

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY'S LAST WAR, 1914-1918

(ÖSTERREICH-UNGARNS LETZTER KRIEG, 1914-1918)

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I. The New Year's Battle of 1916 against the Russians

A. The military situation at the start of the year

1. Decisions by both sides

As the second Christmas of the war approached at the end of 1915 the war-weary world witnessed only minor military actions after the heavy fighting in the fall. Only in the southwest corner of Germany, at Hartmannsweilerkopf, a brief local action flared up shortly before Christmas Eve; it ended in a defensive success for the Germans. However, behind the lines the headquarters were working all the more diligently so that in the coming year they could break out of the stalemate and win a decision.

The Central Powers

The Central Powers were already suffering greatly from the blockade imposed upon them by the enemy coalition. Time undoubtedly was working against them. Therefore it was all the more important for the high commands to break free as soon as possible. At the start of December, GO Freiherr von Conrad was giving primary consideration to a plan to fall upon Italy with united forces in spring 1916. After Italy had been damaged, the next target would be the enemy's strongest front, held by the French and British. The Aus-Hung. Chief of Staff wanted to use the relatively short period of time necessary to prepare for an offensive in south Tyrol for occupying Montenegro and north Albania. It was already questionable whether the Entente could be driven from Salonika, so it was necessary to make sure of the western wing of the new Balkan front and thus the southeast borders of the Monarchy.

GdI von Falkenhayn regarded both of Conrad's suggestions with unmistakable coolness. This compelled the k.u.k. high command in mid-December to issue the necessary orders for the deployment against Montenegro without the formal consent of the German OHL; they also resumed direct control of the k.u.k. 3rd Army, which hitherto had been placed under GFM von Mackensen. This led to a complete break between the two Chiefs of Staff, which lasted into the new year. Meanwhile, of course, the German Chief of Staff had made a decision that was much more important for the further

course of the war, completely without the knowledge of his ally. For a long time his gaze had wandered from the Balkans and Italy to the West. On this front he wasn't planning a battle of annihilation in the grand tradition of military history; rather he had a forlorn hope that he would somewhere be able to slowly wear down the enemy's power of resistance. He wanted to draw the French into an attrition battle by attacking their sally port at Verdun. Although the Aus-Hung. headquarters had already similarly considered in July 1915 whether it would be possible to strike Italy without cooperation from their allies, as the year drew to a close they still hadn't made any final decision about how they would address the unfavorable situation which would confront the military leaders of the Central Powers in the near future. In 1915 the combined efforts of the two Empires had gained considerable successes; indications that in 1916 they would go their separate ways foreshadowed misfortune. Moreover the commander with the greater resources at his disposal, GdI Falkenhayn, anxiously doubted whether it was possible to win the war on the battle fields.

The Entente

Unlike the leaders of the Central Powers, those of the Entente willingly bowed to the needs of the hour in their meetings of December 1915. What they had been seeking in vain was a combined attack by all parties against the fortress wall of their opponents - this should and must finally become reality in 1916! It was much more difficult for the participants at the council of war in Chantilly to agree upon the time at which the powerful storm should break out. The fighting in 1915 had left its marks on all of the allies. Although they recognized the importance of action, it would take some time for them to assemble enough men and equipment to have a reasonable chance of success. It was finally decided that March would be the month of the general offensive. However, not one of the participants at the conference could have seriously believed they could fulfill this promise.

Moreover, this necessary postponement also involved a great danger. Their opponents could slash apart the net which the Entente was preparing before it could be thrown over their heads. To prevent such a development, one country would strike before the others; this was the Tsar's Empire, the power which - aside from Serbia - had suffered the most in the 1915 campaign. The Russians were motivated partly by the plans of their new Chief of the General Staff, Alexeiev, and partly in response to the needs of Serbia. Another factor was hope to win the adherence of

Romania. Although the time when direct assistance could be provided to the Serbs had long passed, at Chantilly the Tsarist Army was given the task of pinning down the enemy in the next few months. The first operation to fulfill this mission was already being planned while the conference was arriving at its decisions. Alexeiev was not the man to give up his hopes even after the defeats of 1915. According to the plans of this General, the offensive which would throw back the Aus-Hung. front through Lemberg and Kolomea was only a prelude to the decisive blow against the Danube Monarchy which he had been contemplating for several weeks. A great initial success should cause the Romanians, who were once again hesitating, to intervene and then inspire the Entente forces in the Balkans to new enterprises.

2. Preparation for attack and defense

The attackers

The hopes of the commanders were in stark contrast to the unfavorable conditions that actually confronted the Russian offensive. At the start of December, General Shcherbatchev's newly constructed 7th Army had already left Odessa to deploy in the area Woloczysk-Husiatyn, with II, XVI and V Caucasian Corps plus 3 Turkestan Rifle Div, 2 (independent) Don Coss Bde and the 21 Don Coss Bde [sic].¹ Also the XI Corps from the northern wing of 9th Russian Army and XII Corps from Volhynia had been ordered to move to the Bessarabian border. The average strength of the corps in 7th Army was 30,000 combatants, and they also had more guns than at the beginning of the war (although only a few heavy batteries). The ranks of 2 Rifle Div and 82 ID, which had come from Volhynia to Kamenets-Podolsk and Ulaszkowce, had again been filled to replace their losses in the autumn fighting. However, ammunition was still lacking; the supplies sent by the Entente through Archangel and Vladivostok were insufficient. Moreover, the rear areas were in chaos because the Russian high command, emulating the example of the year 1812, had initiated a general flight of the population during the summer. Hungry and helpless civilians, along with thousands of bandits, swarmed through the cities and villages. The railroads were choked up and the transport service completely disorganized. In December there was

1 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Of course there was no unit called the "21st Don Coss Bde"; it's not clear if this refers to some other Bde (perhaps the 1st independent Don Coss Bde?) or to the 21st Don Coss Regiment (which at the start of the war had been assigned to XV Corps).

a serious shortage of rations in the Southwest Front. The magazines in the rear areas were empty. The Armies suffered bitter shortages of food, ammunition, clothing and footwear.² Then bad weather hindered all troop movements. There was a thaw at the start of December; wagons and guns were sunk in the mud and mire. Harsher winter weather followed around Christmas time. Ice formed on the rivers, and many bridges collapsed after being hit by ice floes.

Moreover there were many quarrels between Ivanov and his Chief of Staff, General Savitch. At the last moment Savitch had to be replaced by General Klembovsky.³ Under such conditions it is no wonder that Ivanov had little confidence in the success of the winter offensive. Nevertheless, the objectives under his plan of attack were wider even than the far-reaching goals of General Alexeiev. General Letschitzky's 9th Army (XII, XI, XXXII, XLI and XXXIII Corps plus III Cav Corps) would strike first. His powerful thrust between the Dniester and Pruth would divert his opponents' attention from the principal area of operations. 7th Army (V Caucasian, II and XVI Corps plus the XXII Corps from 11th Army and II Cav Corps from 9th Army) would strike the decisive blow over the Strypa. General Shcherbatchev would choose the point at which he would break through, and then roll the Aus-Hung. front up toward the north. General Sakharov's 11th Army (XVIII, VI and VII Corps) would later join the offensive of 7th Army. The task of General Brussilov's 8th Army (XVII, VIII, XXXIX, XXX, XL and XXIV Corps plus V Cav Corps) was to pin down his opponents' forces in Volhynia through increased activity.⁴

The defenders

The k.u.k. high command at Teschen had already received reports in mid-December that the Russians had pulled XI Corps in east Galicia and XII Corps in Volhynia out of the line and placed them on trains. They soon learned where both corps had gone. On 18 December the Russians began lively scouting operations against the right wing of GdK Freiherr von Pflanzer-Baltin's Army in the hilly land north of Bojan. During these actions the k.u.k. XI Corps took prisoners from the 11, 12, 19 and 32 Russian ID. Thus it was determined that the Russians had deployed their XI and XII

2 Golovine, "The Russian Army in the World War" (in English: New Haven, 1931), pp. 183 ff. and 230

3 Lemke, "250 Days in the Tsar's Stavka" (in Russian: Leningrad, 1920), p. 298

4 Klembovsky, "Strategic Studies of the World War 1914-1918" (in Russian: Moscow, 1920), Part IV, pp. 10 ff.

Corps against the Bukovina. The Aus-Hung. leadership had no further doubt that Letschitzky intended to attack the front between the Pruth and Dniester.

GdK Pflanzner-Baltin quickly drew the necessary conclusions from this situation, and on the 19th already was initiating troop movements to strengthen his right wing. The main body of 51 Hon ID around Sniatyn (Division HQ, 201 Hon Inf Bde and artillery) was moved by rail to Czernowitz, and deployed by XI Corps HQ behind Papp's Brigade in the vicinity of Mahala-Rarancze. The other troops of 51 Hon ID would remain for the time being in the Army's reserve north of Czernowitz. 202 Hon Inf Bde, which had been held in readiness at Kotzmann, was sent to Czernawka behind the center of 42 Hon ID. The artillery of XI Corps was reinforced by two heavy and four light howitzer batteries plus a light cannon battery from the other sectors of 7th Army's front. On the 21st Pflanzner-Baltin sent two regiments from XIII Corps to his Army's right wing - IR # 16 to Toporoutz and IR # 50 to the Okna area. FJB # 27 from FML von Hadfy's Corps was placed behind the left wing of XI Corps. Army HQ assembled 5 Hon CD and IR # 57 from 12 ID at Zastawna. Four battalions of Lt Col. Adalbert Scholtz's Landsturm Group, which had been building trenches in the Forest Carpathians, were ordered to move from Dorna Watra to Zurin where they could protect the flank of GdK Edler von Korda's Corps against envelopment by the Russians on the right bank of the Pruth. Finally the high command decided to return 9 Inf Bde (which a short time previously had been sent from FZM Ritter von Benigni's Corps to the Isonzo front) to 7th Army.

