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Edward Breck: Golf Champion, Master Spy and Attaché Manqué to the German Olympic Team¹

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For some time the activities of America's NSA and Britain's intelligence and security organisation GCHQ have continued to cause unease among their military and civilian partners on the European continent. It was felt that the spying out of friends was highly unethical and to most people such an act was simply unthinkable. The story of Dr Edward Breck, an American diplomat and an outstanding sportsman, shows that US espionage in Europe is a practice of long standing.

It is perhaps no exaggeration to claim that in the person of Dr Edward Breck sport history becomes history proper. This American's life until his "Spanish Adventure" in 1898 can be summarized as follows. He was born in San Francisco on 31 July 1861.² His father was Lt. Commander Joseph Berry Breck,³ a retired officer of the U.S. Navy, his mother Ellen Francis née Newell, his father's second wife. Edward had gone to school in Boston and Newton (St Mark's School) when in 1878 his mother, who had remarried after his father's death,⁴ took him to Leipzig together with his elder brother John Leslie, to give the two boys their education in a German gymnasium.⁵

¹ This is the expanded English language version of a paper read at the Golf- und Land-Club-Wannsee, Berlin, on 29 April 2011 and at the 5th DAGS Symposium in Cologne on 30 March 2012.

² Cf. Samuel Breck, *Genealogy of the Breck Family Descended from Edward of Dorchester and his Brothers in America; with an Appendix of Additional Biographical and Historical Matter, Obituary Notices, Letters, etc., and Armorial Bearings and a Complete Index* (Omaha, 1889): 104. for different first names of his mother see <<https://findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi/http=://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=103295366>> 18 April 2017.

³ During the American Civil War, Breck commanded the "Nippon", a wooden and iron screw steamer; due to declining health he was relieved in command on 19 September 1864. <<http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/n5/nippon.htm>> [23 November 2010], and Patrick Bertrand, "John Leslie Breck (1860-1899)," [unpublished article 2010], 1.

⁴ Breck's father died on 26 July 1865, cf. Bertrand, 1. His widow then married Frederick W. Rice, [1243], who died on 17 February 1885. For information on Edward Breck's family see now Erica E. Hirshler's account of John Leslie Breck's painting 'In the Valley of the Seine' under Provenance, <<http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/in-the-valley-of-the-seine-524387>> 5 July 2017

⁵ Cf. the present writer's "Edward Breck, Anglo-Saxon Scholar, Golf Champion and Master Spy, *Language and Beyond. A Festschrift for Hiroshi Yonekura on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, Mayami Sawada, et al., eds., (Tokyo: Eichosha Co., Ltd, 2007): 33-56, here 33.



Coat of arms of the Breck family; from Sir John Burke's *A Genealogical and heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage of the British Empire* [1852], unearthed by Breck himself when in London in 1889. The motto is *firmus maneo*, 'I stay strong'.

Breck was descended from a Colonial family from Lancaster County, England,⁶ but it is likely that German was spoken in his family. This would have enabled him to attend a German secondary school. He returned to the United States in order "to prepare himself more fully for a German university course", first at Oberlin College, then at Amherst.⁷ In 1883, he

⁶ Cf. Samuel Breck, 9. Dr Breck, when in London in the late 1880s, unearthed the "Arms of Breck" which he placed at the disposal of Samuel Breck, cf. *idem*, 252. Description: If colored, the lion should be tawny; the white ground, white; the horizontally lined space, blue; the inner shield, black and gold." Josephus Daniels, *Our Navy at War* (New York: G.H. Doran, 1922), said of Breck that he was "... of a Colonial American family ...". Here according to the *OED colonial* in US usage meant "of or belonging to the thirteen British colonies which became the United States, or to the time while they were still colonies." Daniels was misquoted by the present writer in his earlier study "Edward Breck": 47, n3: "... descendant of a 'Colonial German family'".

⁷ This he did first at Oberlin College, and afterwards at Amherst College, cf. "Edward Breck": 47, n4, and William Taylor, et al., *Annals of Psi Upsilon, 1833-1941: including A history of the Psi Upsilon ...* (New York: Executive of Psi Upsilon, 1941) 115: "But a few of the many who trod the Gamma's halls from 1879 to 1913 can be mentioned. ... In the 1885 class were ... Edward Breck, scholar, author, naval officer, naturalist, editor, with a brilliant record in the Spanish-American and World Wars. Robert Lansing '86, prominent *international* Lawyer, served as Secretary of State under President Wilson."

started on a course of studies at the University of Leipzig where he obtained his doctorate in 1887, for a thesis written on a work in Anglo-Saxon.⁸ On 31 August 1889 while in Prague, he married Antonie Wagner,⁹ a Bohemian German. Daily communication with his German-speaking wife is likely to have enhanced his command of the language considerably.

In 1887, Edward Breck was said to prepare “for a literary career”, and two years later his main occupation was said to be “travelling in Europe”.¹⁰ There is little doubt that not only he, but also his brother John Leslie, being the offspring of an affluent American family, could afford the lives of a writer and an artist respectively, and living and travelling in Europe.¹¹ After their father’s death, their mother had married Thomas Rice Jr, the son of Thomas Rice of Newton Lower Falls, Massachusetts, a lawyer and wealthy paper manufacturer who had graduated at Harvard and been elected representative to Congress twice-over. Thomas Rice Jr died in 1873, but left his wife in very comfortable circumstances financially.¹²

His family’s wealth may also have been the background reason for Edward’s proficiency in elite sports such as lawn tennis, fencing¹³ and especially the new-fangled game of golf. These assets became evident soon after his arrival in Berlin in 1895.¹⁴ When in 1896

⁸ The present writer’s “Edward Breck”: 34. In the summer of the same year, and perhaps after obtaining his degree, Edward and his mother, then Mrs Ellen Rice, stayed with John Leslie, the painter, at the artists’ colony in Giverny, France. Bertrand: 2.

⁹ Samuel Breck, loc.cit.; and “Breck Funeral Plans under Way,” *The Evening Star* [Washington, D.C.], 15 May 1929: “He was married, first, in 1889, to Miss A. Wagner von Kleeblatt of Austria, by whom he had three daughters, all surviving – Mrs. F.F. Macnee, Mrs. H.F. Miller, and Miss Josephine L. Breck. His second wife, to whom he was married in 1923, was Miss Mary Louise Stanley of this city, who also survives him.”

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ As for Edward the writer, compare his sarcastic remark to one of his editors commenting on what the latter had called “his second so-called very successful book”: “[I] come to the conclusion that writing books is, if anything, worse than painting. You remember the old German short story, beginning: ‘Er war Maler und sie hatte auch nichts!’ (He was a painter and she had nothing, too.)” As for his brother, no less a person than the painter Claude Monet forbade his stepdaughter Blanche Hoschedé to get engaged to him because he knew how difficult it was to make a living as an artist and found him unworthy to support her. Cf. Bertrand, 40.

¹² On Rice see Samuel Breck: 72, entries 1239 and 1243.

¹³ On Breck’s fencing prowess see the present writer’s “Edward Breck”: 37 f. As in the case of lawn tennis, Breck was also involved in the fencing events held under the auspices of the Berlin Industrial Fair of 1896.

¹⁴ According to an application to the Embassy of the United States in Berlin dated 3 July 1895 (no 940) for his wife Antonie, his minor children Ellen Frances (*3 March in Prague) and Margaretha (*August 1894 in Boston) and himself, Breck stated that he left the United States on 13 March 1895.

the grand-scale Berlin Industrial Fair was held, it was graced by sporting events in all three disciplines, and the Doctor made an appearance in all of them.

In the tennis tournament, a handicap event, held on 27 September 1896, Breck competed in the singles where he survived the first round, but lost in the second. In the gentlemen's doubles and partnered by an Englishman, Horace Francis Simon,¹⁵ he scratched.¹⁶

At the National Fencing Event, Breck acted as one of three fencing masters and instructors of note who conducted a fencing academy, a fencing soirée which was enthusiastically received. In a demonstration event, Breck “crossed swords” with Emma Teege, the wife of the university fencing master—it was the first foil event in Berlin in which a woman competed.¹⁷

¹⁵ Horace Francis Simon was in 1894 one of the founding members and Honorary Treasurer of the Charlottenburg Golf Club (later Berlin Golf Club), *Spiel und Sport* 12 May 1894: 450. He competed in the first German Championships held by this club in 1896 and in its traditional Squiers Cup in 1900, Mashie, “Die Golfmeisterschaft von Deutschland,” *Spiel und Sport* 24 October 1896: 1061, and “Golf. Die Meisterschaft von Deutschland und der Squiers-Pokal,” *Sport im Wort* 45, 8 November 1900: 487. In 1940, his obituary was published in the *Journal of the Institution of Electrical Engineers*. It read: “Horace Francis Simon, who died on the 15th November, 1939, aged 70, was educated at the International College, Isleworth, and at the City and Guilds College, South Kensington. From 1891 to 1892 he was chief engineer at Key’s Electrical Co., London. He then went to Germany and was employed as assistant engineer by the Union Elektricitats Gesellschaft at Hamburg, subsequently going to Berlin as a journalist. In 1904 he returned to London and became a partner in the firm of Newman, Wilkinson and Co. In 1906, when Electrical Installations Ltd. was formed he was appointed a director, and later managing director, a position which he held until 1925 when he founded Electricity Services, Ltd. His association with that firm continued actively up to the time of his death. He was also for many years a director of the British Electrical Export Co. He was the inventor and patentee of ‘Typerlite’ adjustable light fittings. He joined the Institution in 1913 as an Associate Member and was elected a Member in 1928.” Communication by Sarah Hale, Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET), Stevenage, Herts, UK.

