

ANTWERP CITY GREAT FORTRESS OF THE BELGIANS

Elaborate Fortifications of the Seaport on the Scheldt

THE KEY TO THE LOW COUNTRIES

Defensive Works Are Of An Exceptionally Powerful Nature

THE removal of the seat of government in Belgium from Brussels to Antwerp, following the development of Germany's plan of campaign, is not a hasty step, but absolutely in accordance with Belgian intentions formulated some years ago, when the menace of a German invasion east its shadow over the country. Events now taking place would go to show that the great port on the Scheldt is destined to play an important part in the war.

The likelihood is that the entire Belgian army will be concentrated in Antwerp in which case that fortress will become the nation's only stronghold.

It may be that the British expeditionary force actually landed at Antwerp, in order to take the invading German army in the flank. It is known that British strategists have taken the greatest interest in the modern defence scheme of Antwerp, and when the big guns are fired it is not at all likely that they will be served exclusively by Belgian gunners.

Napoleon's Dictum.
Whether Napoleon was strategically justified in describing Antwerp as "a pistol pointed at the heart of England" is still a controversial subject with military experts. The best judgment does not confer in the description. As a naval port Antwerp itself is open to

THE FORTS OF ANTWERP

New York, Aug. 22.—The armies of the world could not capture Antwerp with its circle of modern forts, is the statement made at the Belgian consulate, where doubt is also expressed as to the reported capture of Liege by the German invaders.

Antwerp it is said, has the most modern of fortifications. They guard the entire city forming a circle practically immune against seizure. On the East, the West, and North and the South, are forts, and on the extreme Northern section of the city are dykes which can be opened if the German army appears from that direction. Antwerp, Namur and Liege are the only well fortified cities in Belgium, it was said, the others being but slightly protected by forts of less modern construction and but lightly armed.

In the transfer from Brussels 200,000,000 francs of \$40,000,000 gold were taken from the capital to Antwerp.

numerous and weighty objections, and it is a question whether any amount of money and labor would render it suitable for such a purpose. "But Antwerp has always been, and will always remain, the key of the Low Countries, a fact which accounts in some measure for the elaborate fortifications by which it is encompassed. Some six miles from the quays of Antwerp down the devious and treacherous river Scheldt two grim-looking armoured turrets come into view on the right bank, half concealed by earthworks.

Heavily Armored
These works are known as Fort St. Philip, and are reputed to be armed with heavy artillery of somewhat obsolete design. Half a mile lower down on the opposite bank, but more hidden than St. Philip, are more of these powerful structures. The turrets are so placed that they command a wide stretch of the river in either direction, and are even capable of shelling Antwerp. The landward defences of the city, however, are much more im-

posing, at all events to the unprofessional eye. The grass-covered glacis extends for several miles and encloses three sides of the city. It is broken at intervals by roads and watergates, along which all traffic entering the city must pass and at these points there are very strong earthworks and redoubts. Here and there one may discern the lean muzzle of a quick-firing gun shrouded in its tarpaulin, whilst the glacis is dotted with gaily painted sentry boxes.

Were Dismantled
During the last four or five years most of the guns have been removed from the works, and the forts themselves dismantled. The step is due to a decision reached by the Belgian Military Commission, which, after a detailed inspection carried out in 1909, reported unfavorably on the defences of Antwerp in their then state and condemned them unreservedly as a source of weakness rather than of strength from the military point of view. The Commission pointed out that since

the forts were constructed the range of siege guns and field pieces has been more than quadrupled, and that an investing force could comfortably shell the city and port by high-angle fire without suffering any inconvenience whatever from the forts, which lie much too close to Antwerp itself to offer a serious obstacle or to withhold the advancing hosts in check at a safe distance. As the removal of the old defences and the building and arming of modern forts was a matter involving many millions of francs, the question was long and warmly debated before an affirmative decision was reached.

New Fortifications.
The Belgian Chamber finally authorized the necessary disbursements, and the plans for the new system of fortification were at once put in hand. In this work it has been rumored that some leading French strategists took a share, but the stories to this effect have been categorically denied by the Belgian authorities. The work was planned to continue until 1915, but at the present date some idea of the general scheme is to be obtained by a casual inspection. Batteries and redoubts have been thrown up at a distance of nine to twelve miles from the city boundaries and while the forts themselves are of a much simpler design than those they replaced, their armament comprises very powerful modern field and siege artillery.

From what source the new weapons were to be obtained was a question that was keenly debated after the passage of the measure by the Chamber. In addition to a Belgian concern two foreign firms were invited to tender for the lucrative contract, namely Krupp and Schneider-Canet. The Belgian Nationalists were opposed to the acceptance of the German tender under any circumstances whatever. They urged that as the new forts were to exist in the first place as a means of defence against a possible German invasion, it would be folly to acquaint a firm of that nationality, and particularly one with such intimate official connections as Messrs. Krupp, with minute details relating to the number and calibre of the guns to be mounted.

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Powerful Guns.
The armament of the forts include some of the most powerful guns in existence, including twelve inch howitzers which throw a shell weighing eight hundred pounds. The heaviest weapons are mounted in turrets so thickly armoured as to be proof against the biggest projectiles and the howitzers are placed in pits well below the level of the surrounding country.

Every position in the chain of forts is connected with the headquarters by underground telephone and telegraph cables. Some dirigible airships and aeroplanes have been purchased abroad to serve as aerial scouts to the fortress. It is significant that most, if not all, of the available money has been spent on landward defences, for so far as is known the old river forts which command the seaward approach to Antwerp have been left untouched. This fact certainly suggests that the Belgian authorities were more apprehensive of attack by way of their land frontiers than by sea. As regards the entrance to the River Scheldt, the coast on both banks of the estuary belongs to Holland, and it was decided a year or two ago by that country to erect strong batteries at Flushing which would command the estuary. This decision was sharply criticised by British experts and is alleged to have been made under pressure from Germany, who is, of course, anxious to prevent the seaward approach of a relieving army in the event of Antwerp's investment by a German army.

Could Hold Out 12 Months
General Brialmont, one of the recognised military authorities in Europe, has placed on record his conviction that given an adequate and efficient garrison, Antwerp is in a position to hold out against attacks for at least twelve months. As from all accounts the new defensive works are thoroughly in accord with the principles of modern strategy and of an exceptionally powerful character. Ant-

werp must be considered a highly important factor in the military system of Europe.

Most competent German writers on the subject of a Franco-German campaign, in which Great Britain would be involved, have suggested Antwerp as the probable point at which a British force would land to take the invading German army in the flank. This persistent assumption on the German side of Belgium's participation in a great continental war must now be considered symptomatic of German intentions.

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