All these troop movements would have to be completed as quickly as possible, because the attack against XI Corps was expected around Christmas based on the reports of Russian prisoners. On the 21st and the following two days there were lively actions with Russian advanced troops on the hills and plains east of Toporoutz and Rarancze, which were deeply covered with snow. Surprise attacks were launched on Aus-Hung. outposts in the fog and gusts of snow. GdK Korda moved the Army reserves which he'd received closer to his southern wing - 201 Hon Inf Bde to Mahala and Rarancze, 202 Hon Inf Bde to Toporoutz, and IR # 16 to Czernawka. In the afternoon of the 26th, new Russian batteries started to bombard the positions of Korda's Corps. Everything indicated that a Russian attack on the front by Rarancze was imminent.

Order of battle of the 7th k.u.k. Army

i) Organization on 15 December 1915

Commander = GdK Freiherr von Pflanzner-Baltin

Chief of Staff = Col. Ritter von Zynek

VI Corps (GdI von Arz) - 26 bns, 5 sqdns, 17 batties

. 39 Hon ID (GM Blasius von Dani) = 77 Hon Inf Bde (GM von Molnar), 78 Hon Inf Bde (Col. Daubner)

. 12 ID (GM Edler von Hinke) = 23 Inf Bde (GM Ritter von Metz), 24 Inf Bde (GM von Puchalski)

XIII Corps (GdI Freih. von Rhemen) - 26 bns, 5 sqdns, 16 batties

. 36 ID (Franz Ritt. von Schreitter) = 72 Inf Bde (GM Edl. von Luxardo), 13 Inf Bde (Col. Edl. von Löw)

. 15 ID (GM von Richard-Rostoczki) = Just 29 Inf Bde (GM Ritt. von Weiss-Tibanyi)

Corps Hadfy (FML von Hadfy) - 15 bns, 28 sqdns, 16 batties

. 6 CD (GM Edl. von Schwer) = 5 Cav Bde (GM Leiter), 14 Cav Bde (Col. von Pongracz)

. 30 ID (GM Jesser) = GM Franz Kuhn's Group, 16 Inf Bde (Col. Freih. von Testa)

Corps Benigni (FZM Ritt. von Benigni) - 13 bns, 41 ½ sqdns, 15 batties

. 5 ID (FML Edl. von Habermann) = k.u. Lst Inf Bde (Lt Col. Bekesi), 10 Inf Bde (GM Adalbert von Kaltenborn)

. 3 CD (FML Ritt. von Brudermann = 10 Cav Bde (Col. Ritt. von Szivo), 17 Cav Bde (Col. Edl. von Kirsch)

. 8 CD (GM Freih. von Schnehen) = 13 Cav Bde (Col. von Fluck), 15 Cav Bde (Col. Edl. von Dokonal)

XI Corps (GdK Edl. von Korda) - 29 bns, 7 sqdns, 24 batties

. 42 Hon ID (FML Liposcak) = 83 Hon Inf Bde (GM Bekic), 84 Hon Inf Bde (Col. von Petkovic)

. Lt Col. Papp's Bde

Directly under the Army - 27 bns, 22 sqdns, 3 batties

. 51 Hon ID (GM Foglar) = 200 Hon Inf Bde (GM Tanarky), 201 Hon Inf Bde (GM von Latzin)

. 5 Hon CD (FML Freih. von Apor) = 19 Hon Cav Bde (GM von Jony), 23 Hon Cav Bde (Col. von Berzeviczy)

. Also - 202 Hon Inf Bde (Col. Savoly), k.k. Lst Inf Bde (Lt Col. Scholtz), IR # 50 of 35 ID

ii) Reinforcements received through the end of January 1916

From South Army - 12 bns, 2 sqdns, 7 batties

. 38 Hon ID (GM Werz) = 75 Hon Inf Bde (Col. Gombos), 76 Hon Inf Bde (Col. Karleusa)

From 5th Army - 9 Inf Bde (Col. Trimmel), of 6 bns

From Army Group Böhm-Ermolli - 12 bns, 2 sqdns, 20 batties
 . 40 Hon ID (GM Edl. von Nagy) = 79 Hon Inf Bde (Col. Ehmann), 80
 Hon Inf Bde (GM Haber)

From Army Group Linsingen - 22 ½ bns, 28 sqdns, 16 batties
 . 24 ID (GM Urbarz) = 47 Inf Bde (Col. Klinger), 48 Inf Bde (Col.
 Korzer)
 . 2 CD (GM Freih. von Abele) - 3 Cav Bde (Col. Freih. von
 Spiegelfeld), Cav Group of Col. Edl. von Karapanca
 . 21 LW ID - GM Podhajsky = 41 LW Inf Bde (Col. Schwanda), 42 LW
 Inf Bde (Col. Chwostek)

From 3rd Army - 9 bns, ¼ sqdn, 4 batties
 . FML Fülöpp's Group
 . 21 Lst Mtn Bde (GM Eccher ab Eccho)

B. The course of the battle

1. First attacks by Letschitzky's Army against Rarancze, 27-30 December 1915

The attack which was supposed to thrust through the Aus-Hung. defenses between the Pruth to the Dniester was conducted by General Letschitzky with all the divisions of his XII (12 and 19 ID) and XI (32 and 11 ID) Corps, deployed at Bojan and in the valley of the Rakitnabach.⁵ He had chosen a point where his opponents had a strong position. The southern wing of the k.u.k. XI Corps had been placed under GM Foglar, the commander of 51 Hon ID; here Lt Col. Papp held the north bank of the Pruth and the well-fortified Dolzok Heights with three Hungarian Landsturm and four Gendarmerie battalions plus the Ruthenian-Romanian Volunteer Detachment. Farther north, on the edge of the heights east of Rarancze and Toporoutz and then in the forest zone as far as the Dniester, lay the deeply entrenched lines of FML Liposcak's 42 Hon ID. GdK Korda had deployed the reinforced artillery of XI Corps, totaling 36 light and 11 heavy batteries, in nine groups; they in turn were led by 3 headquarters (each over 3 groups) and deployed very close to the main position. The artillery groups behind the Dolzok (which formed a salient facing east) and next to Toporoutz would be able to pound the open ground leading up to the hills at Rarancze.

27 December

5 Klembovsky, p. 12

The battle started around 7:00 AM on 27 December. The Russian batteries opened fire along the entire front between Kalinkowcy and Bojan. They aimed principally against the entrenchments on the Dolzok and the fortifications erected to minimize casualties from shrapnel. All the guns of Korda's Corps fired in response and struck the attacking Russian lines which surged forward from Bojan and from the narrow ravines which led from the Rakitnabach up to the high ground at Rarancze. The regiments of XII Russian Corps, deployed in depth, laboriously made their way forward against both flanks of the Dolzok Heights. The first lines of riflemen from XI Russian Corps advanced slowly against the hills east of Rarancze and Toporoutz. North of the forest zone, skirmishers from XXXII Russian Corps pretended to mount an attack from the village of Czarny Potok and the bend in the Dniester at Samuszyn.

The advance of the Russian infantry soon came to a halt on the entire front under the defensive fire of the Aus-Hung. artillery. The lines of riflemen dug into the frozen earth. Around noon the Russian artillery laid down a barrage in the Rarancze area, to hinder the expected intervention of the opposing reserves. GdK Korda, however, had correctly anticipated that the main Russian attack would be directed against the position which extended as a salient to the east on the Dolzok. He had already moved 201 Hon Inf Bde - placed at his disposal from the Army reserves - from the low ground along the Hukeubach and deployed it just behind the threatened sector. At 1:00 PM the Russian infantry tried to advance against both flanks of the Dolzok, but were driven back with bloody losses by the Aus-Hung. artillery firing from their front and sides. Meanwhile GdK Pflanzer-Baltin sent one regiment of 200 Hon Inf Bde (Hon IR # 302) to Mahala and the other (Hon IR # 301) to Rarancze. In the evening the first trains carrying 9 Inf Bde back from the Italian front arrived at Zucza. On the 28th the Brigade would move ahead to Mahala.

28-30 December

Fighting flared up anew on the 28th. Fresh attacking waves from XII Russian Corps thrust in vain against the right flank of the Dolzok Heights, while reinforcements from 32 ID (on the left wing of XI Russian Corps) struck the heights at Rarancze - also in vain. The attackers were pinned down by the fire of the Aus-Hung. batteries in their front and flank; they collapsed exhausted in front of the positions of Brigade Papp and of the right wing of FML Liposcak's Croatian 42 Hon ID. Meanwhile after a powerful bombardment Letschitzky sent the second line of 11

Russian ID from Kalinkowcy in a new assault toward Toporoutz. However, the Croats in front of Toporoutz also stood fast heroically in their smashed trenches; excellently supported by the artillery, the repulsed all the Russian attacks. GdK Korda had to send just parts of IR # 16 into the sector between Toporoutz and the southern edge of the forest zone to reinforce the gallant, hard-fighting garrison of the trenches.

North of the forest zone, on the 28th the 103 ID of Russian XXXII Corps and 74 ID of XLI Corps advanced in the bend of the Dniester at Samuszyn. This attack, carried out by weaker forces, was easily repelled by the left wing of 42 Hon ID. In front of Corps Benigni some enemy units which had already worked their way forward on the 27th against the Sinkow bridgehead returned to their starting points. On the other hand, the activity of lines of Russian skirmishers in front of 6 CD (on the left wing of Corps Hadfy), signified that an attack was looming against the bridgehead positions at Uscieczko. GdK Pflanzner-Baltin therefore decided to send IR # 5 of 15 ID (which had been in reserve behind the left wing of XIII Corps) by rail from Buczacz to Horodenka. There it would be prepared to support 6 CD if necessary.

In the night of 28-29 December there was bitter fighting involving trench mortars and hand grenades on the Dolzok, where the Russians were able with some difficulty to entrench in the frozen ground right next to the positions of Brigade Papp. When morning dawned, the Gendarmerie battalions of this Brigade repulsed a new, but weak, Russian attack from Bojan. Meanwhile fresh Russian troops from 11 ID assembled again at Kalinkowcy; after a renewed bombardment, they advanced at noon to assault Toporoutz and the area farther north. Parts of IR # 16 and especially the artillery helped the Croatian Domobranen to also shatter this assault. General Letschitzky's attacking divisions were now too exhausted to carry on the fighting; they had to entrench in front of the positions of Corps Korda.

