

1914

CHAPTER 9

WORLD WAR I.

But then, one day, there was a thunderclap. On June 28, 1914, the archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife were assassinated during a visit to Sarajevo in Bosnia by a young Serbian, Gavrilo Princip, a member of a terrorist organization. The Vienna government was convinced of the complicity of Serbia. Franz Ferdinand was the crownprince since 1889, when the only

son of emperor Franz Josef I., crownprince Rudolph, had committed suicide. Since then, for 25 years, crownprince Franz Ferdinand had waited to become emperor, and was, when he died, 51 years old. He was not especially popular in Austria, but there was outrage in the world and sympathy for Austria. It was generally believed that a localized settlement would be possible. There were consultations between Germany and Austria, and war against Serbia was considered. But England, France, and Russia also held consultations and concluded that the best way out in that serious situation would be to exert pressure on Austria to negotiate and not to take drastic steps. But an Austrian crown council decided to send an ultimatum to Serbia with many demands, difficult to accept by an autonomous country. One of the conditions of that ultimatum was, that Austrian police should be allowed to enter Serbia and search there for the perpetrators of the assassination and bring them to Austria to court.

Serbia received assurances from Russia that it would declare war on Austria in case that Serbia would be attacked, and Russia had received assurances from France of support. Whatever Austria had done, was, as is generally believed, instigated by Germany. The ultimatum was taken to Berlin, before it was sent to Serbia.

The answer of Serbia to the Austrian ultimatum was vague, and Serbia had ordered mobilization against Austria, and Austria mobilized against Serbia. This was on July 25, 1914, almost a month after the assassination of the crownprince Franz Ferdinand. England proposed a conference by the great powers to settle the whole affair, but Austria and Germany refused. On July 28, Austria declared war on Serbia, and for the next few days, while notes were going forth and back between the great powers, gene-

ral mobilizations were started, first in Russia, then in Germany, declaration of war by Germany on Russia on August 1, then on France on August 3, followed by the declaration of war by England on Germany on August 4, by Germany on Belgium, by Austria on Russia on August 6. Then followed more declarations of war, by Montenegro on Austria on August 5, by Serbia on Germany on August 6, by Montenegro on Germany on August 8, by France on Austria on ~~---~~ August 12, by England on Austria also on August 12, by Japan on Germany on August 23, by Japan on Austria on August 25, by Austria on Belgium on August 28, by Russia on Turkey on November 2, Serbia on Turkey on November 2, England on Turkey on November 5, and also France on Turkey on November 5. Italy, which was bound by the Tripartite Plan, the Triple Alliance, to participate in any war, in which Austria and Germany were involved, broke the agreement and remained neutral, a great disappointment for Austria and Germany. Later on, on May 23, 1915, it entered the war against Austria and Germany.

This war could have been avoided, but Germany wanted it and instigated Austria. The old emperor, Franz Josef I. was senile, 84 years old. The German Kaiser Wilhelm II and his chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and the Austrian chancellor, count Berchtold, co-operated and achieved what they wanted. There were the German generals Ludendorf, Falkenhayn, Moltke, who all wanted war. And they got it, the most terrible war.

At the time of the assassination of the crownprince there were big headlines in the news papers, followed by daily exciting news, when the diplomatic maneuvers started, but still, there was peace, and practically nobody thought that war may result. Especially we young people did not think about it. It was all

the time like a thunder very far away, lightning far away, but still peace and everything fine as usual. The newspapers brought the news all the time with much optimism, since there were conferences, which could lead to a settlement. We believed that our emperor and emperor Wilhelm II. wanted peace, and made great efforts to achieve it. This had a calming effect and we felt secure, for a while at least, for a few weeks. That was in July.

But the news and the headlines became more and more serious, and then, one day, the storm broke loose, with the Austrian general mobilization on July 31, and the next day by Russia and Germany, and declarations of war. The newspapers told us all the time that our fatherland had been attacked, and that we had to act in selfdefense, and we believed all that.

And now, over night, something that nobody had expected developed, an enormous enthusiasm for the war. From early in the morning on, great masses of people gathered in the center of our city, and everybody felt like electrified. The people stood there and sang patriotic songs, young and old alike. The same thing was reported from other cities, from Vienna, Berlin, and Paris. There were some older people, who kept silent, who had other ideas about war, but the masses were there and they shouted and sang, and they appeared happy. Very soon, troops began to march, with music bands in front. That went on for two days. But many young people had to run, they had to run to their commands, to put on their uniforms, and soon the enthusiasm calmed down.

Soon my cousin Marzell Drancz came, dressed in a gray uniform, and he looked great. He had to go to his regiment, and he stayed only a few hours in our home. I kind of envied him.

I had already before the idea of entering the army voluntarily, and when I saw him, my enthusiasm for the war grew. Many of my colleagues wanted to do the same. And I really went into a mobilization barracks, but there I was told that I was too young and that I needed a consent of my parents. But my mother refused to give it to me, and I consented that I would wait till I was 18.

Our city, which was near the Russian border, had to count with an invasion by Russian troops, and many families packed and left, most of them for Vienna. The news during the first few weeks were good, there were victories for the Germans on the Russian front, and right in the beginning the Germans invaded Belgium and occupied it within a short time. The Germans also advanced into France to the Marne river. But bad news soon came from the Russian front, where the Russian troops had advanced deep into Galicia. These news were bad for the Bukowina also.

One night, at the end of August, there was an enormous explosion, and soon we found out that the bridge over the river Pruth had been destroyed by the Austrian troops. Everybody started now to run, to grab a few valuables, to pack them into valises, and to run into the streets. We thought that we would still get a train and would leave. But since the main bridge had collapsed, no train came and there was no chance to go to Galicia. Everybody now ran to the other station, station Volksgarten, hoping to get a train to the south of the Bukowina and to Rumania. But no train came there either and after many hours of waiting, we went back home. My brother-in-law, Paul Rosegg, states that he remembers having seen me at the station Volksgarten that night, standing there with a valise, wearing a derby hat, which we called in German Steifhut (stiff hat).

For the next two or three days we heard rifle fire, and many people went to certain high areas in parks and observed movements of our troops in the fields. It did not take long and the Russian troops entered the city, on September 15. They were under the command of general Evreimow, and they entered with very little shooting. I saw the general, who had a little white beard, and seemed to be a rather old man. He had an easy job taking Czernowitz, since the Austrian troops had retreated into the Carpathian mountains.

There followed days of great depression. The Russian troops were well disciplined. But the general demanded a large contribution of money, and since most of the rich people had left the city and the banks had been evacuated, before the Russians came, there was not much money, and therefore the general demanded that all the people should bring their silver and jewellery within two days to a certain place, a large office building. That was done and the people got receipts. This he demanded as assurance, that the Russian troops would not be harmed by anybody. A few days later, to show his magnanimity, everybody could take the things, they had handed over, back with their receipts. There were very few incidents, where Russian soldiers had entered stores and demanded merchandise. Some of them were apprehended by their officers, and first of all whipped with a whip, which every officer carried, and then arrested. In general, we had a bad time, and reason to worry. The schools were closed, and there were, of course, no newspapers. On account of that there were all kinds of rumors about events in the war, about victories of the Austrian and German troops, and also about reverses. My enthusiasm for the war had abated since a long time, and especially since the

invasion of the Bukowina by the Russians.

But after a defeat in Galicia, the Russians retreated, and had to pull the front back, and in November Lemberg and Czernowitz were free again.

But we still heard from far away cannon fire, especially at night, and we knew that we were still in danger, and that we would have to leave our home. This was very difficult to accomplish, since the way to the north through Galicia was interrupted. There remained only the railway to the south to the border of Rumania, which at that time still was a neutral country. We had to plan what to do, and I remember that Else was in the center and had a leading part in the conversations, and the planning. We had relatives in the city Suczawa, which was near the border of Rumania, and it was decided to visit them there, and to try to go from there through Rumania to Vienna. We packed in a hurry took the most necessary things along and left, but in the excitement left a large cassette with silver table ware on the table. We gave the key to the apartment to one of our neighbors. My stepfather had left long before, had entered the army, since he was a relatively young man, about 38 years old.

Anyway, we all left for Suczawa, and stayed for about two days in the home of our relatives. We learned there that only women and children could leave the country, but not males, who were liable for military service in the Austrian army. We probably knew it already before, and had planned what we would do. I said good-bye to my mother, Else, and little Walter, who took the train through Rumania, whereas I was put in a horse-drawn carriage, which took a very long road toward the Carpathian mountains, through the cities Gurahumora, Kimpolung, and Dorna-Watra.

There I succeeded, by paying some money, in being put on a military truck and, hidden under straw, to go through the Carpathian Mountains, and after passing the border control undiscovered, to get into Hungary and to the first railway station Borgo-Prund. From there it was easy to get a train, which took me the long way through Hungary to Vienna. This was the first time that I had become a refugee. My brother Carl tells me now in a letter that he went exactly the same way from Suczawa to Vienna, probably a day before or a day after me.

Anyway, we were now all together in Vienna, and stayed for a few days in the home of my aunt Rosa, which was in the 8th district in the Schloesselgasse. It was at about the end of November, when we had arrived there. My mother, Else, and Walter had arrived about two days earlier, and went immediately to look for an apartment. They found one in the 4th district in the Margarethen Strasse No. 50, a small apartment for my mother and Walter, and another room, one flight up in the same house, for Else. I got an invitation from aunt Rosa to stay in her apartment, which I, of course, accepted.

Vienna made an enormous impression on me. I found it beautiful, especially the inner city, the 1st district, which was surrounded by the Ringstrasse with its beautiful buildings. I had lived all my life in Czernowitz, which was a small town, and Vienna was an enormous city, and now everything was so different. I soon found out that most of the professors from the gymnasium in Czernowitz had also emigrated to Vienna, and that school had started a few weeks before. I registered right away for the seventh grade.

The school was the Sophiengymnasium in the 2nd district in the Circusgasse. In the morning, the Viennese students had their

classes, and we refugees from Czernowitz had the classes in the afternoon, so-called parallel classes. Getting there from the 8th district by streetcar took quite some time, but I attended the school regularly. Carl got soon an engagement with the theatre in Posen in Germany as operetta tenor for a whole season, where he was very successful.

My aunt Gusta and her daughter Isabella had also come from their hometown Storozynetz in the Bukowina, and they found an apartment in the 4th district near my mother. Her husband, uncle Isidor, who was a physician, had probably stayed behind in Storozynetz, or perhaps joined them later. I don't remember to have seen him in Vienna. Neither did I see my stepfather there, while I was in Vienna.

A completely different life had begun for me, and it was not easy to adjust. I lived now in the home of my aunt Rosa. It was a nice apartment on the second floor, consisting of two bedrooms, a living room between them, and a very large entrance hall, which was also the dining room, and next to it the kitchen. In one bedroom aunt Rose and uncle Emmerich, called Imre, were sleeping, in the living room the two boys, Herbert and Felix, and the third room was shared by my cousin Alice and me. There was a maid, who slept in the kitchen. It was a peculiar situation, but nobody ever found anything peculiar about it. After all, I was only a young boy, 17½ years old, and cousin Alice was already 19. She was extremely beautiful, tall, with long, blond hair, and, of course, I fell in love with her and she with me. But nobody noticed it, or at least seemed to notice it, as we knew how to conceal it in the presence of others. Aunt Rosa, I am sure, knew it, and she had planned it this way, and as a

good mother, wanted her daughter to have a good time. When everybody went to bed at night, we two went into our room and closed the door. We were never disturbed, it never happened that anybody came into our room at night. We started the night by reading. I had a philosophical book, which I read to her every evening, "Sex and Character" by Otto Weininger, a very famous book in those days. But I was not very successful, trying to explain complicated statements and ideas to her, and it was to no avail. But I continued reading every evening one or two chapters to her, till we got sleepy. I can say, that these were very happy times in my life. This went on for about half a year.

This was one part of my life in my aunts home. But my life there was filled out with many other activities. There was ~~Emme-~~rich Hartmann, called uncle Imre, whom I had already mentioned before, whom my aunt had married around the year 1910, after my grandfather had died, and after she divorced her first husband in Berlin. I had also mentioned that uncle Imre became blind and had developed all the serious symptoms of tabes dorsalis. It was a tragedy. He was a tall, still very good-looking man, with a blond mustache, but quite helpless. He was unsteady on his feet, but could walk in the house without help, holding on to the furniture. At the table, he needed help, as the meat had to be cut for him. His right hand was not well under his control. For instance, when going down the stairs and holding on to the banister with his right hand, it often happened that the hand went up into the air, and he lost the grip of the banister. But I was leading him, when walking with him, and, as far as I remember, he never fell. I went very often out on walks with him. I liked him very much, and he liked me too, I am sure. I spent much time

with him, from morning till noontime, when I had to leave for school. I had to read to him the newspaper, The Neue Freie Presse. He was very interested in the news of the war, and so was I.

During the two months, when we had the Russians in Czernowitz, we did not know what was going on on the war fronts. But after they left, we heard the news that in the meantime the Germans had occupied almost all of Belgium and had advanced in France to the river Marne, but had been stopped there, almost miraculously, by the French and English troops. They never advanced to any degree beyond that line during the rest of the war.

But on the Eastern front it was a different story, as the Russians had advanced deep into Galicia, but further north the Germans under General Hindenburg had won a great victory over the Russians at Tannenberg. On the Serbian front in the south, the Austrians advanced slowly and it took some time, till they occupied Belgrad. This was the situation, when I started to read regularly every day the newspaper to uncle Imre.

He was an enormously cultured and knowledgeable man in many fields. I had to read to him many books, which interested him. Among the most important I remember a book by the great zoologist and paleontologist Cuvier, who lived from 1769 to 1832, who was the founder of the sciences of comparative anatomy and paleontology. Then I remember^e to have read a book about the island Atlantis, in which the author tried to prove that it really existed once, and formed a land bridge between Europe and America. This is still believed by many. It was a large, really interesting book. Then I read to him a book about historic places in Vienna and each time, when we finished a chapter, we went out to the place we had read about. These were places, where once walls

were, rests of the walls which surrounded Vienna, when the Turks besieged the city in 1529. There was later again a siege of Vienna by the Turks in 1683. He knew exactly where to take me, and I learned how to walk with him. Each time we had to cross a street, I pressed his arm and he knew that he had to step down from the sidewalk, and then I pressed again his arm, and he knew that he had to step up onto the sidewalk. These were long and most interesting walks.

Sometimes there were difficulties, when he had to go to a toilet. Vienna had many public toilets, but when we were not near such a place, we were in a dilemma, no matter how fast we walked. He had no control over his bowels, the poor man. He never accepted my help, and I had to wait outside, and somehow he cleaned himself and we went home, where he had to change cloths. But in general, I had much pleasure with him, and I learned a lot on account of the wonderful books I read to him. He also liked it very much, when I played on the piano for him, especially Hungarian melodies. Once a week, a young lady came, and they studied together old French, as it was spoken about 1000 years ago. By the way, in the gymnasium, we also learned German as it was spoken in the middle ages. Uncle Imre, (the Hungarian name for Emmerich) was born in Slovakia, which belonged to Hungary, but was of German descent. He was always sitting in an armchair, often suffering from terrible so-called lancinating pains, which went through his whole body like lightning, especially on days when the weather was changing. His memory was not affected and neither was his speech. His gait was peculiar and typical for tabes dorsalis: He threw his legs too far forward, before the foot reached the ground again. When I walked

with him, he could walk quite fast.

I went often with cousin Alice to the theatre. The Burgtheater was very near, within walking distance, also the Deutsches Volkstheater, and we saw many beautiful shows, classical and modern ones, and sometimes we also went to the opera. We sat, of course, high up in the gallery. I often visited my mother in the Margarethenstrasse, went there usually on foot, which took me almost an hour, and my mother sometimes came to visit us, which was not difficult by streetcar.

Else was then already engaged, her fiancée, whose name was Franz Lang, was a student of architecture. He later got a job with the Department of Architecture. I liked him very much. He was goodlooking and a very fine gentleman. He lived with his parents in the same house, where my mother and Else lived, on the ground floor. He had a sister Mitzi, extremely beautiful. Later, when I was in the army, Else and Franzi got married. But the marriage did not last long, only about two years. They had a nice artist's studio in the Wiedener Hauptstrasse in the 4th district, where Else did some painting, while he went to work.

In the meantime, the war expanded more and more, since Turkey had entered the war on the side of the central powers, Austria and Germany, and Japan on the side of the allies, England, France, and Russia. Germany had many colonies in Africa and Asia, and there also war fronts opened. On the high seas there were sea battles and many large ships were sunk. Australia and New Zealand had also sent troop contingents to the war fronts. On the Russian front the Russians had succeeded in taking the fortress of Przemyśl in Galicia, and had penetrated the Carpathian Mountains and occupied a small area in Hungary. In Galicia they had

advanced to Krakow. But an Austrian-German offensive at Gorlice was successful and the Russians retreated, Przemyśl was retaken, also Lemberg. This is only a short outline of the happenings in the war in the first few months. It would take much more effort and time to describe many details. But this I will not do. After all, this is a biography of our family and I have to concentrate on that. Some details of the war will have to be mentioned, as far as they affected us personally. It was a terrible, bloody war with loss of life of millions of people, lasting over 4 years.

I have advanced in the description of events regarding our family to the middle of the year 1915. Things had gotten quite bad. There was already scarcity of food, and bread and meat were rationed, also gasoline. But my life up to that time was relatively pleasant, it was nice in the home of aunt Rosa, especially on account of Alice and uncle Imre.

All that ended suddenly, when the fiancée of Alice arrived from Rumania. His name was Samuil Patras, and he was of Rumanian nationality. He had studied dentistry and apparently had finished his studies in Bucharest. I was quite disappointed when I saw him and spoke with him. He was a very primitive man, heavy built, and quite uneducated, a real peasant. How Alice could have chosen him was difficult for me to understand. I did not see much love between them, nor real affection. He often lifted her up and carried her around, to show his strength. I was quite unhappy.

