A deranged Harvard professor tried to change the course of World War One by storming the Glen Cove estate of financier J. P. Morgan with pistols and dynamite in 1915.

On July 3rd, 1915 a mousy-looking scholar named Erich Muenter stepped off the train at Glen Street Station and hired a car to take him to the East Island, Glen Cove estate of J. P. Morgan, millionaire financier. Traveling under the alias of Frank Holt, he carried a valise filled with dynamite and two pistols hidden beneath his coat. His self-appointed mission: to take Morgan and his family hostage, and force the end of World War One.

By the summer of 1915, war nerves had already gripped the nation. In May a German submarine had sunk the Cunard luxury liner Lusitania, with a loss of 1,200 lives. Although many Americans were eager to avoid entanglement in a “European War” anti-German sentiment was steadily rising throughout the country. President Woodrow Wilson, long a public advocate of American neutrality, had begun to take a more aggressive stance against Germany. He lifted an embargo against loans to the Allies, paving the way for J. P. Morgan to organize a syndicate of 2,200 U.S. banks to underwrite a loan of 500 million dollars at 5-percent to England and France — a move unprecedented in U.S. banking history. J. P. Morgan & Co. took on the role of purchasing agents for the Allies, handling the first of what would eventually amount to 3 billion dollars in orders for war supplies for the Allies at only a 1-percent commission. In fact, the third floor of new Wall Street offices of J. P. Morgan & Co. had been converted into the informal New York offices for the nations of France, Great Britain and Russia.

Upon the death of his father, J. Pierrepont Morgan, in 1913, J. P. Morgan (known to friends as “Jack”) was heir to one of the
most influential banking dynasties in the world. While biographers would describe him in later life as “reserved to the point of brusqueness”, the J. P. Morgan who commanded Wall Street in 1915 was a very different man. A biographer described the young J. P. Morgan as “big, breezy, and good natured... a more attractive personality is not to be found in Wall Street. Clean living, much time in the open air, and plenty of exercise, have given him a fine color and good digestion. His conversation is punctuated with sallies of humor, and his infectious laugh frequently interrupts his conversation.” Like his father, he was powerfully built, weighing more than 200 pounds, but agile. Like his father, he was sent to serve apprenticeships with banking houses after he graduated Harvard, rather than being directly inducted into a cushy partnership in the family firm. The Morgans believed that banking should be learned from the bottom up. “Most sons of great fathers are tolerated in their positions because of their parentage,” wrote one acquaintance. “J.P. Morgan quickly demonstrated that he stood on his own two feet.” Morgan started at the Boston banking firm of Jacob C. Roberts. It was while he was in Boston that he met and married Jane Norton Grew in 1890. They would have four children: Junius Spencer, Jane Norton, Frances Tracy, and Henry Sturgis. He was then sent to work for eight years in the London firm of J. S. Morgan & Co., founded by his grandfather, and of Morgan, Grenfell & Co. There, his knowledge of banking and brokering was honed, and Morgan developed a love for England that would last throughout his life. He even served brief stints in Paris, France and St. Petersburg, Russia.

The Morgan family had established a summer home at Glen Cove, New York to provide a country seat close to Wall Street. About 1910, they had rented a large farm house on East Island, a large peninsula of land which jutted into Long Island Sound. Finding the location ideally suited their tastes, Morgan had a palatial mansion constructed in the center of the island, commanding a truly majestic vista of Long Island Sound. He called the estate “Matinecock Point.” Yachting was Morgan’s favorite leisure activity. As one of the leading members of the New York Yacht Club, he was intimately involved in the America’s Cup races, and routinely participated in regional yacht races. His private yacht was Corsair, third in a series of ships bearing that name, a 304-foot long floating palace. (He would replace this ship a little more than a decade later with yet a fourth, larger Corsair.) Morgan was a member of a host of prestigious clubs. In the U.S., he was a member of the Union Club, the Metropolitan Club, the Century Club, the University Club, the Racquet Club, and the Harvard Club. In London, he was a member of the St. James Club, White’s Club, the Devonshire, and the Bath Club.

As the J. P. Morgan Co.’s involvement in raising war loans for the Allies in Europe steadily increased, his staff and partners grew increasingly nervous about his accessibility by the public. Morgan freely walked Wall Street as he went from meeting to meeting and commonly greeted acquaintances at the entrance of his Wall Street offices. Morgan was an accident waiting to happen — his visibility and openness made him vulnerable to any number of threats from cranks, anarchists, or terrorists. The only gesture to security he would allow them to take was to hire a plainclothes detective to keep an eye on strangers who visited his Wall Street offices.

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Erich Muenter was a university professor who taught German language. Accounts of his early life are sketchy. Muenter was apparently born in Germany about 1871 and emigrated to the U.S. in 1890; however, he would in his later life fabricate a host of stories as his tenuous grip on reality slipped away. He alternately claimed to have been born in Texas or Wisconsin, the son of German immigrants, or in the South as the son of landed aristocrats, or that he was of Finnish extraction forced to emigrate to the United States by Russian persecution. Regardless of the fictions he contrived of his own origins, Muenter clearly evinced a natural gift for languages. He demonstrated fluency in German, French, Spanish, and Finnish. His German accent was almost imperceptible, except on the few occasions when he was seen by friends to explode in rage; most who met him thought he merely had a mild speech impediment.

Muenter took his Bachelor’s degree in German at the University of Chicago, graduating in 1899. In 1902 Muenter married a young woman named Krembs, who acquaintances described as “a pleasant German-American woman,” and as a “a woman of striking beauty.” She taught school in Chicago for a brief period. 1903 found Muenter and his wife at Kansas State University where he took some graduate courses. There he authored a paper entitled “Insanity and Literature”, and his wife gave birth to their first child, a boy.

In 1904, Muenter hit the big time: he was accepted for doctoral work at Harvard University, and was permitted to teach undergraduate courses in German language. One of the faculty members at Harvard said that “in the classroom Professor Muenter was very calm and precise, and had much charm of manner.” Muenter and his wife lived in modest rooms at 107 Oxford Street in Cambridge which they rented from Thomas W. Hillier, a local livery stable owner. Hillier later recalled that the only evidence of strangeness Muenter was shown was the strange conviction that “a wonderful new language could be built up out of Gaelic and Scots” (actually, newspapers published the report as a language built from combining “Gaelic and Scotch” — which has a certain interesting potential in and of itself...)

Yet his university colleagues saw dark oddities in Muenter’s behavior. There were three separate occasions on which neighbors accused Muenter of blowing out the gas lights in his bedroom in an attempt to asphyxiate his sleeping wife. Muenter claimed that the gas had been blown out by the wind — a common hazard in the days of gas lighting — and the neighbors’ accusations were dismissed as over-active imagination. Certainly, his landlord had vouched for Muenter, claiming that Muenter had seemed genuinely concerned for his wife’s fate. Several friends recalled he obsessed over sexual matters (the details of which were apparently too risqué to detail in Edwardian newspapers) and one reported that he had, with some friends, formed “a secret organization for the study of medieval mysticism.” He showed moments of irrational behavior... he “discovered” a poem which he touted as a previous unknown masterpiece of German literature. A German literary society pointed out is was a fairly well-known work of Goethe. Muenter seethed with anger for months over the affair. Professor Hugo Münsterberg later recalled that while Muenter was at Harvard “he often came to my laboratory... for the purpose of borrowing books on insanity. Some of these he needed to write theses on insanity. Others he would borrow because he was interested in the subject.” Münsterberg thought Muenter was a “pathological study” even before he emigrated to the U.S., and that “the man was always interested in mysticism and metaphysics”. He added “I can scarcely imagine any man being a more interesting psychological study that this man Muenter.” Still, Muenter was affable, if quiet, an excellent scholar and linguist, and meticulous in the classroom. He was always neatly dressed, sporting a neatly groomed moustache, a Vandyke beard, and a
Daniel E. Russell

The Day Morgan Was Shot

While at Harvard, Muenter’s wife gave birth to their second child. By early 1906, she was pregnant a third time. But this time, something went terribly wrong. She was, from all accounts, a strong, healthy woman. Yet with this pregnancy, she seemed to grow weaker and weaker with each passing week. Friends of the family attempted to bring in a physician, Dr. H. B. McIntyre of Boston, to attend her in her confinement (a quaint but dysfunctional Victorian custom of keeping a woman housebound during the final months of pregnancy). But Erich Muenter would have none of this... he did not believe in doctors, and his wife meekly acceded to the dismissal of Dr. McIntyre.

On April 16th, 1906, Muenter’s died before she could give birth to their third child. There was no attending physician at her deathbed, pursuant to her husband’s requirements. Muenter turned her body over to a local undertaker, A. E. Long, to be prepared for burial.

Long, an experienced mortician, grew suspicious when he began embalming the body. There was something not quite right with the look of the woman’s internal organs. He called in Professor Whitney of the Harvard Medical School, who conducted an impromptu autopsy. He determined that Mrs. Muenter had died from the cumulative effects of numerous small doses of arsenic. Throughout her confinement, her husband had fed his wife beef tea laced with poison. Long and Whitney went to the Cambridge police with their information. But before the Cambridge police could obtain an indictment for murder against Muenter, the case took a bizarre turn. Muenter took his two children, and his wife’s corpse, placed them all in an automobile and drove to Chicago. On the 19th of April, he had his wife’s body cremated in a vain attempt to destroy the evidence of his crime. Abandoning his children to his sister’s care, Muenter fled the country.

The Cambridge police announced a reward of $1,000 for the capture of Muenter the wife-poisoner, accompanied by his description: “age 35 years; height 5 feet 9 or 10 inches; weight 150 pounds; florid complexion; dark hair; long face; slanting forehead, full dark Vandyke beard; loose-jointed walker.”

Shaving off his Van Dyke beard, trading his half-mark derby for a soft felt hat, Muenter left the U.S. and settled briefly in Mexico City. He immediately set about to create a new identity for himself. He selected the name “Frank Holt”. In early 1907, “Frank Holt” appeared on the doorstep of Samuel Brothers, an American-owned gold mining company operating in El Oro, Mexico, a small gold mining town about a hundred miles north of Mexico City, seeking a position as a stenographer. One of the executives of the company, James Dean, recalled that “Frank Holt” had proved “an excellent stenographer, but kept aloof from every one in the company. This made much comment and attracted attention to him. He had a worried look and gazed abstractedly into space for a long time frequently. He never spoke a word about his past, even when questioned closely.”

While in Mexico, Muenter did not fully sever his ties to old acquaintances made before his wife’s murder. As he created his new persona as “Frank Holt”, he sent abusive letters back to his former associates at Harvard, still writing as Erich Muenter. He even took time to publish a rambling pamphlet which burlesqued the death of his wife, “and told in gruesome fashion how he had put into practice his theories of revenge.” In it, he stated that the law had taught him that revenge was right.

Police were quickly tipped off as to Muenter’s whereabouts, and dispatched investigators to Mexico City to track him down. Muenter was still a few steps ahead of them: days before they arrived in Mexico, he had quit his job with the mining company, packed his few belongings and moved to Dallas, Texas.

It was necessary for “Frank Holt” to re-establish his academic credentials all over again. Muenter elected to enroll in a small Texas college, the Agricultural and Mechanical College at College Station, Texas. In this intellectual backwater, it would be less likely that any of his former Harvard co-workers would stumble across him and reveal his identity. While there, he met
a young lady, Leone Sensabaugh, the daughter of a prominent Dallas minister. They were soon married. He graduated in 1909 with a degree in German language (when Muenter was captured in Glen Cove, he was wearing a gold tie pin on which “09” was engraved — evidently, a memento of his graduation).

