

PRIT BUTTAR

Author of  
*Germany Ascendant & Collision of Empires*

# RUSSIA'S LAST GASP

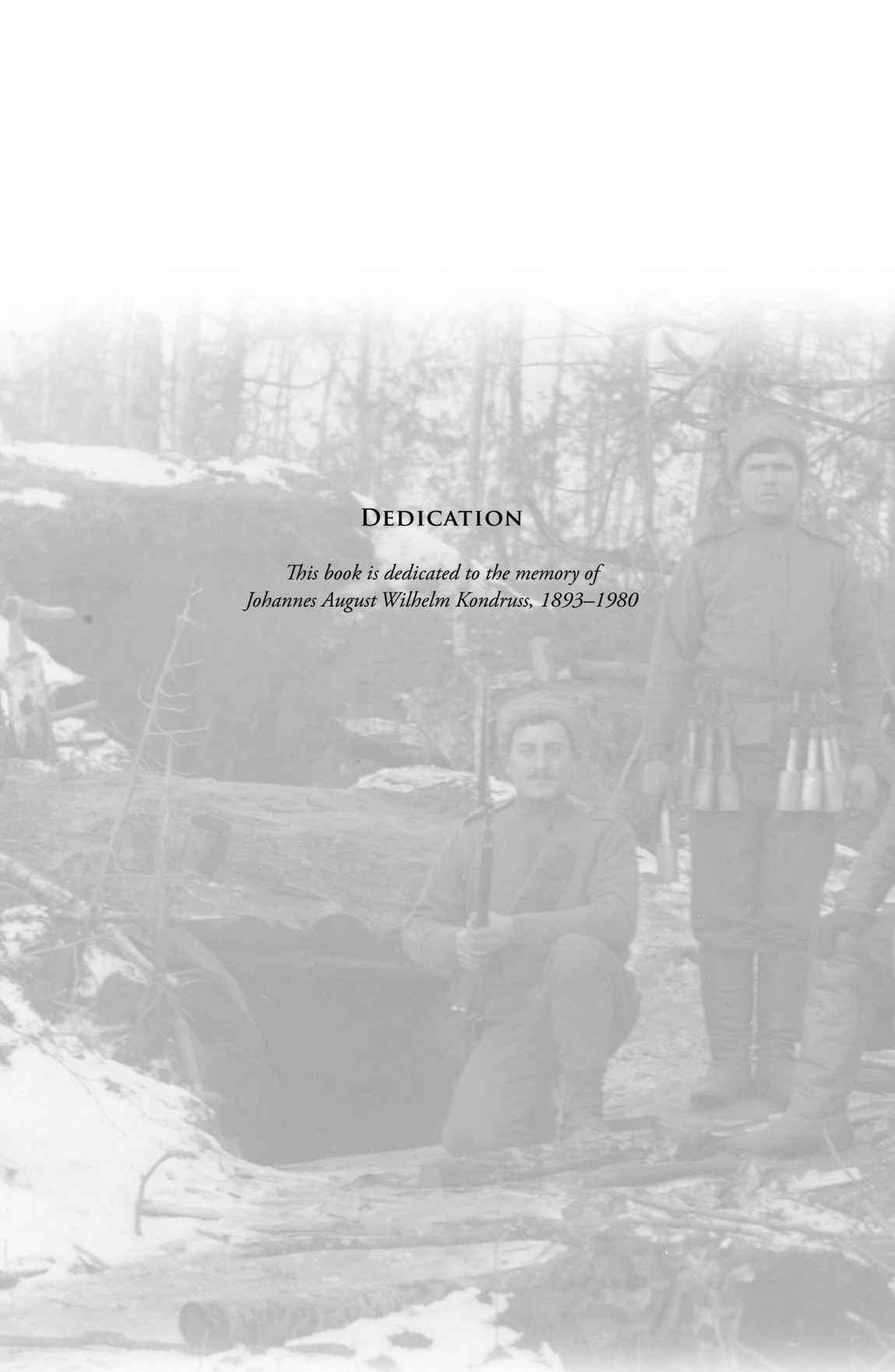
THE EASTERN FRONT 1916-17





# RUSSIA'S LAST GASP

**OSPREY**  
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DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to the memory of  
Johannes August Wilhelm Kondruss, 1893–1980*



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THE EASTERN FRONT 1916-17

PRIT BUTTAR

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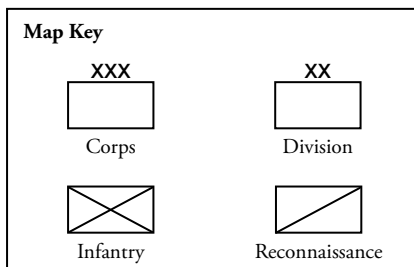
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Front cover: In 1915, the Russian Army introduced specialists in trench warfare. Known as grenadier platoons because of their reliance on grenades, they were organised and trained to carry out small-scale, specialist assaults, as well as spearheading large-scale operations. This group is typical of such a platoon. (From the fonds of the RGAKFD in Krasnogorsk via Stavka)

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

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Once more, I am indebted to the team who helped me with this book – my agent Robert Dudley, Laura Callaghan and Kate Moore at Osprey, Amit Sumal who continued to find source material for me, and my lovely wife Debbie who put up with a great deal. But a special word of gratitude must go to Peter Kolb, who kindly gave me access to the unpublished memoirs of his grandfather who served on the Eastern Front in both wars: further proof, if any were needed, that what seems like history to some of us is the living past for others.

# DRAMATIS PERSONAE

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## AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

**Arz von Straussenberg, Arthur** – commander VI Corps, later commander of reformed First Army in Transylvania, later chief of general staff

**Benigni, Siegmund von** – commander eponymous corps, later commander VIII Corps

**Berndt, Otto** – chief of staff Fourth Army

**Böhm-Ermolli, Eduard von** – commander Second Army

**Bolfras, Arthur von** – chief of the military chancellery

**Burián, Stephan** – foreign minister

**Conrad von Hötzendorf, Franz** – chief of general staff, replaced by Arz

**Csanády von Békés, Friedrich** – commander X Corps

**Czernin von und zu Chudenitz, Ottokar** – ambassador in Bucharest

**Dankl, Viktor** – commander Eleventh Army

**Eugen (Archduke)** – commander Italian front

**Fath, Heinrich** – commander eponymous corps

**Frederick (Archduke)** – nominal commander *k.u.k.* Army

**Habermann, Ferdinand von** – commander XI Corps

**Hadfy von Livno, Emmerich** – commander eponymous corps

**Hauer, Leopold Freiherr von** – commander eponymous corps

**Henriquez, Johann Ritter von** – commander XII Corps

**Hohenlohe, Gottfried** – ambassador in Berlin

**Joseph Ferdinand (Archduke)** – commander Fourth Army, succeeded by Tersztyánsky

**Kaiser, Julius** – commander II Corps

**Karl (Archduke)** – heir to the Habsburg throne, later Karl I of Austria and Karl IV of Hungary

**Korda, Ignaz Edler von** – commander XI Corps, succeeded by Habermann

**Kosak, Ferdinand** – commander 27th Infantry Division, later commander eponymous battlegroup  
**Kövessháza, Hermann von Kövesz von** – commander Third Army  
**Krauss, Alfred** – chief of staff Italian front  
**Kralowetz von Hohenrecht, Gottlieb** – chief of staff X Corps  
**Martiny, Hugo** – commander X Corps, replaced by Csanády  
**Obauer, Rudolf** – commander 11th Infantry Division  
**Ostermuth, Johann** – commander eponymous cavalry corps  
**Pflanzer-Baltin, Karl von** – commander Seventh Army  
**Podhoránszky, Eugen von** – commander 35th Infantry Division  
**Puhallo, Paul** – commander First Army  
**Scheuchenstuel, Viktor** – commander VIII Corps, succeeded by Benigni  
**Smekal, Gustav** – commander eponymous division  
**Szurmay, Sándor** – commander eponymous corps, later renamed XXIV Corps  
**Tersztyánsky, Karl von** – commander Fourth Army  
**Tisza, István** – prime minister of Hungary  
**Zeynek, Theodor von** – chief of staff Seventh Army

## BULGARIA

**Kiselov, Panteley** – commander 4th Infantry Division  
**Toshev, Stefan** – commander Third Army

## GERMANY

**Batocki-Friebe, Adolf Tortilowicz von** – president of East Prussia 1914–1916 and 1918–1919, president of the War Food Office 1916–1917  
**Beckmann, Max** – commander 108th Infantry Division  
**Below, Otto von** – commander Eighth Army  
**Bernhardi, Friedrich von** – commander eponymous corps  
**Beseler, Hans Hartwig von** – governor of *Generalgouvernement* in Warsaw  
**Bethmann-Hollweg, Theobald von** – chancellor  
**Bothmer, Felix von** – commander South Army  
**Bruchmüller, Georg** – German artillery officer, nicknamed ‘Durchbruchmüller’ (‘Durchbruch’ = ‘breakthrough’)  
**Bussche, Hilmar von dem** – ambassador in Bucharest

- Conta, Richard von** – commander 1st Infantry Division, later commander *Karpatenkorps*
- Cramon, August von** – military envoy at *AOK*
- Eichhorn, Hermann von** – commander Tenth Army
- Fabeck, Maximilian von** – commander Twelfth Army
- Falkenhayn, Erich von** – chief of the general staff, later commander Ninth Army
- Falkenhayn, Eugen von** – commander eponymous corps
- Hammerstein-Equord, Kurt von** – liaison officer with Bulgarian Army, later commander eponymous force
- Hell, Emil** – staff officer in *Ober Ost*, later chief of staff *Korps Litzmann*
- Hesse, Hans** – chief of staff Ninth Army
- Hindenburg, Paul von** – commander *Ober Ost*, later chief of the general staff
- Hoffmann, Max** – staff officer at *Ober Ost*, later chief of staff
- Hutier, Oskar von** – commander XXI Corps
- Jagow, Gottlieb von** – foreign minister
- Kneussl, Paul Ritter von** – commander 11th Bavarian Infantry Division
- Kosch, Robert** – commander eponymous corps
- Krafft von Dellmensingen, Konrad** – commander *Alpenkorps*
- Kühne, Victor** – commander LIV Corps
- Leonhardi, Theodor von** – commander, eponymous corps
- Linsingen, Alexander von** – commander Bug Army and eponymous army group
- Litzmann, Karl** – commander XL Corps, later commander eponymous corps
- Ludendorff, Erich** – chief of staff at *Ober Ost*, later quartermaster-general
- Lüttwitz, Walther von** – commander X Corps
- Mackensen, August von** – commander Central Powers forces on the Salonika front, later commander Central Powers forces in Dobruja
- Marwitz, Georg von der** – commander eponymous corps
- Morgen, Curt von** – commander I Reserve Corps
- Oppeln-Bronikowski, Hermann von** – commander 48th Reserve Infantry Division
- Riezler, Kurt** – foreign office official, author of the September Programme
- Schmettow, Eberhard Graf von** – commander eponymous cavalry corps
- Seeckt, Hans von** – chief of staff to Mackensen, later chief of staff *k.u.k.* Seventh Army, later chief of staff Army Group Crown Prince Karl
- Staabs, Hermann von** – commander XXXIX Reserve Corps
- Sunkel, Edwin** – commander 187th Infantry Division
- Tappen, Gerhard** – chief of staff to Mackensen in Romania

