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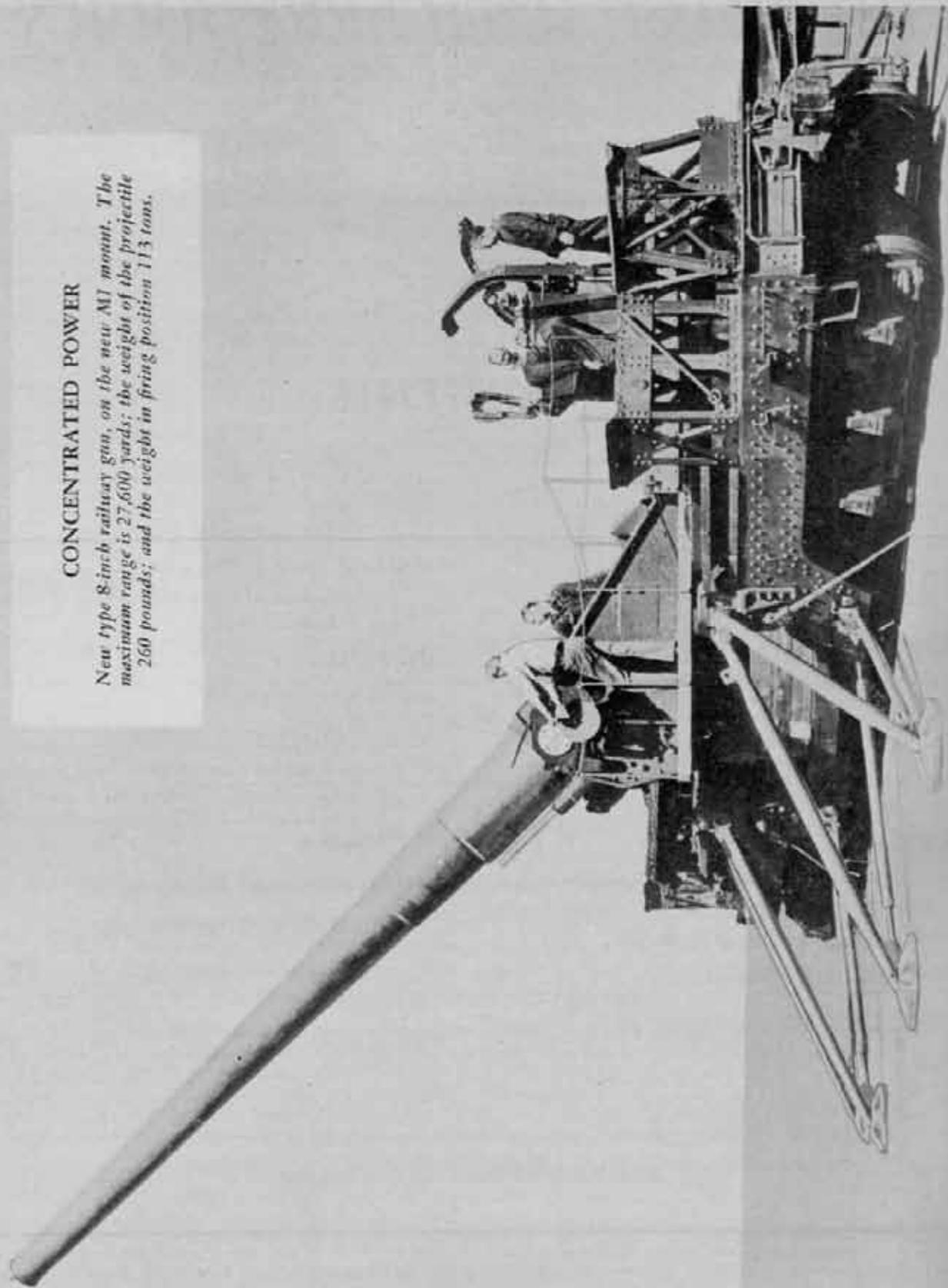
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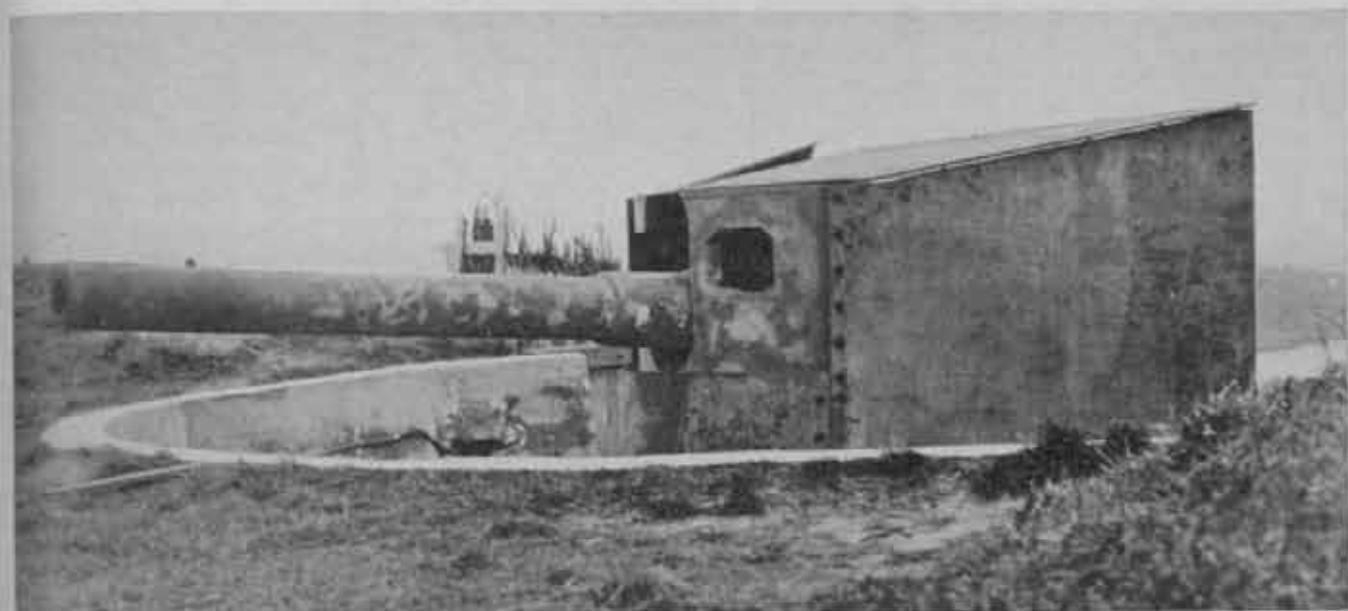