During the 1909-1910 term, he served as Assistant Professor of German at Oklahoma University. A local newspaper carried a notice when he joined the faculty:

“Mr. Frank Holt, the new Instructor in German, is a graduate of the Fort Worth Polytechnic Institute and has spent several years of his life in Germany and speaks German as well as English. He has had several years of experience in teaching the language and comes highly recommended. He also speaks Spanish and French fluently and has studied at the University of Berlin, and studied in Rome and Paris and has traveled over Europe. He gave lectures on German literature in Berlin.”

Most of the notice appears to be a fiction of Muenter’s fertile brain, an attempt to establish a past for the fugitive from Harvard. The university accepted his claims at face value without ever investigating his veracity. Muenter’s employment there was to be short-lived. He was frequently afflicted with insomnia, and would disappear from campus for days on end. Brooding over fancied injustices to himself, he grew increasingly angry that the chairmanship of the languages department had not been given to him, rather than to another professor who had served at the university for many years, and he was soon dropped from the faculty.

He left Oklahoma to teach French at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee for a year, then moved on to teach French and German at Emory and Henry College in Virginia for two years. In 1913, he obtained a position at Cornell University where he worked towards his Ph.D. while teaching under-graduate German and tutoring in several private prep schools in Ithaca. The university was impressed by his fluency in German, French and Spanish. Colleagues described him as “a rather reticent man” and recalled that he strongly condemned munitions shipments to the Allies because “Germany didn’t get a square deal.” Professor Clark E. Northrup, of Cornell’s English Department and who was a close friend of Muenter’s during his stay there, stated that Muenter had “always impressed me as a particularly sane, intelligent man. His scholarship was well founded and he was considered an able teacher who might have held his position indefinitely.” He added that, like most of the staff of the Cornell German language department, Muenter was “decidedly pro-German” and that he had belonged to a newly formed society on campus created to discuss the war after such discussions were prohibited at meetings of the university’s official German club.

But Muenter never forgot that he was still a fugitive from justice. Learning that a former Harvard colleague, Professor Kuno Francke, was planning to visit the Cornell to give a short series of lectures, Muenter decided to take a short vacation to New York City rather than face being exposed. He did not return until the day after Francke departed.

He received his doctorate in June, 1915. His thesis was entitled “The Effect of the Works of Shakespeare on German and French Literature”. Muenter informed the university that he would be resigning to accept a professorship teaching Romance Languages at Southern Methodist University, in Dallas, Texas, which was scheduled to open for its first classes in September of 1915. He packed his wife and children off to Dallas to live with his father-in-law just before the term ended. As he left Cornell, Muenter informed his colleagues that he intended to spend a few days in New York City doing research before rejoining his family in Dallas. It would be the last anyone saw of Muenter until his arrest in Glen Cove several weeks later.

His wife and university colleagues had not realized the extent of Muenter’s obsession over American munitions shipments to Europe. With twisted hypocrisy, the man who had no compunction about slowly murdering his pregnant wife with arsenic had convinced himself that American arms shipments to the Allies were immoral, and must be stopped. And it would be his holy cause to bring an end to the bloodshed in Europe.

In Manhattan, Muenter checked in at Mills Hotel Number 3, located on Seventh Avenue at 36th St, for two weeks. It was a large but certainly not lavish hotel, where rooms rented for 3¢ a day, paid in advance. Clerks at the crowded hotel only recalled Muenter having stayed there because of the inordinate amount of mail he received, and because he had gotten into an altercation with another guest over a war notice posted on a newspaper stand which required intervention by police to stop.

Muenter devoted his first week in New York City to gathering together the materials he thought he would need to end the flow of weapons to Europe. He traveled to Jersey City, New Jersey, where he purchased a .38 caliber Iver and Johnson revolver from John S. Menagh, a hardware dealer. With a box of cartridges, the pistol cost Muenter $2.25. He asked the hardware dealer if the gun came with a guarantee to “work every time.” Menagh frowned and explained that revolvers didn’t come with that sort of guarantee. Muenter had actually wanted two pistols, but the .38 was the only handgun Menagh had in stock. Obligingly, he suggested that Muenter try the pawnshop of Joseph Keechan across the street. There he purchased a used .32 caliber revolver. For both transactions Muenter gave his name as “C. Hendricks.”

Muenter then rented a cottage in Bethpage (at the time called “Central Park”) from Louis Ott, a local real estate broker. He gave his name as “Mr. Patton” and told Ott that his physician had ordered him to move to the country for his health, and that he wanted a quiet, isolated place to live in. The two-room bungalow Ott offered him was perfectly situated off the main road and completely hidden by trees. The largest of the two rooms was only about ten feet square; the second, smaller room was used by the cottage’s owner as a storeroom for furniture. But it suited Muenter’s purpose, who divided his time between his rooms in New York City and the Bethpage cottage.

For the next few days, Muenter traveled through New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania to find the single most important item he needed to execute his grand design. He was frustrated again and again. Finally, he found a company in Long Island...
City that offered to sell him what he so desperately wanted: a case of dynamite. The sales representative informed him that the company did not, of course, keep any dynamite on hand; it would have to be special ordered and would be freighted to Bethpage by train.

Every day for the next week and a half, Muenter visited the Bethpage Rail Road Station’s freight office with clockwork regularity, impatient for his shipment of high explosives. Muenter was so annoyingly insistent that the freight agent, George B. Carnes, finally lost his temper with him. Although the manufacturer, Keystone Powder Co. of Emporium, Pennsylvania, had shipped out the explosives immediately, the dynamite had lain in a Long Island Rail Road warehouse for nearly a week. The railroad’s safety regulations required that dynamite had to be moved on special trains that carried no passengers or regular freight.

Finally, on the 28th of June, the first two of three crates arrived for “C. Hendricks,” the same alias Muenter had used to purchase revolvers a few days before in New Jersey. The first two crates containing 120 pounds of 60% dynamite. The formulation was considerably more powerful than the standard mix of dynamite, which usually contained only 40% nitroglycerin. Muenter’s choice of manufacturer of the dynamite was especially appropriate in light of his mission to end munitions sales to the Allies. The Keystone Powder Co., long prominent as a manufacturer of dynamite for hard-rock mining, had only weeks before been bought out by the Aetna Explosives Co., who converted the factory’s entire production to munitions for the war in Europe.

The third crate arrived on the 29th. It contained an assortment of blasting caps and fuse. Muenter arrived at the station freight office at 6 p.m. Carnes told him, through the locked door, that the station was closed and he would have to return tomorrow to pick up his package. Muenter begged him to let him have the package, apologizing profusely for his behavior during the previous week. Finally, Carnes gave in and let Muenter have his package. The timing was perfect. The Fourth of July weekend was only a few days away. Erich Muenter was ready to set off some fireworks of his own.

Muenter visited Glen Cove on Thursday, July 1st, arriving on the 3 p.m. train from Manhattan. He hired a car driven by Matthew Kramer, instructing him to take him to the Morgan estate. As they drove to East Island, Muenter questioned him about the estates they passed and their owners. When they reached the causeway which connected East Island with mainland, Muenter had the driver stop. Muenter clearly already had some knowledge of the Morgan estate: he queried Kramer about one of Morgan’s chauffeurs, Campbell, while they drove. He studied the main house for a while from a distance, then had Kramer drive him back to the train station.

While Muenter was studying the lay of the land of Morgan’s estate in Glen Cove, Morgan was devoting the whole of the day to a conference with the British Ambassador to the United States, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice. Morgan and Spring-Rice were long-time friends, and the purpose of their meeting was to hammer out terms for British credit for war loans to be orchestrated by Morgan. Late in the day, they boarded Corsair and steamed to Glen Cove to have dinner at Morgan’s mansion.

Sir Cecil Spring-Rice was to be Morgan’s houseguest for the weekend. Morgan had invited twelve other people, in addition to Spring-Rice, to his East Island estate for the weekend. He was throwing a small surprise party in honor of his eldest son, Junius Spencer Morgan, who had married a few weeks before and was leaving on his honeymoon later that week. Morgan was justifiably proud of his son, who was following closely in his footsteps. A few months before his wedding, a rumor was circulating that Junius Morgan would soon be made a full partner in J. P. Morgan & Co. J. P. Morgan told reporters, with a broad grin “What, that youngster? Why, he’s opening letters and sharpening pencils for Kidder, Peabody, up in Boston. We’ll let him get some business experience before we talk of making him a partner.”

Tuesday, July 2nd was a busy day for Erich Muenter. He left Bethpage on the 7:09 train for Penn Station, carrying with him two shabby suitcases and a large brown trunk. The trunk was carted to the station by the son of a local livery operator named John Debul, who noticed that Muenter took great care to prevent it from being jarred on the short trip to the station, then freighted to New York City. Muenter paused in Manhattan just long enough to have the trunk placed into store in a warehouse, then caught the first available train to Washington D.C.

Arriving at Washington’s Union Station, Muenter stopped for a shave. He then rented a modest room in a boarding house where he immediately set about assembling a time bomb. He would later explain to Captain Thomas Tunney, head of the New York City Police Department’s “Bomb and Anarchist Squad”, that he made the device by taping together three sticks of dynamite, then hollowing out a depression in one of the sticks and filling it with the heads of “trick matches” which he had obtained in a novelty shop in New York City. The matches were designed to explode when struck. He placed a glass vial filled with concentrated sulfuric acid, stoppered with an ordinary cork, upside down next to the hole filled with match heads. The sulfuric acid would eat slowly through the cork, until a few drops of acid landed on the match heads, causing them to ignite and explode the dynamite — a slow chemical detonator. Muenter had experimented over and over again with this arrangement until he could accurately estimate how long it would take for the acid to detonate the bomb.

At about 3:30 in the afternoon on Friday, July 2nd, Muenter visited the Capitol. Although the Senate had not been in session since early March, the building was open to tourists on weekdays.

In the reception hall, adjacent to the Vice President’s private office, were two large windows which looked out to the north over Washington. The deep alcove of one of these win-
The US Capitol Reception Hall, after being shredded by a bomb devised by Erich Muenter, alias Frank Holt

dows was set up with a small desk which served as a telephone operator’s board, serving commodious telephone booths intended for use by senators when Congress was in session. Since Congress was adjourned, the telephone exchange was unmanned and the desk was covered with a canvas slipcover. Behind the desk, on a low marble window-sill, were telephone directories for every major city in the U.S.

Muenter placed the suitcase containing the bomb in the alcove and left the building at about 4 p.m. Passing a mailbox, he dropped a handful of letters, addressed to the President of the United States and to the four major newspapers in Washington DC into the slot and returned to his boarding house. He packed the few belongings he had brought with him into a valise. For the next few hours he wandered aimlessly around the streets of Washington.

Late in the evening, he was back in the street outside the Capitol. At 10:30, Muenter was seen by a young couple, who were standing on the Senate terrace, pacing back and forth and staring at the windows of the reception hall. Muenter then apparently took a quick walk around the perimeter of the Capitol building before returning to his vantage point at the Senate terrace. Then he sat down on a bench at a nearby trolley stop.

At 11:23 p.m., the bomb exploded.

“I was sitting with my feet propped up on my desk at the Senate basement door, my post, when the explosion occurred,” Frank Jones, a thirty-five year veteran of the Capitol police. “The explosion knocked me from my chair. It sounded like several cannon going off, accompanied by a racket of flying glass, and a sound of cracking timber. I thought the Capitol dome had toppled...”