## ROMANIA

**Antonescu, Ion** – operations officer North Army; head of state in Second World War

**Aslan, Mihai** – commander Third Army

**Averescu, Alexandru** – commander Second Army, later commander of Third Army and other forces in southern Romania, later reappointed to command Second Army

**Brătianu, Ion** – prime minister

**Christescu, Constantin** – deputy chief of general staff before outbreak of hostilities

**Crăiniceanu, Grigore** – commander Second Army, replaced Averescu

**Culcer, Ion** – commander First Army, replaced by Dragalina

**Dragalina, Ioan** – commander 1st Infantry Division, later commander First Army

**Grigorescu, Eremia** – commander 15th Infantry Division

**Iliescu, Dumitru** – secretary-general of war ministry, chief of general staff after outbreak of hostilities

**Negrescu, Nicolae** – commander Danube Flotilla

**Niculescu-Rizea, Constantin** – commander Danube river defences

**Popovici, Ioan** – commander Olt Corps

**Porumbaru, Emanuel** – foreign minister

**Prezan, Constantin** – commander North Army, later commander Romanian forces in Battle of Bucharest

**Știrbey, Barbu** – politician and confidant/lover of Queen Marie

**Teodorescu, Constantin** – commander of Tutrakan garrison

**Zottu, Vasile** – chief of general staff before outbreak of hostilities

## RUSSIA

**Alexeyev, Mikhail Vasiliyevich** – chief of general staff

**Baluev, Petr Semenovich** – commander V Corps

**Barantsov, Mikhail Alexandrovich** – commander XI Corps

**Bezobrazov, Vladimir Mikhailovich** – commander Guards Army/Special Army, succeeded by Gurko

**Brusilov, Alexei Alexeyevich** – commander Eighth Army, later commander Southwest Front

**Dimitri Pavlovich (Grand Duke)** – son of and aide-de-camp to Grand Duke Pavel Alexandrovich

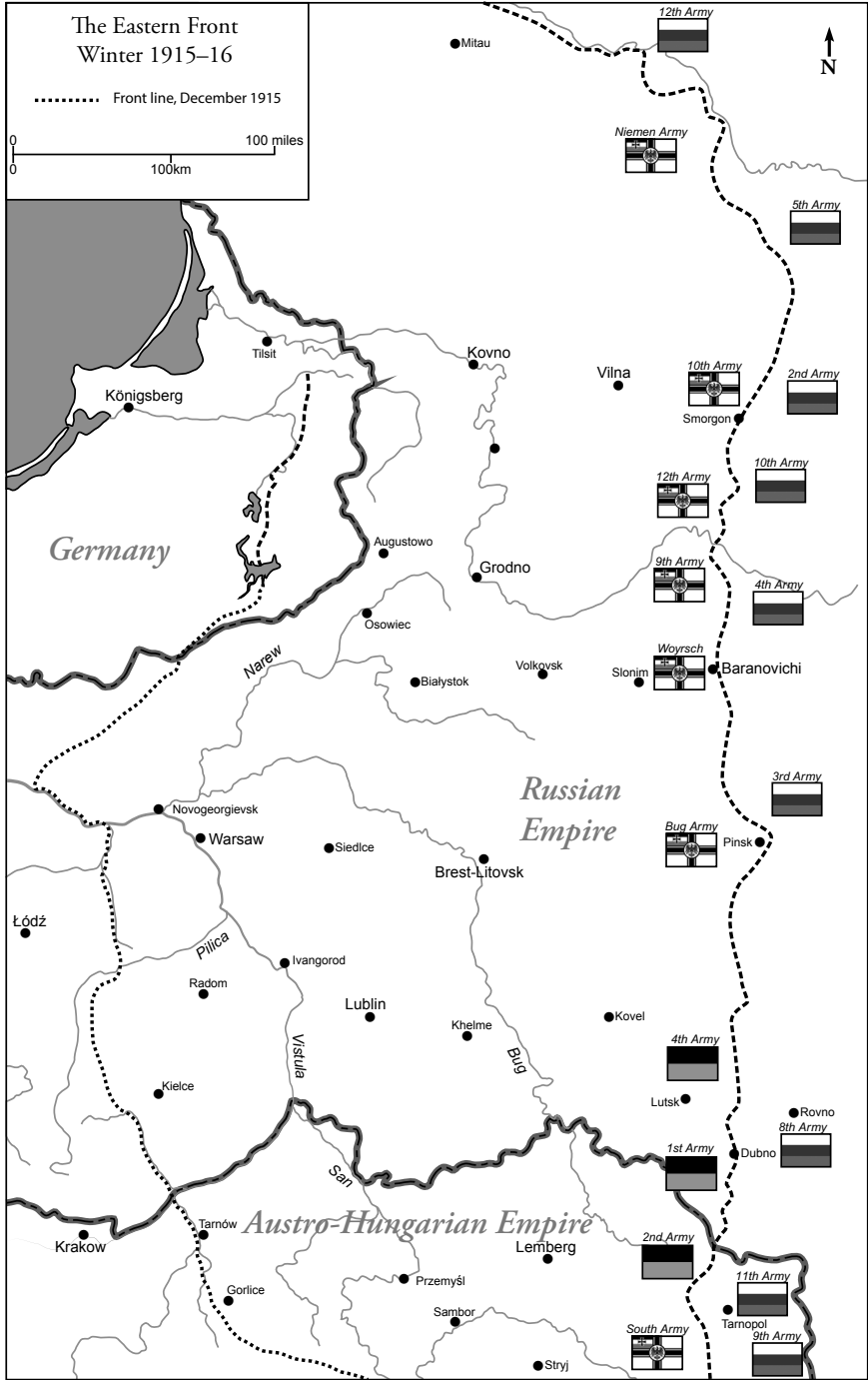
- Diterikhs, Mikhail Konstantinovich** – quartermaster Southwest Front
- Dragomirov, Abram Mikhailovich** – commander IX Corps
- Evert, Alexei Ermolayevich** – commander West Front
- Fedotov, Ivan Ivanovich** – commander XXXII Corps
- Gillenschmidt, Jakov Fedorovich** – commander IV Cavalry Corps
- Gorbatovsky, Vladimir Nikolayevich** – commander Twelfth Army
- Goremykin, Ivan Logginovich** – prime minister, succeeded by Stürmer
- Gurko, Vasily Iosifovich** – commander Fifth Army, then commander Special Army, later acting chief of general staff
- Ignatiev, Alexei Nikolayevich** – chief of staff Guards/Special Army
- Ivanov, Nikolai Iudevich** – commander of Southwest Front, succeeded by Brusilov
- Kaledin, Alexei Maximovich** – commander XII Corps, later commander Eighth Army
- Khvostov, Alexei Nikolayevich** – minister of the interior, replaced by Stürmer
- Klembovsky, Vladislav Napoleonovich** – chief of staff Southwest Front
- Kornilov, Lavr Georgeyevich** – commander XXV Corps
- Kuropatkin, Alexei Nikolayevich** – commander Northern Front, replaced by Ruzsky
- Lechitsky, Platon Alexeyevich** – commander Ninth Army
- Lesh, Leonid Vilgelmovich** – commander Third Army
- Litvinov, Alexander Ivanovich** – commander First Army
- Pavel Alexandrovich (Grand Duke)** – commander I Guards Corps
- Plehve, Pavel Adamovich** – commander Northern Front, succeeded by Kuropatkin
- Pleshkov, Mikhail Mikhailovich** – commander I Siberian Corps
- Polivanov, Alexei Andreyevich** – war minister, replaced by Shuvayev
- Promtov, Mikhail Nikolayevich** – commander III Cavalry Corps
- Rauch, Georg Ottonovich** – commander II Guards Corps
- Ragosa, Alexander Franzevich** – commander Fourth Army, temporarily commander Second Army
- Rodzianko, Mikhail Vladimirovich** – state councillor, member of the Russian ‘Progressive Bloc’
- Ruzsky, Nikolai Vladimirovich** – commander Northern Front
- Sakharov, Vladimir Victorovich** – commander Eleventh Army, later commander of Army of the Danube
- Savich, Sergei Sergeyevich** – commander XVI Corps
- Scheidemann, Sergei Mikhailovich** – commander I Turkmenistan Corps

**Sergei Mikhailovich (Grand Duke)** – inspector-general of artillery  
**Shcherbachev, Dmitri Gregorovich** – commander Seventh Army  
**Shuvayev, Dmitri Savelyevich** – war minister, replaced Polivanov  
**Sirelius, Leonid Ottovich** – commander IV Siberian Corps  
**Sluysarenko, Vladimir Alexeyevich** – commander Fifth Army, replaced Gurko  
**Smirnov, Vladimir Vasilyevich** – commander Second Army  
**Stürmer, Boris Vladimirovich** – prime minister, later also minister of the interior  
**Winogradsky, Alexander Nikolayevich** – commander 14th Artillery Brigade, later military advisor in Romania  
**Zayontchovsky, Andrei Medardovich** – commander XXX Corps, later commander of Russian forces in Romania  
**Zhilinsky, Yakov Gregoreyevich** – military attaché in France

#### MISCELLANEOUS

**Berthelot, Henri** (France) – military advisor in Romania  
**Knox, Alfred** (Britain) – military attaché in Russia  
**Paléologue, Maurice** (France) – ambassador in Petrograd  
**Piłsudski, Józef** (Poland) – commander Polish Legion, later head of state of Poland  
**Sarrail, Maurice** (France) – commander of Anglo-French forces in Salonika





# INTRODUCTION

---

As 1915 drew to a close, Europe remained locked in war on a scale that no previous generation had ever conceived. Everything about the conflict – the numbers of men involved, the huge demands on industrial production, the casualties, the impact upon society at large, and the strategies that would need to be followed to see it through to a conclusion – threw up challenges to which nobody appeared to have answers.