Anyway, I had to leave and moved to the apartment of my mother. I lost much when I left the home of aunt Rosa, I lost Alice and uncle Imre. School also ended soon, and I advanced to the eighth grade. Since I was already over 18 years old, I had to enlist in the army, and the day for entering the army was fixed: It was

the 15th of October, 1915, and I was happy that I was accepted in the Infanterie Regiment No.83, which was stationed in Vienna in the 21st district, as a so-called Einjaehrig-Freiwilliger on account of my college education, which implied that I would later be sent to an officers school and become an officer.

There was still the long summer before us, and now my mother ^{had} and aunt Gusta/planned something very special: Aunt Gusta wanted for some reason to travel back to Storozynetz in the Bukowina, and I should accompany her, and I should go to Czernowitz to pick up the cassette with silver ware, which we had left there and some other valuable things. What reason aunt Gusta had to go there, I don't know anymore. Perhaps uncle Isidor was there and she wanted to join him. The train connection through Galicia was free since the retreat of the Russian army. So, one day, we left and it was a long journey. Normally, it would have taken one day only, but we were about three days on the road. There were long delays in smaller, war-torn cities, and I remember that we had to stay in a small town, Kolomea, about half a day. We stayed in a Jewish house near the railway station, where we could get only some bread and milk. There was a very small child lying in a crib and sleeping, and the face of the child was covered with flies, which we constantly chased away, but they were back on the child's face the next moment. It was hopeless. I remember that the train had to go over the river Pruth over the bridge, which was destroyed by our troops the year before. It was now a wooden bridge and the train moved very slowly and noisily over that bridge.

I got out in Czernowitz and aunt Gusta continued her ride to Storozynetz. I found our apartment in relatively good condition, and the maid of our neighbors was there, and gave me the keys and

the cassette with the silverware, which she had found on the table and taken to her apartment to hide it.

The city had changed very much since we had left. There was little life, since many people had left and only the poor people had stayed. The University was re-opened, also some other schools, and the City Hall and other institutions functioned again. Many stores had opened again, mainly food stores. At night, the thunder of the cannons could be heard, and people feared a new Russian invasion. That happened later in 1916.

I was supposed to return to Vienna soon. But I met some friends and there were many pretty girls around, and I had the home for myself and so I delayed my departure. I had a real good time there. Then there came a letter from my mother, urging me to return. So, I packed and left, the same way I had come, over the wooden bridge over the river Pruth, and the long way through Galicia and Moravia to Vienna.

All the refugees from Galicia and the Bukowina were supported by the government, and so were my mother and Walter too. Every two weeks, she had to travel to the 2nd district to receive an amount of money, and later, when I lived with her, the amount was increased. This was of great importance, as we did not have anything to live on, since we had lost everything when we emigrated. We had abandoned in Czernowitz the storerooms, filled to capacity with merchandise. Therefore, little cash was available which we could take along, just enough for fares and expenses in the beginning. That is why the support by the refugee committee was of such importance to us. It was probably not much, what my mother received, and I assume that my stepfather, who was in the army, sent her regularly a part of his salary.

She had to economise, the poor soul, but I don't remember that I ever heard her complain. She was always nicely dressed, and prepared nice meals. Once Carl came back, after the theatre season in Posen had ended. Since my mothers apartment was too small, we rented a room around the corner in a house in the Kettenbrueckengasse No. 6, which had a plaque outside that said, that Franz Schubert had once lived in that house. Schubert had also died in that house.

The people who rented the room to us were a couple in the 60th, very nice to us. The man played in the orchestra of the opera house, I think the flute, and his wife was an usher there. Once our sister Else had to stay with us over night. I don't remember anymore for what reason, and we had no chance to talk to our landlords about it. When they saw her in the morning, they were furious, as they thought that we had taken a girl for pleasure into our room. We had to convince them that she was our sister, and then everything was alright again.

The time came closer for our enlisting in the army, and we had to prepare ourselves for it. Carl had to enlist and leave earlier than I, and he had to travel to Kielce in the occupied part of Poland, where he enlisted in the Infanterie Regiment No. 6. On account of his studies in the Akademie fuer Musik und darstellende Kunst he was accepted as Einjaehrig-Freiwilliger, and was later sent to the officers school in Troppau in Silesia, from which he returned as a Korporal to Kielce, and was soon sent to the Russian front near Kirlibaba in the Carpathian Mountains. That much about him for the time being.

My first day as a soldier was the 15th of October, 1915. I had to be at a certain hour there in the morning, and we soon received our uniforms. It was not easy to get the right

size of blouse, pants, and shoes. Our civilian cloths we had to pack and put away. Later, we took them home. Many of us were young fellows from Vienna, but there were many boys from Hungary. The Infanterie Regiment No.83, with dark brown collars, was a Hungarian regiment, stationed in Szombathely in Hungary near the Austrian border, but one company was stationed in Vienna. Soon we were in the midst of people, who spoke only Hungarian.

I and many other Viennese boys received the permission to live outside the barracks in private rooms. But for the first 14 days we were not allowed to go outside, since we had to get first basic instructions, in the first place how to salute others, who had already stars on their collars, and officers. We had received uniforms, which were very special and beautiful, especially the pants. They were blue and quite tight, so that the shape of the thighs and lower legs were exposed, and the lower ends of the pants were in the shoes. The upper parts of the pants above the knees had as an ornament a yellow cord. It was a complicated design, with many loops and looked quite good.

The drill started the next morning and was very rigorous. The commando language was German and that was good. We had to learn to stand straight and the commando was "Habt acht" and meant not only standing straight, but also to pull the shoulders backward, and to push the chest out, to keep the hands on the sides of the thighs, with the fingers close together, to keep the heels tight together and the feet on an angle separated. Saluting had to be done by putting the right hand straight at the edge of the cap. Other commands were "links um", which meant turn to the left, and "rechts um", turn to the right, which had to be done in a certain way, using the heel of one foot and the tip of the other foot to

turn and then to bring ~~to bring~~ the heels together again. "Kehrt Euch" meant turning around 180 degrees, and "Ruht" meant relax by putting one foot a little forward and moving about freely. And there were many, many other commands, which we learned gradually. Then came exercises early in the morning for at least two hours, also exercises with the rifle, which were quite strenuous, running, throwing yourself to the ground, crawling, getting up, etc. Most of us regarded the exercises as healthy and also as fun.

We learned also many other things, for instance how to put your bed in order, how to clean your eating utensils and store them away,

At 9 o'clock in the evening at the signal of a trumpet, everybody had to be in bed. We sang songs while in bed and that seemed to be permitted. At 5 in the morning, the trumpeter woke us up, and everybody had to jump out of bed, wash up with very little water and soap, get dressed, put the bed in order, and get on the line for coffee and bread. At 6, we had to stand outside in line, while the major and other officers passed by, inspecting us. Then we marched to the exercise grounds, which was the grassland area between the Danube river and a dam, many kilometers long, the so-called inundation area, to prevent a wide area beyond the dam from being flooded. That was an ideal exercise field, and for the next few months we were there every day, except Sundays, for 6 hours till we marched to the barracks for lunch. I do not remember anymore, what we got to eat, probably a thick soup with some meat in it, beans, or noodles, or potatoes, and may be an apple in the end. There was usually then a rest period for two hours, and then we had to attend classes, usually about the reglement, a thick book containing all the rules in military matters,

which contained everything a soldier had to know. After dinner we sat around and talked, or sang, or played chess, or studied the reglement.

After the first 14 days, we were allowed to go home on Saturday afternoon for the weekend, and I took the long ride by street-car home to my mother. I had a lot to tell her. Long before 9 o'clock in the evening, I was back in the barracks. Since I had the permission to sleep outside the barracks, I had rented a room in a house near the barracks, and so I slept in a comfortable bed. But I had to be very careful to get up in time, so that I would not miss the coffee, and be at 6 o'clock at my place in the row between my comrades. I had also to be careful to be before 9 o'clock in the evening in my room. No soldier was allowed to be in the street after 9, and cars with military police patrouilled the streets frequently. Life was not easy, but I took it in stride. I was glad that I could go home on Saturdays to my mother and little Walter. I had learned that some boys could get a loaf of bread from the sargent, whose duty it was to supply all the food for the kitchen. So, I tried too and for a very small amount of money I got from him a big loaf of commis bread. This I brought in a brown paperbag to my mother and made her very happy. Bread was rationed and very difficult to get. That I did every Saturday with few exceptions, when the sargent had no bread left.

One morning, I had a mishap. A few seconds before 6 o'clock in the morning, a metal button of my coat - it was winter already - fell off. I was desperate, but found a way out. There was no time to sew it on. The button had a little ring in the back. So, I made a tiny hole in the coat, pushed the ring through and put a match through the ring. Unfortunately, a sargent had seen

what I had done, and reported me right away to the major. When the major inspected the company, he stopped in front of me, and the sargent showed him the match in back of the button. The major was furious, or pretended to be furious, and punished me right away with two weeks' barracks arrest. That meant sleeping in the barracks and not going home on two weekends. It was hard. I had to sit evenings with the boys, who were mostly Hungarians, talk or play chess with them. I had learned to speak Hungarian and could communicate with them quite well. There came Christmas, and we had two days free to go home. I don't remember how we celebrated it at home. Probably with a good meal and a good cake, made by my mother, and Else and her fiancée Franzl were probably present too.

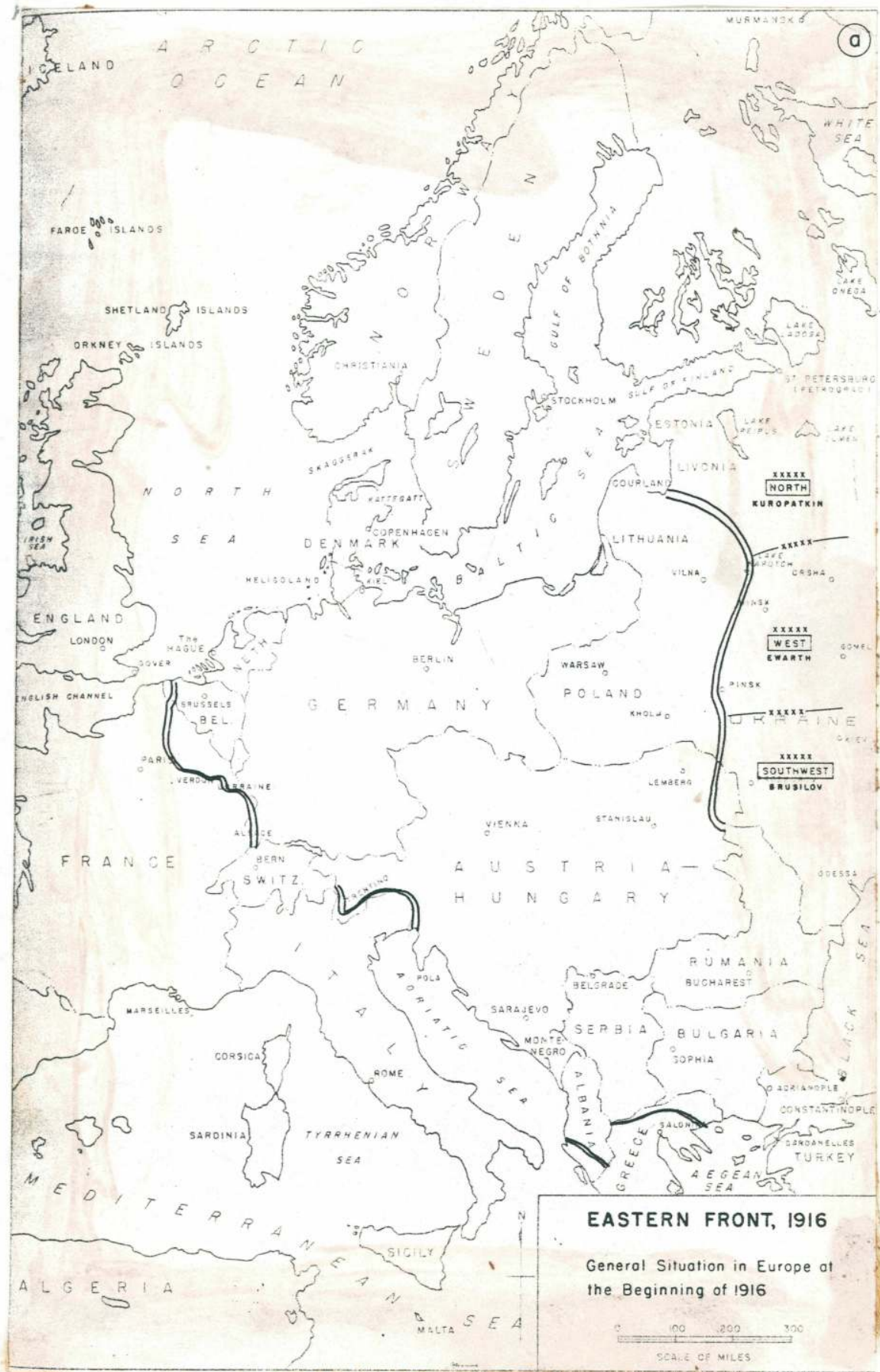
In the war the situation had changed considerably since Italy had declared war on Austria-Hungary on May 23, 1915, and entered the war on the side of the Allies. Germany at once severed diplomatic relations with Italy, but did not declare war. It took more than a year till Italy declared war on Germany on August 28, 1916. On October 14, 1915, Bulgaria entered the war on the side of the central powers and invaded Serbia. England and France declared war on Bulgaria and so did Russia and Italy. The Bulgarians advanced rapidly deep into Serbia. The Serbs were in full flight into Albania, and the Austrians occupied Montenegro and advanced into Albania. King Nikita of Montenegro and Prince Wied of Albania had fled to Italy. The Serbian troops took refuge on the island of Corfu, which belonged to Greece, which was neutral.

On the Russian front the Germans were very successful and had taken all of Poland, Lithuania, and Courland. The front line

ran from Riga on the Baltic Sea to Baranovici, Pinsk, Tarnopol, and Czernowitz. On the Italian front there were no major changes. The front was on the Isonzo river and there were in the first year four offensives by the Italians, but they were unable to break through. On the western front there were severe battles, four major offensives, but the Germans did not lose any territory, and the situation remained almost unchanged till the end of 1915.

I had only on weekends an opportunity to read the newspapers, but I followed the events with great interest. Big parts of Russian territory were occupied, Serbia was eliminated or rather crushed, and on the western and Italian front there were no changes. I became very optimistic, and my patriotic feelings increased. We believed at that time everything that the newspapers brought, that Austria-Hungary and Germany were attacked in a treacherous way by the enemies and that we acted in self-defense. The young people, all of them, were proud to wear the uniform and to contribute to the defense of the fatherland. The hardships of the military drill and the daily exercises were accepted as necessary, and we became used to it. There were some sadistic people among the instructors, sargents and officers, who for some reason were never sent to the war front. They were a curse for the young people and were hated, but even that was accepted as a necessary evil.

We were now in the midst of a very severe winter. Nevertheless, the drill continued. Many boys had frostbite, still we had to stand still, or lie in the snow and crawl. I became gradually sick, had rheumatic pains in the whole body, but never went to a doctor. When I woke up in the morning, my hands and



feet were stiff, and I had to rub them to loosen the joints. Every evening I used an ammoniated gel, called Opodeldoc, an old medicine, which we had used as children, to rub around my joints. I did not know then, but I knew later that I had gone through a period of rheumatic fever. Still, everything else was fine and I accepted it.

But one day, a great change took place. Although there was a rumor for some time, the official announcement came to us as a shock. Having registered with the Infanterie Regiment No.83 in Vienna had led all of us to believe that we will stay always with this regiment. But the regiment did not need that many aspirants for the degree of officers. There were many other regiments in Hungary, Bohemia, Croatia, etc, which did not have enough of these aspirants, which were called Einjaehrig-Freiwillige. One day came the announcement that many of us were transferred to other regiments, and among them was I also. 16 of us were transferred to the Infanterie Regiment No.19 in Leva in Hungary, and we had to leave on January 27, 1916.

I had to bid farewell to my mother, Else, Walter, aunt Rosa, uncle Imre, and Alice. Uncle Imre gave me a long hug. He knew that he would not be alive anymore, when I will return.

Nothing could be done and we had to take the train to Leva. When we arrived there, there came another surprise. The regiment, since it had 4 companies, sent to each company 4 of us. But one of the companies was stationed outside of Leva, about 5 miles north in a small village, Nagy-Kereskeny, and that was the place, where I and 3 other boys, Mannheim, Markasinski, and Buchsbaum, had to go. When we arrived there, we were shocked by that what we saw. It was a very small village, with small houses apart

from each other, and the barracks were similar small houses. But wherever we looked, there was mud. There must have been before snow and ice, and since the weather was mild, it had melted and the result was mud. We had to walk through a sea of morass to get to the office to announce our arrival. There was a sargent, to whom we gave our papers and who put down our personal data. He seemed to be friendly. We asked, whether we would be allowed to sleep outside the barracks, and he gave us the permission. We were told that we would have to^{be} at the rapport at exactly 6 o'clock in the morning.

It was late in the afternoon, and somebody showed us, where we could rent rooms, and we got there two rooms. Going there, we had to walk through mud, since there was mud everywhere. We were hungry and asked, where we could get something to eat, and an inn, the only one in the village, was indicated to us. The owner of the inn was a Jew, very friendly, and he lived there with his family, and they had a very pretty young daughter, who served us some food. There were many other soldiers there and among them also the sargent, whom we had met before in the office. We soon went to our new sleeping quarters, and set the alarm clock for 5 in the morning, and went to sleep, two in a room. We rushed in the morning, washed up a little, got dressed and walked fast through the mud to the barracks, hoping to still get some breakfast, and were on time to stand for the rapport in front of the first row. The officer, a captain and the sargent behind him, came to us, asked a few questions and that was all.

The whole company then marched to the exercise fields, singing, as it was usual, military songs, in Hungarian, of which we did not know the words yet. Exercising was the same as before

in Vienna. The commandos were in German. Everything was all-right. The evenings we spent in the inn, and liked to talk to the young daughter of the innkeeper and his wife, who, if I remember right, also spoke some German. There was a lot of shoe-cleaning necessary when we came home, before 9, of course, and also of the pants.