In the Reception Hall, the telephone operator’s desk was blown into slivers and the telephone directories into shreds. The window’s cast-iron casement was shattered into fragments, and the marble of the wall pulverized into fine dust. The brick wall beneath the marble veneer had a hole a foot in diameter and three inches deep blown out of it. The telephone booths were smashed and plate glass panels used as partitions were shattered. The large glass chandelier which hung in the center of the room was reduced to fragments and debris was blown from one end of the huge room to the other. The ornamental frescoes which decorated the room looked like they had been struck by machine-gun fire. Had the bomb been detonated earlier, when the room was glutted with tourists, the carnage would
The bomb blast was heard a mile away. Within a few minutes the East Plaza outside the Capitol was filled with curiosity seekers.

Muenter walked three blocks to Union Station, arriving in time to catch the 12:10 train from Washington to New York City. Both conductor J. L. Riland and head brakeman J. N. Purcell recognized Muenter when shown a picture of him. He wore a “cheap suit of light material with a stripe running through it”—the same suit he wore when he went to Morgan’s estate—and a stiff brimmed straw hat. Muenter was sprawled out in Berth 6 of Car 27. In one of the many little ironies of the case, Washington’s Chief of Police Raymond Pullman occupied Berth 4 in Car 26. Pullman was going to New York City to follow up a lead on the Capitol bombing.

The next morning, Muenter’s letters to the press were in the hands of the editors of the Washington Times, the Washington Star, and two other major newspapers. The letter was dated June 1st and was signed “R. Pearce”.

Unusual times and circumstances call for unusual means.

In connection with the Senate affair, would it not be well to stop and consider what we are doing? We stand for PEACE AND GOOD WILL to all men, and yet, while our European brethren are madly setting out to kill one another we edge em on and furnish them more effective means of murder. Is it right?

We get rich by exportation of explosives, but ought we to enrich ourselves when it means the untold suffering and death of millions of our brethren and their widows and orphans?

By the way, don’t put this on the Germans or on Bryan. I am an old-fashioned American with a conscience, if it is not a sin to have a conscience).

We are within the international law when we make this blood money but are we also within the moral law, the law of Peace, or of Love, or of Christ, or whatever else a Christian nation may call it?

Are we within reason? Our children have to live after us. Europe helped and encouraged the Balkans in their bestial ware, and she reaped the whirlwinds. Can’t we learn wisdom?

Is it right to supply an insane asylum with explosives? Or give them to children? We even prevent our own children to kill and maim themselves at the rate of 200 dead and 5,000 maimed on the glorious Fourth.

How much more should we not hesitate to furnish strangers, and they mad? Will our explosives not become boomerangs? If we are willing to disregard our ideals for a dollar, will they hesitate some day when they get a chance? A prostitute sells out for a dollar. Fb! Columbia too?

Wilson said in his Decoration Day speech that the war developed national spirit. Good! Now let peace make for national spirit. Let all real Americans say: “We will not be a party to this wholesale murder!” Would that not be national spirit? Better than one based on the murder of our fellow-man.

We want prosperity. Yes. But Europe needs enough non-contra-band materials to give us prosperity. Let us not sell her explo-

sives. Let each nation make her own man-killing machines!

Sorry I, too, had to use explosives. (For the last time, I trust.) It is the export kind and ought to make enough noise to be heard above the clamor for war and blood-money. This explosion is the exclamation point to my appeal for peace!

One editor said: There are times when one government may be expected to speak on behalf of other countries and of humanity in general. God bless you Mr. Editor, that was a timely word in this blood-money madhouse. Let us stop this colossal American crime!

Let us have a vote on it by mail. We can trust the President. Let every man and woman in favor of not being party to further murder write to Mr. Wilson at once. This is necessary. The people financially interested in explosives have done all the talking so far (that includes many a newspaper). For once let the rest of us have a chance. Write at once and send petitions. We would, of course, not sell to the Germans if they could buy here, and since so far we sold only to the Allies, neither side should object if we stopped.

Of interest was that fact that in the letters the word “Senate”, identifying his bombing target, was written in after the letter was typed. This would indicate that Muenter, at least at the time he had typed his newspaper manifesto, was uncertain what he would target with his time-bomb. Police investigators at first thought that the date was a typographical error. They later learned that it was not; Muenter had made up his mind in late May to explode a bomb somewhere that would attract widespread public attention to his cause, but hadn’t decided just which target would be the most appropriate venue.

The President never saw the letter. Days later, his staff wasn’t even certain it had been received... they had automatically filed it away with more than 5,000 other crank letters that the White House had already received that year.

Changing trains in Manhattan, Muenter boarded the Oyster Bay branch of the Long Island Rail Road. At about 8:30 a.m. on the morning of July 3rd, Muenter stepped off the train at Glen Street Station. He carried a suitcase filled with newspaper clippings which he hoped to use to convince Morgan that he should stop armaments shipments to Europe. Also in the suitcase were several sticks of dynamite. In Muenter’s coat he carried two revolvers and a stick of dynamite. At Glen Street Station, Muenter hired Arthur J. Ford and his automobile (first in the fleet of Glen Cove’s “Yellow Taxi Company”) to drive him to the Morgan estate, a distance of two miles. Once at the mansion, Muenter started towards the house.

“Oh, I forgot,” Muenter said. “I have to get my card.”

Ford watched Muenter open his suitcase, and thought he saw him withdraw a revolver and slip it into his pocket. Muenter walked rapidly to the house.

Muenter walked up to the front door and rang the bell. At the door, Muenter was met by Henry C. Physick, the Morgan family butler. Asking to see Mr. Morgan, he presented a worn...
“I want to see Mr. Morgan,” Muenter said and handed him a worn business card which read:

“What is your business with him?” Physick asked.

“I can’t discuss that with you,” Muenter replied. “I am an old friend of Mr. Morgan. He will see me.”

“You must tell me the business you have with him,” Physick reiterated.

Muenter pulled out both revolvers, and shoved Physick out of the way.

“Don’t dare try to stop me,” Muenter yelled.

Muenter demanded where Morgan was.

Physick thought quickly. Although he was well aware that Morgan was in the breakfast room with his house-guests, he told Muenter that he was in the library — at the opposite end of the house.

Muenter raced down the hall towards the library with Physick following a few paces behind. As Muenter entered the library, Physick turned and ran towards the breakfast room shouting “Upstairs, Mr. Morgan! Upstairs, Mr. Morgan!” Afraid to go into the breakfast room for fear of tipping Muenter off as to Morgan’s exact location, Physick darted down a staircase to the basement to rally the staff to defend the household.

“We were at breakfast in the room on the ground floor, when the butler was heard shouting from the main entrance by the library to Mr. Morgan to go upstairs quickly,” the British Ambassador later recalled. “We did not know what was the matter, whether it was fire or burglars, and the whole party left the table and ran up the rear staircase, which was nearest to the door.”

At the top of the rear staircase they found Rosalie McCabe, an elderly nurse employed by the Morgan family to look after their youngest children.

“What has gone wrong up here?” Morgan asked. “What do you want me for?”

“Nothing has happened up here that I know of,” McCabe replied. “Everything has been quiet.”

Morgan and his guests began a room by room search to try to figure out what had caused Physick to yell out. Sir Spring-Rice ran up to the third floor, where the guest and servants’ quarters were located, and noticed nothing amiss.

A moment later, McCabe, who was standing near the head of the main staircase, located in the center of the house, cried...
Muenter, realizing that he had been fooled by the butler, had started back to the main staircase. Along the way, he heard voices from a small side room. He entered to find Morgan’s younger children at play. He pointed a pistol at them.

“Where is Mr. Morgan?” he asked.

The children didn’t answer. Muenter demanded they follow him. Finding the main hallway deserted, he started up the main staircase, the children following a few steps behind. As Muenter reached the second floor landing, a loaded revolver in each hand, he yelled out “Now, Mr. Morgan, I have you!”

Seeing the pistols, Mrs. Morgan heroically tried to place herself between Muenter and her husband. Morgan pushed her aside, and lunged at Muenter. Muenter fired two rounds into Morgan before he was smashed to the ground by the 220-lb bulk of the millionaire. He pulled the trigger two more times, but the gun misfired both times. Morgan landed with the weight of his body squarely on Muenter. They struggled for a moment until Morgan twisted the revolver from Muenter’s hand. Morgan had landed in such a way that he had accidentally pinned Muenter’s left hand, holding the second revolver, to the floor in such a way that Muenter was unable to fire it. Morgan’s wife, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, and Miss McCabe pried the second revolver from Muenter’s grasp.

“I have a stick of dynamite in my pocket,” Muenter shouted. “Take care of it.”

Realizing his attempt had failed, Muenter was overheard by Morgan’s valet, Bernard Stewart, to cry “Kill me! Kill me now! I don’t want to live any more. I have been in a perfect hell for the last six months on account of the European war.” By this time, Physick and a small phalanx of household staff armed with make-shift weaponry had reached the second floor. Physick had armed himself with the closest weapon that came to hand: a large chunk of hard coal. He used it to pound Muenter into insensibility as he lay beneath Morgan on the floor.

Ironically, Muenter had been wholly unaware that Sir Cecil Spring-Rice and his wife were both among the Morgan’s houseguests. Had his plan succeeded, he would have had an unanticipated bonus among his hostages.

Morgan got to his feet. The servants trussed up the dazed Muenter under Morgan’s immediate supervision. Satisfied his attacker would not escape, Morgan went to the telephone and called Dr. William M. Zabriskie, a local physician who lived on Highland Road and who attended to many of the Gold Coast millionaires when they were summering in Glen Cove. He calmly informed Zabriskie that he had been shot, and his services were needed. It was only then that Mrs. Morgan and the household realized that Morgan had been struck by Muenter’s bullets. Morgan assured them that he wasn’t in pain, and that the injuries were slight.

At 9:10, Morgan telephoned his Wall Street office.

“I’ve been shot in the stomach,” he told his staff. “Get the best doctor you can.”

His office notified two prominent New York City physicians, Drs. J. W. Markoe and H. H. W. Lyle, who immediately left Manhattan by automobile for the two hour long drive to Glen Cove.

Dr. Zabriskie reached the Morgan house at little after 9:30 that morning. One of Morgan’s wounds was little more than a flesh wound, the bullet having passed through the muscle of his thigh and exited a few inches below his hip. The other wound concerned him more. It appeared to have penetrated the lower part of the abdominal cavity, which raised the extremely dangerous possibility that it hit Morgan’s gastrointestinal tract.
coal-wielding butler, all of Muenter’s injuries were superficial.

A few minutes later, Justice of the Peace William E. Luyster, who presided over the Glen Cove Court House, and the local chief of constables, Frank E. McCahill arrived at the house. They collected Muenter and his pistols and dynamite and suitcase filled with newspaper clippings and carted him off to the Glen Cove Court House. On their way into the building, they passed a young man named F. Darius Benham, who dreamed more than anything else of being a newspaper reporter. He had applied to almost every newspaper in New York City for a job as reporter, and had been rebuffed. When he learned from McCahill that Morgan had been shot, and that the man who shot him was in Glen Cove’s jail cell, Benham commandeered the bicycle of a local delivery boy and rode to the telegraph office to get off a wire carrying the first news of Morgan’s shooting to the world press.