A combination of industrialisation and major improvements in public health in the second half of the 19th century led to large increases in the population of Europe, rising from about 200 million in 1800 to double that figure by 1900. The experiences of war during the 19th century resulted in most large nations adopting systems of national service followed by a variable period as a reservist; as a result, when the continent plunged over the precipice into war in the summer of 1914, all the Great Powers had the ability to field forces on a scale that dwarfed anything that had gone before.

The same industrialisation that helped increase the population of Europe also provided arms and munitions on a scale to match the huge armies that were sent into battle. Yet despite the enormous stockpiling and production of guns, bombs and shells, all armies found themselves struggling to cope with the huge consumption of resources that followed. Every army that fought in 1915 was forced to moderate its military ambitions to live within the limitations imposed by ammunition shortages, and it was only at the end of the year that all sides could begin to look forward to a time when they might have sufficient *matériel* to cope with the demands of modern warfare.

In the west, the terrible irony of the ‘mobilisation’ of 1914 was that hundreds of thousands of men were left facing each other in almost static front lines, subjecting each other to bombardments and assaults that left huge numbers dead or maimed without any prospect of ending the war. In many respects, the fighting on the Eastern Front was very different, with the front line moving back and forth as the vast spaces of Eastern Europe allowed armies to exploit weaker areas.

However, the very space that allowed for such movement also made a conclusive victory almost unachievable. As early as October 1914, the Germans had correctly calculated that it was impossible for armies to maintain operations more than 72 miles (120km) from their railheads, and both sides rapidly realised that there were few if any strategically vital objectives within such a radius. Consequently, although there were major advances by all sides, it was not possible to advance sufficiently far to force the other side out of the war.

The Great Powers entered the war with a clear idea of how they intended to win. Germany wished to avoid a prolonged two-front war, and opted to concentrate most of its strength against France, intending to send its victorious armies east after defeating its western opponents. Russia believed in the irresistible might of its vast armies, and anticipated a steady advance that would roll over the German and Austro-Hungarian forces, while the armies of the Austro-Hungarian Empire calculated that their best hope was to draw the full weight of the tsar's armies onto themselves, giving the Germans every opportunity to win the war in the west before the Russians could put enough forces into the field. When these initial plans failed, senior commanders struggled to come up with alternative strategies, trying usually without success to learn from the errors of the opening campaigns. To a very large extent, the one shining victory of the opening phases of the war – the German triumph at Tannenberg in September 1914 – left commanders on all sides attempting in vain to recreate the great encirclement. They repeatedly saw the endless stalemates as anomalies; the reality was that it was Tannenberg that was the anomaly, achieved at a time when there was still open ground between formations, allowing corps and armies to be outflanked – by the time they became aware of German movements, it was too late for the Russians to react. As the war continued, the density of troops prevented any such advantage being achieved.

At the outset of the war, the chief of the German general staff, and therefore the most influential figure in the military hierarchy of the Central Powers, was Helmuth von Moltke, nephew of the great visionary who had masterminded the Prussian victory over Denmark, Austria and France in the 19th century. All of his hopes rested on the execution of the great envelopment of the French Army, first proposed by Alfred von Schlieffen, whose eponymous plan failed through a combination of exhaustion, German errors and the French counterattack at the Battle of the Marne in September 1914. Overwhelmed by the pressures of defeat, Moltke suffered a breakdown in his health; he was dismissed and replaced by General Erich von Falkenhayn, formerly the German war minister, who now had to try to devise a new strategy for winning the war.

At first, Falkenhayn attempted to achieve a last-gasp victory in the west, attacking the British at Ypres in October 1914 with the intention of driving them into the sea and thus opening the northern flank of the front line for a grand envelopment. Despite narrowly failing to achieve a breakthrough, he remained convinced that overall victory in the war could only be achieved in the west – even if Russia were to suffer sufficiently catastrophic defeats to knock it out of the war, the French would continue to fight until they were defeated. However, Germany's worst nightmare of fighting a two-front war was, for the moment at least, a reality, and striking a decisive blow against France seemed impossible, at least while Russia remained strong enough to require substantial German forces to be sent east.

For the officers who planned war strategy at the beginning of the 20th century, the fate of Napoleon's *Grande Armée* remained a powerful reminder of the problems of conducting military operations in European Russia. The country was simply too large and too poor for a modern European war: the Russians could retreat with impunity as there were no vital assets within close reach of the border, and any invading army would be left stranded at the end of its lengthy lines of communication. If it had been impossible for Napoleon's army to live off the land, this would be even more so in the modern era, with much larger numbers of men. Nevertheless, of the foes that Germany faced, Russia appeared to be the one that might be defeated with the least difficulty. Consequently, 1915 saw Falkenhayn approving increasing German commitment on the Eastern Front in an attempt to drive Russia out of the war, or at the very least reduce its strength to a level where it could effectively be ignored for long enough to defeat France.

In Falkenhayn's opinion, there were several means by which Russia might be induced to leave the war. Firstly, he questioned the ability of the tsar's empire to sustain the sort of effort that was already placing such a strain on Germany:

If such a strictly disciplined political organism as Germany, accustomed as she had been for centuries to conscientious work, and having at her disposal an inexhaustible wealth of skilled organising forces in her own people, was only barely able to accomplish the mighty tasks imposed upon her by the war, it was certain that the Russian State, so much weaker internally, would not succeed in doing this. As far as human calculations went, Russia would not be able permanently to meet the demands of such a struggle, and at the same time to effect the reconstruction of her whole economic life, which was necessitated by her sudden isolation from the outer world, owing to the closing of the western frontiers and of the Dardanelles.<sup>1</sup>

However, whilst it might be possible to exhaust Russia, Falkenhayn doubted that it would be possible to win a conclusive victory on the battlefield. He was therefore aware of the need to keep open diplomatic channels between Berlin and Petrograd, and repeated attempts were made throughout 1915 – largely via neutral Denmark – to persuade the tsar to abandon the war against the Central Powers. Unfortunately for Falkenhayn, the strength of the bond between Russia and its western allies was too great, and Russia steadfastly refused to contemplate a separate peace. Nevertheless, it remained possible to weaken Russia to the extent that Germany could concentrate its attention in the west.

Whilst there was general agreement in German circles that the war would ultimately be won or lost in the west, the strategy to be adopted against Russia was the subject of bitter arguments. At the beginning of the war, the only German forces that defended East Prussia against the Russians consisted of the divisions of Eighth Army, and after the army's commander, Maximilian von Prittwitz, appeared to lose confidence after a tactical defeat at Gumbinnen in August 1914, he was dismissed and replaced by General Paul von Hindenburg, with Generalmajor Erich Ludendorff as his chief of staff. Immediately, this new team enjoyed a remarkable victory when they used Eighth Army to surround and defeat the Russian Second Army at Tannenberg in September. In the months that followed, the great victory of Tannenberg, and the lesser tactical successes in the two Battles of the Masurian Lakes (September 1914 and February 1915), achieved almost legendary status, and allowed Hindenburg and Ludendorff to establish an influential power base. Falkenhayn might be chief of the general staff and thus control German forces via *Oberste Heeresleitung* (Army High Command, usually abbreviated to *OHL*), but Hindenburg rose from command of Eighth Army to the post of *Oberbefehlshaber der gesamten deutschen Streitkräfte im Osten* (Supreme Commander of all German forces in the east, usually abbreviated to *Ober Ost*).

After the failure of the First Battle of Ypres in late 1914, Hindenburg and Ludendorff openly campaigned for the dismissal of Falkenhayn, resulting in great animosity between the individuals involved. Much has been written about the internal strife in the Russian Army before and during the first years of the war, when the faction dominated by War Minister Vladimir Sukhomlinov fought for supremacy with an opposing faction of military conservatives, dominated by senior officers of Baltic German descent whose loyalty to the tsar was beyond question; the struggle between Falkenhayn and his opponents at *Ober Ost* was in its own way every bit as divisive. Falkenhayn found himself in a difficult situation, as it was clear to him that Germany urgently needed to bring the war in the east

to a conclusion as quickly as possible, so that the entire strength of the German Army could be sent west. However, sending reinforcements to the east effectively strengthened *Ober Ost* and thus his enemies. His solution at the beginning of 1915 was to allow a small number of newly created reserve corps to be deployed under Hindenburg's command, but with the strict condition that they were then to be returned to *OHL* for use in the west.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff used the reinforcements to mount another operation aiming to emulate the encirclement achieved at Tannenberg. The result was the Second Battle of the Masurian Lakes in February 1915, in which they drove the Russians from the small amount of Prussian territory that they still occupied. Several Russian divisions were destroyed in the fighting, but the swift Russian withdrawal limited the encirclement to a single corps. It was effectively little more than a tactical success, and to Falkenhayn's irritation the reserve formations that had made it possible remained in the east.

Whilst Falkenhayn's disputes with *Ober Ost* were a major problem, they paled into insignificance when compared to the problems created by Germany's main ally, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, chief of Austria-Hungary's general staff, had been a hugely important figure in the years before the war, with a hand in almost every aspect of army training and doctrine. During the years in which he dominated the training of staff officers and the drafting of manuals for the infantry, artillery and cavalry, he preached the supremacy of offensive operations, and the need to press home attacks at close quarters. The use of artillery and infantry fire to suppress defences was often ignored or minimised, and attacks were to be carried out repeatedly against the enemy's forces in order to break their will to fight. Retreat was something to be avoided at all costs, and if an enemy attack gained ground, it was vital that this ground was recovered with counterattacks as soon as possible, so that the enemy did not gain any advantage in terms of morale from his success. The importance of morale was something that Conrad repeatedly stressed – it was the currency that determined how long an army could continue offensive operations.

It was a huge tragedy for the *kaiserlich und königlich* (Imperial and Royal, usually abbreviated to *k.u.k.*, a reflection of the arrangement by which Franz Joseph was Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary) Army that Conrad was wrong in almost every respect. In their attempts to turn their chief's visions into reality, the commanders of Austria-Hungary's armies squandered hundreds of thousands of lives in the opening battles of the war, and then steadfastly failed to learn from their mistakes in the months that followed. By the end of 1915, the Germans were convinced that their ally was incapable of mounting any operations

unless there was substantial German involvement, and the Russians too were aware of which of their opponents was the weakest.