¹⁶ “Lawn-Tennis-Turnier in der Berliner Gewerbeausstellung,” *Deutsches Lawn-Tennis-Jahrbuch*, ed. Robert Freiherr von Fichard, 3 and 4, Berlin 1896: It is interesting that Andrew Pitcairn-Knowles should have competed somewhat more successfully in the same event, and that Breck was in the second round beaten by [E. Gordon] Lee, who was the treasurer of the Akademischer Sport-Club Berlin, founded 1893 by Pitcairn-Knowles.

¹⁷ Eerke U. Hamer, “Willibald Gebhardts Einsatz für die Gründung und den Bestand des Deutschen Fechterbundes bzw. des Deutschen und Österreichischen Fechterbundes,” *Die Männer um Willibald Gebhardt: Anfänge der Olympischen Bewegung in Europa*, eds. Roland Naul and Manfred Lämmer (Aachen: Meyer und Meyer, 2002): 70-104, here 71. On Breck’s fencing prowess see the present writer’s “Edward Breck”, 37 f.



Soccer team of the Anglo-American Club, Berlin (1890s). Front row, centre, with ball in lap, Andrew Pitcairn-Knowles; to his left Fred Manning, after the turn of the century editor of *Der Lawn-Tennis-Sport* (as from 1908 *Lawn-Tennis und Golf*) and a member of the Berlin Golf Club. Other identified members of the AAC are Ivo Schricker, later Secretary General of Fifa (standing, second from left) and Dr Hugo J. Hardy (standing, 4th from left), in 1904 attaché to the German Olympic Team in St Louis. Photograph from the collection of Richard Pitcairn-Knowles, Sevenoaks, UK.

The golf tournament was staged on the new nine-hole sandy uphill course of the Berlin Golf Club north of what in those days was referred to as the Spandauer Chaussee (now Spandauer Damm).¹⁸ Breck finished as runner-up with a score of ninety-eight and had to share this place with another American, Professor Willoughby Dayton Miller, a Doctor of Dental Surgery.¹⁹

The Berlin Golf Club had been founded as the Charlottenburg Golf Club in 1894 by a young Scotsman,²⁰ Andrew Pitcairn-Knowles.²¹ It is no exaggeration to claim that its founder

¹⁸ On the genesis of the Berlin Golf Club see the present writer's *100 Jahre Golf in Deutschland. 1 Gründerzeiten bis 1924* [Contributions by Christoph Meister and Dietrich R. Quanz] (Munich: Albrecht Golf Verlag GmbH, 2007): 71-74 and 85 f.

¹⁹ *Sport im Bild*, 2,18 (May 1896): 281.

²⁰ The Charlottenburg Golf Club, an off-shoot of the Akademischer Sport-Club, had been founded by 12 May 1894 when a note of its foundation appeared in *Spiel und Sport* 4,145 (12 May 1894): 450; <<http://miami.uni-muenster.de/servlets/DSOViewerServlet?DocID=3117&DvID=3193>>, and *ibid.*, 145 (19 May 1894), first page of appendix "English Chat", <<http://miami.uni-muenster.de/servlets/DSOViewerServlet?DocID=3117&DvID=3193>> [9 January 2012]. Founding members were, besides AP-K, its Honorary Secretary, John Bloch, the editor of the journal, R.E. Kiemens [sic; i.e. Richard Edward Kimens who spent half of his life as attaché to the British Embassy in Warsaw; communication by Olaf Dudzus, Potsdam]. H.F. Simon, A. MacPhail, a Canadian, and W. A. Freymuth, an Englishman. The *terminus ad quem* for its successor, the Berlin Golf Club, is 24 August 1895 when its founder and Secretary Andrew Pitcairn-Knowles spoke of the "kürzlich gegründete 'Berliner Golf Club'", *Sport im Bild* 1,9 (24 August 1895): 128.

²¹ On Pitcairn-Knowles see the present writer's "English Editors of German Sporting Journals at the Turn of the Century," *The Sports Historian. The Journal of the British Society of Sports History* 13 (May 1993): 38-65, and Richard Pitcairn-Knowles, *The Edwardian Eye of Andrew Pitcairn-Knowles 1871-1956* (Lewes, Sussex: The Book Guild Ltd, 2000).

ought to have had a monument put up in his honor for founding a real host of sports clubs in the Prussian metropolis.

In 1893, when studying at Berlin's Technical University, he had initiated the Akademischer Sport-Club Charlottenburg, afterwards also renamed Akademischer Sport-Club Berlin.²² This was followed not only by the golf club in the following year, but also by the Anglo-American Club,²³ the Lawn-Tennis Turnier Club Berlin 1897, the Berliner Schlittschuh Club and the Berliner Hockey- und Radpolo-Club.²⁴ Quite a few competitors in the events just mentioned were recruited from these clubs, notably from the Akademischer Sport-Club, the Anglo-American Club and the Berlin Golf Club. Professor Miller, and Breck's prospective partner in the tennis doubles H.F. Simon, were members of the Anglo-American Club as well of the Berlin Golf Club; they were indeed founding members of the latter,²⁵ Miller being the club's first president.²⁶ Of the tennis players, Dr Hugo J. Hardy, Dr A.O. Lee,²⁷ and M.B. Toklas were all members of the Anglo-American Club, Walter Vassel and Oscar Faber were members of the Akademischer Sport-Club, and Pitcairn-Knowles was affiliated with both.²⁸ Dr Breck, for that matter, to whom we now return, had joined the Berlin Golf Club by October 1896 by which time he had also become its Honorary Treasurer.²⁹

²² The photograph shown below has been gleaned from *Amtliches Tennis- Hand- und Jahrbuch 1927*, ed. Ferdinand Gruber (Heidelberg: Verlag Hermann Meister, 1927): 45.

²³ The club was founded on 30 September 1895 and at the beginning went by the name of Sport-Club International, "Der 'Anglo-American Club', Berlin," *Sport im Bild* 3,31 (1897): 523.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²⁵ *Sport im Wort* 10 (5 March 1903): 119, on the general assembly of the club on 24 February.

²⁶ The Berlin Golf Club does not seem to have had a president at its beginning in 1894, but by October 1895 Miller had acted as the Club's president, Breck, *Golfing* (4 October 1895): ? [only a newspaper clipping available].

²⁷ A certain E. Gordon Lee was in 1896 the treasurer of the Akademischer Sport-Club, von Fichard, *Deutsches Lawn-Tennis-Jahrbuch* 1896: 162.

²⁸ According to a specimen of the *Anglo-American Club Bulletin*; see also the present writer's "English Editors": 43 f.

²⁹ *Spiel und Sport* (10 October 1896): 1004. It was he who in this capacity was in charge of the entries for the forthcoming championships open to all players of the world ("Offen für alle Spieler der Welt.") The entry fee was 5 marks. His address was given as Equitable Building, Berlin. The building was located in 59-60 Friedrichstrasse on the corner of Leipziger Straße and was the headquarters of both the American Embassy and the insurance company of that name. <<http://www.akpool.de/ansichtskarten/121266-ansichtskarte-postkarte-berlin-mitte-equitable-gebäude-an-d-friedrichstrasse>> [10 January 2012].



*Internes Turnier des
Akad. Sport-Clubs Charlottenburg 1896*
sitzend: O. Faber, W. Vassel; stehend: Pitcairn-Knowles, Molesworth, H.E. Kimens

Lawn tennis club tournament of the Akademischer Sport-Club Berlin on a concrete court on Berliner Chaussee in Charlottenburg, 1896. Standing from left: Andrew Pitcairn-Knowles, Molesworth, H.E. Kimens, a wealthy Englishman; sitting, from left: Oscar Faber and Walter Vassel.



The tennis court of the Anglo-American Club in 1899. The Star-Spangled Banner (left) and the Union Jack have been hoisted in harmony behind the crowd. The court was located on Eschen-Allee in Berlin's Westend. Original photograph by Waldemar Titzenthaler, Berlin W., Leipziger Str. 105. From the collection of Heiner Gillmeister.