Inside the Glen Cove Court House, Luyster and McCahill searched through Muenter’s pockets. They found a small slip of paper on which was written the names of Morgan’s four children. He also had three ten dollar bills and an editorial cartoon clipped out of the Philadelphia Record. The cartoon showed Lady Liberty pointing to a crate of fireworks, representing the European war, and admonishing Uncle Sam that they are “dangerous fireworks”. More ominously, they found a schedule of sailings for merchant vessels leaving New York, on which several ship departures were circled.

Muenter, still clinging to his identity as “Frank Holt,” explained to Luyster and McCahill in a quiet, methodical manner exactly what his plan for the Morgan household had been.

“I have a well-trained mind and I studied for a long time as to what would be the proper course for me to pursue before I decided to take the matter up with Mr. Morgan personally... I wanted to go to every manufacturer personally, and persuade him to stop this traffic. It was physically impossible for me to do this, but Mr. Morgan, with his great influence could do what was impossible for me, and so I decided to apply to him.”

He explained that it had been his intention to take Morgan’s wife and children hostage. Muenter intended to seal them into a room while he forced Morgan to do his bidding to stop munitions shipments to Europe. He had planned to cut a small hole in the door of the room he placed the Morgan family in, through which he intended to pass food during what even he perceived would have been a lengthy siege.

At first, Muenter claimed that his shooting of Morgan had been accidental.

“I shot to frighten him. You see, I wanted to talk to him. He came running angrily towards me as soon as I saw him and I shot to frighten him so that it would be possible to avoid a mix up and so I could place my arguments before him... the bullets which I intended to go wild struck him.”

Muenter added “he would not have been shot if he had not been violent.”

“I admire Mr. Morgan’s courage,” he concluded. “If he would display a quality of moral courage equaling the physical courage he showed towards me he would go down in history as a very great man.”

But Muenter faltered in his story on at least one occasion, and admitted that his purpose had been to assassinate the financier.

With very little probing from Luyster or McCahill, Muenter wrote out the following confession:

I, F. Holt of Ithaca, N.Y., formerly professor of French of Cornell University, make the following statement:

I have been in New York ten days, and made a previous trip to Mr. Morgan’s a few days ago. My motive was to try to influence Mr. Morgan to use his influence in the manufacture of ammunition in the United States and among millionaires who are financing the war loans, to have an embargo put on shipments of ammunition so as to relieve the American people from complicity in the deaths of thousands of our European brothers.

If Germany should be able to buy munitions here we would positively refuse to sell them to her, for the reason that the American people have not put an embargo on them. We are getting rich in the selling of ammunition, but we do not get enough prosperity out of the shipment of non-contraband, and would it not be better for us to make what money we can without causing the slaughter of thousands in Europe?

I am very sorry I have caused the Morgan family this unpleasantness, but I believe that if Mr. Morgan would put his shoulder to the wheel he could accomplish what I had intended to do. I hope he will do so anyway. I did not mean to injure him, but I wanted him to do the work I could not do myself, and hope that with the help of God he will do this, as we must stop our part in the killing of Europeans.

- F. Holt.

In the afternoon, Holt was brought before Justice of the Peace William E. Luyster at the Glen Cove Court House to be arraigned. The court room was packed with reporters and gawkers. Even two competing newsreel camera crews had set up their cameras in the court room.

Holt, his bloodied clothing seized as physical evidence, had been loaned an blue serge suit that fit him like an overcoat. With his head bandaged with a thick white cloth, his eye blackened and closed, the thin college professor made a preposterous spectacle as he was ushered into court by a constable.

From the bench, Justice Luyster began to read the charges against Holt.

“Frank E. McCahill, being duly sworn, says that he is in informed and so believes that on the 3rd day of July, 1915, in the township of Oyster Bay, Nassau County, State of New York, Frank Holt, late of Ithaca, did commit the crime of assault in the first degree, and that in the time and place aforesaid, he did willfully, maliciously, and feloniously go to the home of J. P. Morgan at East Island, and with intent to do bodily harm to the said J. P. Morgan, and to kill him, did fire two shots at the said J. P. Morgan with a revolver with leaden ball cartridges, and did inflict grievous bodily harm upon the said J. P. Morgan...”

Holt raised his hand and began to protest, but was silenced by the constable. The crowd in the courtroom had crept forward as Luyster read the charges, clogging the space between
the rail and the prisoner. The newsreel crews protested that the onlookers were blocking their shot.

I wish you gentlemen in front would all be seated,” Luyster admonished. “There are some moving picture men here trying to take pictures, and let us let them have them.”

Luyster asked Holt how he pled to the charges.

“Have the part about doing it willfully and intending to kill taken out,” Holt said. “You know that it not true.”

“This is the language of the code,” Luyster replied. Holt asked again that the language of the charges be changed to eliminate “willfully,” which was again denied, before he entered his plea of “Not Guilty.” Justice Luyster adjourned court, and remanded Muenter to the Mineola jail until a preliminary hearing could be held on Thursday, July 8th.

Muenter’s confession was telegraphed, as standard procedure, to the larger police departments around the country. In Washington, Captain Robert Boardman, chief of the detectives division and one of the lead investigators assigned to the Capitol bombing, read over the confession. He noticed a strange similarity of language between “Frank Holt’s” confession and the “R. Pearce” letters sent to the press. In fact, so had the newspaper reporters who had already begun to swarm to Glen Cove. Muenter steadfastly denied any participation in the Capitol bombing. He claimed that he had spent the day in Manhattan, and had lunched at the hotel in which he was registered. Reporters quickly checked the story; no one at the hotel could remember him being there on the 2nd of July.

Muenter’s confession had read “If Germany should be able to buy munitions here we would positively refuse to sell them...
to her, for the reason that the American people have not put an embargo on them.” The “R. Pearce” letter included a sentence that read “We would, of course, not sell to the Germans if they could buy here, and since so far we sold only to the Allies, neither side should object if we stopped.”

Playing a hunch, he telegraphed to his commanding officer, Major Pullman, who was still in New York City:

Ascertain from F. Holt, in custody at Glen Cove, N. Y., for shooting J. P. Morgan, his whereabouts Thursday and Friday, as he may have placed the bomb in the Capitol here Friday night.

Pullman contacted Inspector Wood of New York Police Department, and asked for his assistance. Wood, in turn, placed him in contact with Constable McCahill in Glen Cove. After further interrogation of Muenter, McCahill was able to send a telegraph to Washington:

Frank Holt placed dynamite bomb in Capitol building at 4 P.M. yesterday. Left Washington on midnight train for New York. Confession 5:30 P.M. this evening.

Pullman immediately started for Glen Cove by car to join in on the interrogation of “Frank Holt”

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, another police detective sat reading the police description of “Frank Holt” which had accompanied his confession. Captain Patrick F. Hurley, who had been assigned to the Muenter wife-poisoning case nine years previously saw a strange similarity in the description of “Frank Holt” to their department’s description of the fugitive Muenter. Both descriptions were of a man about five foot, ten inches tall, dark hair, long, thin face, and a high or slanting forehead. And both descriptions made special note of the fact that he was a “loose-jointed walker,” a symptom of a lengthy illness which doctors nebulously defined as “tuberculosis of the bones.”

Like his Washington counter-part, Hurley decided to play a hunch and sent off a photograph of the fugitive wife-poisoner. He contacted McCahill in Glen Cove, describing Erich Muenter who he had known personally before the murder. Muenter was so badly bruised and battered that McCahill couldn’t even begin to identify him from Hurley’s description. Hurley promised to send a photograph of Muenter as quickly as possible, hoping that Muenter had finally been captured.

Henry P. Davison, who owned a summer home in Locust Valley, was in London, assigned to negotiate the details of a massive war loan to the French government.

By 9:45 a.m., the news had reached Wall Street itself on news ticker tape. Wall Street’s leading bankers, brokers and financiers began to make their way to J. P. Morgan & Co. to enquire as to Morgan’s condition. Among them were A. Burton Hepburn, of the Chase National Bank; Stephen Baker, President of the Bank of Manhattan; and Jerome J. Hanauer of Kuhn, Loeb and Co. The Morgan Co.’s doorman, George Miles, gave everyone the same prepared statement: Mr. Morgan was resting easily, and that the surgeons did not expect to find the wounds dangerous. A battery of Morgan Co. staff were assigned to answer a constant stream of telephone calls.

In Glen Cove, Drs. Markoe and Lyle took charge of Morgan. One of the wounds was clearly just a flesh wound... the bullet had passed through Morgan’s groin, bounced off his hip bone, and exited through the back of his thigh. The other wound was of greater concern. The path of the bullet was not well defined. For a while, the doctors were of the opinion that the bullet had lodged at the base of Morgan’s spine, and might have penetrated into the abdominal cavity en route. No X-ray apparatus was available in Glen Cove. Faced with the necessity of probing for the bullet, a dangerous and painful procedure, they asked Morgan’s servants to search the hallway where he had been shot for the bullets. Surprisingly, both spent bullets were found on the carpet, overlooked in the commotion.

Nurses were brought in from Manhattan to attend Morgan in eight-hour shifts. Another New York City specialist, Dr. Culver, arrived to consult with Markoe and Lyle. After their examination, it was determined that neither of Muenter’s bullets had not struck any vital organ.

As Morgan’s houseguests were ferried back to Manhattan by yacht, the estate quickly became an armed camp. Several of the local police, carrying shotguns and revolvers, were detailed to the Morgan mansion to guard the household. Nassau County Sheriff Petit sent an additional twelve men. Three more officers from the New York Police Department were loaned to strengthen the force. An armed police officer was placed at every entrance to the house, and the rest were scattered around the estate. Charles Price, gatekeeper on the estate, had been armed with a repeating rifle.”I wouldn’t let you in even if it were not against orders for they might take a pot shot at you,” he told a Times reporter. “There are a score of men with shotguns up there on the grounds. They are men who are not taking any chances...”

That Saturday was to have been the first of several duels between the America’s Cup yachts Resolute and Vanitie, along a course between Glen Cove and Greenwich, Connecticut. Morgan was part owner of Resolute, which had been built for the sole purpose of defending the America’s Cup from a challenge by Sir Thomas Lipton. New York Yacht Club Commodore George F. Baker Jr., a long-time friend of Morgan’s and whose father had been allied with the J. P. Morgan & Co. for many years, was aboard his yacht Viking, stationed off Greenwich as the regatta committee boat. At 1 pm, the hour at which...
Resolute and Vanity should have hove into view, there was nothing on the horizon. Shortly thereafter Resolute’s launch came along side Viking to inform Baker and the other members of the committee that Morgan had been shot. Viking immediately returned to Glen Cove, to find both Resolute and Vanity at anchor and their crews ashore. With his typical panache, Morgan sent word to Baker and the captains of the two yachts that the race shouldn’t be abandoned on his account.

Late in the afternoon, Junius Morgan and his new bride arrived at the main gate of the estate, already besieged with newspaper reporters from New York. He was totally unaware that his father had been shot, and was shocked at the sight of armed servants manning the gate. He was taken to a small cottage near the main gate, and broken the news. Among the staff, there was idle gossip that the number of guests Morgan had invited to his weekend party, thirteen, had been a bad omen from the start.