The problems of the Austro-Hungarian Empire extended beyond the disastrous errors of Conrad's planning and doctrine. There was no clear war plan, other than to tie down large numbers of Russian troops until Germany could turn east in strength. Conrad repeatedly called for a grandiose pincer attack against Warsaw, with Austro-Hungarian troops advancing from the south while German forces pressed down from East Prussia in the north, but the Germans never agreed to such a plan before the war, and its implementation once hostilities began was beyond the limited resources available. Although the ruthless mobilisation of reserves and the shortening of basic training to an absolute minimum allowed the *k.u.k.* Army to recover its numerical strength after the crippling losses of 1914, the delicate structure of the regiments and divisions was lost forever. The multi-lingual and multi-national empire had organised its regiments along national lines, with officers speaking the same language as their men; as reserves were poured in to refill the depleted ranks, it proved impossible to maintain this arrangement. With growing alienation between officers and men, the forces of Austria-Hungary were already showing signs of war-weariness by the first winter of the war, and by the end of 1915 there were persistent concerns about the reliability of many formations, particularly those made up of Czech and Ruthenian (Ukrainian) personnel.

After the failure of *Ober Ost* to strike a decisive blow against Russia in early 1915, attention turned elsewhere on the Eastern Front. Bitter fighting in the Carpathian Mountains had reduced the forces of Germany's ally to a desperate state, and in an attempt to reduce pressure on them, Falkenhayn planned a counterattack in what is now southern Poland, between Gorlice and Tarnów. Led by Generalfeldmarschall August von Mackensen, the predominantly German forces were subject to a complex command arrangement by which they were technically subordinate to Conrad's *Armee Oberkommando* (Army High Command, or *AOK*), though Conrad had to clear any orders he issued with Falkenhayn. The result was that *Ober Ost*, nominally in charge of all German forces on the Eastern Front, was left without any say in the new offensive.

Backed by heavy artillery, Mackensen moved forward in measured advances, first reaching the Galician capital Lemberg, and then turning north towards Brest-Litovsk. Unable to stop the advance, the Russians were forced to abandon all of their territory in Poland and parts of Belarus. For much of the summer, the men at *Ober Ost* – an expression used for Hindenburg himself, his headquarters, and even the expanse of Russian territory controlled by Hindenburg's troops –

who had conspired against Falkenhayn at the beginning of the year could only watch with frustration and envy as their comrades marched inexorably forward. A diversionary attack into Lithuania by *Ober Ost* slowly turned into a separate offensive, and Hindenburg and Ludendorff, the heroes of 1914 who in the eyes of the public had saved Germany from the Russian steamroller with their victory at Tannenberg, repeatedly demanded greater priority in terms of reinforcements and munitions so that they could advance deeper into Russian territory. On every occasion, Falkenhayn refused, much to the frustration of all at *Ober Ost*. It was inevitable that these refusals were seen as personal slights, and increased the animosity between the two opposed camps within the German Army. Finally, late in the campaign season in 1915, *OHL* authorised advances by the German troops in Lithuania and Latvia, but it was too late for them to achieve the deep penetrations that had originally been envisaged. Nevertheless, as 1915 drew to a close, although Russia remained obdurate in the face of German diplomatic feelers, the Germans could claim considerable success. Falkenhayn had succeeded in neutralising Russian power for the moment, and would be able to turn his attention elsewhere in his attempts to bring the war to a satisfactory conclusion. He had also neutralised his opponents within the German military. Max Hoffmann, a senior staff officer at *Ober Ost* and an active anti-Falkenhayn plotter, wrote in his diary in early January 1916:

The moment when Hindenburg could do something against Falkenhayn is long gone. Time has plucked all the trumps from his [Hindenburg's] hand. Times have changed, the days of our achievements are far in the past, as are the times of his blunders, such as Ypres etc. Under the current kaiser, I regard the prospect for change as gone.<sup>2</sup>

Russia entered the war with a mixture of trepidation and expectation. In many respects, its armies were still recovering from the shock of defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, and there was a widespread view amongst Russian military circles that the German Army was the most formidable force in Europe. However, this was tempered by the knowledge that in the opening phases of the war, Germany would be fully occupied in attempting to overcome France, and there would thus be an opportunity for an early strike by Russian forces. Indeed, Entente strategy required such a strike in order to force Germany to divert troops away from the west, and the French had helped finance the railroads that would be essential for rapid Russian deployment. When the war began, a variety of issues – difficult terrain, errors by senior officers, inadequate supplies and skilful

German ripostes – resulted in repeated setbacks. Although Russian armies scored repeated successes against the forces of Austria-Hungary, they failed to make any serious impression on the Germans throughout the opening months of the war. When they succeeded in surrounding a group of German divisions to the east of Łódź in November 1914, they failed spectacularly to hold on to them; despite being outnumbered, the German force showed great resolution and determination to fight its way back to the German line through the winter snow, even taking its substantial haul of prisoners with it.

In 1915, the Russian Army found itself drawn into a terrible battle of attrition in the Carpathians, bloodily repulsing repeated attempts by the *k.u.k.* Army to break through towards the north and trying to advance out of the mountains onto the Hungarian plain. The front line elsewhere became dangerously thin as troops were sent into the mountain battles, particularly immediately north of the Carpathians, where Mackensen's offensive broke through in the spring. Constantly off balance, the Russians fell back from one improvised line to another, though their greater willingness to face reality later in the year allowed them to withdraw with far fewer losses than those of the first defeat at Gorlice–Tarnów in May. Nevertheless, the disasters that the Russian Army suffered had inevitable consequences. Grand Duke Nikolai, uncle of the tsar, was dismissed as supreme commander. His replacement, to the consternation and surprise of most people, was Tsar Nicholas himself. It would have been a brave decision in any circumstances to take command of a beaten, demoralised army; for a man with almost no military experience, certainly none at the highest level, it was an astonishing gamble in several respects. The military risks were obvious to all, but by late 1915 there was growing unrest throughout the Russian Empire, and the association of the tsar with further military failures carried its own risks.

As winter set in and all sides paused to consider the future, there were the beginnings of some ideas of how the war might be brought to a conclusion. None of the strategies adopted by the belligerents in 1914 had proved to be effective on the battlefield, but in 1915 the Germans had found a way of sustaining an advance through the use of heavy artillery to suppress defences, followed by deliberate and often lengthy pauses while further ammunition was brought forward and preparations completed for another 'push'. This was the means by which Mackensen advanced across southern Poland and into Belarus, and was then replicated during the advance into Serbia in the autumn. However, such tactics might work on the Eastern Front, but were less likely to succeed in France, where both sides occupied heavily fortified positions in depth. Here, a different strategy would be needed.

Both the Entente and the Central Powers – the latter largely in the form of Falkenhayn's *OHL* – came to very similar conclusions. The war would be won by exhausting the resources of the enemy. On 6 December 1915, representatives from Britain, France, Russia and Italy met in Chantilly to discuss how to proceed. Marshal Joseph Joffre, the French supreme commander, produced a detailed memorandum in which he placed the blame for allied failures on a lack of coordination:

[The setbacks are due to] the independence with which each ally has conducted the war, each on his own front and in particular according to his own opinion.<sup>3</sup>

If the war was to be prosecuted to a successful conclusion, Joffre argued, the Entente would have to coordinate its attacks in a more rational manner. Although all parties agreed to this, Joffre's memoirs describe his continuing misgivings about his allies. He feared that the British wished to reduce their commitment to the Western Front and preferred to direct their resources against Turkey in the Middle East, and he expressed exasperation at the lack of honesty on the part of the Russian delegates at the conference:

One incident at the conference highlighted this tendency to dissimulate. During the session on 7 December, I invited the representatives of the allied armies to summarise the situations of their armies; General [Yakov Gregoreyevich] Zhilinsky [who had been commander of the Russian Northwest Front at the beginning of the war, and was widely regarded as a courtier rather than a serious military figure] was the first to speak and energetically disputed the figure that we knew represented the effective strength of the Russian armies. Where, according to us, the effective strength did not exceed 1.5 million, the general pretended that they had reached a strength of 2.7 million men. The difference was substantial. In order to validate our figure, I offered to read out a telegram I had received from Petrograd ... that was very clear on the subject of Russian strength; the general opposed the reading of the document. I passed it to him, he read it very rapidly, and flushing strongly, he thrust it into his briefcase.<sup>4</sup>

Nor did he make any attempt to hide his exasperation at the apparent inability of Russia to exert any pressure upon the Central Powers, leaving Zhilinsky to report back to his superiors that Joffre behaved as if only France was fighting the Central Powers with anything approaching adequate commitment.<sup>5</sup>

The conference concluded with an agreement that all Entente Powers resolved to coordinate their attacks in a move designed to prevent the Germans from moving

troops from one crisis to another. It was hoped that such pressure would precipitate a collapse at some point in the east or west, though Joffre continued to harbour doubts about whether his allies would actually comply with the agreement.<sup>6</sup>

The problem for the French, British, Russians and Italians was that whilst they might have come to an agreement on strategy, the tactical means of delivering that strategy continued to elude them. None of the French attacks in Champagne or the British attacks at Neuve Chapelle and Loos had achieved the sort of breakthrough enjoyed by the Germans in the east, and the armies of Italy, whose intervention in the war had been expected to produce great results, had battered themselves in vain against the Austro-Hungarian defences along the River Isonzo, despite enjoying a substantial numerical advantage. In the east, the Russians had undoubtedly achieved substantial successes against the forces of the *k.u.k.* Army, and even against German formations, but Joffre was not alone in doubting the ability of Russia to achieve a decisive result. However, Joffre could console himself with the fact that even if Italy and Russia could not break the enemy lines, they could be expected to reduce the ability of Germany to concentrate its forces in the west, where France's armies might then be able to secure a decisive victory.

At a time when – with some difficulty and reservation – the Entente Powers were moving closer to an agreed strategy, the Central Powers were heading in completely the opposite direction. At various points throughout the war, the Germans had proposed a centralised command structure for the Eastern Front, with – naturally – a German general appointed at its head, and Vienna had rejected the suggestion on every occasion, largely for reasons of national prestige. Relations between Falkenhayn, who was in many respects the epitome of the professional Prussian soldier, and his opposite number, Conrad, had never been good, and deteriorated steadily through 1915. At the end of the year, after the defeat of Serbia, Conrad rejected the advice of Falkenhayn and ordered his armies to attack Montenegro. This resulted in the almost complete breakdown of relations and a period of no meaningful communication between the headquarters of the two allies, at a moment that would prove critical.

