "Kaiser Franz Joseph lies on his deathbed."

The other diarist is much more free of speech and full of detail, and his comments on the progress of the wireless station explain a good deal. He was a post-office official of sorts, and keen on his job; when he tries to narrate how the party from the *Warrego* broke up his switchboards and table-sets and electric bells, his writing becomes pathetically illegible:—

28 July, 1914.—Rumours spreading that Austria has sent an ultimatum to Serbia, and that Germany has addressed a demand to Russia that warlike preparations on the Austrian frontier shall be stopped.

29 July.—At the wireless station at Bitapaka, now in building, emergency antennæ have been fitted to the 45-metre⁴ tower, and the station is getting ready to receive wireless messages.

1 August.—S.M.S. *Planet* is off to Yap. The Bitapaka wireless station on duty every night from 10 to 12. War between Serbia and Austria.

10 p.m.—Discussion with the Government. Decided to withhold as yet the notice that, on account of war or common danger, mail matter will be received only at sender's risk.⁵

5 August.—Bitapaka caught an official telegram for Angaur, to the effect that Kiaochao will take no more cypher telegrams; deferred messages are no longer permitted, and telegrams should be routed *via* Guam. . . .

⁴ Eyes that mistook the *Sydney* for the *New Zealand*, even across Blanche Bay, were not very steady. The *Talasea* was the schooner the *Australia* had stopped.

⁴ About 150 feet

⁵ This notice was practically an intimation that war was imminent, and it was undesirable to disturb the minds of the native population till the very last moment

The district administration has established on Matupi an observation post to report the arrival of vessels. Communication at night by Nos. 4 and 1.⁶ Posts are established on Matupi, the North and South Daughters, and the Mother, as well as in Herbertshöhe. An expeditionary force is to occupy the wireless station now in building at Bitapaka.

At 10.15 p.m.—Telegram to the Governor, Rabaul, Nauru. War with England, France, and Russia confirmed. Telegraph Receiving Office, Central.

6 August.—Cessation of all public telephone services and of the reception of telegrams. . . .

The Government is transferred to Toma.

At 4 p.m. mobilisation of all persons liable for service, and formation of a defence force of 40 persons. All vessels are requisitioned for defence purposes. The N.D.L. steamers *Sumatra* and *Meklong* depart, destination unknown.

7 August.—Establishment of a field-post for the militia and the expeditionary force. False alarm at 3.15 p.m. A vessel enters St. George's Channel. All Englishmen arrested and kept in custody—not known where.

The defence force encamps at Malagunan. . . .

8 August.—An intercepted English message deals with Kieta, Bougainville, *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*.⁷

10 August, 10 p.m.—To Rabaul at midday came information that a strange vessel was approaching, which was signalled to as a phosphate steamer from Nauru. The steamer cruised for a long time in St. George's Channel, and then disappeared again. Alarm in Rabaul about the attitude of the Chinese (lack of work, threatening lack of food). Have therefore arranged for all my native "boys" to sleep on the verandah. No arms, only spears from St. Matthias and a bow and arrows. Sebau⁸ has put on a singlet, buckled on a life-belt—Heaven help us!—and taken a postman's cap and a bow and arrows.

11 August.— . . . The wireless station at Bebra⁹ can now operate (25 horse-power motor got from Komine).

12 August.—A telephone message from the planters at Put-put says that several ships have been seen cruising in St. George's Channel and off the east¹⁰ coast of southern New Mecklenburg. At 5.30 a.m. Herbertshöhe sends news that an English fleet (one battleship, two large cruisers and one small one, and three torpedo-boats) have appeared in the roadstead off Herbertshöhe. At 7 o'clock three torpedo-boats appear in Simpsonshafen and inquire about Whiteman and Bebra. Again at 9 o'clock a boat comes to

⁶ Probably referring to Government cyphers.

⁷ This was a message wirelessly *en clair* from the s.s. *Kulambangra*, giving rumours current in Bougainville about a proposed peace-time visit of the German squadron.

⁸ Apparently the head "boy."

⁹ See p 92

¹⁰ So in original, but probably meant for "west."

shore, and lands five officers (the Admiral¹¹ among them) and twelve armed sailors. The District Officer is searchingly questioned; he denies any knowledge of the position of the wireless station. The Australian fleet threatens to bombard Rabaul if the wireless station does not immediately stop working. Still connection with "Samoa."¹² At 10 o'clock Herbertshöhe informs us that a torpedo-boat is landing men. At 10.30 line broken . . .

At 2 p.m. the torpedo-boat *Warrego* again lands three officers, six men, and two mechanics. The post-office is occupied; a switch-board with fifty shutters, other switchboards, a gross of electric bells, . . .¹³ table-sets, . . . switchboards for . . . lines utterly destroyed, and the installation cable cut. Half-an-hour later the English leave again, promising to spare private property. Rabaul is not to be bombarded. . . . The situation is serious. In a letter to the Governor, whose whereabouts also has not been betrayed, a demand is made that the wireless station should cease working immediately, otherwise the unfortified places Rabaul and Herbertshöhe will be bombarded. The Governor has ordered the District Officer to bring the women and children during the night into a safe place. All the Englishmen are under guard in Namanula.¹⁴ Lieutenant-General Wylde has tried to get into communication with the English troops, although he has, it is alleged, given his word of honour not to do anything against German interests. . . .