After being a runner-up in May, Breck won the title in the first German Golf Championships on 14 October 1896.³⁰ There is a detailed report on the event in the sporting weekly *Spiel und Sport* which said that Dr Breck, who had recently improved his play considerably, needed seventy-nine strokes for the eighteen hole course, this being an amateur record for the Westend links of the Berlin Golf Club.³¹ The winner was awarded a gold



Edward Breck, golf champion of Germany and Austria, on the Westend course, 1896. Photograph from *Sport im Bild*, 1896.

medal, a prize that may have survived in the United States together with other first prizes for a handicap and a putting competition which he also won.³² He repeated his success in the following year, but in 1898 his career was suddenly interrupted for reasons that will be explained shortly.

In 1887, at the time he was said to be preparing for a literary career, he became editor and literary adviser of the famous Boston based arts publisher Estes & Lauriat, and from 1890-1892 editor-in-chief of the journal *Life* of London.³³ Partnered by Alfred Howard, he had also been the editor of the fencing monthly *The Swordsman* when in 1895, in the January

³⁰ The present writer's *Golf in Deutschland*: 82.

³¹ Mashie: 1060 f. The record for professionals at the time was said to be 71.

³² These prizes were a silver cigarette case and a silver matchesafe.

³³ The present writer's "Edward Breck": 34.

issue of *The Outing. An Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Sport, Travel and Recreation*, the following notice appeared:³⁴

The Swordsman, a monthly journal devoted exclusively to fencing, will not be published during the coming season. It was unquestionably well managed, and did yeoman service in the cause of fencing, but its editors, Dr. Edward Breck and Mr. Alfred Howard, cannot hereafter spare from their legitimate business the time necessary to keep the *Swordsman* up to its former high standard, and rather than be identified with an inferior publication they wisely decided to discontinue it. Dr. Breck will hereafter devote his leisure to the Fencing Department of *Outing*, which will be made more complete and comprehensive than ever before.

The “legitimate business” preventing Breck from giving *The Swordsman* its due was a new job he had found. He was about to take up the posts of Vice-Consul and assistant to the US naval attaché in Berlin. Both positions may have been rather unofficial ones, according to Allen Knechtmann, a specialist at the Navy Department Library in Washington.³⁵ However, it is more likely that his obtaining them was part of the scheme of the US Navy Department and its Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) to install naval attachés in the capitals of Europe who,

³⁴ <<http://campechesteel.2itb.com/photo5.html>> [9 December 2011].

³⁵ “An ‘assistant’ would have been a purely informal and unofficial arrangement stemming from his role as vice-consul, which was, of course, a State Department appointment. In any case, Breck’s connection with the naval attaché had no official Navy sanction. I also checked the U.S. Official Register for the years 1893, 1895, 1897, and 1899 (the Register was apparently published bi-annually) to see if Breck appeared in the list of embassy and consular officials assigned to Germany, and he does not. Therefore, his role as a vice- consul likewise was unofficial. ... Regarding Breck’s qualifications for being appointed [assistant to the] naval attaché in Berlin, there may have been some residual influence from his father’s naval service. The U.S. Navy certainly has had its fair share of that kind of ‘inherited’ prestige. I suspect, however, that what really got him to Berlin was his command of German, his knowledge (such as it was) of the country” Communication by James Allen Knechtmann, M.A., M.L.I.S., C.A., Senior Reference Librarian, Navy Department Library, Naval History and Heritage Command, Washington Navy Yard, DC.

in turn, would see to it that spies were planted there.³⁶ In any event, apart from contributing to *The Outing*, Breck pursued his literary career by working as a correspondent for dailies such as the *New York Herald* and the *New York Times*. In this capacity, he had to report on the country's attitude towards a conflict looming large from the beginning of the new year. It was the war threatening between the United States and Spain due to the Cuban question. Before the war finally broke out on 23 April 1898, Carl Schurz, the famous American of German extraction, had in an emphatic editorial of *Harper's Magazine* entitled "National Honor" tried to vindicate the American cause which to his mind was purely humanitarian.³⁷

Cuba had long been suffering from harsh Spanish rule which of late had sparked off yet another uprising of her enslaved people. The island should be set free, but, if possible, with the minimum loss of lives and treasure which a war would inevitably entail. The outcome of such a war was hardly in question, but there would be "no glory to a robust young giant in kicking a poor old cripple." Schurz considered the annexation of Cuba "out of the question", for according to President McKinley, by the nation's code of morality, such a move would "be criminal aggression." Neither could it be called an advantage, for, run down as the

³⁶ The renowned American historian Nathan Miller wrote: "While spies were dispatched on secret missions, frantic requests for information poured upon the naval attachés in Europe. Captain John R. Bartlett, chief of ONI, told them that money was no object. 'There is a considerable sum to the credit of the information department,' he declared, 'which can be drawn upon judiciously, say fifty thousand dollars. With unlimited funds available, the attachés hired spies with abandon and let it be known in proper circles that they were prepared to pay for information.' He also mentioned the activities of Edward Breck in the process: "Edward Breck, a former student at Heidelberg and a champion swordsman, penetrated Spain disguised as a vacationing German physician. Taking the cloak-and-dagger aspects of his assignment seriously, Breck sported a false mustache and carried hidden pistols. Yet, like many amateur spies, he had failed to provide himself with means of safely transmitting what little information he did learn out of the country." Miller, *Spying for America. The Hidden History of U.S. Intelligence* (New York: Paragon House, 1989): 165-175, here 171 with further details. Miller erred when he said that Breck failed to transmit the results of his espionage, because he did not take notice of Breck's report in the November issue of *The Cosmopolitan* where he states that he cabled his findings to the US from British Gibraltar. *The Cosmopolitan*, 26,1 (November 1898): 3-13 and 195-200, here 198: "I [...] proceeded to set the telegraphic and cable wires in motion, laden with cipher messages." It is hard to believe that Breck could have availed himself of US cipher unless he was indeed a regular spy. It is interesting that *The Cosmopolitan* should have been part of the Hearst Group, the most active advocates of a war with Spain in the hope of *du sang à la une*, much blood on its front page. Breck himself described his role as assistant to the US Naval Attaché confirming Knechtmann's suggestion that one reason of his being appointed was his knowledge of German: "Während der ersten Hälfte des spanischen Kriegchens [sic] fungirte ich als Assistant des amerikanischen Marine-Attachés, weil derselbe sehr wenig Deutsch sprach und wir doch fruchtbar viele Kundschaften zu sammeln hatten, Munitionen, u.s.w. einzukaufen, die Spanier in Deutschland zu beachten, und was sonst alles ein Militärattaché in Kriegszeiten zu tun hat. Wie Sie ja wissen sind Attachés überhaupt nur die höheren Geheimagenten." In his letter to Willibald Gebhardt (4 typed pages) dated 3 August 1903: 1 f. The letter is contained in the papers of Professor Engler preserved in the Carl und Liselott Diem Archive of the German Sport University, Cologne.

³⁷ *Harper's Weekly*, 42,2152 (19 March 1898), 267. Reprinted in *Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz*, 5, ed. Frederic Bankroft (New York: Putnam, 1913): 452-457. In the spring of 1892 and after the death of George William Curtis, Schurz became the author of the journal's editorials. Walter Kessler, *Carl Schurz, Kampf, Exil, Karriere* (Cologne: Greven Verlag, 2006): 107.

Caribbean island was as a result of Spanish misrule, it “would be like the annexation of a house infected with an inexterminable contagious disease.” And he concluded his article by saying that if the United States were compelled to engage in a war that there could “be no clearer case of self-sacrifice.”³⁸

In an article in *The New York Times* dated 17 May 1898 and entitled “Germany still hostile”, Breck reacted against a note promulgated in the States by the Associated Press, that the German press had changed its opinion in favour of the United States. Breck asserted that not one German paper in fifty could be produced that did not contain “a line directly hostile to America.” Even Carl Schurz’s editorial which had tried to emphasize the unselfishness and disinterestedness of the United States, after having been translated into German, was being heavily denounced.³⁹ Breck especially criticized the *Kreuzzeitung*, the voice for the Prussian conservatives, which had attacked both Mr Schurz’s motives and his facts, and had wound up “by denying that Mr. Schurz was a man of *any* authority whatever, either in America or out of it.” Breck was also a regular reader of Germany’s satirical weekly *Kladderadatsch* which had carried the contentious topic for three successive weeks. The journal’s front page news had been “comic” poems, the theme of which had been the general degeneracy and blackguardism of Uncle Sam, one of them ending with the pious hope that, if Uncle Sam did win the fight, “at least the rascal would have to pay dearly for it.”⁴⁰

³⁸ Nathan Miller (*op.cit.*:166 f.) cast heavy doubts on Schurz’s “self-sacrifice” story when he wrote: “Although most strategists envisioned the war as being limited to the Caribbean, [Theodore, Jr.] Roosevelt [as Assistant Secretary to the Navy] laid plans not only to intervene in Cuba, but to seize the Philippines from the Spaniards as well. On February 25, 1898, Secretary [John D.] Long ... took the day off, leaving Roosevelt in charge of the Navy Department. Roosevelt wasted no time in sending a cable to Commodore George Dewey, commander of the Asiatic Squadron, who was in Hong Kong, ordering him to attack the Spanish fleet in the Philippines in case of war.”