At 6:30 in the evening Muenter was driven to the County jail in Mineola, escorted by Constables McCahill and William E. Hufts and Deputy Sheriffs Thomas Campbell and Phineas C. Seaman. Before he was taken inside and locked up for the night, Muenter was allowed to pose a second time for newssreel cameras, then was permitted to send his wife a brief, cryptic telegram which simply read “Man proposes, God disposes. Don’t come here till you get letters.” He was then given a quick physical by the jail’s physician, Dr. Guy F. Cleghorn, and pronounced fit for incarceration. Investigators from the Nassau County District Attorney’s office, Nassau County Police, New York City Police (including both detectives and specialists from their crack “Bomb and Anarchist Squad”), Washington DC Police, and Secret Service began to descend upon the Mineola jail to interrogate Muenter.

At the Morgan estate, Drs. Markoe and Lyle issued a written statement to reporters gathered at the entrance to the Morgan estate:

“A further examination of Mr. Morgan’s wounds shows that the bullets did not involve any vital organ. The condition of the patient continues excellent.”

An obstruction was placed at the entrance to the bridge, designed to wreck any motor vehicle which tried to run through the checkpoint controlled by gatekeeper Price. Price had traded in his repeating rifle for a revolver. In the evening, Price was relieved by four policemen armed with shotguns or rifles.

“One thing you may depend upon.” Price told reporters, “nobody will pass this bridge again unless known to one of us until he has been subjected to the most searching examination. Mr. Morgan permitted persons to enter freely before, but he will be carefully guarded from now on. Why, Mr. Morgan was so democratic that he would even walk out into his grounds to talk to persons who had come to beg favors from him. He was universally kind to all. But unless I receive orders to the contrary, nothing like that will be permitted again. From this moment on the Morgan grounds are closed to strangers. That rule will apply night and day.”

By sunset, there were more than thirty armed policemen on the estate, with a uniformed policeman stationed at every entrance to the Morgan home. Corsair was anchored off East Island, and her large searchlight was pressed into service to sweep the beach facing Long Island Sound searching for anyone who might try to enter the island by way of the beach.

Back at the Glen Cove Court House, Justice Lyuster and Constable McCahill gave Muenter’s suitcase another careful inspection. They discovered in a small pocket a handwritten letter addressed to “His Majesty the German Kaiser”. Like the letters he mailed out at the time of the bombing of the Capitol, it was signed “R. Pearce”, and outlined Muenter’s views on foreign policy:

I hope that you will listen to my plea in the same spirit in which it is made. Let me assure you that I represent the Ideal American, i.e., the real American as he is in his heart of hearts. My name is either known to you or will be in a day or two, so don’t brush this letter aside as of no importance.

We Americans have your best interests in mind and are striving to aid the unfortunate European belligerents, but in order that we may be able to work for you effectively we must find you reasonable and exhibiting the spirit of humanity and not of land grabbing, if you will pardon the expression.

Recently, when we went into Vera Cruz to help the Mexicans settle their troubles, many of the representatives of your nation who were over here at the time could not understand our move except in the light of land grabbing. We could not explain to them that we were unselfish in our motives, that we merely wished to help the unfortunate parties in Mexico settle their difficulties. We Americans, therefore, in order to sympathize with any European nation, must not get the impression that she is contemplating the seizure of land that does not belong to her by nature.

If, for instance, France should ask for the French-speaking portions of Lorraine, or Italy for her Italian population, or Austria or Serbia for adequate seaports, that would seem reasonable to us, and we would sympathize with such demands. But when we hear of Germany contemplating to annex Belgium, or of England wishing to take German South America, then we get impatient. And all of these things have nothing to do with the question of who will be victor in battle.

We feel here that the gigantic struggle is not to be laid at the door of anybody particular. It is the outcome of the natural growth of the nations and of commercial rivalry which is perfectly legitimate and healthy. That the friction caused by such rivalry was not eased off by mutual understanding, we think, was caused by the fact that the men as the head, instead of applying their private Christianity to public affairs, are icebound by a long tradition of lying diplomacy, so-called.

The people, fortunately, are not responsible for such ‘diplomacy.’ The ‘diplomat’ must be annihilated, must disappear from the Governments of the world, and his place must come a Christian statesman who is big enough to see the needs of the other country. Why does a Christian business man get along without war? Because he is sensible enough to know that peace and generosity pay better in the end.
If, then, the American heart and mind and means are to help you, we beg of you not to allow any reports of selfish aggran-
dizement come to our ears. We feel that such an attitude would not lead to a real settlement, but merely lay the foundation for more war.

Affectionately,

- R. Pearce

Daily newspapers around the world carried the news of the Morgan shooting as headline news on Sunday morning, the 4th of July.

Early in the morning, Mrs. Junius Spencer Morgan, Mrs. Herbert L. Satterlee, Henry Morgan, and other members of the family were driven to the Lattingtown chapel (a small Episcopal chapel which later evolved into St. John’s Episcopal Church of Lattingtown) to attend service officiated by Rev. John W. Gammack of Glen Cove. Neither Morgan’s wife, who newspapers reported was “bordering on collapse” over the shooting, nor his mother, who had reached the estate late the previous evening by automobile and was herself “in a serious nervous condition” over her son’s brush with death, attended services.

In Glen Cove, all of the churches offered prayers for Morgan’s speedy recovery. The esteem was genuine. Morgan was well-liked by most of the residents of the community. Although he tended to remain aloof, like many of the Gold Coast estate owners, he lacked the arrogance and pomposity of the nouveau riche. He was known to tip his hat to local fishermen who were hauling up an especially large striped bass from the waters off his island. Morgan was relentlessly pursued by the press during his comings and goings from East Island; his policy was that if a newspaper reporter could catch him, the reporter had the right to have his question answered (even if the answer was that if a newspaper reporter could catch him, the reporter had the right to have his question answered (even if the answer was wholly tongue-in-cheek). Many residents of Glen Cove took a perverse pride in misdirecting reporters as to his whereabouts, sending them off on wild goose chases into the farmlands of surrounding communities.

Morgan had slept well during the night. The first thing he did in the morning was demand his pipe and then ordered a hearty breakfast... both good signs.

An X-ray machine was brought to the Morgan estate from New York City. It showed that both bullets had passed through muscle only, not breaking bone or striking any internal organs. Morgan’s temperature was normal, an optimistic sign that infection had not begun to set in.

Junius Morgan relayed the news to the reporters who still cluttered the entrance of the estate. He declined their requests for an interview at the mansion.

“We have decided not to permit anyone to come to the house except members of the family,” he said. “It was my father’s wish, and of course I must abide by it.”

When asked if he could give additional details about Morgan’s condition, he stated “No, the bulletins cover his condition fully, I think. We read some of the stories published in the newspapers and were surprised at their accuracy.”

In the afternoon, Assistant District Attorney Charles R. Weeks, who had been assigned official responsibility for the case by Nassau County, arrived at the Morgan estate in company with police officials to investigate the crime scene. They set up shop in the office of the estate superintendent, MacGregor, and began to take statements from all of the servants who were a witness to the shooting.

Throughout the day, a number of other Gold Coast estate owners stopped at the Morgan estate and left their cards along with their good wishes. Included in the list were C. A. Coffin; J. Parker Kirlin; W. D. Guthrie; Mrs. Henry P. Davison with her son and daughter; Mr & Mrs Harry Payne Whitney; William F. Sheehan; Mortimer Schiff, and J. B. Claws. William H. Porter was allowed up to the mansion and had a brief visit with Morgan. On departing he told reporters “I have the best of news.” More than 400 telegrams had poured into the Glen Cove telegraph office from around the world, expressing their hopes for Morgan’s speedy recovery. Even parsimonious-looking John D. Rockefeller sent one. In France, the French Society of Political Economy passed a resolution hoping for Morgan’s recovery, and asked the citizens of Paris to visit the American Chamber of Commerce to inscribe their names in a guest book there as an indication of their sympathy.

Cecil Spring-Rice returned to Morgan estate... the only member of the weekend group allowed to do so. Late Sunday afternoon he went out for a ride in one of Morgan’s cars, driven by Morgan family chauffeur James Paddison, to visit Willard D. Straight at his Greenvale estate. About two miles from Greenvale, a low, long dark-colored touring car, passed them at high speed. Paddison noted that there were six men in the car. As Paddison turned a curve he saw that the touring car was stretched across the road. The men were standing spread across the road, their arms outstretched as if trying to signal Paddison to stop. Paddison, rather than stopping, put his foot down on the accelerator and aimed directly at two of the men on the side of the road. At first, they seemed stunned that he wasn’t stopping, then jumped out of the way. Paddison didn’t slow down until he was safely inside the gates of the Straight estate. He reported the incident to the police back at the Morgan estate.

In Mineola, the interrogation of Muenter continued. The prisoner was weak. He had lost a fair amount of blood from the pummeling that Frank Physic had given him, and had eaten little or nothing since he was brought to the Mineola jail. The jailers were concerned that he had taken poison, and brought in Dr. Cleghorn to examine him. Cleghorn announced that Muenter merely had “an intestinal disorder which frequently was associated with mental diseases.”

Throughout the interrogation, Muenter claimed that he “didn’t want to hurt any one” and that his singular purpose was to end America’s role in the carnage in Europe.
A New York City police detective asked Holt if he was an anarchist. He shook his head. They asked him if he was a socialist. He said quietly “Not yet.”

One New York City detective bluntly asked Muenter whether or not he thought he was insane.

“I haven’t been able to settle that question yet,” Muenter responded matter-of-factly. Luyster and Weeks were extremely circumspect in offering their opinions relative to Muenter’s sanity: both suspected Muenter would try to raise an insanity defense at his trial. But Chief William J. Flynn of the United States Secret Service was more forthright. He pronounced Muenter “unbalanced.” The jail’s physician, Dr. Cleghorn, pronounced him “a fit subject for Matteawan.”

Captain Tunney, New York City Police Department’s bomb expert, asked Muenter for details about how he had made the bomb which he had detonated in the Capitol, which the newspapers had dubbed “the infernal machine.” He played on Muenter’s ego, feigning amazement at how the German-languages professor could have devised such a brilliantly-conceived timing mechanism.

“There wasn’t any guesswork about it,” Muenter said proudly. “I had experimented, not once, but many times. I knew just what I was doing, and how to do it. I really didn’t take any chances, for all my observations had been checked up, and I knew when the bomb would go off almost to the minute... I knew how much time I had. So I hung around while the acid was eating its way through the cork. I pulled out my watch and said to myself that it ought to be going off pretty soon. And, sure enough, it did go off pretty soon. Then I hurried to catch the train to New York.” Here, Muenter slipped again. He explained to police that the reason he had to hurry back to New York was “to kill Mr. Morgan.”

Throughout hour after hour of interrogation, Muenter refused to provide certain details about his plans, and especially about the quantity of dynamite he had on hand. Cryptically, he would only state that on Wednesday, July 7th, he would tell all. Some of the detectives working on the case believed that Muenter was trying to give his co-conspirators, either German agents or violent pacifist, time to escape the country. But others were beginning to feel that Muenter had something more ominous planned... something scheduled to occur in spite of Muenter being securely behind bars.

“I will tell you all about that on Wednesday, but on Wednesday the whole world will know.” he had told New York Police Commissioner Woods.

Reporters asked Commissioner Woods of the New York Police Department whether or not Muenter had accomplices.

“It would be very dangerous to say no to that question,” he said. “In an investigation like this it is riding for a fall to eliminate any possibility until the facts put it absolutely out of the question. Personally, I think this man acted by himself and on his own initiative... but there could be no development in this case so startling that it would surprise me.”

During a break in the interrogation, Muenter was allowed to write a brief letter to his father-in-law in Dallas.