13 August.—The English-Australian fleet has disappeared. In Herbertshöhe the attempt was made, by threats of severe treatment, to get some news about the wireless station. (Father Dicks threatened with a revolver; "ultimatum" till 6 p.m.; if no information, Herbertshöhe to be bombarded.) The ultimatum had not yet expired when the English at half-past four assembled and left Herbertshöhe roadstead. Strength: four cruisers, three torpedo-boats.

The post-office as well as the telegraph-instrument room was thoroughly ransacked, and everything within reach was destroyed. The private residence of the line-overseer was broken into, and valuables worth 400 marks were stolen.

Herbertshöhe has connection with Bebra and Samoa, and with Rabaul also since 12 noon. . . .

No news from the seat of war (Yap apparently destroyed).

14 August.— . . . The *Siar* and *Komet* returned. After taking in coal, both left again to get into safety. At Mioko a ship's wreckage has been washed ashore: a cabin, broken oars, a small red buoy, a cap with the inscription H.M.S. *Encounter*.

After summarising various press telegrams, the postmaster continues on August 16th:—

. . . Picture-show manager Lembach and road-engineer Muecke allotted to postal service (Muecke and Kleppek for outdoor work, Weller, Koenig, and Lembach for work at the instruments).

¹¹ It was actually Commander Cumberlege

¹² Code name for the force near Toma. See p. 92.

¹³ Dots represent illegibility

¹⁴ On the hill near Government House.

Line interrupted at 2 o'clock, wire being broken by fall of a tree at 8k. Line in working order again on the 17th. All the English have been sent to Batze in the Bainings, except Lieutenant-General Wylde, who is in custody in St. Paul. More press news about the *Goeben* and the *Von der Tann* (Constantinople). The English are said to have landed 100,000 men in Belgium.

Telegraph lines have been laid to Papatatava and Tobera, and direct communication established between Tobera and Bitapaka and Herbertshöhe and Bitapaka (New Guinea Co.).

17 August.—Nothing new.

18 August.—No press telegrams. Yap ceased transmitting.

Nauru and Apia still working.

Line interrupted since 2 o'clock. Great earth-tremor at Barawon. The line is completely destroyed for 400 metres by bamboos slipping down on it. Interruption cleared away 11 a.m. on the 19th.

The field station was dismantled at 4 o'clock and temporarily withdrawn to the post-office.

19 August.—Nothing new from seat of war.

Surveyor Dulk and Assistant-Surveyor Dreihholz arrived from Namatanai and placed themselves at the disposal of the postal authorities. Muecke will stay in Rabaul till the 21st. The installation of a new district telephone net is in hand.

20 August.—A new telephone exchange is being got ready in the Works office building.

21 August.—Line to Herbertshöhe interrupted 8 a.m. Muecke sent off; at 1 p.m. Kleppek sent off; line restored about 2 o'clock.

22 August.—Press news: The German advance through Belgium is being carried out according to plan. The Belgians are retreating on Antwerp. Brussels much disturbed by the thunder of guns close at hand. War imminent between Japan and America. Belgrade fallen. Austrians have crossed the Rhine with large forces, including mountain artillery (to strengthen the front). German losses at Liège 5,000 men. North Sea sown with mines.

Later press news:—

Proclamation of the Kaiser to the Imperial Chancellor, from which one concludes that the war is not offensive on our part. . . . Mails from Finschhafen, Morobe, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. Hoyer informs me that he is still at work on the telephone net.

Mail from Käwieng (Irene) and Namatanai (through Yalu).

The "Amtsblatt" issued.

23 August.—Alarm given that a warship is cruising off the Mother (6 a.m.). Turns out to be the little steamer *Gabriel* belonging to the Catholic Mission.

Six table-sets arrived from Friedrich Wilhelmshafen.

24 August.—Telephone net Rabaul re-opens with eight lines: No. 1 Government Office, 2 District Office, 3 Camp, 4 European Hospital, 5 Native Hospital, 6 Dr. Wick, 7 Chemist, 8 District Officer.

25 August.—Press news: Belgium occupied by large German forces which have penetrated almost to the North Sea. Brussels and Ghent occupied. Official information received by the German Ambassador at Washington states that the Germans have won a brilliant victory over the French between Metz and the Vosges. L. A. Kleppek to Herbertshöhe with six men to repair the telephone line. Telephone station at Raluana installed by Hoheisel.

26 August.—Information (a rumour) that Japan tried to land 10,000 men at Tsingtau but was stopped by the United States.

27 August.—The *Madang* arrived from Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, and the *Samoa* from Samoa.

Hoyer informs me that the District Officer at Friedrich Wilhelmshafen wants to send to Germany *via* the Dutch Indies all persons liable for military service. The *Siar* is probably going to the Dutch Indies. . . .