2. The attack by Shcherbatchev's Army on the Strypa, 29 Dec 1915 to 4 January 1916

For the intended decisive attack, which was supposed to break through the Aus-Hung. position on the Strypa, General Shcherbatchev selected a relatively short sector between Wisniowczyk and Bobulince. Against this front the II Corps (26 and 43 ID) would march in the first line. Behind them the 3 Turkestan Rifle Div and XVI Corps (41 and 47 ID) were ready to

penetrate farther into the line after the intended breakthrough. To the left of II Corps, the V Caucasian Corps⁶ would make a supporting attack between Bobulince and the road from Czortkow to Buczacz; to the right, XXII Corps would make a similar attack between Wisniowczyk and Bieniawa. II Cavalry Corps, three divisions strong, waited at Czortkow for the moment when they could ride forward in pursuit.

General Shcherbatchev had declined to make reconnaissance attacks, so that he would have a better chance of surprising his opponents. On 28 December, a day before the offensive was to start, his divisions moved ahead in the Strusow-Kossow area, up to the middle and lower Strypa which were defended here by Austria-Hungary's XIII and VI Corps. The Russian columns marched with difficulty through hilly country, deeply covered with snow. Their advanced detachments collided near Dobropole with the outpost positions of GM Blasius von Dani's 39 Hon ID. This enemy advance alerted VI Corps HQ that a major Russian assault on Kujdanow was imminent. GdI von Arz ordered his covering troops to avoid a serious fight and to withdraw into the main positions, which on the Corps' left wing ran along the western bank of the Strypa.

29 December

Lively fighting developed along the Strypa early on 29 December. The Mogila Heights, occupied by 132 Inf Bde of FML Hofmann's Corps, were suddenly attacked and taken by detachments of the Russian XXII Corps. Simultaneously, this enemy Corps broke through the line of outposts of 39 Hon ID; some of the defending troops were only able to withdraw over the Strypa bridges into the main position after fighting and suffering some casualties. However, when the Russians thrust ahead toward Wisniowczyk they were hit in the flank by fire from batteries of 39 Hon ID, which were still posted on the east bank of the river (east of Kujdanow). The enemy units fighting 12 ID on the southern wing of VI Corps were similarly checked by artillery fire. The Finnish troops who assaulted the Burkanow bridgehead were thrown back by Col. Edler von Bolzano's 132 Inf Bde and suffered substantial losses. 131 Inf Bde, engaged in the center of Corps Hofmann, repelled an assault on the Sokolow bridgehead.

Based on prisoners' reports, it was recognized that four Russian

6 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - Despite its title, the V Caucasian Corps commanded Finnish troops: the 2 and 4 Finnish Rifle Divs. XXII Corps had 1 and 3 Finnish Rifle Divs.

divisions (26 and 43 ID, 3 and 4 Finnish Rifle Divs) had been concentrated to attack the center of VI Corps. In the evening of the 29th, GdK Pflanzner-Baltin halted IR # 5, which had entrained for Horodenka, and moved it back to Buczacz. He told FML Hadfy, who had IR # 57 attached to his Corps, to hold that Regiment ready in the Zaleszczyki bridgehead in case it had to follow IR # 5 to Buczacz to reinforce the Strypa front. On 29 December, Teschen ordered South Army HQ to make ready GM Werz's 38 Hon ID, which was in reserve at Kozowa, for 7th Army. In place of 38 Hon ID the 43 LW ID, which had left the front of 2nd Army, was sent to Kozowa.

30 December

At dawn on the 30th, Russian batteries which had moved up during the night began to systematically bombard the positions of VI Corps, especially those of the right wing of 39 Hon ID on the heights east of Kujdanow. Because his surprise attack had failed, Shcherbatchev now wanted to weaken his opponents' entrenchments with artillery before the next storming attempt. Meanwhile the regiments of II Russian Corps in the Dobropole area assembled in the low ground between the lightly swelling hills leading down to the Strypa; here they were pinned down by the artillery of the k.u.k. VI Corps and of Corps Hofmann.

Around noon the artillery fire increased to an unprecedented level. Shots from the Russian batteries poured over the right wing of 39 Hon ID. The trenches on the eastern bank of the Strypa were covered with fire and clouds of smoke. However, the stubborn defenders held their ground despite the heavy damage to the entrenchments. When the Russian infantry began to attack around 2:00 PM, seeking to break through at Kujdanow, they came under cross fire from guns and machine guns; each of their repeated assaults were bloodily repulsed.

Meanwhile GdK Pflanzner-Baltin had given VI Corps the leading brigade (76 Hon Inf Bde) and artillery of 38 Hon ID, which was hurrying over from South Army by forced marches. Moreover, in the morning he had already ordered IR # 57 to be sent from Zaleszczyki to Buczacz. Then 7th Army HQ got reports that a sharp Russian attack was also expected on the Dniester front. Therefore they ordered Korda to take one regiment from 9 Inf Bde (stationed just north of Czernowitz) and send it by rail to Horodenka while the other regiment moved to Werenczanka; this could be risky because the situation on the Bessarabian border had become quieter on 30 December.

31 December

On the 31st, Letschitzky prepared for a new blow on the hills east of Rarancze; to divert his opponents' attention, he sent weaker forces against the Michalcze bridgehead, defended by 6 CD. Shcherbatchev continued his attack on the Strypa. In the morning the Russian infantry who tried to advance against VI Corps were halted by our artillery. The leading brigade and artillery of 38 Hon ID meanwhile arrived at Gnilowody. In the afternoon, after several hours of effective artillery bombardment, II Russian Corps struck against Kujdanow. The heaviest pressure was directed against Hon IR "Kassa" # 9 on the right wing of 39 Hon ID. The attackers moved ahead in rows up to 15 men deep. The fighting was heavy, but the Honveds stood the test. The attacking Russian waves again were struck in the front and flank by fire from guns in the trenches and from machine guns. The defenders also hurled hand grenades at the foe. After six attempts to storm the lines, the battered Russian units withdrew to their starting points through fields littered with corpses; with wild cries of "Rajta" and "Eljen" the Hungarians sprang out of their defenses to shoot at the fleeing enemy.⁷

During St Silvester's Night, the batteries of the newly-arrived 38 Hon ID and some machine guns came up to support the garrisons of the trenches. The tired but gallant troops of VI Corps stayed in their fortifications and awaited a new assault. However, the Russian artillery was silent during the night, which gave the defenders a chance to repair some of the heavy damage to their positions.

1-4 January

On New Year's morning the II Russian Corps again attacked the heights east of Kujdanow and the adjacent defenses of VI Corps, but were checked by the defensive fire of the Aus-Hung. artillery. The intervention of the batteries and machine guns of 38 Hon ID was sufficient to enable the troops of Arz's Corps to continue their resistance.

Also on 1 January, parts of XXII Russian Corps thrust against an advanced strong point of 131 Inf Bde of South Army, but were also defeated. Throughout the day the positions of XIII Corps were under heavy fire from the Russian guns, as were those of 6 CD at the Michalcze bridgehead.

7 Arz, "Zur Geschichte des grossen Krieges 1914-1918" (Vienna, 1924), pp. 96 ff.

On the 2nd, the weakened II Russian Corps lay in their trenches and had to be content to carry on a fire fight. Around 3:00 PM on the 3rd, the V Caucasian Corps at Pilawa made a weak thrust against the heights southeast of Bobulince, defended by GM Edler von Hinke's 12 ID. At the same time actions developed in front of the lines of the northern wing of the k.u.k. XIII Corps.

Meanwhile GdK Pflanze-Baltin had moved two regiments of 38 Hon ID from Gnilowody to Monasterzyska, where they could be entrained to join XI Corps. When it was reported that the outpost positions of XIII Corps had been driven in, one of these regiments was ordered to Buczacz. V Caucasian Corps didn't hazard a major assault on the Buczacz bridgehead. They carried on the fight with little effort, and on the 4th they didn't move past the outposts of XIII Corps. Finally toward evening they directed an attack against the main positions of the Zagreb 36 ID south of the Buczacz-Czortkow road; it was soon checked by very effective artillery fire.

The defeat of 7th Russian Army

Thus the Russians' first offensive against the northern wing of Pflanze-Baltin's Army had worn itself out. Since the battle started, Shcherbatchev's Army had lost almost 18,000 men; in the same period the k.u.k. VI Corps lost just 800, mostly from artillery fire. The Russian high command was bitterly disappointed that Shcherbatchev's costly attack, upon which they had placed such high hopes, hadn't taken the Austrians by surprise and led to a breakthrough of the Strypa front. General Alexeiev wrote Ivanov that "The numerous casualties bear no relation to the minor successes. You must pay more attention to softening the enemy position with artillery, and engage all available forces in the fighting."⁸ While the XXII and especially the V Caucasian Corps had mounted only weak attacks, II Corps had lost more than half of their combat troops on the battlefield. At the start of the action, Shcherbatchev hadn't been aware of the exact location of the Aus-Hung. position on the Strypa. His artillery had spent hours bombarding some heights in front of the k.u.k. VI Corps which had been long been abandoned. After the opportunity for a surprise attack had passed, the methodical Army commander had restricted his activity to the relatively short part of the front between Wisniowczyk and Bobulince. Substantial forces (three divisions) had been left unemployed behind II Corps while that unit had been collapsing.

8 Lemke, pp. 299 and 312

During this heavy fighting, GdK Sakharov's 11th Russian Army had also stayed in their trenches. General Alexeiev was concerned by the possibility that the German South Army itself might go over to the offensive and could thrust toward Tarnopol and Zbaraz. On 2 January he ordered General Ivanov by telegraph to take immediate measures to prevent the Germans from conducting a counter-offensive from the hills around Kremieniec or from the line Wiszniewiec-Zbaraz.⁹

For this purpose the Guard troops which had left the West Front for Odessa in mid-December (I and II Gd Corps under General Bezobrazov) deployed behind 11th Russian Army in the Woloczysk area. Shcherbatchev and Letschitzky were ordered to continue the offensive with all their strength.