³⁹ Breck highly commended Schurz whom he mentioned twice, but misquoted the headline of the editorial which was “National Honor”; to Breck, it was “A Case of Self-sacrifice”, a quote from its final sentence.

⁴⁰ This was the issue immediately after the outbreak of the war, and Breck was here paraphrasing the ultimate line which reads: “Mach doch dem Schuft die Sache möglichst schwer”, “An den braven Uncle Sam”, *Kladderadatsch. Humoristisch-satirisches Wochenblatt* 51,17 (1898), front page.



Breck was absolutely right in his assessment of Anti-American feeling in Germany. This is best exemplified by an article which shortly before the outbreak of the war appeared in the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, a paper which Breck, in another article, had called “Prince Bismarck’s own organ” and “most bitter against the Americans”.⁴¹ Extremist as the paper may have been, it was nevertheless faithfully and most prominently reproduced by provincial papers such as the *Bonner Zeitung*.⁴²

The anonymous author of the article, referring to Thucydides of ancient Greece and the famous German historian Leopold von Ranke, made a distinction between “inner” and “outer” reasons for war. In the particular case, the “outer” reasons were Spain’s failure to squelch a three-year-old insurrection on the largest of the Antilles by which the US was led to unroll the guiltless flag of humanity and civilization, pretending to alleviate the suffering of its people. Another “outer” reason was to claim compensation for the loss of the US battleship

⁴¹ Breck, “Roman Power in Berlin ... The Anti-American Feeling,” *The New York Times* (10 July 1898).

⁴² “Der kubanische Zankapfel”, *Bonner Zeitung* 7,86 (Wednesday, 18 April 1898), front page a-c.

“Maine” although there was no proof that the Spaniards were responsible for the explosion which sent her to ground off Havana.⁴³ Those able to see beneath the surface of these “outer” reasons would soon realize that the “Cuban fever” of the Americans was due to their infamous land grabbing and lust for conquest.



US SS “Maine” entering Havana harbor. The explosion aboard the ship which caused her sinking and the death of many of her crew occupied European and US newspapers for months.



⁴³ For an account of the ship’s mission under the US consulate general of Fitzhugh Lee see <<http://www.spanamwar.com/Leebiop.htm>> [17 November 2014]. Almost exactly a hundred years ago, in 1912, after being dewatered and raised, the hulk of the vessel was solemnly towed out to sea and sunk beyond the three mile limit on 16 March 1912. A monument to the victims of the “Maine”, designed by a certain Felix Cabarrocas, the winner of a competition, was set up and finally inaugurated on 8 March 1925 in the presence of Cuban President Zayas, General John Pershing, Admiral Dayton and the minister of Spain. <<http://www.spanamwar.com/mainemonumenthavana.html>> [9 January 2012].

Caricature from a Catalan newspaper which pinpoints one of the subterfuges for Uncle Sam's "land grabbing": the sinking of US SS Maine"; only her bow protrudes from the sea while part of her crew are struggling with the waves. The Catalan headline reads: The obsession of Uncle Sam; the caption: Hang on to the island so as not to lose it.

The author then went on to name the many attempts by the United States in the course of history to annex the 'Pearl of the Caribbean'. In 1847 and 1850, expeditionary forces under the commands of Colonel White and General Lopez respectively had been sent to Cuba with a view to sparking off an insurrection. As early as 1816, certain interested groups had raised 200 million dollars in order to deal with Spain for the island. They had hoped that by the acquisition of Cuba complete control of the Gulf of Mexico would be gained, and at the same time an incalculable advantageous stand in world trade.⁴⁴

No less a person than Thomas Jefferson had told his friend Monroe in 1823, in a letter and after the purchase of Florida, that the addition of Cuba to the Federation was exactly what they needed to round out their 'national power' until the finalization of their frontiers.⁴⁵ He then quoted from a book by the American "sea strategist", Captain Mahan,⁴⁶ in which the latter had argued that if Cuba were occupied by any enemy power a great danger would arise for the defenseless South coast. On this ground, the author continued, any conquest could be justified: Germany might annex Denmark, France England, etc. Spanish misrule was blatantly apparent to the whole world, but the question was whether the resistance of the Cuban rebels was not due to encouragement and support by the United States.

⁴⁴ It is interesting that in this connection the author mentions the Nicaragua Canal which has never materialized: "Man begreift es, daß der Besitz Kubas, im Verein mit der Vollendung des Kanals von Nicaragua durch amerikanische Unternehmer, die Beherrschung des Antillenmeeres durch die Vereinigten Staaten bedeuten würde." It is interesting that only recently the idea of the Nicaragua Canals has been revived.

⁴⁵ "But we have first to ask ourselves a question. Do we wish to acquire to our own confederacy any one or more of the Spanish provinces? I candidly confess, that I have ever looked on Cuba as the most interesting addition which could ever be made to our system of States. The control which, with Florida Point, this island would give us over the Gulf of Mexico, and the countries and isthmus bordering on it, as well as all those whose waters flow into it, would fill up the measure of our political well-being. Yet, as I am sensible that this can never be obtained, even with her own consent, but by war; and its independence, which is our second interest, (and especially its independence of England,) can be secured without it, I have no hesitation in abandoning my first wish to future chances, and accepting its independence, with peace and the friendship of England, rather than its association, at the expense of war and her enmity." Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, President of the United States, on the Monroe Doctrine, dated Monticello, 24 October, 1823, <<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/thomas.htm>> [24 April 2011].

⁴⁶ Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Interest of America in sea power, present and future* (London: Low, Marston & Co., 1898).

For three years, gangs of freebooters, with American equipment, had been at work on the island and the question was whether this was in accordance with alleged US neutrality. The US government told the Spaniards that, since they were unable to come to grips with the rebellion, they should rely on their immediate neighbors to take matters in hand. This reminds one of the arsonist who, in order to camouflage his crime, was assiduously assisting the fire brigade. What could at the long last be said about a highly disreputable Republic which declared herself the moral guardian of a monarchy of Old Europe? (The implication was, of course, that Germany was a monarchy, too.) It was a democracy where demagogic hypocrites did all the talking, a Republic where corruption of judges and public functionaries, misappropriation of public funds, rowdyism and lynch law were the order of the day. And, in her history, America took great pride in a splendid four-year Civil War, Indian wars, the savage persecution of her negroes, altogether providing numerous instances of cunning and malice, cruelty and bloodshed in much the same way as Spain, the country they so disparaged.

At this point, we return to Dr Breck, the golfer and assistant to America's naval attaché in Berlin. Two months after the outbreak of the war he was celebrating Independence Day (4 July) in the company of top-rung members of the US diplomatic corps in Germany.⁴⁷ The locale was Leipzig, the very city where he had obtained his degree. It was in the midst of jollifications that Andrew D. White, the US Ambassador, received the message of the defeat of Spain's fleet under Admiral Pascual Cervera.⁴⁸ There had been the suggestion earlier in June that year that Breck should go to Spain, but the fact that as an American, if caught, he would be court-martialled and shot, had then been a strong argument for not going.⁴⁹ Now he

⁴⁷ Breck, "A Dangerous Mission to Spain," *The Cosmopolitan*: 3.

⁴⁸ In the Battle of Santiago, Cuba, on 3 July 1898. The American fleet was commanded by Rear-Admiral John C. Watson, his flagship being the "Oregon".