29 August.—From Tsingtau. The Japanese Admiral Kato has informed Waldeck that a blockade of Tsingtau has begun. Within twenty-four hours neutral ships and non-combatants must leave the town, as bombardment both by land and sea will then follow.

30 August.—The *Siar* left at 8.30, apparently for Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, Humboldt Bay (Dutch Indies), and Makassar. She took no mails.

Press news: Belgian divisions put to flight; great rejoicing in Berlin over the victory.

31 August.—Nothing new.

1 September.—Buka natives say that the cruiser *Encounter* has been sunk off Buka by a big ship with many funnels. Many natives of the British Solomons are said to have been taken on board by this vessel.

2 September.—Rumour spread that Tsingtau has fallen, and that Togo has been captured by a Liberian gunboat with an English crew. The Government wants to know if we can spare bronze wire for a 30-k. line. Probably a line is to be built from Toma far into the interior of Baining. Apia has sent no messages for two days. Intense wireless activity—Japanese, American, and English ships. In case we get no more answers from Nauru, the Government will be moved from Toma and a new wireless tower built of wood.

3 September.—The Government has again taken 300,000 marks to Toma, as Mrs. Möller (wife of the commander of the *Komet*¹⁵) threatens to betray to the English when they arrive that the Government had handed over its funds to the business houses. Kleppek back from Herbertshöhe.

4 September.—Consultation with Councillor Schlettwein about arrangements for sending mails *via* the Dutch Indies. The reason why the *Siar* had not been compelled to carry mails could not yet be determined.

5 September.—Steamer *Madang* arrives with important news from S.M.S. Administrator Ehemann informs me that he intends going in the *Kalili* to the Dutch Indies, and will take mails.

¹⁵ An Englishwoman. This statement is not necessarily correct. See also p. 118

6 September.—Long press telegram with important war news. Causes of the war; great seafight at Leith (Hull), four *Dreadnoughts* (perhaps of latest design) sunk; Roumania armed neutrality, Holland friendly neutrality, China against Japan; America intervening, sends Pacific fleet. *Lusitania* sunk; Libau bombarded by the *Augsberg*; Togo occupied by French and English; unrest in India and Saigon; united French and English fleet in Hong Kong. Yap destroyed on 12th August by the English cruisers *Minotaur* and *Newcastle*.

Issued for building material: 350 kilograms of 1½ mm. bronze wire; 220 insulators (III) with screw-props, 400 "saddle-clips" (for constructing telephone lines from Toma).

7 September.—The rumour runs that in Kiaochau German cruiser . . . has brought in a Russian auxiliary cruiser which was taken off Tsingtau, a big vessel, two-funnelled. Captain G. has gone with secret orders to Kiaochau.

8 September.—Mails for Dutch Indies and Germany per *Kahli* closed.

10 September.—Have arranged with Government-Councillor Lederer that L. A. Kleppek shall take over the construction of the line inland from Toma. Kleppek is making section-apparatus out of table sets.

11 September.—At 3 o'clock in the morning two destroyers run into the harbour. They leave Rabaul again. At 7 o'clock a boat cruises around (the *Yarra*) not far from the jetty, and lands sailors who break into the N.D.L. shed and *steal* a great deal. At their commander's instigation, however, they have to give back the booty.

Kleppek receives instructions to break in on the line to Herbertshohe in the neighbourhood of the hospital.

At 10 o'clock the destruction of the district telephone net is completed. (The line to Herbertshohe was interrupted at 7.15 a.m. Last news was that an English-Australian squadron of many vessels was approaching.) Raluana breaks up its telegraphic station at 7.30. At 1 p.m. the destroyer is relieved by a bigger one. All cutters are collected in the inner harbour behind the N.D.L. jetty. There is a rumour that the N.D.L. boat *Sumatra* has been caught. At 6 p.m. a small cruiser (old type), a submarine, and the *Sumatra* arrive. Searchlights on the harbour till 9 p.m. Books and registered letters, &c., brought into safety.

12 September.—At 10 a.m. a large cruiser with four funnels enters, apparently the *Melbourne* or *Sydney*. At 1 appear the battleship *Australia*, two submarines, a collier, an oil-tank steamer, and three transports. A large cruiser with three funnels is still lying off Vulcan Island.

The rumour is that Rabaul will be permanently occupied by the English-Australian fleet and used as a naval base. Nothing new from Heibertshöhe. It seems that troops have been landed there, and are marching inland *via* Ralum. News from the European seat of war: German troops are said to have advanced to within 25 km. of Paris. Seafight between English and Germans,

in which the English lost two cruisers and the Germans three. The Russians are said to have reached Berlin (??) with five million (??) men.

At 3 o'clock the rest of the Australian fleet appears—a large cruiser and two transports. An officer from the *Australia* at 2 o'clock measured the N.D.L. jetty and took soundings. Apparently only two torpedo-boats are now left in Herbertshöhe.

The weather is very hot. A little rain on the 11th.

This, the only weather-note in the entire diary, is a fine gesture of indifference to the British occupation—almost equal to a Frenchman's "Je m'en fiche!"