One day, there was a mishap: The alarm clock did not work well and we got ^{up} too late. No matter how much we rushed and ran, when we arrived, the company was already standing in closed ranks, and we had to step into the open places. From then on, everything went wrong. The punishment was ~~that~~ we were not allowed anymore to sleep outside the barracks. We got a room where there were 4 long sacks, filled with straw, on the floor, one pillow each, also filled with straw, and a blanket. It was still winter and quite cold. For heating of the room there was a small iron stove with a tube or funnel for the smoke, leading to the only small window. It seemed to us unbelievable, but that was the situation. No chair, no table, only a few nails on the walls for our cloths. We tried to make a fire in the stove, but had no luck. The wind blew into the pipe, and we got only smoke into the room. Four men in a cold room, with straw sacks on the floor, which was an earthen floor. We asked the sargent how we could heat the room, but we got only a short,snappy answer. No linnen, no towels, no wash stand. We had to walk outside to a pump to wash.

Now we knew what we had not known before. We had heard the mords "nemet" (German) and "nemetek" (Germans), and we soon knew that we were meant. We had not known before that the Hungarians hated the Germans. Later we heard also another word:

"Zsido" (Jew), the "Zs" pronounced like the "J" in Jamaica. This had become clear to us by talking to some of the soldiers who showed sympathy and became friendlier. But only two of us were Jews, I and friend Mannheim, the other two not. But generally all 4 of us were looked at as enemies. There was nothing that could have helped us. We were in enemy country and had to endure it. We lied down to sleep in our cloths, and put our coats over the blankets to get some warmth. We had given up trying to make fire in the stove, since we only got smoke into the room, and burning of our eyes. They knew it when they gave us that room as quarters.

But it should get worse. One day they found that we had not cleaned enough our coats, that there were spots of mud on them. The punishment: Arrest for one night, which meant sleeping in a small, narrow cubicle, into which we had to crawl to get inside, and which was inside not high enough to stand up. We were later told that this was once a pigsty. We had to sleep there on straw without any blankets. But we slept anyway, and the next morning we had to brush the straw out of our hair and of our uniforms.

One day, they found something else wrong and there was again punishment, especially severe. This same sargent took us out in the late afternoon for special exercises. For about two hours, we underwent the most strenuous exercises. We had to run in the mud, then we were ordered to kneel down, to get up, to lie down, where there was especially much mud, to get up, to lie down again, then to run again and so on. This went on for two hours. He enjoyed it, how we got dirtier and dirtier, and out of breath. Then we had to go home, that means to our barracks. Cleaning of these coats seemed impossible. With a knife we could scrape off thick

layers of mud, and then we had to hang the coats up for drying. Early in the morning, we started to brush the mud away, and to clean our rifles, which were covered with mud. We still looked quite dirty, when we stood in close ranks and went out to the morning exercises. Behind all that was, of course, the captain. We knew about him as well as about the sargent, that they were never out on the front, that they always stayed in the "Hinterland". There were great many such people in the army, people who had special connections. We used to call them "Drueckeberger", which means people who stay away from danger.

One day we read in the reglement, a book that contained everything about military matters, that a soldier has the right of complaint to the highest officer in the regiment about injustices. I proposed to my colleagues that we should ask for a hearing of a complaint before the commander of the regiment, who was a coronel. Our colleague Markasinski was against it, was afraid that we would all end up in jail. I did not let go, and went into the office and asked the sargent whether there was a possibility to put in a complaint. He said that it was possible, but not more. A complaint that they had put us for a night into a pigsty, and that our room was without heat, and that we had to sleep on strawbags which were on the floor, would have had a strong effect. We expected now that they would make a counter-move and it came very soon.

One day, we were told that we were punished with one week of jail. The reason given was undisciplined behavior. All four of us were transported to Leva, and put there in a prison behind bars. But it was a clean room with beds, and we were rather happy. We could rest there and were treated nicely. Our col-

leagues from Vienna, 12 of them, who were transferred together with us, came every afternoon to the window and could not believe their ears when we told them what kind of treatment we had gone through in Nagy-Kereskeny. They brought us every day good things to eat, like cookies, candies, chocolate, etc. They told us that they were treated nicely, and that they soon will be sent to an officers school in Esztergom.

We felt sorry that we had to leave the jail and go back to Nagy-Kereskeny. When we arrived there, there were quite a number of aspirants there, Hungarian boys, about 10 or 12, who had gotten two big rooms with newly made beds with mattresses. We had to return to our room, where the straw-filled sacks were on the floor. We were told that we will be further punished, that we will not be sent to the officers school, as we don't deserve it, but will be sent to the battle front with the next field company, which was just being formed. The other 10 or 12 boys were getting ready to be sent to the officers school. We were not unhappy, since that was the fastest way for us to get away from that place, which was hell. It is unnecessary to say that my patriotism had reached a very low level on account of that kind of treatment.

And so we left on May 7, 1916 for the Russian front. It was a long train ride. We passed Tokai, a place famous for the wine, and many of us got out and bought a bottle of Tokai wine. Then the train took us further east to Munkacs and then north through the Beskid Pass in the Carpathian Mountains to Galicia. The train stopped for a long time in Stryj, where my uncle Martin Sobel and aunt Klara lived. This was the city where Else and Carl were born, and where I spent two months of vacation, when I was

ten years old, exactly eight years ago. I figured that the uncle was probably as a pharmacist in the army, but I sent a messenger into the town with a little letter, telling my aunt that she should come to the train station, if she wanted to see me. She did not come and the train left. She later told me that she had received my letter, but that she could not come to the station. The train continued to Lemberg, and further east to Zablotce, where we got out. From there we marched to the front line, which ran straight from Brody in the north to Tarnopol in the south. We went first to small barracks, which was the reserve position of the regiment. There everyone of us had a place for sleeping, one man next to another one, in two layers. I had to crawl up to the upper layer. It was summer and the weather was nice. We were about half a mile behind the front line.

The next day, after our arrival, the coronel, quite an old man, over 60, came to inspect the newly arrived field company. When he came to me, I saluted, standing straight, and said: "Ein-jaehrig-Freiwilliger Adolf Mechner." He looked at me, but did not ask me anything, for instance why I had not gone through an officers school, since I did not have a little white star on my collar. I knew right away that he was informed about us by the captain in Nagy-Kereskeny. I should say misinformed. It did not matter. Our new commanders, the 1st and 2nd lieutenant, and the captain, whose name was Steinitzer, and all the soldiers were very friendly toward us. It was a different bunch of people. By now, I spoke already quite well Hungarian and sang with them the Hungarian songs. It was a relatively quiet part of the front, stationary for months. Artillery fire was quite rare, but at night there was constant infantry fire.

But we were in a relatively safe place, behind a little hill. Very soon, I was full of lice.

About a week later, we went into the front line, that means into the trenches, and the troops which had been there came into the reserve, our barracks. That was the usual thing, that such changes were made every three weeks. A completely different life began for us. The trenches were just deep enough that a man, standing straight, was fully protected against rifle fire, except for the place where he had to put his rifle in order to shoot, where there was a little less soil. The walls of the trenches were strengthened by a kind of wicker-work, held up by posts ~~by posts~~, which were rammed vertically into the ground. This required, of course, constant repair. Things got bad when it rained. Then we often had to stand in mud. What I did not mention was that we all had high boots, which gave us much protection. The trenches were wide enough that people could pass easily behind a man who was leaning against the front wall of the trench. The distance from one man to the next one was about $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 yards. The front line did not ^{run} in a straight line, but rather in a zig-zag, each branch about 15 to 20 yards long, so that the tip of the zig-zag line was nearer to the enemy line. This was important for the defense, allowing flanking attacks or defense. A few more details: There was usually a second trench line parallel to the front line, some 10 to 20 yards behind, connected by running trenches with each other, of importance in case the enemy succeeded in an attack and invaded the first line. This second line was, in hilly terrain, a little higher up on the hill for easier defense. Another important detail was that the trenches did not

run in straight lines, but were interrupted every 8 - 10 yards by a higher mass of earth, and the trench ran in a U-shaped form behind that hill, which was only 5 - 6 feet wide. This hill was important, as it offered protection against artillery attacks coming from the side, and especially against shrapnells and hand-grenades. Especially bad were the nights, since we had to shoot constantly, and the Russians did the same. It was fear that the enemy may have come out of the trenches and come closer to us. We saw nothing, only the grass against the sky, and that gave the impression that the Russians were coming. In reality it was the grass moving in the wind. But we were not sure, and therefore there was a constant shooting going on from both sides, and an enormous waste of ammunition. That was going on every night. With daylight the front became quiet, and that was the time when we could lie down to sleep, along the trench wall, with the knapsack under the head. I had something special, a little pillow which could be blown up, which I had brought with me from Vienna. It was terribly dirty, but that did not matter, since it was soft. Not everybody was allowed to sleep during the day. There were always some people on guard duty during the day. Once a day they brought ~~they brought~~ food, a thick soup with pieces of meat, beans, potato, and what have you, then a big piece of bread, a piece of sausage, a cup of coffee. That was all for the whole day.

During the day there was more artillery fire, since it was easier to see, where a shrapnell or a grenade went and exploded. The noise, which a shrapnell or grenade made when coming toward us, is difficult to describe. When it flew over our heads, it was a loud, whining noise, getting at first gradually louder

and then less loud, and then came the explosion. But it was different with projectiles coming straight toward us. Then the whining noise was almost missing, and we felt the pressure in the air, and we knew that we had to get down within a second to get some protection. That goes for grenades. With shrapnells it was different, since they were shot in such a way that they exploded in the air in front of us over our heads, so that a rain of heavy lead bullets, each the size of a cherry, came down with great force. It could not perforate the helmets, which we were wearing all the time, but otherwise it could cause terrible wounds. There was only a second left to go down to duck behind the trench wall. With the bullets there came also heavy pieces of metal down, the cover of the shrapnell, which could cause terrible injuries. But, as I said, this part of the front was stationary, and we got relatively little artillery fire.

The three weeks on the front line had passed, and we were pulled out and went into the reserve. Life there was in general pleasant. There was a brook nearby, and we could go for a bath when we wanted. There were no airplanes in use at that time, and we never saw one. But the Russians had so-called captive balloons, ^{in the air} which were all the time, far behind their lines, in the shape of a Zeppelin balloon, from which they observed us. They must have seen us bathing and one day suddenly a few shrapnells exploded over our heads. They did not aim very well, and nobody was hurt. But we ran away fast.

I got a special mission when we were in reserve: To walk every morning over a hill to the regiment's commando with the regiment's report, which I had to bring to our commander, captain Steinitzer. This was only unpleasant in rainy weather,

otherwise I liked it to walk through the fields, where flowers were in full bloom. Often I found there Russian infantry projectiles on the ground, which I collected in my pocket. They were pointed, whereas the Austrian projectiles were round at the top. Captain Steinitzer often held conferences, in which he discussed the general war situation. Among other things he told us not to take prisoners, but rather to shoot them, even when they were without a rifle with both hands up. He said it was too expensive to take care of prisoners. I came later into such a situation a few times, and did not follow his advice. One day, I was promoted to the degree of Gefreiter, which means lance-corporal, and now I had a little white star on each side of my collar.

Captain Steinitzer found out that I could play on the piano, and from that day on I had to go every evening to his quarters, where he and the other officers, 2nd lieutenant Géza von Táhy, 1st lieutenant Žiža, a Yugoslav, cadet Pestl, and ensign Vid, also a Yugoslav, were assembled and drinking. Captain Steinitzer was a heavy drinker and got drunk every evening. There was a piano and I played for them whatever came to my mind, and they all sang, mostly student songs, popular operetta music, folk songs, etc. It was much fun.

One day, the whole regiment had to move. It was raining all day, and we had to walk with our heavy knapsacks, rifles, small shovels for digging in, bayonets, ammunition, etc. On top of the knapsack was the coat, but this time we had to wear it, and below the knapsack was a rolled-up blanket. We walked from morning till late in the evening, and slept then in an old school building. The officers were riding on horseback, but we

others had to walk, carrying an enormous load with us,

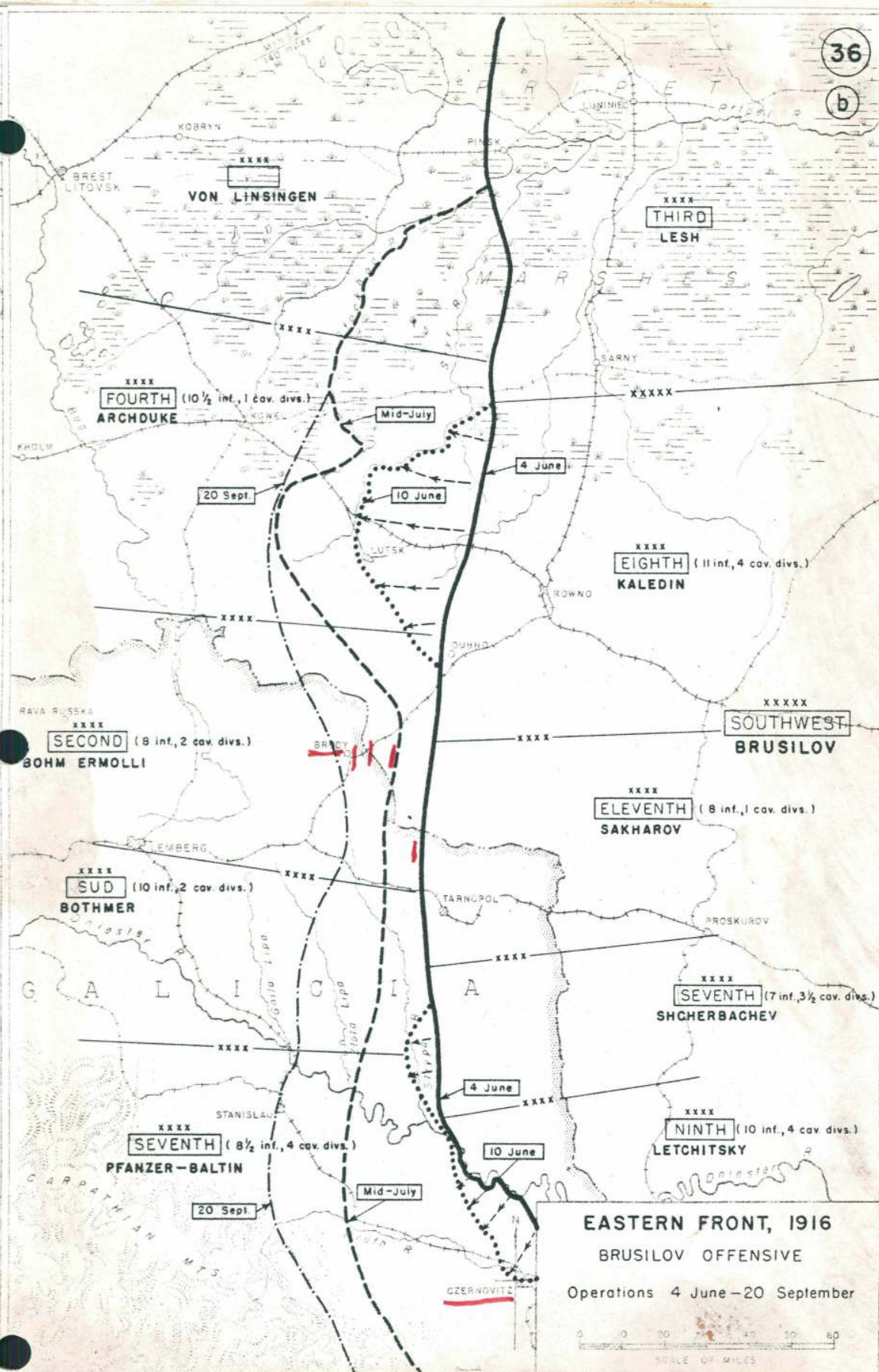
We were not told where we had to go. Later we found out. Since the beginning of the year, when I was transferred to a regiment in Hungary, I was not anymore informed about the situation in the war. I did not know, for instance, about the terrible battles in France at Verdun, where hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives. Verdun withstood, although almost completely surrounded by the Germans, and was never taken. There was also a great battle on the Somme river, where tanks were used by the English for the first time. They advanced, but did not gain much terrain and had great losses in men.

What we did not know then and what I learned later was that the Russians had launched a great offensive under general Brusilov and had advanced over a front of 300 miles. The Russians took Lutsk on June 8th in the north, and Czernowitz on June 18th in the south, and heavy fighting continued about Kovel, Tarnopol and Baranovici. Tarnopol was the area, where we were. The Russians advanced from 25 to 125 kilometers in that area, and we were retreating. We were moved north to cover the retreat, and had to go into position between Radziwilov and Brody. These two cities were for over 100 years border cities, Radziwilov in Russia, and Brody in Galicia, and the border running from north to south between these two cities. It took the whole next day of marching, till we reached that point. The rain had finally stopped, and in the late afternoon we had to spread out to form a line, and to start digging in. It did not take long and we were not yet deep enough, when the Russians had come closer, and started with ~~with~~ artillery as well as infantry fire. One of my best friends, a fine Jewish boy, from Hungary, whose name I have forgotten, was

one of the first to lose his life. We had to run, and had to leave him behind. After running for about one mile, we had to stop, spread out to form a line and dig in again. Just in that moment, when I was standing there with about 10 or 12 men, a shrapnell exploded about 10 yards above us, and a rain of bullets came down. Many were wounded, but, miraculously, I was not hit. The line was rather thin, as we were about 10 feet apart, and we started to dig in. My hole was about a yard deep when the Russian artillery started to shoot. But our artillery responded and we had quite a number of machine guns also. Each of us was supplied with a great amount of ammunition, and we prepared ourselves for a fierce battle.

Behind our line was a wooden fence, and some of our people had removed some boards of the fence in order to be able to move through. I had not gone through any of the holes in the fence. It was dark anyway, and I was busy digging and deepening my hole. We were ordered to call all the time the name of our company, to make sure that the line was intact. The call came from the right and continued to the left.

