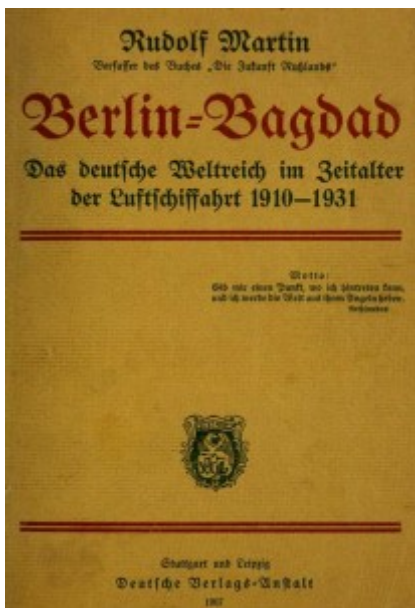


Martin, R.E. (1907) Berlin-Bagdad; Das deutsche Weltreich im Zeitalter der Luftschiffahrt, 1910-1931

Rudolf Martin (1907) Berlin-Bagdad; Das deutsche Weltreich im Zeitalter der Luftschiffahrt, 1910-1931



Rudolf Martin's science-fiction extravaganza Berlin—Baghdad (1907) visualized 'The German World Empire in the Age of Airship Travel, 1910—1931' but here the principal conflict is between Germany and a post- revolutionary Russia. An ultimatum to England — prior to the complete unification of Europe under German leadership — comes as something of an afterthought and is soon forgotten when the Russians launch an air attack on India. [Niall Ferguson (1999) *The Pity of War*]

Fiction writers, describing similar attacks, embellished them with concrete details and spectacular—even lurid—descriptions of the results. Rudolf Martin, in his 1907 novel Berlin-Baghdad, imagined the pacification of rebellious Central Asian villages by the dropping of "two or three" aerial bombs and a Russian aerial attack on Berlin in which airships sweep over the city "like a flight of fantastic dragons," leaving in their wake forty thousand dead and seventy thousand injured. [A. Bowdoin Van Riper (2004) *Imagining Flight: Aviation and Popular Culture*, p.24]

After the initial wave of futuristic novels in the late nineteenth century, a new kind, reflecting increased international tensions, appeared. One of the first and most widely imitated of these was a futuristic story of the Berlin-Baghdad link written by Rudolf Martin, a government official. Published in 1907, the novel started with the much discussed railway corridor under development at the time but went on to imagine land-based travel giving way to an airship fleet, allowing Germany to extend its influence and claim additional colonies. This utopian vision coincided well with the expansionist designs of the German Colonial Society and the Pan-German League. Martin himself acknowledged and later emphasized the imperial potential of the new machine, but in this novel he stressed its contribution to business, politics, and, especially, culture. Martin postulated that Germany's future flight technology would surpass that of England's sea fleet, although he was magnanimous: Germany would also help England regain territory lost to Russia and extend British holdings further into the sky.

Martin asserted the primacy of Germany as a matter of course, but he stressed the wider significances of the new technology as a means of transport. Acknowledging popular resistance to change, Martin remained optimistic. The airship would overcome obstacles, much as the railway had done some eighty years earlier. If the "engine in the air," as he called it, lived up to its promise, it would have the effect almost of a new natural law, freeing humankind from gravity and shrinking distances more than the railroad had ever done. Unlike many German ultranationalists, Martin saw no conflict between culture and civilization, and he used the terms interchangeably: the smaller the Earth the greater the cultural strength of the new era in which distance would no longer hinder civilization. [Guillaume de Syon (2002) *Zeppelin!: Germany and the Airship, 1900-1939*, p.33]

Martin, R.E. (1907) Berlin-Bagdad; Das deutsche Weltreich im Zeitalter der Luftschiffahrt, 1910-1931



Full text (German) at <https://archive.org/details/berlinbagdaddasd00mart>
English summary in Clarke, I. F. (1997) *The Great War with Germany, 1890-1914 : fictions and fantasies of the war-to-come*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press.

Other posts of possible interest:

- [Phillips Oppenheim, E. \(1905\) A Maker of History](#)
- [Niemann, A. \(1904\) The Coming Conquest of England](#)
- [Gautoff, F.H. \(1909\) Banzai!](#)
- [Eisenhart, K. \(1900\) Die Abrechnung mit England](#)
- [Gastine, L. \(1912\) Les Torpilleurs de l'air](#)