3. The high point of the battle

a. The Russians break into the lines at Rarancze, 1-7 January

Already on 1 January heavy new fighting broke out on the Bessarabian border, where Letschitzky tried to tear apart the center of the k.u.k. XI Corps between Toporoutz and Rarancze. In clumps of woods and in the ravines which ran from the east through the heights, he packed two divisions (32 and 19 ID) for a powerful blow. To distract his opponents, Letschitzky had already sent 12 Russian ID on New Year's Eve to attack the southern flank of the Dolzok from Bojan. The two Gendarmerie battalions fighting on these heights repulsed the surprise enemy attack and inflicted heavy casualties.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 299

1 January

The Russian artillery opened heavy preparatory fire on the Toporoutz-Rarancze sector in the morning of New Year's Day. Between 9:00 and 11:00 AM the 11 Russian ID mounted an unsuccessful assault from the low ground at Kalinkowcy against the lines between Toporoutz and the forest zone. Soon thereafter artillery fire rained down on the positions on the heights east of Rarancze, and reached an intensity never before witnessed in the Czernowitz area. In the works on the south wing of 42 Hon ID, the shields erected to guard against shrapnel fire collapsed, and trenches were damaged. Smoke and fumes descended on the troops in the observation posts and robbed them of breath and sight. The defenders pressed themselves against the forward sides of their trenches and the breastworks and awaited the enemy onslaught in their precarious situation.

Around noon the Russian batteries directed a barrage against the low ground along the Hukeubach. However, FML Liposcak had meanwhile shifted parts of 202 Hon Inf Bde into the sheltered area right behind the part of the line which was suffering under the heavy bombardment. Thus when the Russian infantry burst through the destroyed barbed wire on the extreme southern wing of 42 Hon ID into the badly damaged positions, the battalion and regimental reserves as well as troops from 202 Hon Inf Bde - stationed right behind the edge of the heights - flung themselves on the enemy and expelled them again from the trenches. After renewed bombardment by the Russian artillery, around 3:00 PM fresh attackers - six regiments - struck again. This time the furiously fighting enemy established a firm foothold in the foremost positions of 42 Hon ID on a front about half a kilometer long. The attack could penetrate no further, because as soon as GdK Korda learned of the Russian penetration he sent two battalions from 51 Hon ID of his Corps' reserve from Rarancze to the hotly-contested heights. On the western edge of the high ground the exhausted garrison of the trenches, supported by reinforcements which had hurried to the scene, stood their ground. The attacking Russian infantry was worn out, and had to be content with the limited ground they had won. This nevertheless was a significant gain, because it gave the spotters for the Russian artillery a view of the basin of the Hukeubach and of the area where the reserves of Korda's Corps were deployed. If the Russians gained any more of the edge of the heights with a new attack, there would be a grave danger that the entire front of XI Corps would become untenable.

As twilight settled over the low ground on the Hukeubach, Col.

von Savoly (the commander of 202 Hon Inf Bde) led a regiment from 51 Hon ID, which Pflanzner-Baltin had attached to 42 Hon ID, onto the heights. These reserves lost their way in the darkness, but during the long winter night were still able to seal off the short and shallow area where the Russians had penetrated between the mixed units from 202 Hon Inf Bde, Lt. Col. Papp's Bde, 51 Hon ID and 42 Hon ID.

2 January

Meanwhile GdK Korda sent to Rarancze IR # 16 from Czarnawka and the last regiment of 51 Hon ID (Hon IR # 305) from Mahala; the latter had been given to him by Army HQ. Pflanzner-Baltin also ordered IR # 5, which had moved by train from Buczacz to Horodenka, to deploy at Zuczka (just north of Czernowitz). He ordered XI Corps to recapture the lost part of the front at Rarancze. At dawn on the 2nd FML Liposcak placed the hastily summoned reserves - Hon IR # 305 and IR # 16 - under the command of GM Tanarky and sent them to counterattack from Rarancze. As the two regiments climbed the heights they were already colliding with the Russians. These enemy troops were pushed back, but all the efforts to recover the lost position remained unsuccessful. Toward noon the Russians themselves mounted sharp attacks at the point where the front bulged between Rarancze and Toporoutz.

Because of the critical situation, GdK Korda moved all the reserves he could spare from his left wing to Rarancze and Toporoutz - FJB # 27, a battalion of IR # 50 and a brigade of 5 Hon CD. After the troops on the right wing of 42 Hon ID had repulsed several Russian thrust on the west edge of the heights in heavy fighting, FML Liposcak wanted to counterattack. But Pflanzner-Baltin, who had hastened on the 2nd from his own HQ to that of XI Corps at Sadagora to direct the defense on the spot, forbade any further attacks with the troops on hand, whose units had been completely intermingled. He ordered FML Liposcak to restore order in the ranks and to pull men from the firing line to create reserves. Pflanzner-Baltin once more gave XI Corps the 9 Inf Bde, which he had retained to back up the Dniester sector. He told GdK Korda to hold this Brigade in readiness behind the Dolzok so that it could strike the flank of the Russians in case they broke through the center of XI Corps. Four batteries south of the Pruth at Zurin were also ready to hit the enemy with flanking fire if needed. Pflanzner-Baltin entrusted GM Elmar, the commander of Group Benigni's artillery, with the organization of the defensive artillery fire. Finally, a regiment from 38 Hon ID was approaching by train through Kolomea to support XI Corps. Since the enemy on the Dniester continued to threaten the

fortified bridgehead at Michalcze, GdK Pflanze-Baltin felt compelled to divert this regiment to Horodenka to replace IR # 5. Thus the energetic commander of 7th Army was making full use of the rail lines behind his front to quickly move reserves to the endangered sectors.

The high command had also been active; to reinforce the right wing of Pflanze-Baltin's Army they sent FML Fülöp's Group (4 Landsturm battalions and 2 batteries), which was no longer needed in the Balkans. They also found substantial forces in Volhynia which could be used to shore up the front in Galicia and the Bukovina. Already on 21 December FML Edler von Lehmann's Cavalry Corps (2, 4 and 7 CD) had begun to shift south from Luck toward Brody. In the last days of 1915 there had been minor actions at Sapanow, Dubno and Chorupan on the Ikwa, at Czernysz on the Kormin, and at the bend in the Styr by Czartorijsk. These, however, were merely diversions by the Russians, which had no effect and failed to pin down the Austrian reserves.

On 2 January the high command ordered 40 Hon ID to move by rail from Radziwilow to Kolomea. To replace this Division, the 24 ID was removed from 1st Army and deployed behind 2nd Army. The high command moreover intended to send 21 LW ID from Luck to Radziwilow, where it could entrain for the southern part of the front if necessary.

3-7 January

Heavy fighting continued to rage in front of Czernowitz. On the 3rd the Russians attacked again on the hills east of Rarancze, but all their efforts were shattered by the heroic stand of the defenders (IR # 16 and Hon IR # 26 plus parts of 51 Hon ID and of 202 Hon Inf Bde). A sharp thrust by 74 Russian ID from the loop in the Dniester at Samuszyn was similarly defeated by the stubborn resistance of the Croatian Honveds. General Letschitzky didn't spare his troops; after a heavy artillery action, on the 4th he renewed his assaults on the rolling hills east of Rarancze, committing the 11 ID and 2 Kuban Plastun Brigade. However, this attack also broke apart under the fire of the Aus-Hung. artillery, even though the ranks of the Croatian and Hungarian battalions were already greatly reduced. XI Corps had lost 8000 men. The Army commander again urged GdK Korda to restore order to his units; Korda used the night of 4-5 January to bring up fresh forces to the small area of the Russian penetration. He had 9 Inf Bde and IR # 50 relieve the exhausted garrison of the trenches (IR # 16 and three regiments of 51 Hon ID), who moved to rehabilitation quarters in Mahala and

Czernawka.

In the night of 6-7 January a Russian detachment made a surprise assault on the trenches on the Dolzok, but the Gendarmerie battalions of Lt. Col. Papp's Brigade fought bravely and threw the enemy out of their lines with a counterattack. On the next day, four Russian regiments struck in a small area on the Rarancze hills next to the sector they had penetrated earlier. The north Moravians of IR # 93 and the Croats of Hon IR # 26 gallantly withstood this new Russian assault.

b. 7th Russian Army tries again to break through at Kujdanow, 7 January

The attack is thwarted

Meanwhile General Shcherbatchev was preparing a new attack on the Strypa. He deployed 3 Turkestan Rif Div and parts of 41 ID of XVI Corps on the rolling hills south of Dobropole, inserting these troops in line between II Corps and V Caucasian Corps. Once more he was seeking to break through at Kujdanow and Bobulince.

The Russians struck by surprise at dawn on 7 January. In an impetuous rush, the first attacking waves of 3 Turkestan Rifle Div broke into the positions on the left wing of the k.u.k. 12 ID. Several hundred men were taken prisoner, the lines of 12 ID were broken, and seven machine guns were lost. The Russians were already following the retreating garrison of the trenches toward the Strypa and on the east bank seized several advanced batteries of the defenders. However, in a gross error the Russian artillery fired on their own infantry, bombarding the positions that had already been conquered in the belief that they were still occupied by Austrians. Therefore the main body of 3 Turkestan Rif Div were unable to follow right behind the first waves of storm troops. Before they could effectively support the offensive, the foremost Russian detachments were counterattacked by Honved IR # 16 and 24 plus parts of IR # 57. These troops recovered the lost artillery and pushed the attackers, who were thrown into confusion, out of the positions of 12 ID. The Russians who weren't killed or wounded in the hand-to-hand fighting ran away in wild flight under the fire of the Honveds. More than 700 prisoners remained in the hands of the victors.

New waves of attacking Russians rolled against the entire front

of 39 Hon ID and the left wing of 12 ID around 11:00 AM. Hon IR # 22 of 38 Hon ID, which had been attached to XIII Corps, was sent from Buczacz by forced marches to join VI Corps. The main body of 38 Hon ID, which had already earlier been placed in the center of VI Corps, stiffened the resistance of the exhausted defenders of the trenches and helped deflect the Russian attacks. When evening fell, the battered groups of attackers returned to their starting points. General Shcherbatchev's attempt to break through the strongly fortified heights at Kujdanow had failed once again.