Behind us was the city of Brody in flames, so that we were not completely in the dark. It was about midnight, when we started to receive massive artillery fire. We knew that that was the beginning of the attack. And then the Russians started to move. We could see them and we could hear them. They all shouted and ran. It was the first time in my life that my knees shook, and I could not stop the shaking. Their shouting came closer and we all started to shoot. But then, suddenly, when they were in the middle of the field which was between us and them, our artillery started to shoot. The Russian tactic was always to send many lines of men, one after another one, up to 16 lines, forward. It was called the



The map shows the Eastern Front and areas, where our company was placed, marked with red lines. In mid-July, we were stationed more to the East, had then to retreat towards the city of Brody and after a further retreat over a bridge over the river Boldurka, I was transported to the railway station Zablote and then by train to a hospital in Przemyśl. The map also shows my hometown Czernewitz, which was re-occupied a few weeks earlier by the Russians in the course of the Brusilov offensive.

Russian steamroller. The idea was that the first lines will not reach our lines, but the last lines will come close and overwhelm us. They came very close to me, many of them up to 10 or 15 feet distance from me. But I was a sharpshooter, and each of them received a shot in the head. After being hit, they usually ran a few more feet till they fell, and often I was afraid that one of them would fall over me. Fortunately, they could not run fast in the dark, as there were many people lying on the ground. I also had the advantage of being near the ground, while they were exposed. Behind us, the city of Brody was burning, so that the sky was lighted, and I could see the silhouettes of the men with the handgrenades clearly, and so they were easy targets for me. It was, of course, self defense. Hand grenades are terrible weapons. The recoil of the rifle caused me severe pain in the shoulder, and I had to put a piece of rag into my blouse to lessen the pain. I had to shoot very fast, as they came closer and closer all the time.

Suddenly, I lost contact with the man to my left, and I guessed that the Russians may have broken through. I went for a moment to the back to my commander, lieutenant Žiža, and told him that. He sent me with another man to find out what the trouble was. We went along the wooden fence and saw that many boards of the fence were missing, and there were Russian soldiers standing and shooting. We turned and ran, but they had seen us and turned around and shot. But I was fast and bending forward while I ran, but unfortunately, the other man who was with me got a shot in his shoulder. We went back to our lieutenant, and he sent me with a detachment of a few more people, whom I showed the way, and we all threw handgrenades at the Russians.

There must have been very few, and they were silenced. We then restored our line for the rest of the night.

When I came back to my hole, I saw dimly a man lying there and moving. He said something what I understood meant: "Don't shoot", and he put his hands up and crawled out. I threatened him by holding my rifle towards him, but he had no rifle. This was my first prisoner I had taken, a very young, good-looking boy, whom I took over to my lieutenant, and I went then back to my hole. The attack was in general repulsed, and the rest of the night was quiet.

When daylight started, we saw a terrible picture: Hundreds of dead and wounded lying in front of our line. We stuck out a white flag, and so did the Russians, which meant no shooting, so that we could bring in the wounded. I went out with our Red-Cross men with stretchers, and what we saw is difficult to describe. Besides many dead, great many severely wounded men. The men lying before my hole had all shot wounds in the head. The worst massacre was done by our artillery. One wounded officer made me cry like a child. He had his lower leg hanging on a tendon, and when they put him on the stretcher, I lifted his leg up and put it next to him, and he pointed to a big hole in his coat and that meant that he had also an injury in his abdomen. He was such a good-looking, very tall^{man}, very pale on account of the great loss of blood. Among the wounded and dead were many, who stood up and put both hands up, people, who had been hiding and waiting for the right moment to show that they wanted to be taken prisoner.

The date was the 2nd of August, 1916. Everybody was digging in, making connections from one hole to the next one. We

were all sleepy, since we had not slept at night, and very hungry and weak, since we had not eaten anything the day before. I was now in a sector more to the right, and there was a two-story building behind me. I went there to go inside, and to my astonishment there was a good piano there on the second floor, and I played a few pieces on it.

Just then, the Russian artillery started to shoot, and it was good that I had gotten out of the house, because they directed the artillery fire at that house, and soon it started to crumble. Just as we moved away in our trenches, which were close to the house, a big piece of the wall fell down, very close to me, and I was struck by a few bricks. I felt a severe pain in the middle of the back, and also in my right knee. We moved away from that house, since there was danger that it would collapse completely with a few more artillery shots.

I moved as well as I could, in severe pain, to my old hole from the night before, where I had my knapsack. I fell soon asleep or rather collapsed. They then brought the food for the day and I ate, the first time after two days.

I noticed that there was very little shooting of our artillery, but much shooting of the Russian artillery and infantry, and we had to stay now all the time in the trenches. The noise was enormous. We expected a second night of an attack by the Russians, and I could see the fear in everybody's face. We got a lot of ammunition. It got dark, and very soon the hell broke loose. Heavy artillery fire and the shouting of thousands of men, the same shouting as the night before. We had no artillery and only a few machine guns. We shot as fast as we could.

A messenger came and I remember his name, Haidinger, and

it was from lieutenant Žiža. The message: All our troops will retreat, but I and a few men, 8 or 10, should stay behind and shoot as much as we could and then surrender. I was flabbergasted, as I saw the end of my life. As soon as he left, I knew what I had to do: To leave also with all the others. The shouting of the Russians was already very close. I did not know where to go, since I had not known the terrain behind our lines. I had to climb soon over a fence, and there, with me, also climbing over the fence, was Haidinger. "Mechner", he said, "you were supposed to stay behind". I said to him: "Nobody has the right to tell me to surrender". And I ran. It was pitch dark, and I ran as fast as I could. I came to a river, and I later found out that it was the Boldurka river. Should I now go to the left or to the right, I asked myself. I decided to run to the right along the river and after a while, to my amazement, I came to a bridge, a wooden bridge. There were a few men there, putting hay on the bridge, and pouring gasoline on it. They called me to hurry, and there came a few more people, and in the next moment the bridge was on fire. What enormous luck I had. ⊗

Continued on page 109-A

We came into a village, and there were thousands of men, shouting their regiments numbers. I found a few people of my regiment, and we walked together. I had severe pains in my back and I was almost certain that I had there a broken bone. And my right knee was hurting too, and I was limping. I was so weak and exhausted that I had to lie down at the edge of a road to sleep, and the others did the same. By daybreak we moved on, and soon found a few more people of our regiment.

But the pain was intense, and I was looking for a health station, and finally found one. I was examined and was told

1916

⊗ This was one of the smartest things I had done in my life - I was 19 years old - to disobey an order of a military commander. One of the worst sins. To become a Russian prisoner seemed unacceptable to me. The Russians were known not to take prisoners, to prefer to shoot them instead. That was much simpler for them. I made my decision fast. The Russians were very near already, their voices had become louder. Our artillery was gone and our machine guns had stopped shooting a few minutes before. So, I knew that everybody was running. So, I went too. The Russians may have been 20 feet behind me and I had to run very fast. There were none of our people next to me. When I came to the river, I had to decide fast whether to go right or left. I decided right and it happened to be good. There was the bridge and I got there one or two minutes before they started to put it on fire. All luck!

As a Russian prisoner, if they would not have shot me right away, I would have been sent to Siberia, would have starved to death or frozen to death. It was 1916 and the war ended in 1918. In 1917 the Russian revolution had started. Many Austrian prisoners had been sent back to Austria after the signing of an armistice. If I would still have been alive then, I would have been sent back to Austria. So, I had made the right choice at the right moment at the right place.

Continue on page 109.

that I had to go to a hospital. I was put on a horse-drawn vehicle, together with a few other people. It was a long ride to the railway station Zablotce. I was sleeping all the time, and when I was put on a railway car, I soon fell asleep again. There was a man in the car, which, by the way, was a cattle wagon, who was supposed to take care of the wounded. That he was a thief, I found out when we finally arrived in a hospital in Przemyśl. My knapsack was almost empty, and I had a few nice things like a good pocket knife and other things, which were not there anymore.

When I arrived there, I told them that my regiment was the Infanterie Regiment No.83. I had had enough of the Infanterie Regiment No.19. I was examined quite thoroughly, repeatedly X-rayed, and no fracture was found. In the knee it was only a severe sprain. The back pains became less severe, and after about a week they were practically gone.

I was told by people who shared the room with me that I often cried and yelled out of my sleep. I believed them, since I was aware that I had bad dreams, which often woke me up. It was always the yelling and shouting of the Russians, when they started an attack. Perhaps they had shouted "hurrah" or a similar word, but it was nerve-racking and made my knees shake. It was a terrible experience and came every night back as a dream, also the humming and whining noise of the grenades, ending with an explosion, which woke me up and made me yell. The doctor who treated me called it a neurosis or something like that, and I received pills for the night, which did not help. Since that was not serious enough to keep me in the hospital, where they needed beds for more serious cases, I was released from

the hospital after about 10 days, and sent back to my regiment No. 83 in Vienna, with a recommendation for further treatment of my neurosis in a convalescent home.

I was happy and so were my people at home, when they saw me, my mother, Else, Walter, and all the others. My dear uncle Imre had died in the meantime. I had a most pleasant life then for a few months at home. Twice a week, I had to go for a cold water treatment, which consisted of a warm shower, a luke-warm tub bath to which cold water was gradually added, and then a cold shower. At the end, an ice-cold ^{wet} linnen sheet was wrapped around me, I had to lie down, and was covered with blankets and had to rest for one hour. This was done twice a week and continued for 4 months. I enjoyed the treatments very much, although I really did not need them. The bad dreams continued for years. I enjoyed being in Vienna. I went to museums, to libraries, to the opera, to shows, to concerts, read a lot, visited aunt Gusta and cousin Isa, who lived now in the same house in Margarethenstrasse 50, also aunt Rosa and Alice, who had moved to another apartment in the Lederergasse in the 8th district.

Else had her little apartment also in the same house where my mother lived, and I saw her very often. Her fiancée Franz Lang and his parents also lived in that house. Else was always very religious, and had converted in 1915 to Lutheranism. She went often on Sundays to church, and loved the sermons and lectures of the pastor. I went once or twice with her, but was not very impressed.

I had not mentioned yet that my mother was often ill, had suffered from gallstones. For many years, when I was still a little boy, she had severe gallstone attacks, usually accompa-

nied by yellow jaundice. Over the years, she had undergone many kinds of treatment and once, before she married my step-father, she went to the spa Karlsbad in Bohemia for a few weeks. During the war, while in Vienna, in 1916, she took courage and underwent a gallbladder operation at the clinic Hochenegg. The gallbladder and about 80 stones were removed, a few big ones, and she recuperated nicely.

On the war front, there were many changes in the meantime. On the Italian front, there were ~~another~~ 5 offensives on the Isonzo, the 5th on February 15th to March 17th, the 6th on August 6th to 17th, the 7th on September 14th to 18th, the 8th on October 9th to 12th, and the 9th on October 31st to November 4th, all terrible battles with severe artillery bombardment, which was called drum-fire, but all without substantial change.

On August 27th, 1916, Rumania declared war on Austria-Hungary, and began the invasion of Transylvania, occupying Kronstadt and Hermannstadt. But soon the situation changed, and Austrian and German forces ^{invaded} Rumania, and the capital Bucharest fell on December 6th. The Rumanian government had moved to Jassy. There were further advances and soon most of Rumania was occupied.

The emperor Franz Joseph I. had died on November 21st, and was succeeded by his grandnephew Carl. I remember that I went late in the evening to see the coffin passing through the Mariahilferstrasse, being taken to the Hofburg. Great many people were standing there, many of them crying. He was the monarch for 68 years.

Toward the end of the year 1916, president Wilson, who was just re-elected, tried to intervene, and proposed to both warring

sides "peace without victory". Negotiations went on for weeks, proposals and counter-proposals. The Germans felt that they were in a relatively better strategic position since the collapse of Rumania, and made proposals which were difficult to accept. Negotiations continued into 1917, when, on January 8, the Germans decided that unrestricted submarine war would be the only method by which England could be brought to her knees, and the war won. President Wilson was already under pressure, since the Germans had sunk the Lusitania off the coast of Ireland, with the loss of 1198 lives, including 139 Americans, on May 7, 1915. The sinking of the Lusitania had brought the United States and Germany to the verge of war. Now the United States was notified by Germany that unrestricted submarine war would start on February 1st, 1917. The United States severed relations with the German government. Soon American ships were in fact sunk during February and March, 1917. after the sinking of the big liner 'Lusitania'. On April 6th the United States declared war on Germany. War was not declared on Austria-Hungary until December 7, 1917.

As to myself, my treatment was ended, and on December 16, 1916 I returned to my regiment in the 21st district of Vienna. On January 2, 1917, I was sent for 3 months to the officers school in Bruck-Kiralyhida, which was in Hungary, near Pressburg, and not far from Vienna.

It was a severe winter, and training was very strenuous. We were over 100 boys, most of them from Vienna, and we all took the treatment in stride. At 9 o'clock, everybody had to be in bed, and the lights were turned off. Then we all started to sing, and that went on for a long time. We needed the sleep, since we had to get up at 5 and stand in closed ranks at 6 o'clock. In that one hour we had to get dressed, wash up - which was usually impos-

sible, since the water was frozen - have the breakfast, and put the bed in order. About that they were especially strict. We marched out singing, when it was still dark, to the exercise field. The exercises were extremely strenuous and continued for hours. They started with movements of the head, and arms and legs, turning of the body, and combinations of all these movements, kneeling, lying down in the snow, all kinds of exercises with the rifle, swinging it up with both hands, and at the same time spreading the legs apart, and, of course, in the end running for long stretches. There was usually a pause for 10 or 15 minutes, and then the exercises started again. That went on till noon-time, when we finally marched back to our barracks for the lunch. There was one hour rest in the afternoon, when everybody had to keep quiet. Then classes started, and we had to sit and listen to lectures about military matters. Then came dinner around 6 o'clock, and afterwards we were free to do whatever we wanted, read, play chess or card games, etc. At 9 o'clock, we had to be again in bed.

On Saturday afternoon, we were allowed to leave and take the train for Vienna, and then we were really happy, when we could get home and see our loved ones. But on Sunday night, we had to be back at 9 o'clock and in bed. I had to take the street car No.13 in Vienna, to get to the Ostbahnhof, and I usually left the house at 5 o'clock.

One Sunday, I had bad luck. There was much snow in the streets and the streetcar No.13 did not come. I waited over one hour, till it finally came. I just made it to the train station, but there was no time to buy the ticket. The man at the door could have let me go through without the ticket, since I could have

paid for the fair the conductor in the train. But he was stubborn, and I had to stand there and see the train leave. I had to wait now 2 hours or so for the next train, and I knew that I would arrive late, exactly at 9 o'clock. I had to run a long way from the train station to the barracks, and while I was running, I heard the bugler blow his horn, what meant that it was 9 o'clock. When I arrived at the barracks, the sargent had just finished the inspection, and had, of course, noticed that I was not in bed. I explained to him the mishap with the streetcar, but to no avail. He put me on the list, and I had to appear the next morning for rapport. I explained to the captain that I had waited for over an hour for the streetcar, and on account of that had missed the train. Nothing helped; I was punished with withdrawal of the privilege to go to Vienna for one weekend, or perhaps two, I don't remember anymore, which was a hard punishment.

At that time, my rheumatic pains had gotten very bad, and I had especially bad pains in my feet. The winter was very severe. I went for a medical examination, and the doctor put me for two weeks in the hospital. That helped and the swelling of the feet subsided. On March 31st, the course in the officers school ended, and we all went back to our company in Vienna. On April 16th, I advanced to the rank of Corporal, which meant that I had now 2 white stars on each side of my collar.

But at the same time, I was transferred to another regiment, the Infanterie Regiment No.78 in Osijek in Slavonia, which is now a part of Yugoslavia. It was a long ride by train. When I arrived there, I soon asked for permission to go for four weeks to Vienna to finish my studies in school, since I still had not finished my 8th year in the gymnasium. There was no dif-

ficulty, since that was contained in a regiments command order, and had to be given to petitioners. So, I received the permission, and on May 21st went back to Vienna for 4 weeks. I attended classes in the Sophiengymnasium in the Circusgasse, and at the end received not only a certificate that I had successfully terminated the 8th class, but also ^{had passed} the matura examination. That was a great thing, since the matura examination was very difficult in previous years, and a horror for all the students. That meant that I was now entitled to enter a University and become an "Academician", as it is called in Russian. Living again for one month in Vienna was a great pleasure. But on the 28th of May, I had again to say "good-bye" and leave for Osijek. I had to learn now again another language, Yugoslavian, or as it was called at that time, Croatian.

I had stayed there only one month, when I was again put in a field company, to be sent to the Italian front, and transferred to the Infanterie Regiment No.96. One day before, I was advanced to the rank of Zugsfuehrer, which meant file-leader, and I had now 3 little white stars on each side of my collar.

The train took us through Zagreb into Krain (Carniola), and we were for a while in Kranj (Krainburg). The language which the people spoke there was Slovenian, which was quite different from Croatian, which I had just started to learn. We did not stay in one place, and every few days we changed our location. The longest time we stayed in Rakek, which was to the north of the port of Trieste. For about two months, I was instructor of a cadet-aspirant course. On September 17th, I received the Bronze-Medal for Bravery for service on the Russian front.

I had at that time trouble with a tooth, which I had broken on a hard piece of bread, and was sent to a dental laboratory,



Adolph 1917



Adolph 1918

which was in Postoina. This was a famous place. The German name was Adelsberg, and the Italian name Posthumia, and there was the famous Adelsberger cave, the biggest in Europe. I went there about twice a week for dental treatment, by train, and each time I visited the cave, together with hundreds of people. The visit took about two hours. The cave was also famous for another reason. A river disappeared there near the entrance to the cave, and went underground. Nobody knew at that time where it re-appeared. There were many rivers in the Karst mountains which were like that. It took a long time after the war to find out the exact place where rivers that have gone underground re-appeared. This was done by putting great amounts of paint into the water. Anyway, I visited the Adelsberger cave all together about 10 times. Our company went on October 14th to the Isonzo front near Gorizia.

At this point, I should describe some important happenings in the general war. There was not much change on the Western front. But the unrestricted submarine war had caused great losses. By October 1917, the Germans had destroyed 8 million tons of shipping. But the British had gradually learned how to counteract, first by a convoy system, and then by the use of great numbers of destroyers and submarine chasers, also by intensifying the ship building, so that by the beginning of 1918 the Allies were building more new tonnage than was being destroyed. The German gamble on the submarine had failed. On the Russian front there was some advance of the Russians, but in July the Germans and Austrians drove the Russians back, and retook Tarnopol and Czernowitz on August 3.