The issue that triggered the rift was the command of the Austro-Hungarian Third Army, led by General Hermann von Kövesz von Kövessháza. For the duration of the Serbian campaign, Kövesz was under the command of Mackensen, who had moved to the Serbian front after his successes against the Russians. With Serbia defeated, Conrad informed Falkenhayn that he was removing Kövesz from this command arrangement and would be using Third Army for the operation against Montenegro. He saw this assault as part of securing the flank of any future attack towards the south to drive the Entente forces from Salonika.

Falkenhayn insisted that he had known nothing about the Austro-Hungarian plan to strike at Montenegro, something strongly denied by Conrad who claimed – with some justification – that he had made no secret of this intention throughout the planning of the Balkan operation. August Cramon, the German liaison officer with Conrad's headquarters, later wrote about the dispute:

In all loyalty I must record that between mid-November and Christmas Conrad had repeatedly informed our army leadership of his plans with regard to Montenegro and Albania. Frankly, I cannot say to what extent Falkenhayn agreed with these plans. From my written notes, it is not clear whether he ever decided to reject Conrad's proposals. It seems to me that he increasingly adopted a dilatory attitude, which in view of the unclear overall situation was indeed not unreasonable. In mid-December he advised Conrad of the urgent requirement to withdraw German troops from the Eastern Front and therefore regarded it necessary that instead of tying up the surplus divisions of Kövesz's army in the Albanian and Montenegrin mountains, they should be sent east; in view of this requirement, he perhaps regarded it as necessary to abandon the Montenegrin operation.<sup>7</sup>

Conrad's reply was swift. He was not prepared to abandon the invasion of Montenegro, and in any case had already issued orders for the withdrawal of Third Army from Mackensen's control. Falkenhayn objected strongly to what he regarded as a *fait accompli*, complaining to Berlin that he had not consented to this in any way; given his high-handed treatment of Conrad at various points in 1915, there is a certain irony about this objection to *AOK* acting without full consultation. Cramon was summoned to a meeting with Falkenhayn:

He summoned me to Oderberg and told me without any circumlocution that he no longer trusted *AOK* ... I pointed out that the continuation of the war in the same successful manner would be unthinkable without the personal cooperation of the two chiefs of staff. Falkenhayn agreed with me but held to his point of view that mutually profitable cooperation was impossible. I would have to use my skills to put matters right.<sup>8</sup>

It proved to be a difficult task. Conrad was convinced that he was in the right, and was persuaded with difficulty to write to Falkenhayn apologising for any misunderstanding. It took a month for this letter to appear, during which the two allies proceeded to draw up their plans for the coming year with little regard to each other.

In keeping with his long-term strategy, Falkenhayn intended to concentrate his efforts for 1916 in the west, with the intention of drawing the French Army into a battle of attrition at Verdun. A relatively modest advance would see his troops able to deploy artillery on the high ground that dominated the fortress city, and he then intended to bombard the French into defeat: either they could choose to defend Verdun in what would become a hugely costly battle, or they could face the ignominy of abandoning a high-prestige position. Falkenhayn's plans for this were, to an extent at least, based upon the belief that the armies of the Austro-Hungarian Empire would continue to concentrate on the Eastern Front, so that should the Russians show any signs of recovery, they would still be faced by considerable forces. Ignorant of Falkenhayn's plans, Conrad intended to return to a plan that he had proposed on several occasions – an attack on Italy, designed to knock the Italians out of the war and end Italian claims to Austro-Hungarian territory.

Ultimately, neither plan would succeed, due to a combination of the formidable obstacles they faced and miscalculations by both Falkenhayn and Conrad. Lack of coordination between the two powers did not play a substantial part, but it led to weakness in the east, particularly in the southern part of the front that was held by the *k.u.k.* Army, at a time when Russia finally managed to raise and equip enough troops to mount a powerful offensive. A year that began with high hopes of final victory for the Central Powers would become one that brought the forces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire close to complete collapse, and in attempting to discharge its obligations from the conference at Chantilly, tsarist Russia would fulfil Falkenhayn's prediction about its abilities to sustain the effort of a prolonged modern war.

## CHAPTER 1

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# THE FRUITS OF WAR: THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THE OPPOSING ARMIES

Many of Europe's military decision-makers wrote after the war – with varying degrees of justification – that they had foreseen that the conflict would be long, costly and difficult to win. However farsighted they might have been, all of Europe's Great Powers entered the war prepared and equipped for a short, if brutal, conflict. When the high expectations of offensive strategies failed to be fulfilled, all sides struggled to adapt to the reality of the fighting, which stubbornly refused to respond to all pre-existing theories of military operations.

In short, the problem was one of war fought with the firepower of modern industry and the numerical strength created by a century of considerable population growth, but marred by problems of mobility. All armies remained critically dependent upon railways – it was simply impossible to move the quantities of supplies required by any other means. Once troops deployed in the field, mobility was limited to the speed of marching men. It rapidly became clear that an army with even a modicum of competent organisation could withdraw faster than an attacker could pursue, and any advance ran out of momentum once it stretched too far from the critical railheads. In theory, horses had been expected to provide at least a degree of faster mobility, but cavalry proved to be ineffective. Tactics used by the mounted formations of all sides were poorly thought through and ineffective, and cavalry units lacked the firepower to prevail against almost any sort of defence. In addition, the burden of supplying fodder for horses added its own strain to supply networks that struggled to keep pace

with the demands of field armies; for example, the Russians had to devote more rail capacity to horse fodder than supplies for soldiers.

The German plans for the war have been analysed in great depth, with some recent works even questioning whether the famed 'Schlieffen Plan' actually existed.<sup>9</sup> Even Schlieffen doubted that the German Army was sufficiently strong to carry out his proposed encirclement, but in the absence of any other realistic alternative, the Germans launched their armies across their western borders in August 1914. At first, the advance appeared to go well, but ultimately it foundered at the Battle of the Marne in September. Falkenhayn's attempt to secure victory at Ypres late in the year also failed, precipitating a radical rethink of strategy. Having concentrated so long on a decisive knockout blow against France before turning east, the Germans had no credible alternative for winning the war, and, the factions within the German military system had differing views of how to conduct the war, though there was general agreement that an attempt should be made to knock Russia out of the war before turning on France. The divergence centred more on how this should be achieved; Falkenhayn favoured the minimum possible expenditure of effort and resources, whereas *Ober Ost* rapidly developed ambitions for major conquest.

There has been much argument about Germany's war aims. Although most nations had been preparing for war for many years prior to 1914, there is little clear evidence that German statesmen and soldiers had given much thought to what they wished to achieve, other than decisive defeats of France and Russia in order to eliminate the immediate threats that Germany faced, particularly in light of Russian rearmament and modernisation. Despite years of expectation and preparation, the avalanche of events in the summer of 1914 plunged the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires into a war that they characterised as one that was imposed upon them. The assassinations in Sarajevo, the uncompromising support of Russia for Serbia, the equally intransigent support of France for Russia, allowed the governments, newspapers and even the clergy of the Central Powers to portray the conflict as one in which Germany and Austria-Hungary were fighting for their survival, surrounded by foes who wished to deny them their fundamental right to exist.<sup>10</sup> Kaiser Wilhelm II told his people:

We are not incited by lust for conquest. We are inspired by the unyielding determination to keep for ourselves and all future generations the place which God has given us.<sup>11</sup>

In September 1914, when it seemed quite likely that the Schlieffen Plan was about to succeed, thoughts began to turn to how the future security of the

Central Powers might be safeguarded. Kurt Riezler, an official in the foreign policy section of the German chancellor's office, had accompanied Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg on a visit to *OHL* in early August. Despite the enthusiasm and confidence that he witnessed there, Riezler recorded in his diary that war remained a gamble.<sup>12</sup> Discussions with staff officers began to shape his view of what Germany should attempt to achieve, as he wrote on 19 August:

[There was a] meeting all evening about Poland and the possibility of a loose affiliation of other states with the Reich – a mid-European system of different customs zones. [This would be] Germany with Belgium, Holland and Poland under close protection, Austria under looser protection.<sup>13</sup>

The significance of this entry is the first use by Riezler of the concept of *Mitteleuropa* to describe a future settlement. There were many factions who wished for substantial territorial adjustments: industrialists sought to secure raw materials and captive markets; others wished to establish coaling stations that would provide greater maritime independence. Riezler himself expressed concern at the profusion of demands, and urged the German government's press secretary, Otto Hammann, to try to damp down the numerous calls that were being made, at least until the military situation became clearer.<sup>14</sup>

On 9 September, Riezler wrote a document that became known as the September Programme, the first attempt to formulate policy for a post-war settlement. Riezler summed up the cardinal aims of his proposals at the beginning of the document:

[Our aim is] the security of the German Empire for all imaginable time in the west and east. To this end, France must be so weakened that it cannot be restored to Great Power status, [and] Russia must be driven as far as possible from the German frontier and its hegemony over the non-Russian vassal peoples must be broken.<sup>15</sup>

This was a very deliberate departure from any attempt to restore any delicate balance of power in Europe; like many staff officers at *OHL*, Riezler concluded that the failure of this balance to prevail in the summer of 1914 was what had led to the great gamble of a pan-European war, something that he intended to avoid at all costs in the foreseeable future. In order to achieve this state of safety, Riezler proposed substantial penalties on France. There would be huge reparations, sufficient to fund war pensions for Germany's troops and to pay

off its national debt. Changes along the border would deprive France of valuable iron mines, and the chain of fortresses built to deter a German invasion would be destroyed, leaving France permanently vulnerable to attack from Germany.

Even at this early stage of the war, Riezler and others had no doubt that while France had been implacably hostile towards Germany since the end of the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, Britain posed a threat that in many respects was even greater, not least because of the difficulties of invading the British Isles. In order to put Germany in a better position to deal with Britain in any future conflict, France would also be required to cede a coastal strip from Boulogne to Dunkirk. France would be tied to Germany by trade agreements that would exclude Britain from the continental market, and Belgium – stripped of the fortress city of Liège, and with Antwerp also under German control – would be reduced to the status of a vassal nation, entirely dependent upon Germany. Luxembourg would become a state within the German Empire, and a new economic region consisting ultimately of all of continental Europe would be established under German control. The territories that Russia would lose, stretching from the Baltic region through the Ukraine to the Caucasus, would also be part of this economic area, effectively providing Germany with a continental empire that would eliminate the possibility of a British blockade being an effective weapon in any future conflict. British trade within this area would explicitly be controlled or even blocked.