Aftermath of the fighting

The battle on the Strypa died out on 8 January. General Shcherbatchev was content to let just his artillery operate. However, Pflanzner-Baltin anticipated that the Russians would resume their attempts to break through with reinforced units. Pilots observed major troop movements behind the Russian front opposite our VI and XIII Corps. Prisoners belonging to 47 Russian ID were captured on the hills east of Bobulince. It seemed that the burnt-out II Corps was being replaced by the entire XVI Russian Corps.

GdK Pflanzner-Baltin reacted to the Russian troop movements by sending to Buczacz IR # 5 from his Army's right wing and Hon IR # 21 (from 38 Hon ID) which had been attached to XI Corps. FML Fülöpp's Group, after detraining at Horodenka, was also placed under XIII Corps. On the 11th GM Werz, commander of 38 Hon ID, took over control of the regiments of his Division which had been placed in the center of VI Corps.

Guessing that the Russians might extend their offensive to the Tarnopol area, the high command again placed its reserves in motion. From Böhm-Ermolli's Army Group the 24 ID and 2 CD (of Cav Corps Lehmann) went to Monasterzyska to join 7th Army. It was also planned to transfer 70 Hon ID from Transylvania to either Galicia or Bukovina. Moreover, two further divisions from Volhynia (21 LW ID and 11 ID) could be shifted to the right wing of the Russian front.

Linsingen's abortive plans for an offensive

Thus GdI von Linsingen would lose units which he had intended to use for an offensive. There were reports that the Russians were taking parts of VIII, XXX and XL Corps from Volhynia to follow their XII Corps to east Galicia and the Bessarabian border. GdI Linsingen wanted to attack the Russians, and sought - as he had in December - to win GO Conrad over to his plan. He believed that a thrust through Sarny wasn't possible because the Styr and the nearby swamps weren't yet firmly frozen. Moreover, the supply line along the rails through Kovel was inadequate. However, in a letter to the k.u.k. high command on 8 January Linsingen stated that he could attack along the Luck-Rovno road. 11 ID would have to relieve 1 German ID for this operation. In addition to 1 ID, the attacking group would contain 22 German ID plus the k.u.k. 3 ID, 21 LW ID, and 37 Hon ID. Covered on their left flank by 41 Hon ID, these units could advance to Rovno and then along the Horyn to the south. 1st Army would also take part

in the offensive. The operation would threaten the flank of the Russian armies attacking in east Galicia and compel them to halt their operation. GdI Falkenhayn supported the plan and on 10 January asked GO Conrad to place 1st Army under GdI Linsingen to carry it out.

Conrad, however, didn't concur with these ideas. He was concerned because of the poor roads, unfavorable weather, insufficient mobility of the artillery, the limited capacity of the railroads to Volhynia, and the unfavorable outcome of the earlier thrust to Rovno (in fall 1915). He also opposed Linsingen's plan because an attack that took place so far from the fighting in southeastern Galicia and the Bukovina couldn't affect the outcome there. GO Conrad now wanted to restrict his response to the Russian attacks to a purely defensive strategy, so that his reserves wouldn't be expended in a wide-ranging campaign. He was already toying with the idea of sending all available units from the northeast to the Italian front in the spring.

GdI Falkenhayn was annoyed; on the 13th he replied to Conrad's assertions by stating that he still considered an attack in Volhynia as the most effective means to respond to the Russian offensive in east Galicia. Nevertheless, he had no intention of continuing to advocate an operation in which Conrad had no confidence. He felt that if the allies kept shifting units from the sectors not under attack to the engaged sectors the entire front would never again be properly ready for resistance. These tactics also meant that the German troops in east Galicia (3 Gd ID and 48 Res ID) would be restricted to a purely defensive role for the foreseeable future. At the close of his letter Falkenhayn expressed his expectation that Conrad would do everything possible to make these German units available as soon as he could.

GO Conrad, however, stuck to his idea of sending reinforcements directly to the endangered 7th Army; he had meanwhile ordered 21 LW ID to march from Luck to Rudnia (a rail station northeast of Brody). Now he ordered GdI Linsingen to also have 11 ID available to be shifted to the south. To replace 11 ID, 4th Army would pull another division from the front so that it could assemble at Luck as a reserve for Linsingen's Army Group.

c. Mass Russian attacks at Rarancze, 10-19 January

After the unsuccessful thrust by 3 Turkestan Rif Div, General Shcherbatchev gave his exhausted troops a period of rest;

Letschitzky, however, wasn't satisfied with the paltry results of his attack at Rarancze. He made repeated attempts to widen the very narrow and shallow dent which had been made in the position of the k.u.k. XI Corps.

10-13 January

On 10 January there was an isolated thrust by the Russians on the hills south of Toporoutz. At the same time, some enemy detachments began to attack in the loop in the Dniester at Samuszyn. The Russians also seemed to be building up their forces in front of the fortified bridgehead at Michalcze. 6 CD was reinforced by parts of Lt Col Scholtz's Landsturm Group.

Between 10:00 AM and evening on the 11th, the Russians made five new assaults at Rarancze; they were bloodily repulsed by IR # 93 and Hon IR # 26 in bitter combat. The fighting slackened on the 12th. Meanwhile the regiments of 40 Hon ID (9500 riflemen strong) assembled behind the right wing of XI Corps. The Russians were giving Korda time to reinforce the worn-out defenders of the trenches with fresh troops. GM Edler von Nagy, the commander of 40 Hon ID, took over command of the defensive sector from Rarancze to Toporoutz. On this line of just 4 ½ km he could deploy five regiments against the enemy - two from his newly-arrived 40 Hon ID, both regiments of 202 Hon Inf Bde, and IR # 93. (The latter, however, was infected by cholera.) Right behind the front the battalion and regimental reserves were stationed in an area on the edge of the heights that was shielded from artillery fire. Two regiments of 40 Hon ID, one regiment of 9 Inf Bde, IR # 50 and a brigade of 5 Hon CD were stationed as divisional and corps reserves in the valley of the Hukeubach. All the troops of 42 Hon ID were now united in the sector stretching from Toporoutz north to the Dniester, commanded by FML Liposcak. GM Foglar held the sector between the Pruth and the Dolzok with the battalions of Lt Col Papp's Brigade and parts of 51 Hon ID. In the area north of Czernowitz GdK Pflanzer-Baltin had at his disposal the other troops of 51 Hon ID, IR # 16, and IR # 97; the latter had been taken from Corps Hadfy and temporarily placed under 9 Inf Bde. The artillery of XI Corps had also been gradually reinforced. Between the southern bank of the Pruth and Toporoutz there was a total of 35 batteries (5 ½ of which were heavy), under the overall command of GM Elmar. These batteries made up the iron scaffolding upon which the defense of the western edge of the hills was erected.

14-19 January

After several hours of drumfire, on 14 January General Letschitzky unleashed a massive new attack against Rarancze and Toporoutz with six regiments, deployed in twelve to fourteen ranks. GM Elmar kept the Russian batteries under heavy fire. Some of his lighter guns, deployed directly behind the first

position, struck all the lines of attackers as they moved forward. The batteries he assigned to barrage fire were also effective; at the moment the Russian storming columns came forward these batteries suddenly opened surprise quick fire on their flanks. Six Russian attacks collapsed on the fire-torn hills at Rarancze. A large part of 11 Russian ID was destroyed in this frightful storm.

Nevertheless Ivanov decided to continue the fight. He gave Letschitzky the 2 Rif Div and ordered him to master the heights between Toporoutz and Rarancze regardless of difficulties.¹⁰ If the Russians could take this position that anchored the flank of the k.u.k. 7th Army, then three divisions would leave 9th Army and join 7th Russian Army for a resumption of its offensive.

Once again Pflanzner-Baltin and Korda used the pause in the fighting since the 15th to prepare new defensive measures. IR # 50 went to the front in place of the burnt-out IR # 93; the artillery of XI Corps was reinforced by yet another 30.5 cm mortar battery.

Before dawn on 19 January, the Russian 2 Rif Div with some other troops advanced against Rarancze and Toporoutz. The first wave was repulsed by the fire of the alert defenders, mainly from the artillery. Further waves rolled forward as the day advanced. In the second assault at Toporoutz the Russians pushed through the destroyed barbed wire into the positions of 202 Hon Inf Bde. However, they were thrown out by the garrison and suffered heavy casualties. Soon afterward they stormed the positions of 40 Hon ID on the edge of the heights east of Rarancze, and in a few places were able to penetrate into the trenches. Here also the Honveds held on gallantly and drove the Russians back with hand grenades, bayonets and the battle-axes which the Magyars called "Fokos." The fearsome combat lasted until the afternoon. In the evening GM Nagy reported that his brave troops had defeated no fewer than sixteen attacks, delivered in thick ranks. The area in front of the trenches was covered with dead and wounded enemy troops. More than 500 Russians who survived the slaughter were taken prisoner. On 19 January the k.u.k. XI Corps lost 1500 men.

General Letschitzky didn't repeat this massive assault in the next few days. However, there was still lively fighting in the trenches on the hills by Rarancze. On the Dolzok, where the Russians had worked their way right up to the entrenchments of Papp's Brigade, there was mine fighting on the 22nd which cost

10 Klembovsky, p. 13

the attackers more than 300 casualties.

4. The battle dies out

Meanwhile GdK Pflanzler-Baltin had assigned 24 ID to XI Corps. This Division was inserted into the center of 40 Hon ID to replace the exhausted 202 Hon Inf Bde and IR # 50. Thus the strength of the defenders in the 4 ½ km long sector between Rarancze and Toporoutz increased to about 17,000 riflemen and 180 guns. Behind them another 15,000 riflemen stood in reserve.

The high command sent Pflanzler-Baltin's Army the 21 LW ID through Brody and Lemberg and 21 Lst Mtn Bde (5 battalions and 2 batteries) from the Balkans. The main body of 32 ID was assigned to the South Army. To replace the 32nd, the 31 ID (which had been relieved on the northern wing of 2nd Army by 7 CD) moved to Zalosce. In addition, the 11 ID of 4th Army in Volhynia moved to Rudnia, whence it could be sent to Galicia if necessary.