I had heard last night that you had telegraphed for particulars, but as I had already written and telegraphed Leone, and as the papers have gave your interview, I did not think you needed any more particulars. The papers must have had plenty of them. How terrible it all looks now and how different from my plans! What can I say can console you and the family? It is too much all at once! My heart and brain are in such agony that words cannot express. I fear that you wish to come here, but I hope that you will not do that. I am well taken care of. The Gr[and] Jury cannot meet until September. I am held without bail on plea without guilty, and so I just wait, though I wish death might come to end it all at once. Life under these conditions is unspeakably horrible.

Yet, I think, I did right! Only my plans did not come out as I intended. I went to the Morgan house in order to force Morgan to use his great influence to stop the shipment of explosives. That’s why I took some explosives with me, in order to be able to demonstrate ad oculus what the use of machines of murder means, but of course I did not wish to hurt any one. I wanted him to be in the same danger (him and his family) that we are imposing upon Europe. I wanted to send him out to the manufacturers and me of influence to plead with them for real American neutrality, while I hold his wife and dear children as hostages in some upper room of the house. I found the three children in the parlor, and asked them to come upstairs with me. They came.

No objection, I walked ahead. That was my mistake. If I had been behind them, all might have been different now.

“Mr. Morgan jumped at stopping and giving me a chance all went off in an explosion of excitement. No chance for explanation! Mr. Morgan jumped at me, although I held a revolver in each hand. This physical courage overruled my moral courage. We rolled on the hall floor... I have tried to do my duty, yet the result of what we have done must... not be in vain. I have tried to be my duty... I am in the hands of God. Don’t worry about me. We send love and blessings._MARGIN
Muenter took a few minutes to complain to Warden Hults of the Mineola jail that the guards had shown him disrespect by calling him by his first name, and requested that he be referred to as “Mr. Holt”. The warden provided him with the latest New York City newspapers, in which he read the accounts of both the Capitol bombing and the shooting of Morgan. He pronounced the coverage “very satisfactory”, and told Commissioner Woods that he thought the publicity garnered from the acts would help him to obtain his objective. He even offered his opinions on the Kaiser, the King of England, and the Czar of Russia: “It would be a good thing if they were blown up. Then the people would have some chance of getting their rights.”

Some of the more sensational newspapers in New York City carried articles claiming that Muenter was being given the “third degree” in Mineola jail. Major Pullman of the Washington DC police explained to reporters it was far from the truth.

“The third degree stories are not true. Holt was not put through any third degree, but was handled with extreme gentleness. The story that he was walked up and down in the jail all night is a mistake. Nothing like that occurred.” He added that Muenter was “a grouchy sort of man, not a crook... but a highly educated man with fine sensibilities... he is easily insulted, and questioning him had to be a matter of extreme tact.”

The attempt to take Morgan and his family hostage sent a chill throughout the upper crust of American society. Clarence Mackay, who had an estate in Roslyn Harbor, petitioned his local justice of the peace for a permit to carry a pistol; he was not alone in his request. Mortimer Schiff, Frank Doubleday, and other millionaires living in the estate district between Oyster Bay Cove, Mill Neck and East Norwich petitioned Nassau County to form a “police district” in their neighborhood to protect themselves and their families against future terrorist attacks.

In Glen Cove, people began to see mysterious “Germans” behind every bush. Someone notified McCahill that a man with a German accent had bicycled up to the entrance of the Morgan estate, but was turned away when he asked to see Mr. Morgan. Two young Germans had approached John Ford, a local garage owner, and asked how much it would cost them to hire a car and driver to take them to the Morgan estate. Ford, eyeing them suspiciously, told them it would cost $2 (eighty years later, the same trip costs only about $3). They shook their heads and started off towards East Island on foot.

At first, estate superintendent MacGregor passed off the “mysterious Germans” as harmless cranks attracted to the estate by the publicity in the world press. More likely, they were merely curiosity seekers, drawn like dozens of others to the scene. But MacGregor decided not to take any chances. He took five of the policemen assigned to guard the estate and scared Glen Cove for the German bicyclist and the German walkers.

F. Worthington Hine was giving a large Independence Day dance on the evening of the 4th of July at his Glen Cove summer home. Hine was the son of the President of the First National bank, and was himself owner of the Keystone Powder Co. As his guests were departing at 3 a.m., he heard a noise on the piazza and saw that a man had been trying to climb the porch post and had fallen to the ground. Another two men were seen sprinting across the estate’s lawn. Hine, accompanied by Donald Bayne, son of the President of Seaboard National Bank, hopped into a car and headed after them in hot pursuit. However, Hine ran the car into one of the walls which surrounded a neighbor’s estate, and the chase ended as quickly as it had begun.

By the 5th of July, Morgan’s condition had improved that Drs. Markoe and Lyle were no longer staying constantly at the house, and the nursing staff decreased to only a day nurse and a night nurse. Morgan was visited by William H. Porter, and they chatted for awhile. Junius Spencer Morgan commanded his father’s beloved sailing yacht, Greyling, in the Larchmont Yacht Club’s regatta for 50-foot class boats. It was becoming increasingly difficult to keep Morgan in bed.

After two anxiety-filled days, Morgan convinced his mother to go out for an overnight sail aboard Corsair to calm her nerves.

On July 5th, Holt received a brief cable from his wife in Dallas:

Mr. Frank Holt, Mineola, L. I.

Everything is all right. It is your duty now to rest and let your ones and God take care of you. All your friends send love. They are so kind to us here. If you can let us know that you get this do so.

- Mrs. Frank Holt

Later in the day, Leone Holt gave an official interview to the press in Dallas. She stated that she had never exhibited any “socialistic tendencies,” and that “the great misfortune that has come to him is due solely to a nervous breakdown.” Frank Holt had planned to go to New York City only to do some “special research”. She added that her husband had “no class prejudice against wealth.”

Muenter was not yet aware that the police investigators had begun to suspect that he was not “Frank Holt” but Erich Muenter.
The newspapers that he was shown on the previous day did not yet carry the news that Hurley in Cambridge had been in touch with local police. But by July 5th, they were all carrying the story of how a deranged Harvard professor had poisoned his wife and disappeared in 1906 — and identifying "Frank Holt" to be that man.

Since Muenter had never been arrested, there was no formal police description of him. The French “Bertillon system” of identifying criminals was still widely in use. It used detailed descriptions of certain parts of the body, and was far less accurate than fingerprints in proving identification beyond a reasonable doubt. But throughout the country, newspapers had received photographs of “Frank Holt”, disheveled and bandaged, standing in front of the Glen Cove Court House as he was led away to the Mineola jail. And immediately, former university colleagues who had been intimately acquainted with Erich Muenter contact both press and police to identify “Frank Holt” as the missing murderer.

Ironically, one of the Assistant District Attorneys had once worked with Muenter. Charles I. Wood had been at Harvard during the 1905-06 semester, doing post-graduate work in German as well as teaching a few undergraduate courses. One of the other faculty members with whom he spent several hours a week was Erich Muenter. Wood visited him in the Mineola jail, hoping he would be able to positively identify him. He found Muenter lying covered up in bed, his head bandaged, his right eye black and swollen closed. He was also shorn of the beard which he always worn at Harvard. Wood announced to the other investigators that it “was impossible for me to make up my mind whether he is Muenter or not,”

“The resemblance would be almost conclusive, except that Muenter spoke quickly and clearly,” he said to his colleagues. “Holt drawls and is indistinct.” He wasn’t certain whether the speech pattern was due to the fact that Muenter was weak and sick, or that he was purposely trying to disguise his voice.

“He cannot be induced to answer any questions about his past. I asked him where he was born. He said he could not remember. I asked him when he was married. He thought a long time before he answered.” When Woods asked him other questions about his earlier life, he put his hands to his head and complained of “pains in his brain”.

Charles Apted of Cambridge, who had known Muenter for several years, was the first of a long line of people to arrive at Mineola to try to prove “Frank Holt” to be Muenter. After viewing him in his cell, he announced that he was “a dead ringer” from Muenter.

Two specimens of “Frank Holt’s” handwriting — his letter sent to The Washington Times on the occasion of his bombing of the Capitol, and a letter to his father-in-law — were shipped off to Boston handwriting expert W. E. Kingston to be compared with existing letters written by Muenter. Kingston pronounced them to be identical.

The Cambridge police began locating other people who had known Muenter personally while he was at Harvard, realizing that it would be necessary to send them to Long Island to identify him in person. Harvard was a fairly tight-knit community; though large, almost everyone knew everyone either socially or professionally. In addition to faculty members, the list included Muenter’s former landlord, two newspaper reporters, even the mayor of Cambridge, Timothy W. Good. William J. Corcoran, the District Attorney for Middlesex County announced that, if Muenter’s real identity could be established, he would demand his extradition to Massachusetts for trial on murder charges.

Only one small impediment stood in his way: someone had stolen the original 1906 indictment against Muenter out of the District Attorney’s Office files. At the Mineola jail, officials ordered that their prisoner not
be shaved. By allowing his beard to regrow, they hoped to facilitate his positive identification as Erich Muenter.

At the University of Chicago, Professor Chester N. Gould announced to stunned reporters that he knew that Muenter and Holt were the same man... and that he had known for more than six months. Gould, who had known Muenter from his University of Chicago days, had visited Cornell in November, 1914. At their first meeting, he hadn’t recognized Muenter, but the familiarity of his face stuck with him. A day or two later, he recalled why the man looked so familiar. It was Muenter. At their second meeting, Muenter walked directly up to him and said “Hello, Gould” as if they had known each other for years.

“At first I felt a bit nervous, for one can never tell what an erratic person may do, and I never felt quite confident of my safety.” Noting that Muenter was an excellent teacher and a credit to his department, and feeling that the former wife-poisoner had reformed, Gould stated that he felt “morally justified... of leaving an erratic individual at large and permitting him to keep on making good. Unfortunately, I was mistaken...”

It took several days for police to track down the trunk Muenter had placed in storage in New York City. They traced it to a warehouse operated above a livery stable and garage at 342 West Thirty-Eighth Street. The effort was well spent, however. The trunk contained an anarchist’s delight... 134 sticks of 60% dynamite (carefully packed in sawdust), a box of blasting caps, coils of fuse, batteries, nitric acid, windproof matches, six wooden containers of mercury fulminate, smokeless powder, and three recently completed home-made tin can bombs. Each was five inches in diameter and eight inches high.

New York City’s Inspector of Combustibles Owen Egan declared it “the greatest equipment for bomb making ever brought to New York.” The owner of the warehouse, R. L. Vaughan, was lucky to be alive... for days he had tossed it around the warehouse without a care.

“Muenter was ready for anything with his little arsenal,” explained Egan. He added that “there is nothing in the argument that he must have had financial backing, for a good deal of what he had could be bought for fifteen cents a pound. I do think, however, he must have had somebody to instruct him in bombmaking, for I do not see how he could have learned all he evidently knew unaided.”

Ironically, Morgan’s yacht Corsair would help win World War One. After Morgan transferred the vessel to the US government for military service, she served as an escort for US convoys crossing the Atlantic Ocean. Her crew proudly boasted that no Allied ship was ever lost to German submarines or surface ships while under escort of Corsair.
Yet fifty pounds of dynamite were unaccounted for... a quantity more than sufficient to make fifteen bombs of the size that wrecked the Capitol.