The status of the September Programme has been the subject of much argument. The German historian Fritz Fischer's case for German culpability in the outbreak of war was based upon the existence of the programme, reasoning that such a radical document must have been based on pre-existing plans; he attempted to link it to a conference of 1912 in which Kaiser Wilhelm and his senior military officials agreed on a war of aggression in the summer of 1914. Others have responded that whatever might have been agreed at the kaiser's 1912 conference, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that Riezler's programme was based upon any pre-existing plan, or that the military personnel at the conference regarded the proposal of an offensive war as anything more than one of many plans. Whatever the relative merits of these arguments, the detail of Riezler's plans and their concordance with the views of so many senior figures within the German military establishment both confirm that the programme represented a school of thought that had considerable support. At no stage did Germany officially adopt the details of the programme, and many within the establishment, notably Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and Falkenhayn, regarded such aims as

excessive and unattainable; Otto Hammann quoted the chancellor as describing the proposals as 'a covetous nationalism that wants to annex half the world', and it is clear that within days of the drafting of Riezler's programme, the chancellor was already accepting that many of its objectives might prove unattainable.<sup>16</sup> Others, such as a group of right-wing bodies who referred to themselves as the 'Six Economic Associations', demanded even more, wishing to subjugate Belgium entirely, and to annex large portions of northern France as well as establishing a colonial empire in Africa. A petition in support of such proposals in 1915 received the support of over 1,300 prominent officials and academics, while a response advising that annexation of independent non-German people might create greater difficulties than it solved was supported by barely 140.<sup>17</sup> Drawing on the themes of the September Programme, Friedrich Naumann published his book *Mitteleuropa* in 1915, describing in some detail how Germany could establish hegemony over much of Central and Eastern Europe. For him, the only way that this could be achieved was by war, and not only because force of arms could impose such a rearrangement of borders, as he made clear in the opening sentences of his book:

As I write this, there is fighting in the east and west. I deliberately write this in the middle of the war, as it is only in wartime that there is the mood to consider transformative thoughts. After the war, normal sentiments will once more rapidly emerge from hiding, and it will not be possible to create *Mitteleuropa* with such normal sentiments. Just as Bismarck established the German Empire in war in 1870 and not after the war, so in war must our state's leaders establish the basis of a new order, while blood flows and the people have the will. Later, it would be too late.<sup>18</sup>

To a large extent, the only major body publicly to oppose such ambitions was the Social Democratic Party, which continued to insist that Germany's workers were fighting for the defence of Germany, not conquest. Falkenhayn's objection to such talk of conquest was based upon military and diplomatic pragmatism. He calculated that it was beyond the power of the German Army to defeat all of the Entente Powers sufficiently to enforce such annexations. One or more of Germany's foes should be tempted to make peace, and this meant limiting Germany's demands to an acceptable level. However, in the heady days of late summer in 1914, such thoughts seemed overly pessimistic, and as the human and material cost of the war became ever greater, so it grew harder to consider accepting modest post-war aims.

Support for this reshaping of Europe was particularly strong in the Austrian parts of the Dual Monarchy. The new *Mitteleuropa* would allow Austria to become less reliant on its difficult relationship with Hungary. Predictably, there were those within the Dual Monarchy who feared this new arrangement and saw it as a threat; István Tisza, the Hungarian prime minister, objected strongly, recognising that it would reduce Hungary in particular, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in general, to little more than a vassal state of Germany. Partly due to this fear, and partly due to the constant tensions between Vienna and Budapest, the first stage of implementing the economic part of *Mitteleuropa* – a customs agreement between the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires – was not agreed until 1918, and was not put before the respective parliaments for ratification before the war came to an end.

As Russia's forces were driven from the parts of Poland that had been under the rule of the tsars since the last independent Polish state was partitioned, the issue of what to do with Poland became increasingly important. The vagueness of German policy towards any future Polish settlement undermines Fischer's case that Germany consciously planned a war of aggression with the intention of securing major territorial gains in the east; if any such plan had existed, there surely would have been more detailed consideration about what to do with the first territory that was likely to fall into German hands. By contrast, Vienna made an early claim to Poland. Leopold von Andrian was an Austrian diplomat who was consul-general in Warsaw prior to the war, and when he returned to Vienna at the beginning of hostilities he was assigned a role in shaping Austria-Hungary's war aims. He had previously been a proponent of expanding the empire towards the northeast, and he returned to Poland in February 1915 where together with Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, an Austrian literary figure who had been recruited into government service, he continued to proselytise about Austria's mission to bring civilisation to Eastern Europe. As the year progressed, though, the character of his public pronouncements and private writing changed, not least due to the growing interest of Austria-Hungary's ally. At first, Germany appeared content to allow Austria-Hungary to develop its policy in Poland, but the reality was that it was German force of arms that drove the Russians east, and there was therefore a growing appetite in Germany for a bigger say in what happened in Poland. An additional motive for German territorial acquisition was the experience of Russian occupation of parts of East Prussia in 1914. There had been widespread looting, rape and killing, albeit at a far lower level than the same region would experience in 1945, and during the first winter of the war, Adolf Tortilowicz von Batocki-Friebe, the president of East Prussia, had written a memorandum expressing the need for a buffer zone around current German territory.<sup>19</sup>

At first, Andrian had seen Poland as a territory disputed both physically and culturally by Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but by the end of the year, Andrian and other Austro-Hungarian officials rapidly realised that their intentions towards Poland were more likely to be hindered by their ally than by Russia.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Andrian pressed forward with his plans to tie Poland to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, making much of one of the few common factors between the two countries – their Roman Catholicism – to arrange celebrations of Emperor Franz Joseph's birthday in Warsaw in August 1915. Kurt Riezler, the author of the September Programme, visited him in October, an encounter that left Andrian increasingly conscious of German rivalry. Immediately after, he returned to Vienna, and then travelled to Berlin where he had another meeting with Riezler; here, Andrian discovered that Riezler had met senior Polish figures and had begun discussions about a possible semi-independent Polish state that was part of the German Empire, modelled loosely on the arrangement with Bavaria. At the time, Berlin was still officially in accord with Vienna's vision of Poland as being in the Austro-Hungarian sphere of influence, and Andrian made the first of several outspoken attacks on German policy; these were sufficiently strident that Gottfried Hohenlohe, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in Berlin, felt compelled to raise the issue with German officials. At a meeting with Gottlieb von Jagow, the German foreign minister, Hohenlohe was reassured that Andrian's interpretation of matters was exaggerated.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the Germans began to show reluctance to support Vienna's preferred option of combining Congress Poland with Galicia.

German policy was already developing in a divergent direction from that of Austria-Hungary. Whilst the latter wished to create a new province of the Habsburg Empire, many Germans began to articulate a somewhat different vision. In his memorandum of December 1914, President von Batocki proposed that all non-German people in the border strip that he wished to create should be expelled, and perhaps replaced by ethnic Germans currently living within Russia in some sort of exchange. He attempted to minimise any humanitarian concerns by suggesting that village and town communities could be exchanged en masse in an orderly manner. Whilst such suggestions appear to be forerunners of the policies of Nazi Germany, it should be remembered that similar forcible expulsions of civilians – in this case Germans – from East Prussia, Silesia and Pomerania – were part of the Potsdam Agreement after the Second World War, in which it was stated:

The Three Governments, having considered the question in all its aspects, recognize that the transfer to Germany of German populations, or elements

thereof, remaining in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, will have to be undertaken. They agree that any transfers that take place should be effected in an orderly and humane manner.<sup>22</sup>

The result of the Potsdam Agreement was immense suffering, with many of the Germans being mistreated, robbed, raped or even killed. Had Batocki's plan been implemented, it is likely that it would have had similar consequences. The German government might have toyed with such ideas, but made no attempt to implement them; some in military circles, such as Ludendorff, were more enthusiastic about such an approach, but had their hands full with the conduct of the war.

Although the proposals to expel all Slavs and Jews from the territory that Batocki wished to annex sound repugnant, they should be considered in context. Mass expulsion of ethnic groups was a practice that was widespread at the time. The Russians commenced a policy of deportations as soon as they occupied Galicia, and internal forcible movements had been practised within the tsar's empire for decades. The Turkish treatment of Armenians was even more extreme, with up to 20,000 being killed in 1909, and further deportations and killings over the following years. The Western Powers were not immune to such practices. It was only two generations since the United States had confined Native Americans to small reservations, and as soon as they recaptured parts of Alsace and Lorraine in 1914, the French systematically expelled those that they regarded as being insufficiently French.

Austrian plans for acquisition of land to the northeast were unpopular in Hungary as well as in Germany. The creation of new provinces within the empire might threaten Hungarian influence, and in an attempt to accommodate their concerns a complex plan was drawn up, ensuring that any new state created out of Poland would not have the same status as Austria or Hungary. However, all of these considerations were largely academic. The Germans might not have decided finally what they wished to do with Poland, but they had concluded that the Austro-Hungarian proposals were not acceptable. One of the reasons was that there was growing concern that the absorption of such a large number of Slavs into the Austro-Hungarian Empire would threaten the close association between the Central Powers, and that Austria-Hungary might find itself tempted to join some future Slav anti-German faction. Instead of allowing Vienna to establish its control over former Russian Poland, the Germans moved forward to create a *Generalgouvernement* in Warsaw to oversee the territories occupied by German troops. The officers of *Ober Ost* expected that this new Polish administration

would be under their control, but they were bitterly disappointed when Falkenhayn ensured that the head of the new *Generalgouvernement* would be Generaloberst Hans Hartwig von Beseler, an artillery expert who had overseen the assault on the Russian fortress of Novogeorgievsk and, more importantly, was a close ally of Falkenhayn.

Beseler made up for his lack of experience in administering such a territory, and his ignorance about Poland, by reading and consulting widely. He also cooperated with a civilian administration led by Wolfgang von Kries that worked alongside his office, but nevertheless thoroughly exploited the region. Timber and agricultural produce was shipped away to Germany in large amounts, often leaving locals short of food; as a result of shortages of food and other essentials, the death rate in Warsaw doubled during the war. High levels of taxation further added to the misery of the Poles, leaving them less able to obtain whatever food might have been available on the black market. Workers were drafted for labour both in Poland and in Germany, and often failed to receive the low levels of pay that they had been promised. The opening of schools and permission to speak Polish in the University of Warsaw did little to reduce resentment of German occupation.