Russian troop movements forced the high command to increase the units in Galicia and the Bukovina. Spies continued to report the arrival of Russian reinforcements near the Bessarabian border. Besides 2 Rif Div, three more rifle divisions were expected. It was believed that three fresh Russian divisions (21 and 36 ID plus a grenadier division) were deployed in front of South Army. There were reports that VIII Corps at Dubno had been relieved by Opolcheniye so that it could move toward Tarnopol. Russian troops also were apparently being drawn from the Styr. Intercepted radio messages indicated to the high command that the Guard troops who'd been identified at Odessa in mid-December could now be found on the border of east Galicia behind the front of 11th Russian Army. All this information created the impression that the Russians would widen their offensive, intending to deliver a blow from Tarnopol against South Army.

The Russians finally abandon the offensive

Actually General Ivanov, following the instructions of the Stavka, had ordered that 7th Army should be reinforced by three divisions from 9th Army so that it could renew the attack on the Strypa before the end of January.¹¹ However, it seems that Ivanov went about his work only half-heartedly. On 22 January he submitted a report to the Russian high command, in which he stated that the small number of available heavy guns and machine guns on the Southwest Front and an insufficient supply of

11 Klembovsky, p. 13

ammunition were the primary reasons for the failure of all the attacks. General Ivanov was also concerned that his opponents could move the units now available in the Balkans to Galicia and the Bukovina. He also stated that the military situation would worsen if the Southwest Front wasn't soon able to receive the equipment it lacked. If it didn't, the Front would suffer very heavy casualties and he would have to find some other method of seeking a decision.

On the same day, however, General Ivanov received an order from the Tsar to resume the offensive in Galicia without delay. Moreover, General Alexeiev sent him a telegram declaring that the lack of equipment which Ivanov had been lamenting was a less significant factor than the inactivity of Shcherbatchev and a great part of his forces. Alexeiev also reminded the commander of Southwest Front that the artillery of his attacking armies hadn't effectively bombarded the opposing positions, and that the infantry had made insufficient use of sappers to prepare the approaches.¹²

General Shcherbatchev now planned to resume the offensive on 27 January. However, the weather had changed - the massive heaps of snow were melting and troops couldn't move forward on the muddy roads. Shipment of artillery, ammunition and rations stalled, so that Shcherbatchev wouldn't be ready on the 27th.

Now, however, the high command also was turning against a renewed assault. General Alexeiev had once more approached his allies to suggest a grand concentrated offensive, which would involve a simultaneous invasion over the Carpathians into Hungary by the Russian Army and a campaign on the Danube by ten allied corps from the Balkans. This plan was once again rejected by the French because of the miserable condition of the Entente units in the Balkans. The attack on the Strypa and at Czernowitz, which was supposed to lead up to this great concentric offensive against the Danube Monarchy, had thus lost its meaning. Moreover, Russian supreme HQ was concerned by the uncertain attitude of Romania. Because of the setbacks to Russian arms, the Romanian politicians seemed to be inclining more toward the Central Powers. It was learned that Romania had concluded a trade treaty with Germany and Austria. Great concern was caused by a rumor that the German and Bulgarian high commands wanted to issue Bucharest an ultimatum with a short time frame, demanding that Romania join the Central Powers. Therefore on 26 January General Alexeiev ordered that the offensive in Galicia would be

12 Lemke, pp. 255 ff.

suspended. General Ivanov should now move troops from the front so that they could assemble in Bessarabia near the Romanian border, in position to guard the southern flank of the Russian armies.¹³

5. Observations about the New Year's Battle

Thus the fight which the Russians had maintained between 27 December and 19 January at the gates of Czernowitz and on the Strypa had been in vain. The Armies of Letschitzky and Shcherbatchev had been unable to capture Czernowitz or break through the Strypa line to prepare for the offensive which was supposed to deliver a death blow to the Danube Monarchy. The Russians had also failed to achieve the political goal of this winter battle - to win Romania for the Entente. The heavy fighting ended with a complete defensive success for Pflanzer-Baltin's Army.

Why the Austrians won

This brilliant triumph of Aus-Hung. arms was achieved thanks to the dexterous defensive measures of the solid leaders and to the stubbornness and endurance of their troops; the latter had stood fast despite all the trials and tribulations of the prolonged combat. With astonishing heroism, the infantry stayed in the firing line day after day despite snow storms and frost; intelligently supported by the artillery, they held all their positions even though they were greatly outnumbered at several points. Soldiers from all the nationalities of the Danube Monarchy played an equally glorious part in the New Year's Battle. This firm defense by the multi-national troops contributed greatly to the victory and had a very encouraging effect.

The artillery of Pflanzer-Baltin's Army was also distinguished. They played an especially decisive role in the defensive fighting at Rarancze. While the heavy batteries suppressed the enemy artillery, some of the light batteries stationed just behind the first position pounded the routes upon which the Russian infantry were approaching. The rest of the light batteries waited for the moment when the Russians had left their assembly points and then surprised them with a destructive bombardment on the flanks.¹⁴

13 Klembovsky, pp 13 ff. Lemke, pp. 298 and 479

14 Kiszling, "Die Neujahrschlacht in Bessarabien" in "Österreichische Wehrzeitung" for 1926, Issue I.

This method, which had been developed during the campaigns on the upper Isonzo, caused most of the Russian infantry assaults to collapse under artillery fire.

The defective methods of the Russians had also contributed to Pflanzer-Baltin's victory. Both Letschitzky's and Shcherbatchev's Armies had attacked on relatively narrow fronts and didn't unleash their divisions simultaneously. Throughout the heavy fighting, Sakharov's Army stayed completely inactive; Brussilov's Army made some isolated feint attacks which failed to pin down their opponents' reserves. Thus the Austrians had been able to reinforce the sectors under assault by shifting reserves from the quiet sectors. Moreover, even in the narrow areas chosen by the Russians for their breakthrough attempt the fighting repeatedly stopped for several days; this not only gave the defenders time to repair their damaged positions, but also to relieve the exhausted trench garrisons with fresh troops.

Tactical lessons

Pflanzer-Baltin's Army had lost more than 30,000 men in the victorious defensive battle. Most of the casualties were caused by the powerful preparatory fire of the Russian artillery. Losses were especially great among the defenders of trenches which had been provided with shields to guard against shrapnel. The enemy shells had pounded the shrapnel shields, which then collapsed into the trenches and injured the garrisons. Based on this depressing lesson, it was ordered that future trenches should be dug deeply but kept open to the sky. They would have shell-proof dug-outs for the observers and deep foxholes for the other troops to weaken the impact of enemy drumfire. Although construction of such dugouts and holes in the foremost battle lines wasn't always the solution to tactical problems, they were in demand by the troops themselves. Also there was no resolution to discussions about the importance of maintaining a second line a hundred meters behind the front position. In the fighting on the Strypa VI Corps found that these hundred-meter lines were too close to the initial fighting and often were overrun at the same time as the first lines. They believed it was more important to seal off an enemy penetration entirely than to concentrate all troops in the direction of the initial thrust. In XI Corps sector, on the other hand, the enemy attacks didn't penetrate beyond the foremost trenches thanks to the fire of the defending artillery. 42 Hon ID at Rarancze made considerable use of the hundred meter line. They left only some observers in the foremost trenches; the other personnel were stationed in the nearby communications and connection trenches; even during the

drumfire the reserves were moved forward as closely as possible.

Because the reserves were thus entering the forward lines so quickly, the troops from various units were completely intermingled, and the chain of command became very unclear. These drawbacks were by no means concealed from GO Pflanzner-Baltin. During the actions at Rarancze he had repeatedly insisted that the units should be kept in order, and that entire regiments should be kept together as reserves. However, strict supervision was needed to ensure that the defenses were thus organized during the pauses in the fighting. The troops had a definite tendency to occupy the foremost line in as much strength as possible. "Shoulder to shoulder" deployment gave the soldiers in the trenches a feeling of security and confidence. Even high-ranking officers weren't willing to forego having men deployed very thickly in the forward line, although this led to heavy casualties. They felt it was preferable to fight with parts of various regiments mixed together than to weaken the infantry fire power by pulling men into reserve.

The concentration of all the infantry in the foremost line, a consequence of having reserves stationed so nearby, was at least at Rarancze inevitable because of the unique nature of the terrain. The Russian artillery completely dominated the valley and the western bank of the Hukeubach. In this situation the reserves had to move up from the low ground into a zone safe from artillery as soon as the Russians opened their barrage. When the lines of Russian riflemen penetrated the trenches, if they weren't expelled by the garrisons in hand-to-hand fighting they were always expelled by the reserves in a quick counter-thrust. All reports on the fighting at Rarancze agreed that the defensive artillery fire organized by GM Elmar was exemplary. This artillery commander had a good vantage point from which he was able to observe the entire battlefield; thus he could personally direct a barrage at the most critical points even if the observers in the foremost lines had fallen or the telephone lines had been severed. The barrages were especially effective when delivered on the enemy flanks. Therefore the bulk of the field artillery was concentrated close behind the front lines. All of these lessons learned in the victorious fighting by XI Corps were disseminated to the entire Eastern front. However, it is questionable whether the defensive tactics which had proven their worth at Rarancze were necessarily applicable without reservation to the other sectors of the front.

The Russian high command also derived many lessons from the winter fighting. In the unsuccessful assaults the Armies of

Letschitzky and Shcherbatchev had lost almost 70,000 men. Alexeiev was very disturbed by the heavy casualties; he blamed the poor coordination between the infantry and artillery and the useless bombardment which had been directed against the insufficiently scouted Austrian positions. He also noted that neither commanders nor troops had constructed approach trenches toward the enemy. They had failed to use all of their large resources for a coordinated mass attack. Ivanov, on the other hand, complained that the available artillery and ammunition were insufficient for a large-scale offensive.¹⁵ The future alone would determine whether his Armies would finally smash the Aus-Hung. front after receiving further reinforcements and mastering the tactics of mounting a brutal mass assault after the infantry worked their way forward by building sap trenches.

¹⁵ Lemke, pp. 298 and 348 ff. Klembovsky, pp. 14 ff.