Both Nassau County and New York City police detectives were detailed to search Glen Cove, Syosset, and other towns on Long Island for the missing sticks of dynamite, which they feared might have been cached away for future terrorist attacks. Police and Secret Service agents were also concerned about what Muenter might have left behind in his boarding house room in Washington. Muenter genuinely couldn't recall the address of the boarding house in Washington where he had assembled the bomb. But Secret Service Chief William J. Flynn appealed to Muenter, on the grounds that any explosives or hazardous chemicals that he had left behind might fall into the hands of children, for as much detail as he could provide. Muenter described the boarding house, and surrounding neighborhood, in detail. He even carefully drew a map of the location of the boarding house for Harry W. Pullman, chief of the Washington D.C. police. Muenter even offered to lead the Secret Service on a field trip to Washington to show them the location. Police searched more than 200 boarding houses in Washington, trying to locate the one in which Muenter had assembled the bomb.

On July 5th, Maj. Pullman's police located the boarding house where Muenter had stayed, helped considerably by Muenter's map and description. It was a small two-story house at 107 D Street, N.E., owned by Guy W. McCord. A black maid, Triessa Beatrice Guyer, recognized Muenter from a photograph. Police found the empty bottle of sulfuric acid he had used in making the detonator in a pile of rubbish in the back yard. Muenter had poured the leftover acid down the sink after he had assembled his bomb.

By the July 6th, Morgan's family and physicians were convinced that all danger was past.

Early in the day Junius Morgan went to J. P. Morgan & Co. offices to give them a personal update on his father's condition. J. P. Morgan had a large lunch, and afterwards smoked a "long, black cigar." He took a telephone call from partner W. P. Hamilton and informed him that the only thing preventing him from returning to his desk was his family and physicians. By the evening, Junius Morgan announced to waiting reporters that "my father's condition is the very best. He is all right and progressing favorably in every respect. Pulse and temperature are still absolutely normal."

After a few weeks convalescing, including a week-long cruise on board Corsair, Morgan would return to work on the 14th of August.

It was not until July 6th that Muenter had the benefit of legal council.

Muenter's Cornell colleagues retained attorney Thomas J. Reidy, of the NYC firm of Clocke, Koch and Reidy to defend him. Reidy had known Muenter at Cornell, and in fact had been his landlord for much of the time he was there. He announced that "Frank Holt" had told him that he was wasn't sure where he was in 1906 — he might have been in Germany studying German — but that he was “positive he was not Muenter.” While in jail, Muenter wrote out a lengthy polemic addressed to "The People" and gave it to Reidy to instructions to release it to the press. Reidy, instead, pocketed the document.

"I intend to keep the notes which the prisoner has given to me," Reidy told reporters. “Enough of his writings and statements has been printed already."

He asked that Muenter not be subjected to any more interrogations by the Secret Service or police. "He is very weak and his condition is serious. They must have obtained all the facts they want from him by this time, and further ordeals might put his life in danger." The Nassau County District Attorney concurred. A few details were still unresolved, but in the three days they had to interrogate him, they had learned enough to put a solid case together.

Muenter's father-in-law hired attorney Martin Littleton to assist in his defense. Littleton met with Muenter in the afternoon. Muenter asked repeatedly whether his act had stopped the shipment of arms to Europe. He offered to waive a public hearing, saying he "did not want to cause the Morgan's any more trouble," and asked repeatedly as to Morgan's condition.

"I talked with him some time," recalled Littleton. "It was obvious I was simply talking to an insane man. He would close his eyes and apparently doze off. I would ask him a question and he seemed to wake suddenly."

Muenter told his lawyer that the jail guards were refusing him access to newspapers. He grew so upset that Littleton stepped out into the corridor and grabbed a daily paper that a guard lad left lying there before leaving the jail.

Dr. Cleghorn had received a report from Cambridge which detailed several operations which had been performed on Muenter. Reidy's ban on police interrogation didn’t apply to physicians, so Cleghorn went to the Mineola jail and examined Muenter to see whether or not there were scars which matched the descriptions. They matched exactly. The Nassau District Attorney was also notified that a large contingent of Cambridge residents would be setting out that day for Mineola to try to identify Muenter.

Dr. Carlos F. MacDonald, a psychiatrist, was brought to the Mineola jail to interview Muenter. MacDonald pronounced Muenter a "paranoic of the reformatory type." adding that his statements “...for the most part seem logical... when the subject is an abstract one, his mental weakness does not come out strongly. In his discussion of concrete facts, however, his wildness is more apparent, notably when he describes how he thought he could imprison the Morgans, barricade the door on them, and prevent their rescue by laying a stick of dynamite on the table.”
“Don’t you think you made a mistake in going there with two revolvers and trying to influence Mr. Morgan that way?” MacDonald asked.

“‘The mistake I made was that I walked ahead of the children instead of after them,” Muenter responded. “If I could have gotten him and his family into the rooms and imprisoned them all there and kept them there with myself while he was planning the work, that is the work, that is why I brought the family there, so they couldn’t shoot off into the room, it would have set this off. If they shot into the room it would have exploded the dynamite. I would lay it on the table and say: ‘This is dynamite. If you shoot at me, go on. It is for the protection of all of us.’”

“Didn’t you think that was an unusual way to protect them?” MacDonald asked. “The children were innocent of any wrongdoing.”

“If the father wanted to kill the children by shooting into the room, he could do so, but he was informed beforehand that the dynamite was there,” Muenter repeated. “I would tell him that — ‘There is dynamite on this table, therefore don’t shoot into this room.’ It was to keep him from rescuing the children.

“But suppose Mr. Morgan had told you that he would decline to accede to your plans?”

“I would have said ‘All right; until you are tired.’ I would have held his family in prison.”

MacDonald next asked Muenter whether or not he had a legal right to take action against Morgan. Muenter responded that it had “...nothing to do with legal right. My dear sir, this is war, you are mistaken.”

“But we are not at war.”

“You are wrong. We are at war. We are actually at war, we are killing thousands of people every day.”

“But we haven’t declared war,” MacDonald reminded him.

“Yes, we are doing it underhandedly,” Muenter replied.

“Do you think that you, single-handed, could arrest the whole trend of an age?”

“No, but Mr. Morgan could.”

Muenter lamented over his failed plan. “It was the only thing that could have been done. If it had succeeded it would have been a very fine thing.”

The Secret Service still took the possibility that Muenter was part of a broader conspiracy extremely seriously. But MacDonald, when asked whether or not Muenter had confederates who assisted him in his campaign of terror, pointed out that “a paranoic acts alone and distrusts others. If any one had approached Muenter and asked him to take part in some scheme, he would undoubtedly have become suspicious.”

On the 6th of July, Muenter’s wife received a letter from her husband which was evidently written in the few hours while he was in Washington, placing his “infernal machine” in the Capitol building.

My Dear Darling:

You are the only one I can and must entrust with this news. I know you are strong in your faith in God and love for your fellow men, and do therefore approve of my action. The fact that it should strike our family instead of John Smith’s may seem hard, but can’t be helped. One hundred times I said, like Jonah, ‘Lord, send someone else,” but I got only one answer. No one else seems to be available. I have prayed and trembled and doubted and lain awake at night and thought, but there is no way out of it. The slaughter in Europe must be stopped, and America must stop sending ammunition. If it goes on I cannot live, for I am responsible, in so far that I do not stop it when I can. So I will try.

First: R. Pearce of Washington. That is my appeal. It is a starter and may do some good. Let us pray that the people may wake up to the crime that they are committing by allowing the slaughter to go on.

Second: The steamer leaving New York for Liverpool on July 3 should sink, God willing, on 7th; I think it is the Philadelphia or the Saxonia, but am not quite sure, as according to schedule these two left on 3d.

Third: I need a powerful assistant and have chosen J. Pierrepont Morgan of Glen Cove, L.I. By the time you get this it will be all over. I shall either be dead or in prison with the Morgan family in their residence in Glen Cove, while Mr. Morgan will go to all the manufacturers of ammunition and persuade them to stop sending them. If he does not he must forfeit his family, and of course, my poor wife and babies also their husband and father.

My dear, believe me, I have many proofs that God is guiding me in this work, and that He has answered my prayer for guidance. I should not wonder if some people say I am mistaken, because the results for my family are so severe. But what about the hundreds of thousands of fathers and husbands who are forced to do the very thing I am attempting — saving my country from moral ruin? The path of duty is hard, but it must be trod, and to gain life we must offer our life.

If the rich of this country wish to get richer by the European horror, they must also be ready to participate in the horrors. They say, if the Germans could buy here and ship safely, they would do so. Yes, but that is no excuse for our selling them any munitions, no more than the Allies. We must stop it.

I have asked the Blosers to deposit rent at First National Bank. They owe $10.75 for July and $12.50 for August.

This is my last letter before the Glen Cove affair. My heart is with you and my babies and all the family in Dallas. I am sorry if a great blow should fall on all of you, but hope God will avert it. He knows best. I cannot do otherwise.

I see that at 11:30 last night I heard right. Let us pray that it was not in vain. Am so glad it cost no lives. Did not know anybody would be on the upper floor at night.

Well, good-bye, my sweet darling. Bring up our children in the love of God and man and be strong and kind. Your affectionate

- Frank

Of greatest concern was the paragraph stating that a ship
would be sunk en route to England on the 7th of July. Muenter's wife immediately brought the letter to the authorities in Dallas, who telegraphed the Department of State in Washington that a bomb may have been planted aboard an England-bound steamship. The Department of State immediately forwarded the telegram to Secretary of the Navy Daniels.

The news was quickly disseminated to the Secret Service agents as well as to the New York City and Washington D.C. detectives. New York Police Commissioner Woods later recalled that "We had been worried for several days about what Holt or Muenter expected to happen on Wednesday. He had said several times that he was going to tell his story on Wednesday... on Sunday, when I tried to get him to talk to me about the dynamite, he said 'I will tell you all about that on Wednesday, but on Wednesday the whole world will know.'"

"We did not feel that we could afford to regard his threats lightly, as if they were the boasts of an ordinary crank, because he had proved that he was a man of ability and one very likely, in view of the seemingly impossible things he had done already, to do what he predicted that he would do."

Woods sent his personal secretary, Guy Scull, by automobile to Mineola to beg Muenter to tell aboard which ship he had planted the bomb. Scull would arrive ten minutes too late to get his answer.

Muenter had tried to kill himself on night of July 5th by slashing his wrist with a pencil eraser metal retainer. The effort was wholly ineffectual; a guard simply pulled the pencil from his hand. County jail authorities were certain that he was trying to starve himself to death, and gave instructions that if Muenter was not taking solid food by the 7th the guards were to force-feed him.

Jail authorities were certain that he would try to commit suicide again. The Nassau District Attorney's office had ordered the jail to post two men to watch Muenter at all times. Personnel shortages made complying with the instructions impossible... only one guard was available per shift. The guard assigned to watch Muenter during the evening shift was Jerry Ryan. He arrived at the jail at 8:10 p.m., after stopping for a beer at Nash's Hotel, and took up his post in a straight-backed wooden chair outside of Muenter's cell. On the instructions of Warden Hults, the cell door was left open. To open the cells in an emergency, jailers had to unlock three separate locks and raise a large handle which controlled a steel bar across the cell doors. Hults wanted the watchman to be able to rush into the cell should Muenter attempt suicide and foil him... and not have to fiddle with locks and levers while their prisoner cheated the hangman.

"Oh, I want to sleep so bad," Muenter told Ryan. Ryan told him to try to get some sleep.

"I shall do everything I can to get some sleep," Muenter
said.

“Then I’ll do all I can to keep things quiet for you.”

Muenter laid down on his cot, face towards the cell door, and put his arm over his head. He seemed to doze off immediately, and for half an hour seemed to sleep.