Whilst there may have been disagreements between Berlin and Vienna about the fate of the parts of Poland formerly occupied by Russia, there could be no argument about the Baltic region. Here, the Germans occupied much of what is now Lithuania and Latvia during 1915, and *Ober Ost* had no intention of allowing these territories to be removed from its control. As food shortages in Germany became more widespread throughout 1915, Ludendorff began to consider how the occupied territories could be exploited to try to remedy matters. In his memoirs, he described the state of the countryside that the German armies seized:

The land was in a neglected state as a consequence of the war, and only where we had been in position for some time was there any order. The retreating Russians had taken the population with them, some willingly. Some had hidden in the great forests and now returned home. Nevertheless, many rural dwellings remained abandoned. The fields were not tended ... the Russian authorities and judiciary, the entire Russian occupation machinery and the local intelligentsia had abandoned the land. There was no police or gendarmerie, and only the clergy had any real authority.

... In the cities, particularly in Vilna, Kovno, and Grodno, serious food shortages developed straight after they were occupied, and worsened and spread to other towns. Firewood was not available in adequate quantities.

Apart from the German minority, the population was unfamiliar to us. The Balts in particular welcomed the German troops ... the Lithuanians believed that the hour of their liberation had come; but when the better times that they hoped for did not begin immediately due to the inflexible necessities of war, they became more distant and mistrustful. The Poles adopted a hostile posture ... the Jews did not know what face they should put on things, but they made no difficulties for us, and we were able to communicate with them, which was by no means the case with the Poles, Lithuanians and Latvians. These language difficulties were very severe and cannot be overstated. As a result of a shortage of relevant German literature, we knew very little of the situation of the land and people, and it seemed a completely new world to us.

In this territory, roughly the size of East and West Prussia, Posen and Pomerania combined, we were faced by a huge task: everything had to be constructed and ordered from scratch. First, order and peace had to be established in the rear of the army and spies removed. The land had to be tended and put to use for the provision of food for the armies and homeland as well as for other supplies for the troops and our war economy.<sup>23</sup>

This summary, particularly the last paragraph, reveals some critical points. Whilst the Russians had removed a great deal of infrastructure in their withdrawal, the intention of the Germans to establish their own regime regardless of local customs and practice rapidly alienated what support there might have been for them. Fearing unrest, espionage and even the spread of disease, the Germans imposed strict movement restrictions, which resulted not only in resentment but also in dislocation of all aspects of everyday life. Compulsory labour, with minimal levels of pay, created further ill feeling.

In particular, although Ludendorff was keen to exploit the new territories, it is noteworthy that agricultural production for the needs of the indigenous population did not feature at all in his list of priorities. To make matters worse, inflexible demands for agricultural produce that could be used by the army or sent back to Germany resulted in too little seed being left for sowing the next year's crop. Nevertheless, a great deal was achieved. Hundreds of bridges, railway lines and roads were either constructed from scratch or rebuilt, and new agricultural industries were established. There was considerable investment in schools and other infrastructure, but all under the strict and inflexible control of the army.<sup>24</sup> Resistance was sporadic and spontaneous at first, but usually resulted in severe repression, with villages being burned and many locals killed. As the war continued, the local population hit back with repeated attacks on German warehouses and the assassination of German officials and police.

Further south, another region was also coming to terms with occupation by the Central Powers. After resisting two Austro-Hungarian invasions in 1914, Serbia was attacked again in the autumn of 1915, this time by a combined force of German and Austro-Hungarian formations, led by August von Mackensen. After a comparatively brief campaign, Serbia's army was forced to retreat through Kosovo to the sea, at first in an attempt to establish an enclave where it could be resupplied by Britain and France, and then for evacuation to the island of Corfu. Falkenhayn had approved the campaign in order to knock Serbia out of the war and thus allow Austro-Hungarian forces to be freed for deployment elsewhere, notably against Italy and Russia, and the German involvement in the region was rapidly reduced as the fighting died down. Conrad, his Austro-Hungarian counterpart, was prone to oscillating wildly between despondency and overenthusiastic confidence, and as Serbian resistance collapsed he bombarded Vienna with a series of memoranda about the future of Serbia. He was prepared to tolerate independence for Albania and Montenegro, provided that both remained firmly within Vienna's sphere of influence, but insisted that Serbia should be incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian Empire:

Serbia is to be removed from the ranks of European states with a single coercive diplomatic act that would be ratified to a certain extent by the military situation; its criminal culpability for having provoked a World War should thus be accentuated. To this end it should, in agreement with the German and Bulgarian governments, be declared that: firstly, Serbia has ceased to exist; secondly, the Karadjordević dynasty has accordingly ceased to rule; thirdly, the area of today's Kingdom of Serbia comes under military administration as agreed by the three allies that retain the right, also to be agreed upon mutually, to decide the future division of the entire territory.<sup>25</sup>

Others disagreed, particularly Prime Minister Tisza in Budapest. During the long years of antagonism between Serbia and the Dual Monarchy, Tisza had always cautioned against annexation of Serbia after any war, on the grounds that South Slav populations within the empire were already restive, and the absorption of Serbia would create more problems than it would solve. In December 1915 he wrote a memorandum listing his concerns, as well as his alternative proposals:

Another one and a half to two million Serbs will not only change the numerical balance of forces but will also revive the nationalist aspirations and hopes of Serbs in our state, and the Hungarian state will be threatened with the loss of its true

identity. If ascendancy is gained by centrifugal elements, or even those elements that do not actually oppose the state but are indifferent, Hungary will lose its coherence, and the entire Monarchy will lose the most important living strength that is essential for it to withstand victoriously the gigantic shift of power in this World War ... The inclusion of all Serbs would certainly not kill off the Greater Serb idea – on the contrary! An increase in the number of Serb subjects in the Monarchy by unifying all Serbs under the sceptre of one ruler, an increase in the Serb element as compared with others from the same ethnicity, or the creation of a huge majority of Orthodox Serbs compared to Croats will intensify Greater Serb propaganda.

Serbia should lose its eastern and southern parts that have been promised to Bulgaria. We should also annex its northwest corner and thus cut it off completely from the Rivers Save and Danube ... A third possible annexation would include territories inhabited by Albanians. For its future existence Serbdom would then comprise a reduced Montenegro cut off from the sea, and the western part of Central Serbia, a mountainous region far from river routes and largely infertile. It would thus be crushed between stronger neighbours and economically would be totally dependent on the Monarchy.<sup>26</sup>

In keeping with attitudes throughout Europe, Tisza intended that ethnic Austrians and Hungarians would settle the northern territories seized by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, ultimately reducing the Slav population to a minority. In addition to securing the region, this would create a physical barrier between what was left of Serbia and South Slav populations within the empire to the immediate north of the Danube.

Stephan Burián, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, did not agree with Tisza's position, and in late November 1915 told a German diplomat that it was impossible to consider any option other than complete annexation of Serbia. By early 1915, this viewpoint had hardened, leaving Tisza isolated in the Austro-Hungarian Joint Council of Ministers. The only crumb of comfort offered to him was that any territory annexed in the Balkans would be assigned to Hungary.<sup>27</sup>

Discussions about the precise arrangements for occupied Serbia would drag on for some time. Whilst Germany had no territorial ambitions in the area, there were considerable German economic interests in the Balkans, and Berlin therefore expected to have a big say in how the territory was administered. Bulgaria, without whose involvement the attack against Serbia would have been far harder to execute successfully, had been promised considerable territorial gains and now that the fighting was over, demanded additional areas. The Germans were willing

to concede this in return for the right to manage and exploit mining and railway resources in the Bulgarian sector. Matters were further complicated by the fact that the Bulgarian Army had actually occupied some parts of southern Serbia and Kosovo that had not been promised to it at the outset, and the Austro-Hungarian authorities watched with increasing alarm as the Bulgarians proceeded to set up administrative departments in these disputed areas. Eventually, Mackensen – who had led the Central Powers forces in their invasion of Serbia – was appointed to mediate between Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria, and after lengthy negotiations a new demarcation line was agreed.

Much as was the case in German-administered Poland, there were both civilian and military authorities in the Austro-Hungarian part of Serbia. The first military governor was General Johan Graf von Salis-Seewis, a Croat by ethnicity with experience of fighting insurgents in Macedonia in the first decade of the century as part of a Great Powers force; his civilian counterpart was Ludwig Thallóczy, a Hungarian with an interest in Bosnian and Albanian history. Each was a nominee of a different faction within the Austro-Hungarian Empire; appointed by Conrad, Salis-Seewis immediately began implementation of policies that would lead to annexation, whereas in keeping with the instructions he had received from the Hungarian prime minister, Thallóczy opposed such developments.