In Russia, the revolution had started, first with mutinies

of the troops in the capital, and then by assuming of power by Alexander Kerensky on March 12th. Tsar Nicholas abdicated on March 15th, 1917. On April 16th, Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders arrived in Petrograd, having been transported from Switzerland through Germany in a sealed carriage, the German high command having calculated that these extremists would soon undermine the pro-Allied provisional government. The war went on, since the provisional government did not want to make a separate peace agreement. Trotsky had also arrived from the United States and supported Lenin. Kerensky became minister of war, and undertook to revive the war spirit. He even went to the front and ordered a Russian offensive. But the offensive collapsed. The situation became precarious, and the Bolshevik influence made rapid headway. On November 6th, the Bolshevik revolution started, the troops mutinied, and the members of the provisional government were arrested. Kerensky managed to escape and went into hiding and later into exile.

On the Italian front the 10th Isonzo offensive May 12 to June 8, 1917 was again unsuccessful, and so was the 11th on August 17 to September 12.

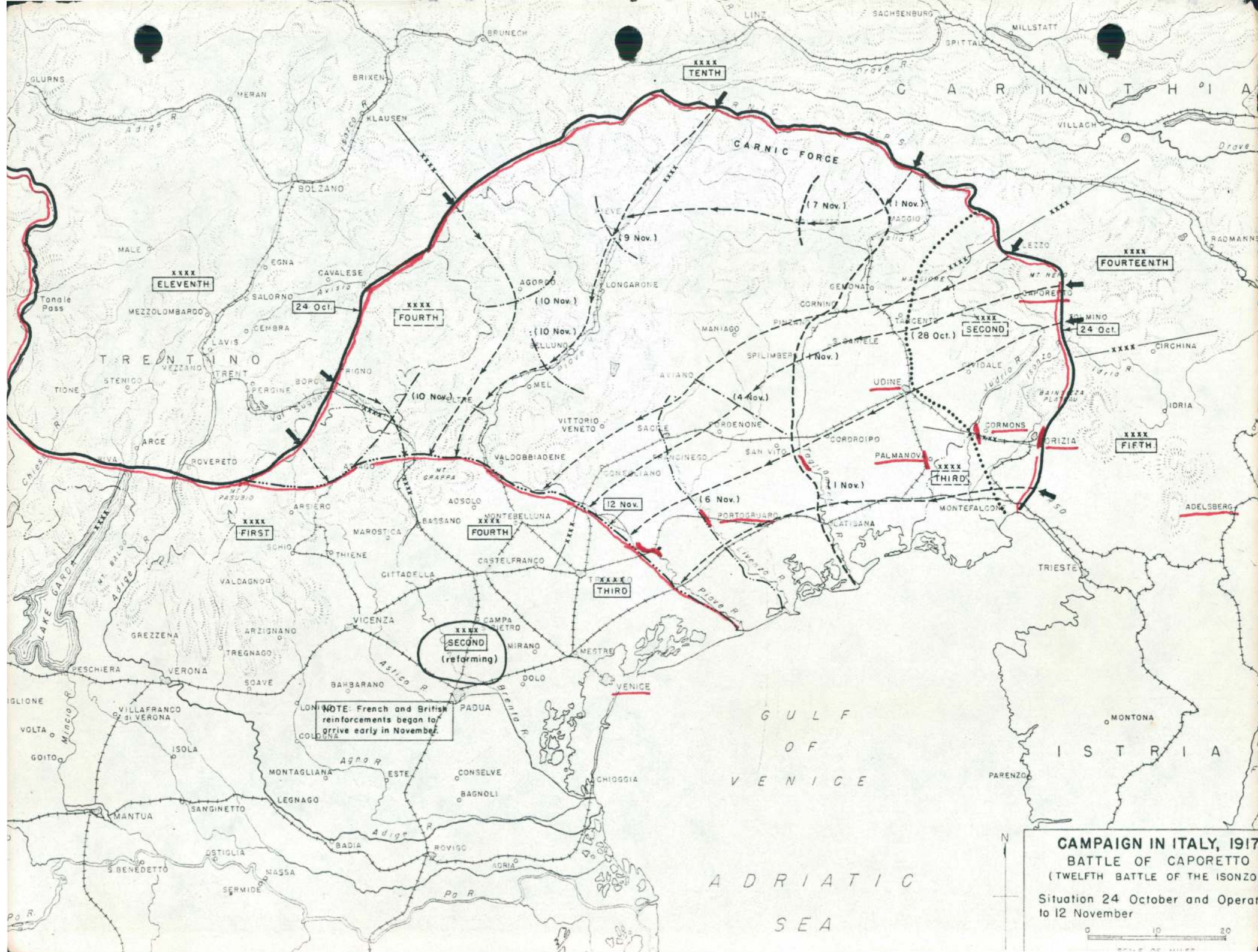
Now back to me. My company arrived on the Isonzo front on October 14th, 1917. It was a stationery front for a long time with well-built trenches, repaired each time after an Italian bombardment. There were caverns deep underground, where the troops were hiding during the bombardments, with good bunks for sleeping. Everybody could sleep at night, since there were constantly men outside on guard duty.

The German general Ludendorff had in the meantime decided to follow the annihilation of Serbia and Rumania with a similar

assault on Italy. Six divisions of German troops were sent to re-inforce the Austrian troops on the Isonzo front. The offensive started on October 24th, 1917, near Caporetto on the upper Isonzo. This was later called the 12th Isonzo battle. The Italians were unprepared and fell back. It was a complete breakthrough, and in 3 days the Tagliamento river was reached, and the Italians lost 300,000 men as prisoners, and even more than that in deserters. The entire Italian front to the south retreated. Our company, which was entrenched in the Ternowaner Woods north of Gorizia, was ordered to advance.

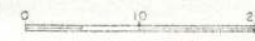
It was late at night, and we had to leave the trenches. But the terrain between our and the Italian lines was a deep valley, full of obstacles. Each man was equipped with pliers, and the most difficult task was to cut the enormous amounts of barbed wires, which were in front of our lines. After opening a few passage ways, groups of our company could advance. But there were many other obstacles. The terrain was soft and steep. The Ternowaner Woods were not anymore woods. There were only trunks of trees, which had remained, and many dry branches were lying on the ground, over which we had to climb. There were also artillery shells, some enormous ones, almost one yard in length, which had failed to explode, so-called "duds", and we had to be careful not to step on them or even touch them. Coming down to the deepest part of the valley, there was a lot of mud from previous rains. Then we had to climb up-hill, and there were the same obstacles, trunks and branches of trees, masses of barbed wires, which had to be cut in order to make passage ways, till we finally got into the Italian trenches. There was no shooting, since the Italians had evacuated their

The map shows shows the Italian frontline before the 12th Isonzo battle, marked in black and red to the right. It started at Caporetto in the north, underlined red. I was positioned at Gorizia, also red underlined. From there we advanced to Cormons, then to Palmanova, then to the Tagliamento River, the Livenza River through Portogruaro, and finally to the Piave River, where the little red line amrks the area, where the island Grave di Papadopoli is. The Austrian troops advanced to the Piave River, occupying thereby the whole area between the two red lines, and shortening the front greatly. You can see nearby the city of Venice, underlined red, and also red underlined is the city of Udine, where I was put in a hospital, after I was wounded, and then sent from there to ~~there to~~ Pettau in Austria. Also underlined red is the name Adelsberg, where the famous grotto is, which is now in Yugoslavia and called Postojna.



CAMPAIGN IN ITALY, 1917 **BATTLE OF CAPORETTO** **(TWELFTH BATTLE OF THE ISONZO)**

Situation 24 October and Operations to 12 November



troops many hours before. Advancing became easier then and especially after daybreak, when we saw where we were. There were good roads and we could advance faster, although with some precaution, as there was always the danger of getting into a trap. We passed many villages and found enormous depots of food, and since we were hungry, not only on that day, but for many months before, we had a few good meals on that day, and also the following ones. There were also great supplies of wine, and our officers had to be strict to prevent our people from getting drunk. There were many kinds of hard cheeses, which some of the soldiers rolled on the ground like wheels, while walking, since they were too heavy to carry. I had cut a big piece of a good cheese, and put it into my knapsack, and I had this supply for many weeks.

We marched all day and in the evening we reached the city of Palmanova. It was a walled city, and we entered through an enormous door into a kind of hallway, where enormous barrels of wine were standing. Passing another big door, we came now into the streets of the city. The houses there must have been evacuated one or two hours before we got there. In almost all of them there was a staircase or a door on fire, started by retreating Italian troops, who wanted to burn down the city. I was the first man of our troops to enter this city, and I started to put out the fires and ordered my men to do the same. We found pales and it was relatively easy to put the fires out. Troops which arrived shortly after us did the same thing, and in that way almost the entire city could be saved from burning down. I went up the staircases in two or three houses. There were bedrooms, where one could see that the people had just crawled out of their beds. All the wardrobes were filled with cloths, and chests of

drawers with linnen. I took a quick look, whether there was any jewelry or camera, but could not see any. In this city, we found also great supplies of food, cookies, candies, bread, fruits, cheeses, etc. We stayed there over night. The next day, our advance continued.

We crossed the Tagliamento river. We did not go through Udine. I remember the names of two cities, through which we passed: Portogruaro and Motta di Livenza. We finally reached the Piave river, and the village there was Cimadolmo. Across the river was Treviso, but it was a few miles away from the river, and we could not see it. There was a dam along the Piave, which gave us good protection.

We did not advance beyond the Piave river. In that area, where our regiment was stationed, the Piave river separated into two branches, and rejoined further down, so that an island was formed, about 4 kilometer in length and one kilometer in width.* During the day, we stayed behind the dam, well protected, but at night we went over to the island over small pontoon bridges, and dug in there. We could not dig very deep, since we soon reached water. Instead, we heaped soil and sand in front of the trenches, and in that way got some protection. We even built some low caverns. There were a few small houses on the island, and I and others carried at night some beams and boards from these houses, which we put in front of the trenches and covered them with soil and sand and branches from trees, so that we had some little rooms, into which we could crawl. We were supplied with charcoal, which we put into old steel-helmets, to heat our coffee and sausage. Twice, I did something stupid: Since it was winter and quite cold, I used the charcoal for heating of my little hole,

* The name of the island was: Grave di Papadopoli.

It was, in general, a more quiet sector of the front. Sometimes we got artillery fire at night, usually in four bursts, fired from four guns, covering a small area, and, of course, frequent rifle fire. We retaliated rarely, as we had a shortage of ammunition. The Italians had also positions on the island, and their trenches were quite close to ours, and they also pulled their troops out at day-break, the same as we did. I was, of course, not supposed to lie down and sleep, and I knew later that it was the carbon monoxide which had made me sleepy.

Absender:
Feladó:

K. u. k. Inf. Feldpostkarte.



Sturmkompagnie 420

Heinrich Bräunwald

Fellpost 5/11

Happy Stations Korreds

Co. F. 3rd Reg. Cal. Inf. 1861-62
B. R. 96
u. a. Biddleington
Feb. 1862 420

gymn. an. Engel 3. III. 1928
germanisch.

Liebe Maxima!

Hoffentlich hast du
meine zwei Feldpost-
Briefe, die ich dir vor
gestern sandte, erhalten.
Heute bin ich wieder
im Wohnort, habe etwas
Fischer n. Kopfweh n.
werde mich bald
zu Bett legen. Ich
bin jetzt dort, wo
ich früher als Station
adjutant war. Seit
einigen Tagen regnet
es. Ich werde bald, auch
Walter

1900. Eine Note.

and also hung a piece of material over the entrance to the hole. So, I had it nice and warm, and I lied down and fell asleep. Luckily, I woke up and crawled out, but fell unconscious to the ground. How long I was lying there, I don't know. I did the same thing a few days later again, and exactly the same thing happened again. I did not know then about carbon monoxide poisoning. I found out the hard way that it was very wrong to do that. I could have died there, and twice something like a miracle happened, that I woke up and crawled out of the hole. Before daybreak, we all went back to the other side of the river to sleep, under cover of the dam. I remember the name of the island: Grave di Papadopoli.

X Every three weeks, we were pulled out of the frontline and went into the village of Cimadolmo, where I got a nice room in a house, where a large Italian family lived. They were very nice towards me, offered me often polenta and other nice things to eat.

On January 1st, 1918, I was nominated to the rank of Faehnrich, in English, "ensign". I had now a golden lace at the edge of my collar and a golden star, and the rank of an officer. I had now a room in the house, where I slept, all for myself, and a man to keep my things in order, clean my shoes, etc., a so-called "putz". Instead of a rifle, I had a revolver. On my cap, I had a golden cockade.

My putz was a very handsome and intelligent fellow. His name was Stojnić, and he was from Bosnia. I had brought a book with me from Vienna, a Hrvatski rijecnik (Croatian reading book) and I spoke the language already quite fluently. I had undertaken to teach Stojnić, who was an illiterate, to read and write his language, and within a few months he was able to read and write.

Identitätskarte Nr. 210 F

Charge: *Kaus' Fein te. Gef.*

Name: *Hechner Adolf*

Truppe **K.u.k. Infanterieregiment Nr. 83**
(Anstalt usw.): **Einjährig-zeiwungen-Abteilung.**

Wien, am **4. pr. 1917** 191

Unterschrift des Inhabers:

Sig piglie

Aussteller:

Wöh

K. u. k.	Legitimation
PVBt. Nr. <i>51.45.06.18.7.18</i>	für Tapferkeitsmedaillen.
Charge, Name <i>Adolf Hechner</i>	<i>I. Kl.</i>
Truppenkörper <i>2/135. Feldkompanie</i>	
<i>Silberne</i> Tapferkeitsmedaille	<i>Hechner Adolf</i>
<i>I.</i> Klasse	Unterabteilungskommandant.

K. u. k.	Legitimation
PVBt. Nr. <i>155/1317</i>	für Tapferkeitsmedaillen.
Charge, Name <i>Hechner Adolf</i>	<i>1215/309</i>
Truppenkörper <i>J.R. 83</i>	
<i>Bronzene</i> Tapferkeitsmedaille	<i>Hechner</i>
Klasse	Unterabteilungskommandant.

3 so-called legitimations (documents of proof) of decorations, which I received for bravery on the front.
1. The bronze-medal for bravery; 2. The silver-medal first class for bravery (grosse Silberne); 3. The Karl-Truppenkreuz.

On April 26th. I received another medal, the Karl Truppen Kreuz, (Charles Troup Cross). Our emperor was Carl I., whom I saw once, when he inspected the troupes on the front. I sometimes went on excursions with my commander, lieutenant 2nd class Jandrilovič, on the island in daytime, with all precautions, of course. We went through bushes to the edge of the water, where we could jump into a hole, and observe with binoculars the Italians on the other side of the river. Our captain got now the idea of naming me observation officer, gave me a very fine pair of binoculars, and I had to climb up on a ladder with another man to an observation post on a high tree. I had to keep exact records of all the things I observed on the other side, any movement of the troops there, had also to count the number of detonations of the enemy artillery. That went on for many days. It was quite an important job, since the Austrian army was planning a large offensive in the near future. I had found out with my binoculars that, one day, new troops had arrived there, with very unusual brown uniforms, and I suspected that these could be American troops, and I reported it. I saw the other troops leave, and the newcomers take their positions.

Our offensive was well planned, and a few German divisions had already arrived. On a certain day, at a certain hour, our artillery fire would start and last for two hours, then our troops would cross the river in small boats and land on the other side, while our artillery fire would be directed into an area farther away. It should have been a decisive offensive, and it was planned to advance to the Po river, at least, and perhaps deeper.

About two days, before the offensive should have started,

one officer of the Austrian army, of Czech nationality, had swam over to the Italian side, and had given all the information of our plan to the Italian command.

On May 31st, 1918, I was on my observation post on the tree, together with the other man, when a rifle shot passed close to us, fired from the Italian side. We knew that we had been discovered, and went, as fast as we could, down the ladder, while a second shot passed by. When we were down on the ground, we moved away from the tree, and could not be seen by them anymore on account of high bushes. Nevertheless, a third shot was fired, while we were standing there and writing down some of our observations. Unfortunately, this shot hit both of us, going through my hand, which was holding the pencil, and then going into the shoulder of the other man. This was 3 or 4 days before the offensive should have started.

We went back to the mainland, where the sanitation officer was already waiting for us, had prepared a wooden splint for my hand, and bandaged me nicely. The projectile had entered the back of my hand between the 3rd and 4th metacarpal bones, and exited in the 1st digital interspace between the thumb and the index finger. Miraculously, the bones were not hit, and neither important tendons nor nerves, arteries, or veins. The other man was more seriously wounded, and was bleeding heavily.

I wanted to remain on the front, wanted to participate in the planned offensive, and begged my captain to let me stay there, but to no avail. I was sent to a hospital in Udine for one or two days, and from there to the Hinterland to a hospital in Pettau, in Austria.

I was very lucky that I was wounded. I heard later that

the offensive was a complete fiasco, due to the treachery by that Czech officer, and the disclosure of our plans. These plans were not changed, after it was noticed that this Czech officer was gone, and so our troops went into a trap. The Italian troops had evacuated the trenches on the Piave river and also the territory behind to a depth of a few miles, so that our artillery fire had no effect. When our boats were in the middle of the Piave river, they were hit by a rain of heavy artillery fire, and the troops, which landed on the other side of the river, found no resistance, but were then exposed to an enormous barrage of artillery fire, and then to a heavy attack by great forces of infantry. They were decimated and most of them captured. Only very few could save themselves by retreating in boats over the river. The Austrians had lost 100,000 men in that offensive. I was very lucky again, as so often before in that war.

The wound healed nicely, without any infection. I had received, of course, a tetanus serum injection. I shared the room in the hospital with another officer, who had very good books, and I read some of them also, read all day long. One day, I looked at the map and found that not far from Pettau was the spa Rohitsch. I knew that the girl Mitzi Klein and her family lived there, sent there by the refugee organization from Vienna, and I had their address. Next day, without asking the commander of the hospital for permission, I went to the train station, and took a train for Rohitsch. Their surprise was great, when they saw me. Mitzi Klein was the girl with whom I was in love as a young boy, a few years back. I had written to her once or twice while I was in the army. I spent a nice day there with her and her family. But in the evening, I took the train back to Pettau.