⁴⁹ In the letter to Willibald Gebhardt, the argument for his not going had first been the fact that he was a married man: "Da es, nach Cerveras Niederlage, keine Zeit gab, einen Mann von Amerika zu schicken, mussten wir einen solchen in Europa finden, und da ich als Sohn eines Seeoffiziers (und eines schneidigen, furchtlosen) die Gelegenheit mit Freuden begrüßte, mich an dem Krieg zu beteiligen, bot ich meine Dienste an. Nach einigem Zögern seitens unseres Marineamts, da ich verheiratet war, nahm man dieselben an." Breck's letter to Gebhardt: 2. It can be speculated about whether Herbert G. Squiers, second secretary at the US legation in Berlin and from 1902 until 1905 US minister to Cuba was involved in Breck's mission. Like Breck, Squiers was a member of the Berlin Golf Club and the donator of the Squiers Cup there. He had signed a passport for Breck in 1895. For an account of Squiers, a distinguished soldier and diplomat, the husband of Helen L. Fargo, a wealthy man and the owner of the yacht "The Norseman", see <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14238c.htm> [5 May 2011], and "H.G. Squiers Returns; Won't Say Why he Quit," *The New York Times* (6 December 1905).

felt he must go. He would take the risk, however, not as an American, but in the disguise of a German. In his article, he had mentioned the incident of the German crew of the warship

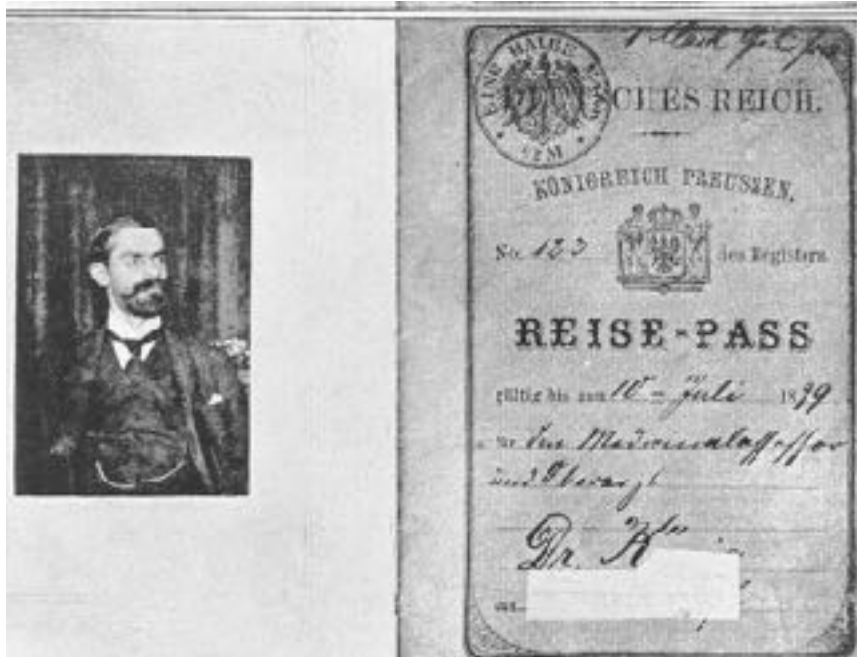


Herbert G. SQUIERS, US diplomat and from 1902 until 1905 minister to Cuba.

“Oldenburg” and Spanish sailors in Cadiz where both parties had been drinking heartily to the downfall of America.⁵⁰ As a German, he would therefore be received as a friend.

In order to perfect his disguise, he needed a passport of the Kingdom of Prussia. He succeeded in borrowing one from a German physician, whom he called a friend, and whose physiognomy resembled his own. Into this pass he pasted a photograph of himself, and this faked document paved his way without question to the Iberian Peninsula.

⁵⁰ A note in the *Bonner Zeitung* read: “Die Offiziere der Madrider Garnison haben auf der deutschen Botschaft ihre Karten abgegeben, als Zeichen ihres Dankes für das deutsche Vorgehen gegen die Vereinigten Staaten.” (Officers of the garrison in Madrid have presented their visiting cards at the German embassy as a token of their gratitude for Germany’s line of action against the United States.) *Bonner Zeitung* 7,38 (Tuesday, 15 February 1898): 2 b.



The “doctored” passport of Edward Breck by which he passed himself off as the German physician Dr. König.

In the light of general German hostility to war-mongering Uncle Sam at the time, questions arise about the German citizen who lent his passport to the American for this purpose. Breck himself in his report on his Spanish adventure in the November issue of *The Cosmopolitan* was anxious to keep his identity secret. He only disclosed that his friend was “Dr. K-, a well-known specialist in mental diseases”. In addition, he revealed the initial letter of his friend’s first name when he said that his luggage, his handkerchiefs, his underwear and even his shoes were marked with “W.K.”⁵¹ In his passport and the pictures he reproduced in his report, a photograph of General Weyler and a written note, he made sure to erase the bearer’s and addressees’ last name, but the umlaut mark clearly visible in the passport and the curved downstrokes in both the passport and the written note at the end of the name make it a sure guess that the donor’s last name was a very common one in the German language, namely König.

Who was this Dr. W. König? With the bits of information provided by Breck himself and the help of Melanie Scholz of the Institute for the History of Medicine at the famous Charité Hospital in Berlin he was soon identified. It was, to use his full name, Wilhelm Julius König (1858-1910), at first medical assistant and assistant medical director at the mental

⁵¹ *Ibid.*: 4 and 193.

institution of the Charité, then in the latter function at the mental hospital in Dalldorf (now Berlin-Wittenau, since 1905).⁵² However, for ceding his passport to a Yankee, a German of a very special disposition was nevertheless required. Apparently, such was the case with Dr König. The generous giver was married to an Englishwoman and bilingual. He spoke English like a native Brit, and it is likely that he was an anglophile into the bargain, and had therefore no qualms about doing America a favor.⁵³

It is quite another question of how the MD made the acquaintance of Dr Breck and how the two became friends. At this point, we return to the Berlin Golf Club. Dr König seems to have been a member of the club since its very beginning. He competed, like Edward Breck, the runner-up, in the May tournament of 1896, was even victorious in all disciplines of a tournament held in February 1898.⁵⁴ He became a member of the club's committee at its general assembly at the Savoy Hotel on 23 February of the same year,⁵⁵ and in 1900 engaged in one of the early editions of the Club's Squiers Cup.⁵⁶ In 1906, he rose to the position of one of its vice-presidents, a post which he held until his retirement in 1908.⁵⁷ Dr König died, after an early retirement in 1910 and a long illness, on 9 January 1911.

⁵² *Deutschsprachige Neurologen und Psychiater 2*, ed., Alma Kreuter (Munich: New Providence, 1996): 742, *Biographisches Lexikon der hervorragenden Ärzte der letzten 50 Jahre 1*, ed. Isidor Fischer, 2nd ed. (Munich: Urban und Schwarzenberg, 1962): 791, and Paul Bernhardt [who as a psychiatrist also worked at the mental hospital in Dalldorf], "Nekrolog", *Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie* 68 (1911): 290-294, especially 291. The author owes a debt of gratitude to Melanie Scholz for placing at his disposal copies of these sources as well as the photograph of Dr König. This has been gleaned from *Totgeschwiegen 1933 - 1945: Zur Geschichte der Wittenauer Heilstätten, seit 1957 Karl-Bonhoeffer-Nervenlinik*, ed. Arbeitsgruppe zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Karl-Bonhoeffer-Nervenlinik, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1989): 29.

⁵³ That König was in sympathy with the United States was confirmed by Breck himself in his letter to Gebhardt in 1903: 3: "Wie ich zu dem Passe kam brauche ich nicht zu erzählen. Ich will nur sagen, dass Amerika doch hier und da einen Freund in Deutschland hatte."

⁵⁴ *Sport im Bild* 4,9 (February 1898).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1889. At the same meeting, Breck was (re-)elected treasurer. Dr König was still a member of the committee in 1903, *Sport im Wort* 10 (Thursday, 5 March 1903): 119.

⁵⁶ "Golf. Die Meisterschaft von Deutschland und der Squiers-Pokal," *Sport im Wort* 45 (8 November 1900): 487.

⁵⁷ Communication by Olaf Dudzus, Golf- und Land-Club-Wannsee, Berlin.



Contemporary photograph of General Valeriano Weyler y Nicolau, Gobernador de Cuba, Marqués de Tenerife and Duque de Rubi (left) which the General dedicated to Dr W. König (right).


 ESTADO
 A don W. König
 Tengo mucho gusto
 en devolverle la fotografía
 de que usamos cuando
 me acompañó de la
 otra viaje con obediencia
 que deseo como
 recuerdo de un viaje
 y de mis simpatías por
 los alemanes mis antepasados
 Weyler

Written note on state paper by General Weyler, the addressee being again Dr W. König. In it, the high-ranking Spanish military man expresses the hope that the “German” will remember his journey and Weyler’s sympathy for the Germans, his forefathers. (“... como recuerdo de su viaje y de mis simpatías por los alemanes mis antepasados”.)



Sitzung der Interdisziplinären Arbeits- und Umformungsbeiräte nach 1900. Sitzend von links nach rechts: Hirtner, König, Simler, Vogelweiss, Junius. Stehend von links nach rechts: Schmidt, (?) , Arndt, Neuwirth, (?) , Schaub.

The only photograph showing Dr König (sitting, second from left).

With the faked passport in his pocket, and armed with a revolver, Breck had no problems with passing through the Spanish border control. Aboard his train, he got into a conversation with a young Spaniard returning from his studies in Oxford. As chance would have it, he was the son of the Minister of State, the Duke of Almodóva.⁵⁸ The latter drew his attention to a young officer who had also boarded the train and who was, again by a curious coincidence, Fernando Weyler, the son of Valeriano Weyler. As Governor General of Cuba Weyler had dealt, until he was deposed in 1897, very successfully with the rebels. Because of his methods, he was called, by the Hearst press, “The Butcher” (*el Carnicero*).⁵⁹ Breck managed to win young Weyler’s confidence and to be introduced to his father. The General, who was of German extraction, received the German doctor most genially and provided him with letters of introduction. These permitted Breck to make a complete inspection of the Spanish coastal defense, making notes and taking photographs. Part of what he saw was during a stop at Gibraltar, a British Dominion, sent to the US Navy Department in coded messages.