As the war progressed, Germany increasingly adopted a dominant role in its relationship with the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Desperate to assert their own rights, the officials in Vienna looked on with dismay as Germany commenced its exploitation of resources within the Bulgarian-occupied parts of Serbia. One official wrote to Vienna in late December 1915:

German higher commands are carrying out ruthless economic acts in Serbia. They exploit the country's resources without any consideration for the needs of the people or their future, and do so almost exclusively to meet German requirements. They requisition huge amounts of livestock, wheat, flour, wine, salt and fuel. They have even improvised slaughterhouses for pigs and send their output to Germany. Not only has hunger raised its head here, but the population has also been severely impoverished.<sup>28</sup>

A message was sent to Berlin via Falkenhayn's *OHL* to remind the Germans that Serbia was part of the Austro-Hungarian sphere of influence; the response from Falkenhayn was typically terse, to the effect that Vienna might regard the parts of Serbia that it controlled as being in its sphere of influence, but it had no right to

assert control over those parts that were under Bulgarian control, i.e. the mines and agricultural regions being exploited by Germany. This exploitation began even before Serbia had been comprehensively beaten; Hans von Seeckt, Mackensen's chief of staff, complained in October 1915 that a constant bombardment of questions about minerals and wheat from would-be German investors and exploiters left him feeling more like a merchant than an officer.<sup>29</sup>

Despite constant requests from Vienna for a definitive agreement on resource sharing in Serbia, the Germans delayed discussions and spent the intervening weeks strengthening their relationship with Bulgaria in order to put themselves in a better position for whatever negotiations might ensue. It took until 17 August 1916 to reach full agreement. Inevitably, the deal was greatly favourable to Germany, not least because German institutions controlled so many assets in Bulgaria.<sup>30</sup>

As soon as the fighting men had moved on, occupation authorities began their work. Bulgaria intended that the territory it gained from Serbia would become completely Bulgarian in character. Accordingly, all schools in the Bulgarian zone were required to teach exclusively in Bulgarian, and thousands of Serbian males were arrested in an attempt to reduce the risk of resistance. Officially, they were interned, but the reality was rather different, as an Austro-Hungarian officer reported:

It is known that most of the Serbian intelligentsia, i.e. administrators, teachers, clergy and others, withdrew with the remnants of the Serbian Army, but some have gradually begun to return for personal or material reasons. Here, in occupied territory, it is virtually impossible to find either them or those who did not flee; they have 'gone to Sofia' as the new Bulgarian saying goes. These men are handed over to Bulgarian patrols as suspects without any due legal process, with orders that they should be 'taken to Sofia'. The patrols actually return the following day without them. Whether they are taken 20 or 200km [12 or 120 miles] it is all the same. The patrols take up shovels, disappear into the mountains, and soon return without the prisoners. Bulgarian officers do not even try to conceal the executions, but boast about them.<sup>31</sup>

Whilst such killings were shocking, even to the Austro-Hungarian officer who reported them, they were not unusual for the region. After Serbia seized territory from the Turks during the First Balkan War, Serbian irregulars had carried out many such killings, not stopping with the intelligentsia.<sup>32</sup> During the invasions of 1914, the *k.u.k.* Army had also committed many atrocities, and after the 1915

invasion there was widespread internment in the area under Austro-Hungarian control, though fewer killings than in 1914. Nevertheless, there were summary executions at the hands of the Austro-Hungarian authorities with little or no legal process. Many of those interned became ill or died as a result of poor housing and inadequate food, and those who were not actually ill were frequently used as forced labour. As was the case in the Bulgarian zone of occupation, schools used the language of the occupiers.

Such policies, designed to crush Serbian national consciousness, had severe effects on productivity in a land already badly scarred by war. Agricultural production plummeted due to the absence of so many men from the countryside; in an attempt to make the conquered land more productive, both Bulgarian and Austro-Hungarian authorities resorted to harsher measures, and inevitably these merely resulted in further resentment and even lower production.

The armies that held the occupied territories from the Baltic to the Adriatic, and who continued to face each other grimly determined to continue the slaughter, had changed greatly during 1915. On paper at least, the balance of power had tilted strongly against the Central Powers; the advent of Italy on the side of the Entente Powers meant that by the end of 1915, Germany and Austria-Hungary, together with the small army of Bulgaria, could field approximately 289 divisions, compared to 356 British, Belgian, French, Italian and Russian divisions.<sup>33</sup> This was not a decisive advantage for the Allies, particularly in a war in which mere numerical superiority was no guarantee of military success. However, the Entente Powers were making good progress in other fields. Throughout 1914 and 1915, the Russian Army was hamstrung by shortages of artillery ammunition, but by the end of the year Russian industry was able to produce 50,000 rounds per day, compared to initial wartime production of less than 13,000. Combined with the huge amounts of war *matériel* flowing across the Atlantic to help equip the new divisions raised in Britain, it was likely that pressure upon the Central Powers would be heavy. To make matters worse, it was increasingly unlikely that Germany would be able to take advantage of the disjointed approach adopted by its enemies in 1915, when it had been possible to transfer sufficient forces to the east to inflict serious defeats on Russia and Serbia, and then to bring those troops west to block the autumn offensives launched by the British and French. The plans agreed at the Chantilly conference in December 1915 would see the Entente Powers coordinating their plans for 1916 in order to bring pressure to bear upon Germany and Austria-Hungary simultaneously. The increased provision of ammunition and artillery would eliminate one of the main factors that had held back the Entente armies on all

fronts, and it was expected that this would force a breach in the line at some point. The difficulties of forcing a breakthrough were clearly understood, particularly in the west where the Germans had constructed extensive defences in depth. In order to improve the chances of success, the Chantilly conference agreed to attempt to inflict 200,000 casualties on the Central Powers every month; once this attrition rate had worn down the enemy, a massed coordinated offensive would be launched.<sup>34</sup>

It is a sign of how far all nations had come that such cold-blooded calculations of slaughter could be considered in this manner: the killing or wounding of the equivalent of the entire population of a city the size of Bordeaux on a monthly basis was now merely an arithmetical calculation. The bulk of this attrition, the Entente Powers hoped and expected, would be borne by the German Army, as this was clearly by far the strongest of the forces of the Central Powers. By the second Christmas of the war, Germany had over 6.7 million men under arms, far more than at any earlier date. However, the heavy losses of 1914 and 1915 had left their mark. The professional core of the army was smaller than it had ever been, with a large proportion made up of men who had been drafted since the war began. One consequence was that – unlike the army of 1914 – a large part of the army's officer corps was made up of men from the urban middle classes, rather than the traditional German *Junker* families that had historically provided the majority of the kaiser's officers. Such a change was inevitable in the face of losses: by the end of 1915, Germany had lost one sixth of its officers, with an even greater number wounded. This change was not the egalitarian improvement that might have been expected. The new officers were less likely than their aristocratic predecessors to regard the importance of looking after the needs of their troops as such a high priority, and the troops themselves were less tolerant of differences in the treatment of officers and men when the officers were from a closer socio-economic background. The loss of so many highly trained officers, and a significant number of the vital NCOs who held together every unit in the army, inevitably had an impact on the fighting power of Germany's divisions. About 30 per cent of the rank and file of the army in 1914 was made up of men in their early 20s, with another 33 per cent consisting of men aged between 25 and 30; by 1916, the percentage of men aged 20–25 was broadly the same, but the 25–30 group was now reduced to only 20 per cent. There had been a proportionate increase in those aged under 20 and over 35, and this new army was consequently less able to endure the physical hardships of war.<sup>35</sup> To an extent, the importance of this was reduced by static warfare, but the resilience of the 1916 army in the face of prolonged combat was lower than in previous years.

If the German Army had suffered serious losses, those of the *k.u.k.* Army were almost catastrophic. The disastrous defeats in Galicia and Serbia in 1914 had cost the army a large proportion of its trained core, and Conrad's blind determination to force a way through the Carpathian passes in the first winter of the war had brought the army close to collapse. In a desperate attempt to compensate, the conscription age was widened and training shortened, but the consequence of this was that many of those who arrived at the front were physically unfit for service on what was still a relatively mobile battlefield, and their poor training resulted in crippling losses; the only practical way of using what amounted to little more than a militia in the offensive operations demanded by Conrad was to launch mass attacks with little attempt at fire and manoeuvre. Some senior officers like Alfred Krauss, chief of staff of the headquarters of Southwest Front in the Alps, doubted the loyalty of some officers who joined the army during the war:

The men everywhere were outstanding – even the Czechs who had such a poor reputation – if they were led well, and if officers were present. However, where those who were not loyal to the state were in command as reserve officers, or where active officers became tainted by national sentiment, the result had the worst consequences for the war.<sup>36</sup>

Whilst this may have been the case on some occasions, a far bigger influence was the loss of ethnic structure within the army. In 1914, divisions had tended to have troops of the same nationality, and although German was regarded as the universal language for military functions, it was normal for officers in the army to speak the same language as that of their men. Replacement drafts, or march battalions, were intended to be raised from the same nationalities and then incorporated into the parent front line divisions, but increasingly it became normal practice for trains carrying several march battalions to arrive at the front in the middle of a crisis, and for the battalions to be amalgamated into an ad-hoc unit to deal with the current emergency, with the result that soldiers with only six to eight weeks' training found themselves fighting alongside others who spoke a different language. The new officers that were recruited during the war had little time or inclination to learn any of the languages spoken by their men, and the gulf between the ranks created increasing tensions. In an attempt to keep the polyglot army united, the authorities made the most of one of the few common factors amongst the many nationalities represented: their Roman Catholicism. The *k.u.k.* Army had twenty-four chaplains per division, compared with only six in the German Army.

Some nationalities within the *k.u.k.* Army gave more cause for concern than others. Many Czech units fought with great distinction, but others showed a worrying tendency to desert or surrender at the first sign of Russian pressure. There were similar concerns about Ruthenian troops from eastern Galicia. Within the Czech lands of the empire, there had always been considerable resentment about Austro-Hungarian rule, with some wishing for a similar status to that of Hungary and others advocating complete independence. By mid-1915, there were widespread and open expressions of dissent in Prague and other cities and large towns in Bohemia; heavy-handed attempts to repress many of these merely increased the level of dissent.

Despite its catastrophic losses, the *k.u.k.* Army remained a powerful force at the end of 1915. Its participation in the Eastern Front victories of 1915, albeit as a junior partner of the German Army, had restored some of its self-belief, though the disastrous assault on Rovno in the autumn had shown once more that it struggled to mount any offensive operation without the help – or leadership – of its partner. Nevertheless, its high command, headed by Conrad, remained convinced that the war could be won through an offensive operation. Now that the Russians had been pushed back, Conrad turned his attention on the enemy that he most disliked: Italy. Once the winter was over, 1916 would see the *k.u.k.* Army try once more to turn its chief's dreams of a successful offensive operation into reality.

The relationship between the Germans and their Austro-Hungarian allies was a strange one, based more on necessity than anything else. Despite the common language between Germany and the Austrian part of the Dual Monarchy, the attitudes and aspirations of the two nations were very different. Ludendorff described how a Jewish resident of a town in Poland asked why Germany had chosen to shackle itself to a corpse, a view that gained widespread support throughout the German military as the war continued.<sup>37</sup> Karl Kraus' *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit* described the alliance as being akin to one between Eskimos and Congolese natives.<sup>38</sup> Whilst German accounts written after the war have been highly critical of the performance of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the reality is that the Germans were also guilty of failing to ensure proper coordination between the two powers. Partly as a result of pre-war spy scandals, the German military establishment showed little inclination to trust their Austro-Hungarian counterparts, and there was little understanding in each camp of the capabilities and limitations of the other until fighting began. Conrad had expected Moltke to win a swift victory in the west within forty days, and Moltke had encouraged Conrad to believe that German forces would be available for a joint offensive against Russia early in the war; both of these, particularly the latter, were utterly