The commander of the hospital took my disappearance seriously, but there were no further consequences.

After one month in the hospital, I was sent back to my regiment No.78 in Osijek. On July 18th, 1918, I received the Silver Medal 1st Class, called the "Grosse Silberne", for bravery on the Italian front. This was announced in the division command report and sent to my regiment. I was quite proud, since that was quite a high decoration. Besides that, I was entitled to the wound medal with 2 stripes, since I was twice wounded, first in Russia and now in Italy. I had now four medals on my blouse.

✕ Shortly after I arrived at my regiment, I received a furlough of 14 days plus 4 days for travelling, from the 16th of July to the 12th of August, 1918, and I went to Vienna. My mother and Walter were not there anymore, had returned to Czernowitz. But Else was there, already married, and had a studio apartment in the Wiedener Hauptstrasse in the 4th district. Things were not good in Vienna, there was little to eat, and war weariness.

Back in Osijek, I was sent to the Infanterie Regiment No.96 in Karlovac. I was there only one month, when an announcement came that students who wanted to go to a University could get a furlough for half a year. I filled out papers right away, and soon I received a favorable answer. I left at the end of September for Vienna, where Else joined me for the trip to Czernowitz. Her marriage with Franzi Lang had gotten into difficulties. She wanted a divorce. I remember that she received many very long letters from him, in which he begged her to come back to him. She never went.

How wonderful it was to be at home again with my loved ones! With our dear Mama, Walter, Else. On November 1st, while in Czernowitz, I was notified that I had been advanced to the rank of lieutenant, retroactive from August 1st, 1918. I now had a golden star on my collar. Shortly afterwards, the war came to an inglorious end.

How lucky I was that I had been sent home shortly before the end of the war! I was at home when the news came about the collapse of the German army, about revolutions in Berlin, Vienna and Budapest, the disintegration of the Austria-Hungarian monarchy and the formation of an autonomous Tchechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, the abdication of the German Kaiser, and Kaiser Carl of Austria-Hungary, of King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, and king Nikita of Montenegro. Communications by railroad were not functioning and often interrupted, and it was difficult for the soldiers of the German and Austrian armies to leave for home from far away areas like Greece, Yugoslavia, or the Ukraine and especially for officers, who were subjected to attacks and brutal treatment while on the way for home. These were things about which we read often in newspapers, and that is why I say that I was lucky that I was at home, when the war had come to an end.

*

This was a turning point in my life, in many respects. It was not only the leaving of the army, the taking off of my uniform, the coming home and to civilian life. It was also a turning point in my way of thinking, in my way of looking at the world and at my life. Everything was different now, and I became suddenly a different person too.

When I had entered the army in Vienna in 1915, I was 18 years old, an adolescent, almost a child. I did not have to make decisions, I had to obey decisions and orders of others,

NOTE: Adolf's manuscript has two pages 128. This one seems not continuous with the rest.

my life for them? How happy was I now, to be at home again, to be with my loved ones!

*

At the beginning of 1918, since the collapse of Russia, Serbia, and Rumania, there was war-weariness in every country. Even in France, where cabinets frequently fell and were followed by others in quite rapid succession, as there was dissatisfaction and the drive toward peace. Only when the great Clemenceau took over, the situation changed, and the drive for victory started. In Austria-Hungary was the same situation and much instability, due especially to starvation, caused by the blockade. In Germany, there was also growing unrest, and gradually the Socialists got the upper hand, and the German Kaiser Wilhelm II. had to agree to certain pronouncements of the Socialists. The Pope put forward an outline of a peace agreement, but the German government was unready to make any concessions. On January 8th, 1918, president Wilson had outlined a peace program, consisting of 14 points, but the Germans still resisted, and saw chances of winning the war. They organized a great offensive on the Westfront, which started on March 21, 1918, and ^{they} broke through the British lines, but advanced only about 40 miles. It came to an end on April 5th. General Foch was named commander and could bring the offensive to a halt. General Ludendorff attacked a few times more in big offensives, the last one on the Marne, which they again crossed, but general Foch ordered a counter-attack with strong French and American forces, and the Germans were driven back. The French, British, and American forces advanced continuously, after a few sharp battles at Amiens, Arras, in the Argonne, and at Ypres. On October 27th, general Ludendorff resigned and the German troops

19



Adolph, ca.1918

of the army and that I had done for 3 years. It had meant accepting indoctrination, brain-washing, privation, humiliation, maltreatment, sometimes resembling torture, like by the Hungarians, without questioning or resistance. That was my attitude then and remained so during the entire war - except when I disobeyed the order by my lieutenant to surrender to the Russians in the middle of the battle. I knew then that it was a question of giving up my life or saving my life. Otherwise I always obeyed orders, had learnt to do what others wanted me to do, had given up thinking what was good for me, accepting things as they were and as they came.

But now, as the war had come to an end and I had taken off my uniform, I had to make decisions, had to think about my future. Now, I wanted to study and I registered immediately with the University of Czernowitz at the philosophic faculty, and getting deeper into it I came to the conclusion that medicine would be the best field for me. I never before had thought of it and certainly not while I was in the army. My interest in the sciences became insatiable and I attended classes at the University from early in the morning till late in the evening.

Now I was not anymore an adolescent, I had matured, had become a man, with my own ideas, who had to make my own decisions, painful in a certain way, as it meant leaving again my home and my loved ones, but that part was overcome by my ambition, my desire to do something important for myself, for my future.

My hometown was so different now. Life had returned to it, some of the old stores had opened again, there was some traffic, mostly by trucks and delapidated cars, there were

other faces, very few of the old ones in our neighborhood, Mr. Tomaszczuk for instance, the owner of the neighboring house, now with a gray beard. I met my former gym teacher, professor Lissner, in the street, hardly recognized him, since he had now a little beard; he was extremely happy to see me again.

There were the old newspapers again in Czernowitz and I was reading them avidly to find out what was going on in the world. There was upheaval in Germany, mutiny in the port of Kiel, revolution in Munich, after the king^{of Bavaria} abdicated. On November 9th the German emperor abdicated and fled to Holland and the Socialist leader Scheidemann proclaimed the German Republic. The German armistice commission, headed by Mathias Erzberger was received by general Foch in his railway coach near Compiegne. The armistice provided for the immediate evacuation of occupied territory on the west front and of all territory west of the Rhine, which was to be occupied by the Allied forces. The treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest were to be renounced and German troops were to be withdrawn from Rumania, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and eventually Russia. Germany was to surrender 5000 locomotives and 150.000 freight cars. She was to turn over 160 submarines, and a large number of other warships. The armistice, harsh though the terms were, had to be accepted. It was concluded for a period of 30 days, but was periodically ~~renewed~~ until peace was signed. On November 11th at 11 A.M. hostilities ceased on the West Front. The Allies at once began to take over the occupied and western German territories. The last German troops crossed the frontier of France on November 18th and the frontier of Belgium on No-

vember 26th. French troops occupied Strassburg on November 25th, while British and American troops began the occupation of Germany. The Peace Conference was formally opened at Paris on January 18th, 1919, with 70 delegates representing 27 of the victorious powers. The Germans were excluded until the terms were ready for submission. President Wilson, received with the wildest enthusiasm when he arrived in Europe in Mid-December, represented the new idealism in international relations and was intent primarily on securing the adoption of a plan for a League of Nations, to be included in the peace treaty. Lloyd George, the chief representative of Great Britain and the empire was more or less disposed to make a moderate peace, but was deeply committed by promises made in the general election recently held, to the effect that the war criminals would be brought to justice and that Germany would be made to pay for the war. Clemenceau, in turn, was frankly the exponent of the old diplomacy, being intent on revenge on the interests of France. Both England and France were bound further by their agreements with Italy, by commitments to the Near East, etc. The Italian prime minister, Orlando played a secondary role, but the foreign minister, Sonnino, stood forth as an unbending champion of Italian claims against Austria and against the new Yugoslav state.

Here it is appropriate to describe what had happened on the Italian front. On October 24th, the Italians attacked on the entire front and the Austrian army collapsed on the Piave river completely. The Italians advanced to Vittorio Veneto (Oct. 30th), by which time the Austrian armies were in a state of dissolution several hundred thousand being captured and the remainder streaming back toward home. The Italians took Trieste and Fiume. The Austrians offered on Oct. 29th to surrender unconditionally to

Italians. On November 3 an armistice was concluded between the Allied Powers and Austria-Hungary; complete demobilization of the armies and withdrawal of troops fighting with the Germans; surrender of half the equipment, evacuation of territories still occupied; Allied occupation of strategic points; surrender of the fleet, etc.

On November 7th, the revolution broke out in Munich, and on November 9th, Prince Max of Baden announced in Berlin the abdication of emperor Wilhelm II., who followed the advice of general Hindenburg and fled to Holland. Scheidemann, the Socialist leader, proclaimed the German Republic. On November 8th, the German armistice commission, headed by Mathias Erzberger, the leader of the Center Party, was received by general Foch in his railway coach near Compiegne, to sign the armistice agreement. On November 11th, hostilities ceased on the West Front. The last German troops crossed the frontier of France on November 18th, and of Belgium on November 26th. French troops occupied Strasbourg on November 25th, while British and American troops began the occupation of Germany on December 1st.

~~The~~ The number of known dead has been placed at about 10 million, the wounded at about 20 million, distributed among the chief combatants as follows: (round numbers):

	Dead	Wounded	Prisoners
Great Britain	947.000	2,122.000	192.000
France	1,385.000	3,310,440.000	446.000
Russia	1,700.000	4,950.000	2,500.000
Italy	460.000	947.000	530.000
United States	115.000	206.000	4.500
Germany	1,808.000	4,247.000	618.000
Austria-Hungary	1,200.000	3,620.000	2,200.000
Turkey	325.000	400.000	

The total direct cost of the war has been figured at 180.500.000.000 dollars and the indirect cost at 151.612.000.000 dollars.

Shortly before the German armistice, Bulgaria had collapsed, and signed an armistice at Saloniki on September 30th. Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria abdicated and was succeeded by his son Boris. Soon afterwards, Turkey had collapsed and concluded an armistice on October 30, 1918, after the Allies had entered Rumania, ^{and} that country now re-entered the war on the side of the Allies.

After the debacle on the Piave there was steady demoralization of the Austrian troops. On October 24th, the Italians attacked and advanced in Northern Italy, and the Austrians streamed back toward home. The Italians took Trieste and Fiume.

The end of the Habsburg Monarchy had started. On October 21st, the Tchechoslovaks declared their independence. On October 29th, the Yugoslav National Council at Agram proclaimed the independence of the Yugoslavs. Meanwhile, disorders in both Vienna and Budapest had resulted in revolutionary changes, the formation of a German National Council in Vienna for the German provinces, and establishment of an independent Hungarian government under Count Michael Karolyi. On November 3rd, as already mentioned, an armistice between the Allied Powers and Austria Hungary was concluded. On November 12th, emperor Charles I. abdicated. On November 13th, the Austrian Republic was proclaimed, and on November 16th followed the proclamation of the Hungarian Republic. On November 24th followed the proclamation of the United Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats,

and Slovenes at Zagreb. King Peter of Serbia became king, with Prince Alexander as regent. On December 1st, King Nikolaus of Montenegro, having opposed union, was declared deposed by the parliament, which then voted for the union with the new kingdom of Yugoslavia.

A national assembly of the Rumanians of Transylvania and the Banat at Alba-Julia voted on December 1st for union of these regions with Rumania.

The conference for the Peace Treaty of Versailles started on January 16th, 1919. President Wilson was received with wildest enthusiasm, when he arrived in Europe in mid-December. Lloyd George was the chief representative of Great-Britain and the empire. Clemenceau was the chief representative of France, and foreign minister Sonnino for Italy. Russia was not represented, though the Russian situation was of vital import. The wars of the counter-revolution were in full swing, and the fate of the new states on Russia's western frontiers depended on the outcome.

The conference unanimously adopted a resolution for the creation of a League of Nations. The drafting of the peace terms was marked by violent conflict by the members. Clemenceau insisted on the separation of the left bank of the Rhine from Germany. England and France demanded that Germany should be required to meet the costs of the war, a proposition to which Wilson objected. The treaty was finally signed on June 28th in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles. The treaty provided for the League of Nations and for the following territorial cessions by Germany: Alsace-Lorraine to France, Eupen and Malmedy to Belgium. The Saar area to be under international administration

for 15 years, after which a plebiscite was to be held, France exploiting the coal mines in the meantime. In the East, Germany was to cede the larger part of Posen and West Prussia to Poland. Danzig was to be a free state within the Polish custom union. East-Prussia was to decide by plebiscites, whether it should go to Poland or remain with Germany. Memel was ceded to the Allies. The German colonies were also ceded to the Allies, to be organized as mandates under supervision of the League. Germany, in article 231, accepted sole responsibility for causing the war. The Allies were to occupy the Rhineland for 15 years, and longer, if necessary, and a belt, 30 miles wide on the right bank of the Rhine was to be demilitarized. The Germans were required to pay for all civilian damage caused during the war, the final bill to be presented by May 1st, 1921; in the interval, Germany was to pay 5 billion dollars, the rest to be paid in 30 years. Large quantities of coal were to be delivered to France, Belgium, and Italy for ten years. Germany was to hand over all merchant ships of more than 1600 tons and a quarter of her fishing fleet. She was henceforth to keep an army of not more than 100,000 men, was to have no large guns, no submarines or military aircraft.

On September 10th, 1919, Austria signed the treaty of Saint Germain. This treaty merely registered the break-up of the ^{of} Habsburg Monarchy. Austria recognized the independence of Tchechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, and Hungary. Eastern Galicia, the Trentino, South Tyrol, Trieste were ceded by Austria. The army was limited to 30,000 men, and Austria, like Germany, was to pay reparations for 30 years. The union of Austria with Germany was forbidden, except with consent of the Council of the

League.

The Bulgarians signed on November 27th, 1919, the Treaty of Neuilly, which deprived them of the seaboard on the Aegean sea. Bulgaria recognized the independence of Yugoslavia. She signed to pay \$ 445.000 reparations. Her army was reduced to 20.000 men.

On March 22, 1919, the Hungarian government was overthrown by a Bolshevik coup, headed by Bela Kun. This government became involved in war with most of Hungary's neighbors. Ultimately, the Rumanians invaded Hungary, and took Budapest on August 4, just after the Bolsheviks had been overthrown on August 1st. The monarchists then regained control and appointed admiral Horthy as regent (Febr.1920). The Rumanians were finally induced to withdraw (Dec.10,1919), under the pressure from the Allies, but only after they had carried away most of what was movable. On June 4th, 1920, the Hungarians signed the Treaty of Trianon, by which the old Hungary was shorn of almost 3/4 of its territory, and 2/3 of its inhabitants. Tchechoslovakia was given Slovakia, Austria received western Hungary, Yugoslavia took Croatia-Slavonia and part of the Banat of Temesvar, and Rumania received the rest of the Banat, Transylvania, and part of the Hungarian plain. Hungary agreed to ~~pay~~ reparations and to keep an army of only 35.000 men.

The settlement of the Turkish question was concluded by the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres on August 20, 1919. The kingdom of Hijaz was recognized as independent. Syria became a mandate of France, and Mesopotamia as well as Palestine became British mandates. The Dodecanese and Rhodes Islands went to Italy, while Thrace and the remainder of the Turkish islands

in the Aegean were assigned to Greece. Armenia was recognized as independent. Constantinople and the strip of territory to the Chatalja line remained Turkish, as did the remainder of Anatolia. The Treaty of Sévres was ultimately replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne.

These developments in the war and the peace agreements were given here in a description as short as possible, since they were necessary for the understanding of the situation during and after the greatest war in history, affecting the whole world. Many details were left out, like the war on the high seas and in the air, the use of poisonous gas on the western front, important battles on the Turkish front, and the war in Russia, which followed for a few more years, after the Bolsheviks had come to power, and were then attacked from all sides.

For those readers, who are interested in some more details of that war, I am bringing here a very good description, which I have picked up recently with the help of a tape recorder from television. It starts with the participation of Italy in that war, in which I was a participant, and ends with the end of the war.

This description is marked with an asterisk in a red circle, like this * on page 135 on page 151-G in the beginning and at the end, and those readers, who are not interested in this description, can skip it, and go to the continuation of my biography on page 152.



The Italian participation in World War I.

This is a short description of the part, which Italy played in the First World War.

Emperor Franz Joseph I. was trying in vain to buy off the Italians with territorial cessions of the Trentino. Italy was already veering toward the side of the Allies and was already negotiating with the Entente powers. Italy's foreign minister Sonnino demanded of Austria the immediate cession of the South Tyrol, the district of Gorizia and Gradisca, the establishment of Trieste and its neighborhood as a free state, the cession to Italy of some islands off the Dalmatian coast, and full sovereignty over Valona on the Albanian coast, which Italy had already occupied in December 1914.

These demands were entirely too exorbitant from the Austrian point of view, but the Germans finally induced Austria to agree.

As it turned out, the Austrians yielded too late. The Allies had offered Italy not only what they had asked for from Austria, South Tyrol and Trentino, Gorizia, Gradisca, but also Trieste, Istria, the most important Dalmatian islands and the southern part of Dalmatia, Valona, the Dodekanese Islands, and the province of Adalia in Turkey. Italy was to receive extensions of her territory in Lybia, Eritrea, and Somaliland.

Italy entered the war on the side of the Allies on May 23, 1915. Austria had now to face the new enemy on a terribly outlined battlefield, alone. The Italians will not declare war on Germany for a year. It is a tactical nightmare. It would be a war of agony. An agony best remembered in the name of a small Italian town, Caporetto. On the day after Italy declared war on Austria, May 24, 1915, there is action at sea. The Italian fleet

superior in tonnage, will succeed in keeping the Austrians bottled up in the Adriatic for much of the war. But it is on land that the great struggles are shaping up, on two forbidding fronts: In the Trentino, where the Alps are cut by two broad valleys, where the first Austrian movements take place. The Austrians had brought four battle-tried divisions from the Russian front for the attack. They had massed 2000 new heavy guns and zeroed them in on the Trentino bulge. The Italians had two of their foreign armies guarding their 130 miles line. Their army chief, general Luigi Cadorna, fair strategist, poor tactician, and reckless with human lives, is convinced the mountains are his shield and that the Austrians will not attack.