⁵⁸ Juan Manuel Sánchez y Gutiérrez de Castro known as Duke of Almodóva through marriage with Genoveva de Hoces, 8th Duchess of Almodóvar des Río, <http://wopedia.mobi/es/Juan_Manuel_S%C3%A1nchez_y_Guti%C3%A9rrez_de_Castro> [18 April 2011].

⁵⁹ For an excellent and impartial account of Weyler see <<http://www.paseosporla.habana.com/1340/habana-guia-valeriano-weyler--cuba-.html>> [15 April 2011] [ibid., search for Valeriano Weyler].

As was expected, the war was of only short duration. When the US Navy did not head for Spain, Breck's notes became useless.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, contrary to what politicians like Carl Schurz had stated, the United States did not exactly act unselfishly. An ultimatum was issued by the US government: Spain was forced in the Treaty of Paris to surrender Cuba, and to cede to the Americans Puerto Rico, Guam, the Marianos and the Carolinas Islands, and to sell to them the Philippines for twenty million dollars.⁶¹ Breck returned to Berlin with the hope of succeeding to the office of Consul, because Goldschmidt had died on 2 November 1898.⁶² His hopes were dashed, however,⁶³ and thoroughly frustrated, he returned to the USA. The fact, that his brother John Leslie had died, and also, that because of his Spanish adventure he had become a *persona non-grata* in the Fatherland, may have contributed to his decision to leave the country.⁶⁴ In fact, the latter may well have been the main reason for his untimely departure. This became evident in 1903 when Breck, in a letter dated 3 August, reacted to a letter which he had received from Dr Willibald Gebhardt, the founder and secretary of the Committee for German Participation in the Olympic Games.⁶⁵ Earlier that year, the American

⁶⁰ It was an irony of history that the Treaty of Paris should have been signed by the Duke of Almodóva whose son had met Breck on his journey to Spain.

⁶¹ <http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_Manuel_S%C3%A1nchez_y_Guti%C3%A9rrez_de_Castro> [18 April 2011]. The notorious US base of Guantánamo, too, came into being as a result of the Spanish-American War during which the bay had been occupied by American forces. *Convenio de Arrendamiento para Estaciones Navales*, drafted by (L.S.) José M. García Montes on behalf of Cuba and (L.S.) H.G. Squiers on behalf of the United States and approved by the Cuban Senate on 16 July 1903 and by the President of Cuba and the President of the United States on 17 August and 2 October 1903 respectively. It was ratified in Washington on 6 October 1903, <<http://www.autentico.org/oa09335.php>> [5 May 2011].

⁶² Cf. "Death of a Consul General. Mr. J. Goldschmidt, our representative at Berlin, passes away," *The New York Times* (4 November 1898). This obituary note may well have been written by Breck himself. <<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F30F13F73B5811738DDDAD0894D9415B8885F0D3>> [12 January 2011].

⁶³ Well-connected as he was, he had tried to gain the support of Robert S. Chilton, clerk in the State Department. Breck in a letter dated 1 November 1898, preserved in the Georgetown University Library, Washington, D.C., Robert S. Chilton, Papers, Box 1, Folder 20.

⁶⁴ The present writer's "Edward Breck", p. 39.

⁶⁵ The Committee had been set up on 4 April 1903, *Dokumente zur Frühgeschichte der Olympischen Spiele*, ed. Volker Koebsel (Cologne: Barz & Beienburg, 1970: 153 (Gebhardt's letter to Coubertin of 25 May 1903), and 217, n251. For an account of Gebhardt see Karl Lennartz, "Willibald Gebhardt and Germany's Position", <http://www.coubertin.ch/pdf/PDF-Dateien/117-Lennartz.pdf> [28 December 2011], especially 110 f. In Breck's place, Dr Hugo Hardy became attaché to Germany's team and the only non-US competitor in the Olympic lawn tennis event, see the present writer's *Olympisches Tennis. Die Geschichte der olympischen Tennisturniere* (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag Richarz, 1993): 30-32. On Hardy's predecessor, Dr Georgios von Streit, attaché to the German team in Athens (1896) who, like Breck, had obtained a doctor's degree from Leipzig (1891), see his *From Bonn to Athens, Single and Return. The Diary of John Pius Boland, Olympic Champion Athens 1896* (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag Richarz, 2008): 201-204.

had apparently applied for the post of an attaché to the German team for the forthcoming St Louis Olympics. Breck and Gebhardt had been friends since they had both been on the committee of the German-Austrian Fencing Association in the late 1890s.⁶⁶ Breck could therefore hope that his application would find favour with Gebhardt.

On 13 July 1903, in a session held at the Königliche General-Ordenskommission, the Doctor had indeed, under AOB items, informed his colleagues of Breck's initiative. He had expressed the belief that, in the person of the former US vice consul Dr Breck, he had found a suitable representative of the German Committee. Dr Breck, he said, had approached him several times, but he had in the meantime been informed of certain criticisms of him.



Meeting of the Nova Scotia Guides Association at Kemptville in 1908. Dr Breck is the fourth from right in the back row. Courtesy Yarmouth County Museum & Archives.

People reproached Breck for his having as an American citizen in the Spanish-American War travelled to Spain “German-flagged” and as a spy. Gebhardt told the assembly that he was investigating the allegations. He would be sorry, he concluded, if Dr Breck, whom he

⁶⁶ The present writer's “Edward Breck,” 36 f.

regarded highly, had to drop out. A guest, Herr Reichskommissar Lewald, declared that he would, if necessary, look for a suitable representative and that he would get in touch with other adequate candidates in the United States.⁶⁷

Another session of the Committee was held on 15 October 1903. In his report, Gebhardt stated that with regard to a permanent representative in America they had in the meantime withdrawn from the person of Dr Breck. Herr Reichskommissar had generously applied himself to the matter and had found the right person in Mr Kammerer, an influential German-American.⁶⁸

Perhaps in a fret, Breck said goodbye to the world for a while, retiring to the backwoods of Nova Scotia. There he lived in one of the log cabins along the lake frontage of the famous hunters' lodge, Milford House, writing in the mornings, and testing sportsmen's gear for the New York outfitters Abercrombie & Fitch in the afternoons, in order to make a living. He wrote for sportsmen's journals such as *The Outing Magazine*, *Field & Stream*, and *Forest & Stream*,⁶⁹ and books on hunting and wildlife, and organized outings for wealthy tourists. One such was the novelist Albert Bigelow Paine who made "Eddie" Breck the main character in his novel *The Tent Dwellers* (1908).⁷⁰ He was also a campaigner, and perhaps also the founder of the Anti-Steel Trap League which outlawed the cruel killing of fur-bearing animals by the use of steel traps.⁷¹

⁶⁷ "Bericht über die Sitzung vom Montag, den [sic] 13. Juli 1903, in den Geschäftsräumen der Kgl. General-Ordenskommission [Berlin]," typescript in the Carl Diem-Forschungsarchiv, Cologne, 4 pp., signed by Dr W. Gebhardt.

⁶⁸ "Protokoll der Sitzung am 15. Oktober 1903," typescript in the Carl Diem-Forschungsarchiv, 6 pp.; *ibid.*, 3, item II.9. Breck had in his letter referred to the committee members who had had bad memories of his adventure as *die Herren*. In the session of 13 July, these were His Serene Highness Prince Edward zu Salm-Horstmar, Baron von Hünefeld, Major von Dittfurth, G. Demmler, F. Hofmann, O. Kessler appearing in the place of Herr Hax, Dr Martin, Albert Preuss, Dr Lewald. Conspicuous by their absence were Captain Dey, Captain von Tschudy, H. Fürst, K. Dörry, A. Schoene.

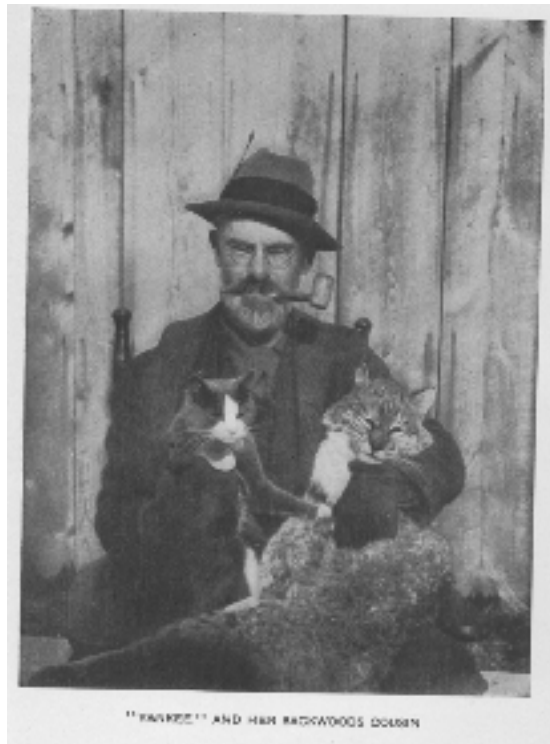
⁶⁹ Breck also contributed the articles *Base-ball* and *Kite-flying* (in part), designated by the initials "E. B.", to the 11th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1911).