II. The Conquest of Montenegro and Albania

A. The campaign in Montenegro

1. Orders issued to the attacking groups

The plan by the k.u.k. high command at the end of November to take possession of Mt Lovcen by a *coup de main* had already led in the following weeks to a decision to overthrow Montenegro and lay hands on northern Albania. On 16 December GO Conrad issued the preparatory orders to the Chief of Staff of 3rd Army; on 20 December, against the will of the German OHL, he removed this Army from Mackensen's Army Group, under which it had operated since October. Some troops of the commanding general in BHD, GdI von Sarkotic, were also placed for this operation under GdI von Kövess, whose task was to attack the enemy forces in Montenegro and north Albania and thus move the southern wing of his Army through Prizren to Scutari.

Coordination during the advance with the Bulgarian Western Group was maintained through the HQ of Mackensen's Army Group, to which the eastern parts of 3rd Army continued to be attached for logistical purposes.

On 24 December 3rd Army HQ was in charge of three battle groups.¹⁶ The first one consisted of all units stationed on the western border of Montenegro, other troops who had been ordered to the area, and the naval detachment in the Bay of Cattaro; the second was identical to 62 ID; the third was the VIII Corps (over 53, 57 and 59 ID plus 10 Mtn Bde and GM von Haustein's Lst Inf Bde).¹⁷

According to the first orders from 3rd Army HQ, GdI Sarkotic and the bulk of his forces were to advance from the Bay of Cattaro and the Krivolije to the line Virpazar-Podgorica; as directed earlier by the k.u.k. high command, this thrust would commence with the capture of the Lovcen area. To cover the left flank of the main body, a smaller group would advance from Trebinje to the area of Niksic, whence all available elements would move ahead toward Podgorica. The troops at Bileca and farther north would

¹⁶ Konopicky, "Die Niederwerfung Montenegros" (Schwarte, Vol. V, p. 189)

¹⁷ 10 Mtn Bde had taken the place of 21 Lst Mtn Bde.

first pin the enemy down and later invade Montenegro as far as the Piva. 62 ID would advance in the area east of this river, while its strong left wing from Mojkovac supported the attack of VIII Corps. That Corps would carry on its offensive toward Podgorica with at least three brigades; they were supposed to secure the Berane area as soon as possible, constantly advancing to prevent the enemy from diverting their units in another direction. As soon as the logistical situation permitted, 57 ID would deploy in the Djakova-Prizren area and from there send advanced detachments to the Drin between Firza and Bruti so that strong parts of the Division might be able to thrust toward Scutari.

This plan of operations envisioned an envelopment assault on the Land of the Black Mountain, which would fully encircle the Montenegrin forces. Although the favorable position at the outset promised complete success, the offensive would still face some very significant difficulties. One of the greatest obstacles in the way of operations against Montenegro and north Albania was that supplies were insufficient, and far below even the minimum requirements. There were continual delays in the movement of railroad equipment from the current terminals of the lines to the field lines still under construction. Thus the material needed to build the line from Ustipraca to Plevlje couldn't be shipped on the Bosnian railroads. The narrow-gauge line in the valley of the Western Morava wasn't fully operational; therefore construction of the field line from Kraljevo through the Ibar valley had already taken so long that meanwhile the repairs to the major railroad from Skopje through Pristina to Mitrovica were almost completed. Wagons which originally had been earmarked for use in the immediate rear areas of the troops now had to be used in place of the hoped-for field rail lines. The carts were supposed to transport supplies over poor and in some places ice-covered roads for distances up to 200 km; the greater part of the supplies had to be used to maintain the vehicles themselves and their crews. Even after the main line was open as far as Mitrovica, the lack of good roads made it impossible for carts to bring supplies for the Berane operation farther than Novibazar. There were plans to build a field rail line from Ferizovic to Prizren to supply 57 ID. All passable roads ended at Ipek.

2. The situation and events around 1 January

The deployment on the western border of Montenegro unfolded without noteworthy disturbances. GdI Sarkotic commanded the

following units as of 28 December:

. Under XIX Corps, Lt Col Törk's Group was around Cattaro and Lt Col Lottspeich's was east of Risano; behind them were the Brigades of Col von Zhuber (at Teodo), FML Schiess (Radovic and Radinovac), GM Streith (Baosic and Josica) and Col von Colerus (at Ruda); 20 Lst Mtn Bde was gathering at Castelnuovo, and the first elements of 14 Mtn Bde, arriving by train from the Isonzo, had reached Bosn.-Brod.

. In the sector of FML Braun's secondary command, the Trebinje "mobile group" was in the Lastva area, and Lörinczy's Group around Trebinje; Col von Hausser's Group was still *en route* at Gorazde.

. 21 Lst Mtn Bde, which was to be in general reserve, had reached Cacak; it was to advance to Trebinje.

Quiet at the front

In general, quiet reigned at the front through the end of December. Only Group Lottspeich was engaged on 28 December to secure the northern flank of the assembly area and to divert the enemy's attention from the area chosen for the main assault (the border heights of Grahorina east of Risano). Through the end of 1915 there was also a pause in fighting on the northern and eastern Montenegrin fronts, broken only by small skirmishes; snow storms in the higher elevations and the miserable condition of the rain-soaked roads and low lands temporarily hampered the activity of the small advanced detachments. However, partisans were active behind the front, northeast of Novibazar and in the Kopaonik Mountains.

The logistical situation of VIII Corps improved enough so that the parts of 10 Mtn Bde left in the rear could move up to Rozaj, while 18 Mtn Bde advanced to Novibazar. On the other hand, 57 ID was still immobile because of heavy demands on the over-taxed supply services. For the moment it was impossible for the Division to send ahead the forces needed to relieve 3 Bulgarian ID at Djakova and Prizren; trucks could drive only as far as Belonjin (west of Prokuplje), and horse-drawn wagons only as far as Kursumlje, from which point bearers had to take over. Due to the collapse of a bridge at Leskovac, traffic wasn't scheduled to resume until 5 January 1916; therefore 57 ID wouldn't be able to start its march from Pristina before the 4th, and wouldn't reach the Djakova-Prizren area until the 8th or 9th at the earliest.

VIII Corps HQ intended to first have 10 and 18 Mtn Bdes - under FML Snjaric, commander of 59 ID - thrust through Rozaj and Berane; 17 Mtn Bde would join this movement by sending its left

wing through Godusa. 9 Mtn Bde, placed directly under Corps HQ, would advance from Ipek toward Plav, at least with strong detachments. GM Schwarz's Brigade, which finally had received clothing for cold weather, would move through Moikovac toward Kolasin; they were supposed to receive support from 205 Lst Inf Bde, but the latter unit still hadn't advanced to Moikovac. In reality the 17 Mtn Bde would be given the task of securing the area between Bijelopolje and Berane; their leading troops, however, wouldn't advance as far as the eastern bank of the Lim. FML Snjaric would send one brigade to Andrijevica and hold Berane with the other. After receiving sufficient supplies by rail, 57 ID could advance to Djakova and Prizren. Haustein's Brigade would guard the lines of communication to Novibazar and Mitrovica.

3rd Army HQ arrived in Sarajevo on 30 December, and on the next day issued orders for the offensive which was nearly ready to start. In the sector under GdI Sarkotic, it seemed necessary to provide some equipment to FML Braun's Group prior to their advance from Risano, since they had only a limited amount of mountain gear. For the same reason it would also be necessary to secure the heights as far as Dragalj with a brigade from the Krivosije (20 Lst Mtn Bde); in the event, the 20th Bde was placed under FML Braun to ensure that it would act in timely cooperation with his Group. It hadn't been decided where to deploy Brigade Hausser, still arriving by train. 21 Lst Mtn Bde was following Hausser, and therefore the point where it would get off the trains was dependent on the final deployment of his troops. Operations were to begin almost simultaneously on the entire western Montenegrin front, but only after 14 Mtn Bde was ready to intervene.

At this time 62 ID and VIII Corps HQ were advised that the offensive would open on the western border of Montenegro on 9 January 1916 unless it had to be postponed a few days because of weather conditions which could affect visibility. Regardless of the exact date, the units in the north were to reach the Lim River between Berane and Andrijevica as soon as possible.

Since relations between the Aus-Hung. and Bulgarian high commands were strained, 3rd Army HQ wouldn't give the Bulgarian liaison officer full information unless the 3 Bulgarian ID took part in a combined action against Albania, and such information was to be restricted to the circumstances on the Army's left wing.

Situation of the enemy forces

As for the enemy, it was known that the portions of the Serbian Army which were the last to retreat had assembled west of Andrijevica and Plav; the main body of the Serbs had already reached Scutari and San Giovanni di Medua. Moreover, reports indicated that Italian troops had landed at Durazzo, where they were joined by pro-Entente Albanians under Essad Pasha. The majority of the "Arnauts", however, were fighting the Montenegrins. Everything indicated that the latter were determined to stubbornly defend their home soil; the Entente press was glutted with announcements of Montenegro's "victories."

Communications by sea between Brindisi and the Albanian harbors was maintained by the enemy fleet, and in the second half of December they weren't substantially interrupted by the k.u.k. naval forces. On the 29th a detachment led by the cruiser "Helgoland" conducted an operation that was glorious but not successful.¹⁸

At the end of December the Montenegrins were still holding onto all their fronts, despite already feeling pressure; few Serbian units, however, were still in contact with their opponents. To temporarily hold the most dangerous route into the Scutari basin, the 1st Serbian Army had formed a "Combined Group" at Andrijevica, and placed it under the Montenegrin Sanjak Group. Also the rear guards of the Timok Armeegruppe (the "Krajina Group") was holding the sally port through the upper Skumbi valley east of Elbasan against advancing troops from the 2nd Brigade of 8 Bulgarian ID. The Serbs had asked for Italian help in this area, but were turned down. In general Rome didn't want to conduct military operations beyond the immediate areas of the harbors at Durazzo and Valona. For both military and political reasons the Italians wouldn't even tell the Serbs about the size or organization of the units they'd sent to Albania.

Meanwhile the Serbian high command was getting the troops and refugees at San Giovanni di Medua and Durazzo ready for evacuation by sea. On 31 December the Serbs had a total of 140,000 troops with about 55,00 rifles, 179 machine guns and 81 guns; there were also 35,000 horses and 10,000 cattle.¹⁹

18 Kriegsarchiv (Marine-Archiv), "Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914-1918" (Vienna, 1929-31), pp. 250 ff.