In May 1916, when the spring thaws began, the beat-up Austrian army strikes. In less than a month, the Italians are pushed back 10 miles. Then the Austrian attack bogs down under stress. The tortuous supply lines, the abrasion of man power, the demands of other fronts. Four divisions must be pulled out to meet a new Russian offensive. Behind them, the Italians will come back struggling to their original positions. The casualties: Italian 145.000, Austrian 80.000. The net gain: nothing.

South-east of the Trentino is Italy's other front: The 55 mile Isonzo. The Italian objective is the town of Gorizia, opening the door to Trieste, the prize of Italian ambition. But a dozen dreadful battles would be fought here, each carrying a numbered name; what a mournful metronom: The first battle of the Isonzo, the second battle of the Isonzo, the third and fourth. The Italians must storm uphill, up mountains of the Karst plateau, described as a howling wilderness with stones as sharp as knives, where each shell splinters into 1000 deadly rock frag-

ments. Cadorna, despite his superior numbers, will throw his army away, hammering against the Karst, agonizingly cold in winter, hot, acrid and infested with flies, like Gallipoli, in summer.

Now, it is August 1916, the sixth battle. This time, the Italians smashing, clawing, even tunnelling their way up, will break through and get to Gorizia. The Italians get to Gorizia, but here Cadorna hesitates, fearful of Austrian re-inforcements, and it is fate; The door to Trieste is slammed shut. Soon he will be back, where he started, and the metronom will tick on. The seventh battle of the Isonzo, the eighth, the ninth, tenth, eleventh. Stalemate. French warfare, become a stagnant order on the Isonzo. Despair and disillusionment in the prisoner camps. The Austrians are being battered between the Russian front and this frozen line. Their supplies stretched thin, morale on the downgrade.

In Vienna, on November 21, 1916, emperor Franz Joseph I. dead at age 86. The monarch, who has ruled for 68 years, is buried with mideaval rites of the Habsburgs. A Capuchin monk, imploring admission to heaven for him, your brother Franz, that miserable sinner. With his death, the Autrians feel leaderless. The new emperor, grand-nephew of Franz Joseph, is 29 years old Karl, amiable, but mediocre. His immediate aim is to work for peace, as he tried to extricate Austria ~~from~~ from domination by the Germans, despised by his Italian wife, the empress Zita. Karl will begin secret, but futile negotiations with the Allies, while at home terrible attrition of war is eating at Austrians soul. Food short, prices beyond reach, apathy and weariness in the streets. Everywhere the broken men,

the ghastly residue of war. Peace feelers also emanate from Rome, from the Vatican, calling for peace without annexations, deploring the useless carnage. The Vatican tries for a peace accomodation, while maintaining its strict neutrality. The appeal of Pope Benedict XIII. is criticized in Allied circles and comes to naught. Austria is now a virtual satellite of Germany, and Karl implores the German Kaiser for help in Italy. "The experience of all eleven battles on the Isonzo indicates" he says, "that the twelfth will be very hard. My generals believe that it is best to substitute German troops for Austrians and Hungarians". Replies the Kaiser: "Austria can count on all of Germany to attack faithless Italy." The metronom ticks once more.

The twelfth battle of the Isonzo. History will remember it as Caporetto. On October 24th, 1917, in great secrecy, the Germans and Austrians had built up a formidable striking force on the Italian front. The 14th army of German general Otto von Below, 6 German, 9 Austrian divisions. The enemy's jugular vein will be the small Alpine market town of Caporetto, a rear area, where a shell burst is rare. A plan is, to strike at the town, outflanking Italy's Isonzo armies, isolating them and advancing into the Italian heartland. The attack will begin with a huge barrage, four hours of gas shells, then one blinding hour of general bombardement. The Germans and Austrians punch a fifteen miles hole in the Italian center. Storming out of their trenches, they will drive the Italians into headlong retreat. It was, say the military historians, the greatest single disaster of Italian arms in modern history. 700.000 men are thrown back 70 miles into the plain of Lombardy and back to the Piave river, where they will make their stand. King Victor Emanuel

implores his troops: "Be a single army. All cowardess is treachery. All discord is treachery." General Cadorna will be sacked. The catastrophe is due more to bad leadership than to bad soldiers. The Austrians surge ahead, although they are now very short in big guns and all sort of ammunition. So swift has been the advance that the supply lines can not keep up. On November 9th, 1917, the Austrians reached the Piave, a wide river, subject to floods and passable only at bridges. The Austrians would make several attempts to cross it, and failed. Italian soldiers, their trenches battered, their antiquated gas masks useless, rushed towards the enemy lines, not to attack but to surrender. In a single day in this battle, Italy loses 305,000 men, of them 270,000 surrender. The Italian prisoners shout encouragement to their captors "Eviva Austria", Long live Austria. "A Roma". On to Rome. The memories of this bitter front will affect the lives of many men. A 19 year old American, volunteer ambulance driver, Ernest Hemingway will write it in "A Farewell to Arms". A 36 year old priest and medical corpsman, Angelo di Roncalli, later Pope John XXIII., will recoil from it. A 26 year old German lieutenant, Erwin Rommel will distinguish himself in it. The Allies, to keep Italy in the war, rushed 6 French and 5 British divisions in, late in 1917, along with detachments of Americans. A noted British visitor asked to go to the front. Italy's king refuses. "I want no historic incidents here" he tells the 23 year old Prince of Wales. One who will see action here, is a 35 year old American flyer, captain Fiorello La Guardia. At the ~~the~~ front, after the winter low, after a last gasp Austrian spring offensive had been repelled, the Italians are getting

ready for the final decisive push.

All the forces are about equal, the Italians with the British, French, and American support will sweep to victory. The Austrian empire is splintering. The German divisions had been pulled back to the western front. Rather than a great battle, this last offensive in Italy in October 1918 becomes little more than a pursuit of a beaten army, an army ready to sue for peace. Italy's ambition, its sacre egoismo, is about to be satisfied. At sea, another death blow. A 42 foot Italian motorboat throws two torpedos at Austrias newest battleship, the 20.000 ton Sanct Stephan. Within minutes, the St. Stephan, sailing in convoy with 10 destroyers, and another battleship, is down to her guttles. No order to abandon ship. On her sistership, the Tegethoff, the band plays the imperial hymn, as the St. Stephan, like the ponderous Austro-Hungarian empire, founders and slips into oblivion.

The First World War.

The Western Front in 1918.

Paris in the springtime of peril, in the spring of 1918. Unexplained, without warning, a series of explosions erupts in the midst of the city. Some day, a blast, every 20 minutes, in crowded streets, houses, a church, where 80 worshippers were killed at mass. This is the havoc of the German Paris gun, fired from an incredible 75 miles away. It is the latest of the wars terror weapons, and the longest throw of Ludendorff's gamble, its all-out offensive. Children, evacuated to safety, deserters and refugees fill the streets. There is talk that the government may abandon the capital, as it did in the year 1914. The crisis of nerves keeps mounting.

On June 1st, the French army, falling back toward Paris, the Allied Supreme War Council gathers urgently. Premier Orlando of Italy, arriving at the meeting place, a hotel in Versailles, premier Clemenceau of France, who asked why the Americans were putting so few men into the battle. Supporting his argument by revealing Britain's desperate manpower figures, Prime Minister Lloyd George, French general Foch, the Allied supreme commander in these dark hours, and the American military chief, black-jack Pershing sent a cable to the war department today that the possibility of losing Paris had become apparent. A mood of pessimism enfolds the meeting place. Not long, the Allied leaders realize, that the German leaders have overextended themselves, just as they did in 1914. And no one dares hope that the newest, greenest Allied force, the Americans, can stem the tide. The Yanks, proud, noisy, charged with a barrel of their own innocence, have been training in France for a year. Now they are finally joining the battle at Chateau Thierry, along the flaming Marne.

On the Marne, in mid-July 1918, the threat to the Allies reaches its high water mark. But now, after four years of deadlock, and this long season of peril, the tide of war will finally turn. The tide turns. Paris, a war capital, its trophies on display, the war itself within ear shot on the Marne, Paris rises to the crisis of 1918.

The front is holding firm and so is the government. The old tiger Clemenceau has decided to stay put. Clemenceau, a former teacher of a girls school in Stamford, Connecticut, rising to premier just 8 bitter months ago, put a warning to French defeatists "I wage war". Tenacious in defense, he is sceptical

of the generals, who already talk about resuming the offensive. Also, full of doubts is Petain, who revived the French army after the shattering mutiny in 1917, who drew the new attack plan, but now wants to wait. The plan, to counter-punch at the Germans, who have now stretched their lines into two deep salients, one toward Amiens in the British sector, the other along the Marne. To jeopard the end of the two salients near Soissons, there will be no more waiting. Now, while the Marne battle still rages, Foch decides to move. He has two new assets, tanks, now available by the hundreds, and Americans, two divisions, first and second, funneled into a French army for this campaign. By the standards of the fledgling A.E.F. these are veteran outfits, tested in recent months at Compiègne and Bellefontaine, hard hit, but still cocky, still doubtful that the war could be won. It is a spirit, re-inforced by their news-paper, the "Stars and Stripes". It is pipelined to other sectors, its lifeline to the homefront. Centered in Paris, it has a staff of professional journalists in uniform. For the civilian press, the war is covered in dashing style. Correspondents like David Runyon for the Hearst paper, Roy Howard for the United Press, who assigns himself to Paris, Floyd Gibbons, going up to the front again. ~~The story~~ The story in the making is the build-up to Soissons. The French 10th army, with the French colonial and American divisions, 350 tanks, supply waggons, water waggons, rolling kitchens, artillery casements, and ammunition trucks. Among the machinery of war, French dragoons in all their doomed, archaic glory, doomed to slaughter in this attack, as in everyone before. The tanks are cranky and tin-plated, but they will jolt the German defenders, who's armor is negligible. Tanks and infantry

will job off together a shock attack, no artillery beforehand. Zero hour on the morning of July 18, 1918. Surprise, coupled with a shock of armor and bombardment, tops down the advantage, the defence has held in this war. For the first time in four years, the Allies are breaking out of the confines of their trenches. Now it is warfare in the open. This day, this battle, July 18, at Soissons, is the war's great pivot. The British proclaim a victory day, although it is Americans and French, who win the field, pushing the Germans back. The French, regaining their lost spirit of elan, the Americans with their fresh hooping charges, like a deadly game of cowboys and Indians, losing half their combat strength in three days. As the Germans fall back to avoid being trapped in their salient, the Allies press in. More Yankee divisions, the 3rd, 4th, 26th, 32nd, and 42nd, planting new bridgeheads across the Marne and the rivers beyond it, the Aisne and the Serre. French general Moyen salutes them in an order of the day. "We are thankful to you for the blood so generously spilled". A German officer writes: "I do not believe, we will ever get out from here free again. The American army is there, a million strong. That is too much." In 3 weeks, the Marne salient is liberated and the Allied tide is still rolling. Foch signals the end of defence, the shift to attack. Everyone into the battle. From the evening of the Soissons offensive in mid-July 1918, the supreme commander Foch had been urging the Allies to go all out on the attack. The British chief Haig, chastened by the setback of recent months, responds cautiously. Among his army commanders is one, who is ready with a plan of a limited drive, Sir Henry Rawlinson, a man with a dogged spirit of

John Bull. He is strained to break out of Amiens with his British 4th army. And now Foch gives him the go-ahead. This was also planned as a surprise, but what a surprise. 17 divisions, 2000 guns, 450 tanks, assembled along a 14-mile front. It takes 60 trains, just to move the artillery. To safeguard the surprise, to cover the rumbling traffic, the royal air force puts up 800 planes, a counter-noise barrage. In a calculated gamble, Haig puts his front elsewhere to mass his power under Rawlinson. 600 tanks will lead the attack, nearly the whole British tank corps, the Canadian corps, and the Australian corps. The target date is August 8, 1918. No-mans land is an average 500 yards deep, a hopeless distance in earlier battles. Most of the 4th army crosses it in less than 15 minutes. By noon, the 4th Canadian division will be swarming over the German reserve trenches. The guns of two French armies join the attack. The French infantry is slow getting started, but that too works out well. German units, facing them, are already shifting. Deceived into thinking that the whole show is on the British front, in a few days the attack reaches the old battle field of the Somme. It will lose its momentum in that churned up terrain. Instead of pressing on, the Allies will stop and probe on another weak spot. They had finally learned not to throw away lives.

What the Germans had learned is despair. They can buy hunger, depressed by a breakdown of their own defenses, they can no longer believe Ludendorff's promise of victory after August 8th, after the battle of Amiens. He calls it a black day of the German army. After the black day of the Germans, great days for the Allies, days of liberation of French towns, swept up by the German offensive, and now given back, as Luden-

dorff orders retreat. Clemenceau, the old patriot, comes to savor what he calls the grandeur and misery of victory. Clemenceau, author of that monumental line: "War is too serious, to be left to the generals." Still tough, still sceptical. He celebrates Amiens and Soissons as little more than encouraging incidents in a long uphill struggle. Throughout the Allied camp in September 1918, the mood is hopeful, but cautious, tempered by the memories of past frustrations. The enemy has been forced out of both salients, back to the formidable Siegfried line. And there the Allies dig in, daring to dream of ultimate victory, possibly in the spring of 1919. They know the tide has turned. They do not know, how fast the tide is sweeping them toward victory.

The haunted city. A place inhabited by ghostly dreams of victory. This is Berlin on October 2, 1918, a day, when a German officer arrived at the Reichstag on a mission that will shake Germany out of its dreams. The courier is the Baron Erich von dem Busche, sent by army chief Ludendorff with a message that makes the victory propaganda suddenly meaningless. The German army is exhausted, the Reichstag is told, reserves are used up. We can not win the war. For years the helpless captive of the army and its propaganda, the Reichstag, is shocked. Some are incredulous, some talk of suicide, but who can deny Ludendorff? A new liberal chancellor, the Kaiser's cousin, Prince Max von Baden, is appointed to carry out the army's new demand, to send out the message: "The German government requests an immediate armistice on land, on sea, and in the air." It is a message, not addressed to Britain or France,

but to Washington, to president Woodrow Wilson, as Germany's best hope for a lenient truce. Armistice. After four years of havoc, the world can hardly bring itself to stop. While the leaders struggle with the idea of peace, troops keep moving toward the trenches. Five weeks still pass. A quarter of a million more Americans will sail for Europe, before the engine of war can be shut down. Five last violent weeks, before the guns stop firing. In a resort in Belgium, in October 1918, Ludendorff waits for a message, which, he hopes, will bring Germany peace by negotiation rather than by surrender. The first word by Woodrow Wilson amounts to a rebuff. No discussion until the German army pulls out of France and Belgium. Faced with an ultimatum instead of negotiation, Ludendorff reverses himself. To the Kaiser and Hindenburg he urges "continue to fight, even against the rising tide of defeat." The rising tide in the Balkans, the Serbian army marching home with the Allies from Saloniki, its leaders celebrating the end of ~~of~~ three years in exile. The rising tide in the Middle East, Damascus abandoned by the German-led Turkish army, abandoned to Lawrence of Arabia and his desert cavalry, Allenby's British army, victors in Palestine and now in Syria. Damascus, the pride of Arab nationalism, and the man Lawrence picked as its leader, Prince Faisal. A tide, sweeping away dreams of empire, the Kaiser's dream: Berlin to Baghdad. Allied warships will soon be sailing unchallenged through the Dardanelles, past the Turkish forts on Gallipoli, beyond Gallipoli, where Allied armies suffered and failed three years before, and on to Constantinople. They will land as conquerers. Defeat looming in Italy, where the Allies are preparing to launch an offensive from the lines of last year's

disastrous retreat, marching on Germany's closest partner, Austria. The Austrian army, battered, demoralized, surrendering by the thousands. The Austro-Hungarian empire is crumbling from within. A riot of nationalism, breaking its ties with everything Austrian, even the language. In Prag, a free republic of free Tchechoslovakia. A splendid affluence, reduced to caricature. The empire of the Habsburgs ended by proclamation. In Budapest, a free Republic of Hungary announced by a socialist, Count Michael Karolyi. A tide of defeats, sweeping the Kaiser's block of Central Powers off the battle maps, Bulgaria, Turkey, Austria. The last front is the western front and there an Allied combined offensive is in motion. British and Belgians in the north, French in the center, Americans aiming to close a giant pincers through the Meuse-Argonnes. There will be no race to the Rhine, only a grudging German retreat, retreat toward the frontier, behind which Ludendorff wants to make a stand. Movement is slow in the American sector, where the frontier is closest and the German escape route is threatened. But thousands of German soldiers choose a different escape: surrender. The German army, wounds dressed in bandages, under-cloth made from table cloths, requisitioned from home front hotels, the German army, drained by privation that is even worse for their families at home. With the advancing Allies with the refugees, returning to their villages or what the Germans had left of them, of all the re-unions this is the most poignant. Albert, king of the Belgians, returning to his country with his army he refused to surrender in 1914.