At 10:35 on the evening of July 6th, Ryan walked out of the cell to investigate a noise made by another prisoner, inexplicably leaving the cell door open and Muenter unguarded. With his guard no more than fifteen feet away, Muenter scrambled up the cross-bars of his cell and dove head-first onto the concrete floor of the jail corridor, a distance of nearly twenty feet. His head struck the floor with such tremendous force that the noise of the impact sounded like an explosion, giving rise to a short-lived rumor that Muenter had smuggled a pressure-sensitive mercury fulminate blasting cap into the jail and had detonated it between his teeth.

Ryan rushed back to the cell, nearly tripping over Muenter who was lying dead on the floor in a pool of blood. The noise of the impact had sounded to Ryan like a pistol shot. He called for another jailkeeper to send for Dr. Cleghorn, that Muenter had shot himself.

“As soon as Dr. Cleghorn came he flopped the body over, and I helped him,” Ryan later recounted to reporters. “I said, ‘He must have had a gun, because I heard an explosion’ and the doctor said ‘It looks as though he had blown his nut off’,” Cleghorn had been mislead by the reports provided to him by the jail guards. But more careful inspection failed to show any bullet wound.

About ten minutes after Muenter killed himself, a team of New York City police detectives led by Guy Scull arrived to interrogate him about his plot to blow up a munitions ship at the bay to investigate a noise made by another prisoner, inexplicably leaving the cell door open and Muenter unguarded. With his guard no more than fifteen feet away, Muenter scrambled up the cross-bars of his cell and dove head-first onto the concrete floor of the jail corridor, a distance of nearly twenty feet. His head struck the floor with such tremendous force that the noise of the impact had sounded like an explosion, giving rise to a short-lived rumor that Muenter had smuggled a pressure-sensitive mercury fulminate blasting cap into the jail and had detonated it between his teeth.

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Police searched Muenter’s cell and discovered a hastily penned note to his wife:

To my dears:

I must write once more. The more I think about it, the more I see the uselessness of living under circumstances such as these. Bring up the dear babies in the love of God and man. God bless you, my sweet.

Affectionately,

-Frank

PS — All please pardon me for all the heartaches I have brought you. Pray with me that the slaughter will stop. My heart breaks. Good-bye.

Muenter’s body was taken to Cornell’s Funeral Home in Hempstead, which served as the jail’s morgue. At 1 a.m. an autopsy was conducted by Cleghorn. The autopsy revealed that Muenter’s skull was shattered from the middle of his forehead all the way to the base of the skull at the back of his head. There were no powder burns in Muenter’s mouth, dispelling the blasting cap theory. Cleghorn told reporters “I can see how, in the excitement at the time, the (jail)keeper could easily have thought the crash was an explosion, but I believe now that it is certain that it is certain that he was mistaken.”

Nassau County District Attorney Smith was furious. Muenter’s death had cheated him out of what would have been one of the celebrated court cases of the era.

In Dallas the Rev. O. F. Sensabaugh stated that he would not informed his daughter of Muenter’s suicide until the morning. “Of course, we are terribly sorry to hear of Frank’s death, but there is little I can say.”

Investigators working on Muenter’s threat to sink either the Philadelphia or the Saxonia learned that both ships had left for Liverpool from NYC on the 3rd. Both were owned by J. P. Morgan. Although no one thought that Muenter would have had an opportunity of placing a bomb on board either ship in person, he would have had ample time to have it shipped out as England-bound freight or mail. Nassau County and New York City detectives who had been assigned to searching for dynamite caches that Muenter may had hid around Glen Cove and Bethpage were reassigned during the night to locate every Long Island Rail Road freight agent in the region, wake him up, and go through the freight records to see if any suspicious packages had been shipped out from their stations. They discovered only that two questionable shipments were sent out from the Oyster Bay station, which on further investigation proved to be completely harmless and not associated with Muenter.

Both ships were contacted in mid-ocean by wireless. A careful search of the holds failed to show any trace of a bomb. P. A. S. Franklin, General Manager of the Morgan-owned International Mercantile Marine, explained to the press that the only way a bomb could have been smuggled on board either vessel was as mail, and that neither ship carried parcel post packages.

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Investigators breathed a sigh of relief. Unfortunately, it was premature.

Although he had originally intended to target the Saxonia or Philadelphia, Muenter’s plan ran afoul of a now-anonymous shipping agent’s efforts to be economical. Muenter had not specified that he wanted the package shipped on a specific vessel, so the shipping agent held them aside a few days to get a lower shipping rate onboard another Morgan-owned vessel, Minnehaha.

The Minnehaha was registered to the International Merchant Marine, a Morgan subsidiary. It was valued at $1 million. On the day Morgan was shot, she had been berthed at Pier 58, at the foot of West Sixteenth Street in Manhattan. The next day she was moved to Gravesend Bay in Queens to take on a cargo of more than $6 million in war supplies bound for Great Brit-
ain. The cargo included 2,800 cases of shrapnel shells, 1,723 cases of artillery cartridges, 1,000 cases of cordite explosive, 1,400 cases of TNT, 3,000 barrels of motor oil, 66 hogheads of rum, 230 horses bond for service with the British Royal Artillery, and several hundred tons of desperately needed food bound for the British people — wheat, flour, pork, beef, and poultry. Unlike the Saxonia or Philadelphia, she was also carrying general freight.

Minnehaha left the Port of New York at 7:14 p.m. on July 4th. At half an hour past midnight on the morning of July 7th, her wireless operator intercepted the message, intended for the Philadelphia and Saxonia, that bombs may have been placed aboard England-bound vessels. Her captain, a long-time International Mercantile Marine employee named Claret, ordered the small boats swung out in case an explosion occurred and it was necessary for the crew to abandon ship.

At 4:15 in the afternoon of the 7th — right on time with ing crewmen ten feet into the air. Following the explosion a large fire broke, filling the ship with dense smoke. Fighting acrid smoke and flames, the crew had to shift a large portion of the cargo in the hold in order to get at the fire. Then they closed the hold and flooded the compartment with live steam to try to suffocate the flames.

Luckily, the general freight was in its own separate hold, on the opposite side of the ship from the high explosives.

“We knew Wednesday morning that something was wrong,” a crewman later told reporters in Nova Scotia, “because the Captain ordered the boats to be got ready. I said to myself, ‘The old man has got wind of a submarine.’ When the explosion occurred everybody rushed on deck... I was sure we had been torpedoed.”

At 5 pm, Claret radioed to International Mercantile Marine’s New York offices to appraise them that the ship had suffered damage and was proceeding to Halifax, the nearest port, more than 500 miles away. Throughout the night, it seemed that the fire was gaining steadily on the crew. To make matters worse, gale-force winds came up, followed by dense fog. By noon the next day, the fire was almost under control. They reached Halifax in the afternoon, but high seas made it impossible for anyone to get aboard Minnehaha to render aid. By the morning of the 10th, the blaze had been reduced to smoldering embers.

“I don’t want to see anything like that again when I have when I have nothing under me but a ship,” said one officer.

After a few days in Halifax, Minnehaha’s damage was repaired and she set off again for Liverpool to deliver her cargo of munitions, little worse for wear.

The assorted residents from Cambridge, sent down at the request of the Cambridge police detectives to try to positively identify Erich Muenter, arrived the morning after his death. A police sergeant checked Muenter’s dental records with the teeth of the late “Frank Holt”; it was certainly the right man. His former landlord, the two newspaper reporters, and the mayor of Cambridge all positively identified the body as being that of Erich Muenter.

Muenter’s death certificate filed with the Hempstead Board of Health officially listed him as “Frank Holt”, rather than Erich Muenter, born in Wisconsin, rather than Germany, on 25 March 1875.

Originally, the Sensabaugh family had planned to have the body buried in Ithaca, rather than Dallas, to spare Leone the horror of a funeral. However, she decided that she wanted him buried near her home.

On July 9th, County Coroner Walter P. Jones convened a formal inquest at Hempstead to determine the cause of death. After the short testimony of Dr. Clegorn, Jones announced that he was satisfied that Muenter had committed suicide by leaping to his death from the bars of his cell. However, for the sake of thoroughness, he adjourned the hearing until the 16th. He wanted to hear the testimony of several of the other inmates of the jail present when Muenter killed himself.

At the same time the inquest went into recess, the Nassau County Board of Supervisors announced that they would be undertake a full investigation to determine whether or not negligence at the jail was responsible for Muenter’s death. In 1914, the Nassau County Jail had scandalized the region when it was revealed that prison guards were engaging in “orgies” with female prisoners. Five guards were indicted and found guilty. Certainly, the Board of Supervisors wanted no part of another such debacle.

Ryan began to feel that the county was planning to scapegoat him for Muenter’s death. He gave a protracted interview to a newspaper reporter at his home in Spring Valley, steadfastly held to his story that he was not asleep at his post. “I had plenty of sleep before I went to work. I particularly remember that I had slept all day Tuesday. I didn’t dare to go to sleep while I was watching Muenter, for I had my revolver on me and he knew it. I was afraid he might try to take it away from me.”

He showed his revolver to the reporter. “It has been loaded this way for two years, so you can see he wasn’t shot with my gun.”

“I have never decided whether Muenter jumped to his death or was shot or shot himself. It seemed to me like there was an explosion. Whatever it was that made the crash, I am not going to make a crack now, but everything is coming out. I am not going to be made a goat of in this thing. Now, I want it understood that I had nothing to do with the door’s being open. That was all arranged for when I got there. After I had gone to see what the noise was I had heard up the cell block, leaving Muenter apparently asleep, I heard the explosion and ran back to find him lying in a pool of blood. When the officials came I walked away; I was sore because he had put one over on me.”

As to his not closing the cell door before he investigated,

Daniel E Russell

The Day Morgan Was Shot
Ryan said “That was probably carelessness on my part. I knew he could not get away. I knew I would only be away a second. Yes, I did violate my instructions when I left the prisoner alone.”

Warden Hults told reporters “There was no explosion of any kind. It is not true that Holt killed himself with a revolver or an explosive. He climbed to the top of his cell door, which is fifteen feet above the floor of the cell, and landed on his head.”

The next day, the Board of Supervisors convened behind closed doors with District Attorney Smith. At the end of the meeting, the Board issued the following typewritten statement to the press:

The Board of Supervisors, at a conference with the District Attorney, agrees with the District Attorney that there has been a great neglect of duty at the jail as to the custody of one Frank Holt, who committed suicide on July 6th, 1915. The District Attorney is doing everything in his power to investigate and find out who is directly responsible for the act and will lay the whole thing before Sheriff Pettit on his return, and, if the facts warrant, further action will be taken and the persons responsible dealt with according to law...

However, District Attorney Smith said at noon that the Board of Supervisors was “creating false impressions” and that in fact he was not investigating the jail.

“What is all this fuss about?” he asked reporters. “There is no question that there has been negligence. We all know that.” Smith laid full responsibility for laxity at the jail in the lap of Warden Hults. “There is nothing to investigate. It is admitted there was negligence. The Warden is responsible. He made a mistake in judgement. He should have had two guards. He had, however, to deal with Holt, who was so weak a ten-year-old boy could have handled him. Two doctors had examined him and we were thinking of sending him to the hospital.” Newspapers called Muenter “the most loosely guarded and most important prisoner ever in the custody of Nassau County.”

A former Nassau county official told reporters from the steps of the Mineola Court House “Nassau County is lucky Holt killed himself. If he hadn’t, he might have walked away from us.”