⁷⁰ The present writer's "Edward Breck", 39 f.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 41-43. Breck was the author of *The Steel Trap, a manual of information*, Washington, D.C., 192?. The 6th edition of this booklet (34 pp. with illustrations) is held by the New York Public Library (research call number YAM p.v. 362)



Be-spectacled Dr Breck, as seen by sporting illustrator Henry (Hy) Sumner Watson, from Albert Bigelow Paine, *The Tent Dwellers*.



“Eddie” Breck with his Milford pet Yankee and her relative, the Canadian wildcat (ca 1908). Photograph from his *The Way of the Woods*.

From time to time, he made an appearance in Boston society circles lecturing on naval matters and using slides in the process. It is possible that some of these were owed to his mission to Spain more than a decade previously.

That the leopard cannot change his spots became evident early in 1917 when it was at last inevitable that the United States would join the Entente and declare war on Imperial Germany and Austria, the Axis Powers.⁷² This time, his destination was Latin America, Brazil and Argentina, both countries with a large German population. German Brazilians, however, did not fall for his trying to masquerade as a go-between coming from Switzerland. After receiving a good hiding, and not without bruises about the head and an injured arm, Breck made a narrow escape to Buenos Aires. There he succeeded, calling himself Dr Ernst Brecht, to be admitted to the German Club.⁷³

This was the time of Germany’s unrestricted submarine warfare, and it seems plausible that Breck’s expertise in naval matters had prompted his being there. The US government’s main object was to induce Argentina to declare war on Germany. This proved easy in the case of Brazil, but Argentina was a different pair of shoes.⁷⁴ German submarines had sunk two Argentine vessels on their way to Europe, the *Monte Protégido* and *El Toro*. The Allies had hoped that these German “atrocities” would be sufficient reasons for war, but the Imperial Government, by expressing regret over the incidents and promising adjustments of Argentina’s losses, had appeased the Argentine public. The country’s president, Hipólito

⁷² According to Daniels, 175, Breck sailed for Brazil on 3 March 1917, “... a month before we declared war ...”

⁷³ All this was told by Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy, and certainly a personal acquaintance of Breck. *Idem, Our Navy at War*, chapter “A Surprise for Count von Luxburg”, especially 175-177. Doubts must be cast, however, on the accuracy of his account which he, not exactly familiar with German history, seems to have embellished considerably. There was no such thing as a *Deutscher Bund* in Argentina which should have had its gatherings in the Restaurant “Bismarck” nor is it likely that its annual meeting there was presided by Count Luxburg, the German Ambassador and that the latter should have thanked Breck for a patriotic speech delivered on the occasion. Luxburg himself stated that he had never been even a member of the Club, although in his capacity as Chef de Mission he was automatically their honorary member. Karl Graf Luxburg, *Nachdenkliche Erinnerung* (Schloss Aschbach/Saale: author’s edition, 1953): 163.

⁷⁴ “Argentine public sentiment toward the belligerents was in a state of uncertainty, and Brazil needed but little to induce her to declare war ...” wrote Secretary of State Robert Lansing, *War Memoirs of Robert Lansing* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1935): 328.

Yrigoyen, had felt no need to yield to the pressures of the United States, and to declare war on the “Mittelmächte”.⁷⁵



Argentina’s president Hipólito Yrigoyen (centre) who saved his country from entering a war. Argentina’s foreign minister Honorio Pueyrredón, whom Luxburg had insulted by styling him a reputed ass, is standing behind him. Poor Honorio was afterwards ridiculed even by his countrymen who referred to him as “el Notorio”. Photograph from <<http://www.yrigoyen.gov.ar/fotos.htm>> 18 January 2012.

Therefore the US State Department thought of a more efficient lever for exercising pressure on Argentina’s president: the calculated publication, on 8 September 1917,⁷⁶ of compromising telegrams sent to Berlin by the unfortunate Imperial ambassador, Count Luxburg. In two of them, Luxburg had recommended to the German admiralty that, should they sink any Argentine vessels, they should do so without leaving a trace (German “spurlos versenken”), and in one of them he had called Señor Honorio Pueyrredón, the Argentine foreign minister, “a notorious ass and anglophile”.⁷⁷

Public reaction in Argentina was as it was expected to be. In the course of public riots, the German Club was set on fire “by pro-ally students and others”, “the restaurant ... gutted

⁷⁵ The historian Felipe Pigna, “Ante la Primera Guerra, neutrals. Cuando la historia parece repetirse: el gobierno radical, en particular, fue energico frente a agresiones alemanas y presiones de EE.UU.,” *Clarín* (13 January 2008); <<http://edant.clarin.com/suplementos/zona/2008/01/13/z-03801.htm>> [19 April 2011].

⁷⁶ Lansing: 328: “I had received verified copies of the Luxburg telegrams on August thirty first. On September seventh the Argentine Ambassador came to see me and I gave him copies of the three messages. With his strong pro-ally feelings he was elated at their contents and hastened to telegraph the text to his government. On the eighth the telegrams were published in the American newspapers and caused a tremendous sensation not only in this country but throughout Latin America.”

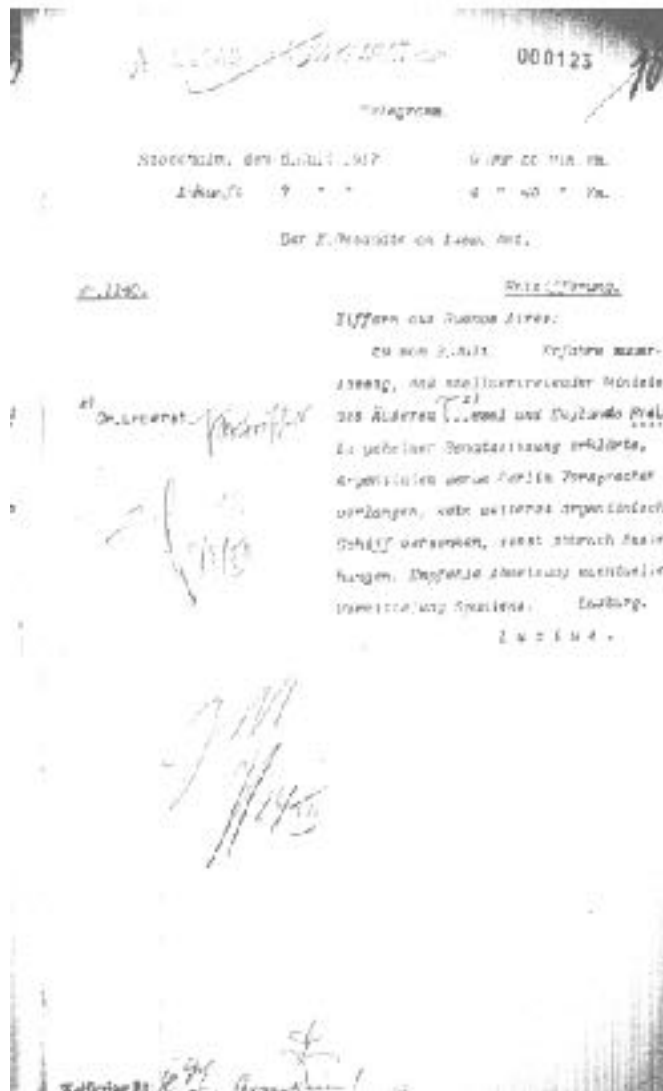
⁷⁷ Lansing: 327, where translations of the telegrams are printed in full.

by a mob, the tables and dishes smashed, and every portrait of the Kaiser, Hindenburg, and other 'heroes' slashed to pieces.”⁷⁸ All this, however, was to no avail. Until the very end, Argentina’s president refused to come into the war.



Original copy of a Luxburg telegram in which it was suggested to sink the Argentine steamers “Oran” and “Guazu” without leaving a trace (one but last and last line). The telegram was also signed by Hellmuth Baron Lucius von Stuedten who at the time was a delegate in extraordinary mission in Stockholm. Communication by Lucia van der Linde, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts Berlin.

⁷⁸ Daniels: 177.



The telegram in which the Argentine Foreign Minister was called a “notorious ass”. The typed marginal note (“Gr[ammatik]. unverst[ändlich].”), grammar unintelligible; handwritten addition: “Notorischer”, suggests that the Americans must have had before them not the cabled, but the original text.