With its grip on Allies soil loosening, its bargaining power all but gone, the German government decides to accept

Woodrow Wilson's terms. The government, but not Ludendorff. At Allied headquarter in Versailles, the leaders gather expectantly, among them president Wilson's personal deputy, coronel House. The Allies are waiting to be brought in on Wilson's armistice negotiations, waiting in irritation and alarm, anxious to destroy the German army. The Allies are afraid Wilson will settle for some mild political terms, the 14 points of World Peace, enunciated in a Wilson speech some months before. "The 14 points" says Clemenceau scornfully, "I do not accept any of them." Italy's Orlando is also unimpressed. Britain's Lloyd George finally takes the initiative, with a cable to Washington, expressing their doubts. Responds from October 25, 1918, with a Wilson message aimed at breaking the armies grip on German policy: "Germany must get rid of its military masters and monarchical autocrats." The military master, Ludendorff, is ousted in a showdown with the civilian government. The Reichstag leader, Mathias Erzberger, is appointed to send an armistice mission to France. On the night of November 7th, 1918, the delegation crosses the French lines in an auto convoy under their own flags, with the French bugler on the running board. A rendezvous place: A railroad car that had been rolled toward a siding, 85 miles behind the front, in the woods of Compiegne. This place will become a shrine of French victory and German vengeance. The Allied delegation is composed of 2 British admirals and 2 French generals, headed by general Foch. The Germans asked for proposals. They are handed firm conditions: Withdrawal beyond the Rhine, and Allied occupation. The blockade will continue until a formal treaty is signed. Horrified, the Germans asked for time. Impatient to start

celebrating, America welcomed a report, leaked to the United Press by a high-ranking officer, and used prematurely. There is still time for men to die and an empire to fall. Imperial pride dies hard. On the eve of the 1918 armistice mission, the German fleet is massed for a last glorious sortie. Attack the British fleet and Germany can march, not crawl, for the truce talks. The sailors answer: Mutiny. Mutiny swells into a revolution in the port of Kiel, in Munich, Stuttgart, Berlin. The public proclaims in the streets, Bolshevists, Socialists, any banner, that promises an end to the war. The signal of defeat, first raised by Ludendorff, has cut the German home front loose from its loyalties, and German soldiers joined in the demand: "Down with the Kaiser." The Kaiser in army headquarters in Belgium, resists public demand and private advice. He insists he will march home to Berlin at the head of his army. A general tells him: "Sir, you no longer have an army." On the morning of November 10, 1918, under guard, to protect him from assassination, the Kaiser boards a train, which will take him to sanctuary in neutral Holland. His empire will be a Dutch garden. The dynasty ends with Wilhelm II., a signature on a letter of abdication. A new government under socialist Friedrich Ebert replaces Max von Baden, who resigns in princely sympathy with his cousin, the Kaiser.

Ebert's first order is to the German truce delegation, still awaiting Foch's terms. The order: "Get a settlement, while there is still something to save." The fear of a Bolshevist Germany is on both sides. At 5:10 A.M. on November 11, 1918, the armistice is signed. The cease fire, rumored for days, is now confirmed, will go into effect at 11 o'clock. By agree-

ment, there will be 6 more hours of war. 6 hours left. The British attack beyond Mons, the scene of their first defeat in 1914. The Americans drive on Sedan, the objective of their Meuse-Argonne campaign. One Yank regiment is ordered to open the South by 10:55. And German artillery shells Verdun. On the morning of Armistice Day, there are more than 2000 American casualties, and British, and French, and Germans. Now, only minutes to the cease fire. War, the deadly game, will end one last convulsive competition. Everyone wants, everyone will claim the honor of firing the last shot. It was not a barrage, one observer will remember, but a deluge.

An American correspondent had been waiting to see what would happen at 11 o'clock. Nothing happened, he writes. The war just ended. There is nothing to separate armies now except Foch's stern order. No fraternization. If an enemy soldier tries to cross the lines, shoot him. The order is widely ignored. There is no more no-mens-land. In London, the war comes to an end by royal proclamation. Parliament adjourns for services in St. Margaret's church. The ceremony soon is drowned out by celebration at the gates of Buckingham palace, in Piccadilly Circus, and Trafalgar Square, by the sound of bells, ringing in unison all over London.

In America, where the news of the armistice arrives at 3 A.M., the crowds first appear in pyjamas and overcoats, and some with influenza masks. The presidential message proclaims: "Armed imperialism is at an end." The wildest jubilee is in Paris. Paris, which in these four years had often heard the noise of guns, is now filled with the sound of crowds, singing the marseillaise. There is singing in the chamber of deputies, and the, 77 year old premier Clemenceau struggles home to announce;

"Since this morning I have been kissed by 500 women," Today, Lloyd George's bitter epigram is forgotten. "This war, like the next war, is war to end war." Tonight the final entry will be written in the French army's journal of communiques: "Closed, because of victory." The last word is victory, not peace.

I am bringing here a description of the First World War, which I have picked up recently with my tape recorder from television, very interesting, as it illustrates many details, which I, as an Austrian and as a very young participant in that war saw from a different angle. Here it is:

"On these battlefields" wrote Scott Fitzgerald, "my lovely, safe world blew itself up. Terrible twilight of an old world, noisy dawn of our times, this was World War One. It was the last time you could look at the face of war to see the features of men. This is the kind of war it would be."

The machines were starting to emerge, known by the names of victims; they would rub out all codes that men had lived by and fought by. After this ship, the Lusitania, there would be no unbreakable rules of war. There would be many other victims, the litter of the primitive D-day, a remote peninsula called Gallipoli. There was the Austrian battleship, Sanct Stefan, sinking in the Adriatic only months before the armistice. No orders to abandon ship from its captain. It was an age, when commanders could take men to their death in the name of nothing but honour.

In this war, empires clashed. George V. England would

survive, but shaken. Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany would crumble. Doomed also the Romanows, absorbed in themselves, where Russia seemed to have changed. And Habsburg, the antique dynasty of Austria-Hungary: Of the world these kings had inherited, only shadows and echoes were to be handed on to us. The echoes would become our overture, the noise of revolution and change in Winston Churchill's words: "Not armies, but whole nations broke and ruined."

Out of the crowds new faces would appear. A magnetic orator named Lenin. In the trappings of a hero and airforce officer, named Hermann Goering. Hindenburg, a general, who had retired to a presidency. An unsuccessful war leader, Churchill. Europe's first American war hero, general Pershing. His ally and antagonist, Foch. Britain's prime minister, Lloyd George. France's old tiger, Clemenceau. Mr. Herbert Hoover, of Belgian war relief. Mr. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, of the navy department. Old soldier to be, coronel Douglass McArthur. A young ace, Baron von Richthofen, and captain Eddie Rickenbacher.

These were the years, when war ventured into a new battleground, the air, and produced a new breed of heroes, the last champions of individual combat. Their time would be brief: They too would be overtaken by their machines. Heroes of this war, some known, some nameless, would keep searching for answers to its hazards. There would be no answer, except man's power to endure its horrors.

Behind its president, Woodrow Wilson, a young nation would march to war in the footsteps of the allies and emerge as their leader. This is the kind of war it would be, a cataclysm. It begins with two morning shots, fired in the summer of 1914 at

a place called Sarajevo. Europe in the midst of the year 1914, Europe in the time of splendid transition, of automobile, of absolute monarchs and general strikes. There has been a decade of war threats and brinkmanship, but it is an age of confidence, which takes crises in its stride. Men are reasonable, progress continues, peace seems permanent. But spoiled children we are, a Paris editorialist writes in the last week of June 1914.

June 28 in London: King George V. and Queen Mary on a short drive to Kensington Palace for a Sunday visit with their relatives. June 28 in St. Petersburg: Tsar Nikolaus II. holding court at the Romanow's summer palace. June 28 at Kiel, Germany: Kaiser Wilhelm II. at the official opening of the widened Kiel Kanal. He takes a salut of friendship from British ships at the ceremony.

In the small Slavic kingdom of Serbia in the Balkans, June 28 is a holiday, festive, patriotic, livelihood despaired of Slav nationalism. Across the border from Serbia is Bosnia, also inhabited by Slavs, but occupied by the alien empire of Austria-Hungary. This is the provincial capital: Sarajevo. June 28, 1914: The distinguished visitor with the plumed hat is archduke Franz Ferdinand, nephew and heir to the emperor of Austria-Hungary. The archduke's wife, Sophia, is with him. Minutes before, a bomb was thrown at their car. At the city hall, they report the ugly incident. From here, they will drive on into the path of calamity. A street, where a boy stands, armed with a pistol. Two shots end the lives of the archduke and his wife. The assassin is a tubercular high school student, Gavrilo Princip, a Slav patriot, inspired and armed

by a Serbian agent. Sarajevo is ransacked by Austrian occupation troops. The bodies of the victims are shipped home to Vienna, to a funeral without pomp or tears. The lifelong disappointment to his uncle, the emperor, the archduke will hardly be missed. In the words of a Viennese writer, Stefan Zweig, he lacked everything that counts in Austria, amiability and charm. In Vienna, the crowds will gather, not for the victims, but for a rare view of the old emperor, Franz Josef, now 84, who comes from his summer palace, but will not attend the funeral.

The funeral barely interrupts the music in the cabarets. But behind the scenes, tragedy is being turned into opportunity by Austria's foreign minister, count Leopold von Berchtold and the military chief, general Franz Konrad von Hoetzendorf. From the German Kaiser, Austria's ally, they get assurances of support for any measures they may take to punish what he called this detestable crime.

At the handing over this plain check, the Kaiser allows himself to be hustled off to his usual summer cruise by his chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg. Everything will be taken care of. There is no reason to change plans.

No reason for any of Europe's rulers to change plans. In the English Channel, king George proceeds with his own summer routine, the annual review of the fleet. At St. Petersburg, the Tsar entertains a summer guest, Raymond Poincaré, president of the French Republic, a ceremonial visit between allies.

Sarajevo has disappeared from the headlines. Society has sit out its rewarding leisure with government officials among the crowd. Europe's less leisurely millions will satisfy them-

selves with an occasional Sunday at the beach. The weather is marvellous.

On July 21st, an American tourist, coronel Edward House, sailed home, with his earlier anxiety relieved. "Europe", he has written to his friend, president Woodrow Wilson, "is wrapped up in sport and social doings. People are talking about the recent regatta at Kenway, won for the first time by an American crew, the Harvard boat, captained by a young Bostonian man, named Leverett Saltonstall".

Everywhere, the omens are peaceful, everywhere except in Vienna. On July 23rd, the Austrian leaders execute the scheme they had started weeks before. They persuade emperor Franz Josef to sign a harsh document. Punish Serbia and you will crush the Slav nationalist movement that had been gnawing at the southern provinces of his empire.

Suddenly Europe rings with a dread word of alarm: Ultimatum. The ultimatum is only a formality. Vienna is prepared to act, no matter what the response. Serbia, under its young regent, prince Alexander, in effect agrees to Austria's terms, but nevertheless calls up its troops. Europe, secure selfsatisfied Europe, is stepping toward the brink.

In late July 1914, The Tsar appears in St. Petersburg before an agitated crowd. The small Slavic country of Serbia has been threatened. Russia, the big brother of Slav nations, is aroused. The slogan in the streets and in government: "Support our ally Serbia". Now, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, alerted by the sound of gathering crisis, cuts his cruise short and hurries back to Berlin, an unsuspecting captive of his advisers. The text of Serbia's soft reply to Austrias ultimatum is kept from him.

In order to leave Austria free to act, as big powers are drawn in, the diplomatic channels begin to flood with activity. Berlin to Vienna, Belgrade to St. Petersburg, to Paris.

On July 27th in Berlin, government leaders report to the Kaiser in a special crisis session. That same day, in London, a voice of moderation speaks up. Sir Edward Gray, Englands languid foreign secretary, urges Berlin to mediate between the principals. But the message is ignored.

On July 28th, convinced that outsiders will back off, Austria takes the ultimate step: War against Serbia. From the Danube river, Austrian gun boats shell the Serb capital of Belgrade.

With war in the Balkans, the Tsar is urged to mobilize its armies. He stalls. Orders a limited call-up, initiates a desperate correspondence with the Kaiser. "I shall be overwhelmed by pressure. Do what you can". Signed: "Your loving Niki". The answer from Berlin: "I fully understand. I am exerting my utmost influence". Signed: "Your devoted friend and cousin Willy". But it is too late, the pressure too strong. Convinced by his ministers that Germany is getting ready to strike, the Tsar orders all-out mobilization.

Now, all over Europe, the crowd rises to the allure of war. The war fever rises, and even the intellectuals are not immune. German novelist Thomas Mann will embrace the war as a purification, a liberation. An enormous hope. English novelist H.G.Wells: "Defeat Germany for the sake of peace and disarmament throughout the world." Dr. Siegmund Freud of Vienna: "All my libido is given to Austria-Hungary." Albert Einstein deplores: "This species which boasts to its freedom of will and yet makes war."

1914

But now, war is Europe's will. In Berlin, the war spirit is inflamed by the movement of Russian troops towards German borders. A fatal mechanism is turned on, the clockwork of warplanes. Time, ready. On August 1st, the clock strikes. The Kaiser summons his nation to war. War against Russia, but the first objective on the timetable is Russia's ally, France.

France, confronted with a brutal German ultimatum, tempted by an opportunity to regain its lost territories of Alsace-Lorraine, France gets ready for a German attack. Announced by ultimatum, it will come by way of neutral Belgium.

France and Belgium, Russia and Germany, Serbia and Austria. Before it is over, 7 eights of the worlds population will take sides in the war. England, watching apprehensively on the sidelines. For England, the issues are defined by the first lord of the admiralty, Winston Churchill: "We could not allow the German fleet to come down the Channel to attack the French ports. But in addition, we were morally committed. Only Britain could defend a fair play of the world."

Churchill has already deployed the fleet against surprise attacks. Now, the government, under prime minister Herbert Asquith, sends Germany an ultimatum in behalf of France and Belgium. For 5 hours, Britain waits for an answer, which never comes. On August 5th, Britain joins the nations on the march to war.

Men, who march in these crowds, will later recall their feelings with wonder and horror. The mood of a schoolboy holiday, the relief that is almost a rapture, and the confidence: Paris in 6 weeks, Christmas in Berlin.

Only the leaders seem to waver. The Kaiser tells his ge-

nerals, when it is too late: "Gentlemen, you will regret this." And Sir Edward Gray of England utters a phrase that will haunt the world for generations: "The lamps are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our lifetime".

Years later, after the 9 million deaths, the 37 million casualties, after the crash of empires, the upheaval of bold societies, years later, a member of the Austrian royal family will say: "This is not what the leaders intended. What they had in mind was a limited war". *

For reason of completeness there remained to be discussed the situation in the East. We have to go back to the year 1917, when the revolution started in Russia, the government fell, and Tsar Nicholas II. abdicated on March 15th, and a new government took over under Alexander Kerensky. At that time already Finland and Poland were granted autonomy, soon also Estonia on April 12th. The war was still continuing with little changes on the Eastern front, but things changed soon after the arrival of Vladimir Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders at Petrograd from Switzerland, having been transported through Germany in a sealed carriage, the German high command having calculated that these extremists would soon undermine the pro-Allied provisional government. Kerensky undertook to revive the war spirit and the fighting power of the army. A Russian offensive against the Austro-German forces soon collapsed and the disorganized Russian troops were completely defeated. Kerensky was in a most difficult position. On November 6th, the Bolsheviks under Trotsky and Lenin decided to attempt a coup. Kerensky managed

to escape, went into hiding and subsequently^b into exile abroad.

This was the start of the Great Revolution and there began a period of Civil War and counter-revolutions. On December 3 an armistice was concluded with the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk, but broke down on December 28th, when it was revealed that the Germans demanded the cession of Poland and the western Russian territories. The Germans then arranged for the independence of the Ukraine, with which they concluded a separate peace on February 9th. On March 3 the treaty of Brest-Litovsk was concluded, by which Russia lost Poland, the Ukraine and all of the borderlands occupied by non-Russian nationalities. The Russian government moved the capital from Petrograd (renamed Leningrad) to Moscow. Independent governments were established all along the Russian frontiers (Lithuania, Dec. 11th, 1917, Moldavia, Dec. 15th, Republic of the Don, Jan. 10, 1918, Ukraine, Jan. 28, Transcaucasia, Apr. 22, etc.).

A new Red Army was organized under the leadership of Trotsky by conscription and subject to strict discipline. It was attacked from all sides, by the cossacks in the South,, by the Ukrainians and White-Russians from the West. The British had landed a force at Murmansk on June 23, 1918 to support a puppet government of Northern Russia and the Americans also sent a force and during the spring of 1919 there was considerable fighting between the Allies and the Bolsheviks. The French were the most ardent advocates of more extensive intervention against the Bolsheviks, but neither the British nor the Americans were willing, after the armistice, to go beyond financial and other support for the anti-Bolshevik movements. On Sept. 30, 1919, the Allies abandoned Archangelsk and then Murmansk. These territories were quickly taken over by the Bolsheviks.

The Caucasian states (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan) declared their independence April 22 and May 26, 1918. Thereupon the Bolsheviks attacked and took Kiev, but were soon ejected by the Germans, who then took also Odessa, and overran the whole Ukraine, from which they tried, rather unsuccessfully, to secure much-needed food supplies. But the Bolsheviks, having assumed the offensive, took Kiev and expelled the Allied forces from Odessa. The Ukraine became a Soviet Republic and was later invaded by the Poles. On Dec. 30, the Ukraine joined with the other Soviet Republics to form the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. The Soviet government recognized the independence of Estonia (Febr. 2, 1920), of Lithuania (July 12), of Latvia (Aug. 11), and of Finland (Oct. 14). Early in 1921, Soviet governments were set up in Georgia (Febr. 25) and in Armenia (April 2, and later became part of the larger Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

In Siberia, Japanese forces were landed at Vladivostok (Dec. 30, 1917), where they were joined by Czech legions, organized out of large numbers of Austrian war prisoners with the purpose of ultimately joining the Allied forces in Europe. The Czechs ceased control of the Trans-Siberian Railway and formed an alliance with local anti-Bolshevik forces. An autonomous Siberian government was formed at Omsk. They extended their operations to the Volga region and admiral Alexander Kolchak was proclaimed Supreme Ruler of Russia, taking Perm (Dec. 24) and Ufa. But the Bolsheviks initiated a vigorous counter-offensive, taking Orenburg and Ekaterinburg (Jan. 25, 1919) and gradually forced Kolchak back into Siberia. Kolchak was subsequently captured and executed. The Bolsheviks then captured

Vladivostok (Oct. 25, 1922) and set up the Far Eastern Republic, which was annexed to Soviet Russia.

There are some more details worth mentioning, for instance the murder of Tsar Nicholas II, the Tsarina Alexandra and their children on July 16, 1918 in a cellar at Ekaterinburg, where they had been kept in captivity. On the outbreak of the revolution the imperial family had been confined first in the palace of Tsarskoe Selo. Thence it had been moved to Tobolsk and finally (Apr. 1918) to Ekaterinburg. The murder was perpetrated by local Bolsheviks, who feared the imminent capture of the city by the advancing Czechs and Whites.