### CONCENTRATED POWER

*New type 8-inch railway gun, on the new M1 mount. The maximum range is 27,600 yards; the weight of the projectile 260 pounds; and the weight in firing position 113 tons.*





*This 17-cm. gun formed part of the armament of Battery Kaiserin  
one of the chain of German coast defenses near Zeebrugge*

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# *Defense of the Belgian Coast: 1914-1918*

*By Lieutenant Colonel Rollin L. Tilton, Coast Artillery Corps*

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THE GERMANS initiated the defense of the Belgian coast as soon as their forces occupied the shore from the Dutch Border to Nieuport. Their defensive measures began in October, 1914, and continued until the German withdrawal from Flanders in 1918 because of pressure in other areas.

For the greater part of the war the German defenses protected the important harbors and submarine bases of Ostende and Zeebrugge and guarded the right flank of the German Army; both vital considerations to the High Command. Although the Allied thrusts against them included many types of coastal attack, their security was never seriously threatened. Not once did they fail in their task of furnishing a stout seaward bulwark.

In peacetime the German naval forces were principally based in the Heligoland Bight. (Map 1) But now, at a bound, Germany found an invaluable and protected naval base for submarines and small craft some 300 miles nearer to and practically on the Straits of Dover. This was the Bruges-Ostende-Zeebrugge triangle. The Straits of Dover are the narrowest part, some twenty miles across, of the

belt of water that protects England from invasion and have always been the bottleneck of the food supply of London and the main routes of oversea commerce. Approximately 100 ships a day passed Dover during the war.

The lines of communication of the British Expeditionary Force ran from Dover and Folkestone on the English coast to Dunkerque, Calais and Boulogne on the French coast. Over them passed a daily flow of men and supply. From Heligoland to Dover is 315 miles; from Ostende, Dover is but 60, Dunkerque, 23 and Calais, 50. Naturally, submarine operations against the channel traffic and the trans-Atlantic trade routes were greatly facilitated. Light forces found the Belgian coast an excellent advanced base for raids and operations against the channel traffic, British naval forces, and the English and French coasts. As a base for air operations the coast was invaluable.

The military reasons for the defense of the Belgian coast were equally important. As the right flank of the German line on the Western front, its defense was vital to the army. Early operations had shown that that line was encircled from the sea and if not adequately defended, a

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*The meagre results of the Allied bombardments show the futility  
of attack against seacoast defenses*

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