At this point the question is how the United States managed to get access to Luxburg’s encoded telegrams, and how they succeeded in deciphering their code. Robert Lansing’s opinion was that at first the English, over whose cables the messages were sent to Germany via Stockholm, intercepted them and had them decoded by their specialists.⁷⁹ When this way of communication was no longer open, the Swedish legation in Washington, disregarding its

⁷⁹ Lansing: 326. This view has been taken for granted by almost all historians afterwards who worked on the subject. See for instance Benjamin Welles, *Sumner Welles: FDR’s global strategist: a biography* [The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute series on diplomatic and economic history] (London: Basingstoke Macmillan, 1997): 54: “British intelligence intercepted his cables, passed them to Washington and, on September 9, Secretary of State Robert Lansing published them - without the normal diplomatic courtesy of forewarning Irigoyen. The Argentine President was outraged.”

neutrality, took over. It was then that the Americans “kept vigilant watch [on their] telegraphic correspondence.” According to Lansing it then took weeks until the cipher of the messages thus captured “was discovered and the messages were translated.”⁸⁰ As a matter of fact, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, although he is far from being clear on this point, seems to imply that Edward Breck himself had been the Yankees’ informant.⁸¹



German ambassador Count Luxburg (left) and US minister Stimson coming from their interview with Argentina’s president Yrigoyen, the latter with a smile, the former with a frown. Faked photograph from an Argentine newspaper. From Stimson’s book *My United States*.

By yet another curious coincidence, we have the testimony of a third party which suggests that this must indeed have been the case. This was a contemporary, Frederick Jessup Stimson, the United States legate in Buenos Aires.⁸² Speaking of “extraordinary spies” in the city, who were on the payroll of the Navy Department, he related the story of a man who because of his peculiar outer appearance was nicknamed Mr Hawkshaw by Fred de Billier, a member of his

⁸⁰ *Idem*: 327.

⁸¹ “He found that the German officials were planning to send important dispatches they would not entrust to the mails, and they planned at first to make him their messenger. But before this was arranged [?], Luxburg’s code messages regarding U-boat warfare were published in the United States.” Daniels: 176.

⁸² Frederick Jessup Stimson, *My United States* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1931): 378-381.

staff. One day, Stimson's porter brought him a note scribbled on the margin of a daily newspaper. It read: "... must see you secretly on matters of national importance." Not without misgivings he told the porter to show the man up. When the unexpected guest was ushered in, he looked, according to Stimson, like "... something between a German professor and a Methodist minister." About the man's identity the American learned the following:

- that he was a classmate of Secretary of State Lansing at Amherst;
- that he lived at the Plaza Hotel which was also the residence of Count Luxburg;
- that he was educated in Germany, and that no one could tell him from a German;⁸³
- that he had been getting on splendidly, because they had made him a member of the German Club the night before;
- finally, that his name was Müller, the German equivalent of English Miller.

Of course, this description fits Dr Edward Breck almost perfectly.⁸⁴ Lingering doubts are at last dispelled when Stimson recalled that the stranger, although he did not know what news was sent to Secretary of State Lansing, after all did send cables of his own, and that he had "since written a book about it from which one would infer he had discovered the Luxburg telegrams."⁸⁵ It is rather unfortunate that this "book" cannot as yet be identified.

Stimson was partly correct when he concluded his story by saying that Mr Miller was afterwards sent to Spain as a Naval Attaché. Breck was indeed directed into the Iberian peninsula, but to Portugal rather than to Spain. He held the post of Naval Attaché until February 1919, and, convalescing from an unspecified illness, returned to the States from Bordeaux in March by means of naval transport.⁸⁶ After his return, Lieutenant Commander Edward Breck, U.S.N.R.F. (O.N.I) became curator of the Naval Records and Library where he had time to indulge in his favorite occupation, writing.⁸⁷ Before that, he had in recognition for his services been awarded the Naval Cross.⁸⁸

⁸³ Here Breck rather overestimated his proficiency in German. As early as 1903, in his letter to Gebhardt, Breck had been guilty of many offenses against the correct use of German. That he had improved his German after an absence from the country for more than one decade and a half is very unlikely.

⁸⁴ Breck and Lansing were not exactly classmates, Breck being in the 1885, Lansing in the 1886 class, see above, note 7. In addition, the Doctor would scarcely have disclosed his real name.

⁸⁵ Stimson: 380 f.

⁸⁶ The present writer's "Edward Breck", 45.

⁸⁷ See a letter to the representatives of the various bureaus and offices of the Naval Department by Josephus Daniels from the Navy Department Washington, reference no. 26256-384:1 O-Lu, dated 15 May 1920.

⁸⁸ Cf. <<http://valor.militarytimes.com/recipient.php?recipientid=9184>> 5 July 2017.

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Navy Cross to Lieutenant Commander Edward Breck, United States Navy (Reserve Force), for dangerous and distinguished service in the line of his profession as Special Agent in Brazil and Argentina, and later as Naval Attaché at Lisbon, where he established a valuable service information throughout Portugal.

Breck died of acute myocarditis in South Milford, Annapolis County, on 14 May 1929. It looks as if it was intended to bury him on Forest Hills Cemetery in Boston, but that eventually his body was taken to the National Cemetery in Arlington.⁸⁹



Lieutenant Commander Edward Breck in 1929, the year of his death. Courtesy Navy Department Library, Naval Historical Center, Washington D.C.

As a final point, we might want to know how Count Luxburg, Breck's victim, judged the affair of the "stolen telegrams". 'A theft' is what Breck's heroic action was called by German newspapers unanimously throughout the country. Naturally, Luxburg was forced, after a short internment, to leave Argentina. Contrary to what was said about him in the Allied media, the German was a most cultured man, a tennis and perhaps also a golf player, fluent in many languages, and an admirer of England as well as of the United States⁹⁰ He had even met his countryman, Carl Schurz, at a Christmas gathering in New York. Schurz had presented him with a copy of his biography of President Lincoln, whom Luxburg held in high esteem,

⁸⁹ Cf. Nova Scotia Vital Statistics, Registration Year 1929, Book 115, p. 560. The informant of his death was Breck's second wife, Mary Stanley Breck whose address was given as 2330 Massachusetts Ave, Washington DC.

⁹⁰ Luxburg: 15 and 63.

and they had talked about Wagner and the ideals of 1848.⁹¹ The Count never suspected that he had fallen prey to an American spy. Instead, he blamed the antediluvian Imperial code system for the embarrassing divulging of his telegrams. It is interesting, however, what he had to say about the alleged atrocities committed by the German U-boats and the sinking of the Argentine vessels. On the Rio Plata, he said, lay derelict river steamers (President Yrigoyen had contemptuously spoken of them as *esos patachos*) their only destination having been the shipbreaking yard.⁹² Their tonnage was modest, some hundred tons – here he was apparently referring to steamers such as the *El Toro* and *Guazo* mentioned in one of his telegrams.

It would be a strange thing, he continued with unconcealed sarcasm, if these could not be used to provoke an outright scandal or even a war. A Mr Zeballos,⁹³ who had with mixed feelings been a witness of the intrigue, had told him that an older regulation forbade these boats the carrying of the national flag at sea. But of late they had been refurbished, at the cost of the Allies, by the disreputable firm Dodero.⁹⁴ With a crew cobbled together and some sea freight they had then been dispatched to Europe. One is inevitably reminded of the sinking of the “Maine”, which had lain at anchor off Havana and been a similar provocation, and the Spanish-American war which resulted from it.

⁹¹ *Idem*: 16.

⁹² *Idem*: 100 f.

⁹³ This was Estanislao Severo Zeballos (1854-1923), former Argentine legate to the United States (1893-1896). In 1917, Zeballos was a stalwart supporter of President Yrigoyen in the attempt of the latter not to declare war on the Axis powers. Towards the end of his life he opposed American predominance. He died in Liverpool on 5 November 1923; <http://www.todo-argentina.net/biografias/Personajes/estanislao_severo_zeballos.htm> [22 April 2011].

⁹⁴ A river navigation company founded by Baron Nicolás Mihanovichan, an immigrant from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. By 1900, the business had a fleet of 200 ships, their own drydock facilities & hundreds of employees. When World War I began, the business had expanded to 5,000 employees and 324 vessels, including trans-Atlantic passenger ships. The entire company was eventually acquired by Alberto Dodero and continues to function today. One very visible vestige of the company is their main office on Avenida Alemán built in 1912; <<http://www.recoletacemetery.com/?cat=7>> [22 April 2011]. On Alberto Dodero see “Argentina: Abdication of a Tycoon,” *Time* (18 May 1949), < <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,853719-1,00.html>> [22 April 2011]; on Dodero’s plans of trading with the United States after the Great War see “Argentina to Build Fleet of Cargo Ships. Alberto Dodero Declares Nation Must Reach out for Trade and Immigration,” *The New York Times* (17 August 1918).