

The Dixie Highway as a Military Asset

COL. HENRY T. ALLEN, Thirteenth United States Cavalry

This article written by Colonel Allen, two years ago when the United States was at peace with all of the world, has a special significance at the present time. A recent congestion of railroad traffic before any attempt was made to mobilize an army, was attended by a food shortage. The trains were unable to move farm products to market fast enough to feed the population. By using wagons and motor trucks to the limited extent which the highways permitted, to haul food into the large cities, the extreme shortage was relieved. With the mobilization of a large army, the early completion of the Dixie Highway therefore is of tremendous import not only from a military standpoint but as an aid in the movement of food products for feeding the civilian population.

Warfare of the present day demands, more than ever, rapid transportation of large bodies of men and enormous supplies of munitions and provisions. It is not enough to have a superior system of railways in any given zone. This must be supplemented by highways, because in the final state the thousands of tons required daily by a modern army reach the firing line by motor trucks and horse drawn vehicles.

Good roads will assure numerous motor vehicles such as characterize the western war front in Europe at the present time by their numbers. The efficiency of a good motor truck on a good road is at least four times that of a horse drawn vehicle, the cost and maintenance of which is the same as that of the truck. In fact, in future wars, the motor truck will rank next to the railway trains in carrying military supplies.

In general the following represents the carrying of supplies to the firing line:

- (1) Railway or steamboat transportation from the large bases of supply to the railway heads or boat terminals.
- (2) Thence by motor trucks to the divisional bases.
- (3) Thence by horse drawn vehicles to the firing lines.

In the Dixie Highway we find a magnificent line from Chicago through manufacturing centers, including Indianapolis, Louisville, Nashville, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Macon and Tallahassee; and from the very heart of the Great Lakes, Mackinaw, through the following important cities: Detroit, Toledo, Dayton, Cincinnati, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Macon, Jackson. In a word, the Great Gulf and the Great Lakes are joined by a wonderful highway passing through a section of the country that has always furnished more than its quota of soldiers for every war in which the nation has been engaged. Due to its geographical position, its population, its food production and its manufacturing capacity, this section may well be considered the greatest military asset of any large part of the United States.

It has been claimed that the construction of good highways would be aiding a foreign foe landing on our shores. While this is true, it would be a still greater aid to the defense in the ready mobilization of all its forces and in supplying the resisting lines promptly with men and munitions. If such a misfortune should happen to the United States as to have a coalition force land on our eastern seaboard, the Dixie Highway with its numerous manu-

facturing cities and its vast supply centers (all well connected) would offer most advantageous sites for supply bases and would constitute a highly important base line sufficiently far from the coast to be reasonably safe from air crafts yet sufficiently close for many war requirements. If it should become necessary to resist an enemy from the direction of the Great Gulf, the advantages cited for the Dixie Highway would be still greater.

The successful prosecution of a great campaign depends upon the existence or construction of roads and the better they are the greater the chances of success will be.

The military strength of a nation depends on the quality of its citizens, upon their intelligence and virility. No nation can have an armed force better than the standard of its average citizen. The capacity and effectiveness of these are determined in peace; they are simply accentuated by war training. Therefore, the nation or State that increases its miles of good roads and the quality of the same improves the quality of its citizenship, increases its wealth in farm and factory and adds to its military assets.

It is in this indirect manner that the Dixie Highway will prove its greater value as a military asset for the nation. This idea is vividly exemplified in Russia and Germany. Standing on the frontier between these two countries a careful inspection shows a marked contrast in the appearance of the cultivation of the country in the roads, the houses, and the school buildings, looking east, from that looking west. The average education and effectiveness of the respective citizens are equally contrasted. It necessarily follows that the Russian and German armies

should show a corresponding contrast, and the results thus far obtained confirm this.

Probably no branch of the Government is more keenly interested in the completion of the Dixie Highway than the army, and to no branch can it have a more important hearing. With the inevitable change in our military policy involving the concentration and organization in time of peace of such commands as would be required in war, the country between the Lakes and Florida will have an added military interest in which the Dixie Highway will prove its great military value.

Biography of

Col. Henry T. Allen

ALLEN, Henry Tureman—soldier, governor, author—was born April 13, 1869, in Sharpshurg, Kentucky. He attended Georgetown College of Kentucky; and in 1892 graduated from the United States Military Academy; in 1886-88 he was engaged in explorations in Alaska; 1881-90 was instructor in languages at the military academy and in 1890-99 was military attaché in St. Petersburg and Berlin, except while serving in the Cuban campaign. In 1901 he commanded the Forty-third Regiment United States Volunteer Infantry on the island of Leyte, of which island he was civil governor. In 1901 he began the organization of the Philippine constabulary, and in 1903 was made brigadier-general and chief of constabulary. In 1904 he was detailed as military observer with the Japanese forces. Since 1908 he has been acting superintendent of the Yellowstone National Park, Wyo. He is the author of "Military System of Sweden," and other works.