19 Serbian General Staff, "The Great War of Serbia for the Liberation of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes" (hereafter referred to as the "Serbian Official History"), Vol. XIII, pp. 399 and 424

Orders of Battle as of 1 January 1916**3rd Army**

Commander = GdI von Kövess

Chief of Staff = GM Konopicky

A. Troops under the Commanding General in BHD

Commander = GdI von Sarkotic

Chief of Staff = Col. Minnich

[1] XIX Corps

Strength = 43 ½ bns, 2 fort MG dets, 1 ¼ sqdns, 45 ½ batties, 8 tech comps, 2 flieger comps; 37,610 foot, 120 horse; 148 mobile and 225 fixed guns, 99 fixed MG

Commander = FML Trollmann

Chief of Staff = Col Günste

- . FML von Sorsich's Group = 6150 foot, 45 horse, 16 guns
 - . FML Schiess' Lst Inf Bde = ½ of Grenz Jaeger Comp 3; k.u. Lst Bns IV/2, IV/3, VII/3, II/5, I/28; ¼ of 1 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 1; 3 Can Batty/Mtn AR 11, 2 How Batty/Mtn AR 2
 - . GM Streith's Lst Inf Bde = ¼ of Grenz Jaeger Comp 1; k.u. Lst Bns IV/4, II/20, I/26, I/31; ¼ of 1 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 1; 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 7, 1 How Batty/Mtn AR 6
- . 47th ID (FML Edl. von Weber) = 16,500 foot, 25 horse, 30 guns
 - . 14 Mtn Bde (Col. Edl. von Conrad) = Bns I/28, II/45, II/72, I/98, V/BH 3; ¼ of 1 Sqdn/Tyrol MR Bn; 4 & 5 Can Batties/Mtn AR 21
 - . Lt Col Törk's Group = 15th Comp/IR 33; half of a border guard comp; Fort Inf Bn 6; k.u. Lst Bns I, II & VIII/2; 2 Can Batty/Fort Arty Regt 5; half a mountain how batty
 - . Lt Col Lottspeich's Group = Grenz Jaeger Comp 4; Fort Inf Bns 5, 8; k.k. Lst Bns I & IV/37; 4 Can Batty/Fort AR 5, 5 Can Batty/Mtn AR 10
 - . Col von Colerus' Fortress Inf Bde = ½ of Grenz Jaeger Comp 3; Fort Inf Bns 3, 4; k.k. Lst Bn 45; k.u. Lst Bns V/4, III/7, IX/19; 3 Can Batty/Mtn AR 10, 2 Can Batty/Mtn AR 12
 - . 7 Comp/SB 12
- . Col. von Zhuber's Group = 3810 foot, 8 guns. k.k. Lst Bns 6, 59, 83, IV/39; k.u. Lst Bn VII/17; 6 Can Batty/Mtn AR 12, 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 21
- . k.k. 20 Lst Mtn Bde (Col von Farkas) = 4450 foot, 25 horse, 8 guns. BH FJB 2; IX Ma Bn/LW IR 23; k.k. Lst Bns I & II/23, 46; ¼ of 6 Sqdn/DR 5; 2 & 3 Can Batties/Mtn AR 21
- . Col Edler von Hausser's Group = 3550 foot, 25 horse, 8 guns. k.k. Lst Bn 49; k.u. Lst Bns IV/6, IV/17, VIII/17, I/20; ¼ of 2 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 4; an independent Mtn Cannon Bn (2 batties)
- . Artillery Group (Col Franz Edl von Portenschlag) = 78 guns. 11

Can Batty/FAR 19, 1 Can Batty/China Bn II, 1 & 2 Mtn How Batties/
Fort AR 5; 10.4 cm Can Batties 2, 3, 6; 12 cm Can Batty 8, 15 cm
Can Batty 1, 15 cm How Batties [M.99] 25, 35, 37, 48, 49; 15 cm
How Batties [M.14] 6, 27; 24 cm Mor Batty 3; 30.5 cm Mor Batties
6, 8, 11, 12, 14; 3 Flak Batty; 1 & 2 Coastal How Batties [L/15];
a Russian battery

. Corps troops = 1 Comp/SB 7, 7 Comp/SB 12, 5 Comp/PB 2, 2 Comp/
PB 5, 3 Comp/PB 8, 1 Comp/BP 10, 14 Comp of the RR Regt; six
light trench mortar platoons. Flieger Comp 6; GERMAN Flieger Det
57.

. Attached to XIX Corps - Castelnuovo Military Harbor (FML von
Rollinger with C/Staff Col Ritter von Hussarek) = 3150 foot, 225
fixed guns, 99 fixed MG

. Garrison = k.k. Lst Bn II/37, 1 Ma Comp/Lst IR 37; two
Fort MG dets; 29 Fort arty comps (207 fixed guns, 99 fixed
MG)

. On coastal defense between the Bocche and Ragusa

. Lt Col Pandic's Group at Gruda - 2 comps, 1 RR
security det, 10 fixed guns

. Col Schmidt's Group at Ivanica - 3 comps, 2 RR
security dets, 8 fixed guns

[2] FML Rudolf Braun's Group (FML Braun was also directly
commanding the Trebinje Mobile Group) = 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ bns, 4 fort MG dets,
1 cav det, 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ batties, $\frac{1}{2}$ a tech comp; 56760 foot, 25 horse; 57
mobile and 60 fixed guns

. Trebinje Mobile Group = Grenz Jaeger Comp 6, Fort Inf Bn 7;
k.k. Lst Bns I/9, II/9, III/26; k.u. Lst Bn I/30; four fort MG
dets, 1 cav det; 3, 4 and $\frac{1}{2}$ 5 "Trebinje" Can Batties; $\frac{1}{2}$ a comp
from SB 7

. Col Lörinczy's Group = k.u. Lst Bns V/2, VIII/19, III/20,
III/29, V/30; 2 Can Batty/Mtn AR 11; a "Trebinje" Mtn Can Batty;
one landing batty

. Col Hroch's Artillery Group = a "Trebinje" Can Batty, 3 Can
Batty/China Bn II, 7 Batty/FHR 36, a "Trebinje" Mtn How Batty;
How Batty "S"; 15 cm how Batty 4; two 15 cm howitzer batties

. Trebinje Fortress Garrison = 2 comps, 2 fort arty comps (5
mobile and 60 fixed guns)

[3] Directly under HQ of the Commanding General in BHD = 14 $\frac{1}{4}$
bns, $\frac{1}{4}$ sqdn, 3 mobile batties, 7 fort arty comps, 2 tech comps;
13,200 foot, 25 horse, 49 mobile guns, 75 fixed guns

. k.k. 21 Lst Mtn Bde (GM Eccher ab Eccho) = 3100 foot, 25 horse,
8 guns. BH FJB 3; k.k. Lst IR 27 (3); k.k. Lst Bn 75; $\frac{1}{4}$ of 6
Sqdn/DR 5; 1 Can Batty & 1 How Batties/Mtn AR 12

. Group Brgat (Lt Col Zsenyey) = 850 foot, 12 guns. 1 Comp of BH
Gendarme Bn; k.u. Lst IV/17; 6 "Sarajevo" Can Batty

- . 3 Comp/PB 2, 3 Comp/PB 15
- . Forming - One infantry bn and two batties
- . Fortress garrisons
 - . Bileca (GM Anton Andrian) = 11 comps, 6 fort arty comps; 3620 foot, 40 MG; 20 mobile & 63 fixed guns
 - . Avtovac Defensive District (Col Wanek) = 13 comps, 1 fort arty comp; 4650 foot, 12 MG; 9 mobile and 12 fixed guns
 - . Sutjeska Sector (Capt Kostetzky) = 1 bn; 980 foot
- . Naval Detachment in the Bocche di Cattaro (Counter-Admiral Hansa) [Vessels marked * took part in the bombardment of Mt Lovcen]
 - . 5th Division (Hansa's own) = Monarch, Wien, Budapest *
 - . 2nd Cruiser Flotilla (L-Sch Capt Grund) = Novara, Kaiser Karl VI *, Kaiser Franz Joseph I *, Aspern *, Panther *
 - . Destroyers = Warasdiner *, Huszar *, Orjen, Turul, Blitz²⁰
 - . Also - 16 torpedo boats, 4 mine-sweepers, 5 submarines and some auxiliary vessels

TOTALS for troops under the Commanding General in BHD = 69 bns, 6 fort MG dets, 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ sqdns, 63 batties, 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ tech comps, 2 flieger comps (or dets); 57,570 foot, 150 fixed MG, 170 horse, 254 mobile and 360 fixed guns; 58 long-range naval guns

B. The 62nd ID (FML Edler von Kalser)

Strength = 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ bns, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ sqdns, 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ batties, 4 tech comps; 9355 foot, 160 horse, 51 guns

. GM Vukadinovic's Group = k.u. Lst Bns III/25, II/26, VII/30; $\frac{1}{2}$ of a "Sarajevo" Can Batty; one landing batty

. k.u. 209 Lst Inf Bde (Lt Col Edl von Spindler) = k.u. Lst Bns VI/4, III/5, IV/26, VI/30, III/31; $\frac{1}{4}$ of Res Sqdn/HR 10; 4 Can Batty/Mtn AR 12, 6 Can Batty/Mtn AR 13

. k.k. 205 Lst Inf Bde (GM von Reinöhl) = k.k. Lst IR 409 (3), 410 (3); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 5 Sqdn/DR 14; $\frac{3}{4}$ of Res Sqdn/HR 10; 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 13, 1 How Batty/Mtn AR 9

. Divisional troops = $\frac{1}{4}$ of Grenz Jaeger Comp 1, $\frac{1}{2}$ of Grenz Jaeger Comp 3; k.k. Lst Eta Bn 518; k.u. Lst Eta Bn III/29; $\frac{1}{4}$ of 2 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 4; 6 Batty/FKR 15, 6 Batty/FKR 17, 9 Can Batty/Fort Arty Bn 2; 1 & 2 Can Batties/China Bn I, 5 Sarajevo Can Batty, 1 How Batty/Mtn AR 5; a landing batty; 3 Comp/SB 7, 7 Comp/SB 8, 4 Comp/PB 9, 2 Comp/PB 15

C. The VIII Corps

Strength = 41 bns, 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ sqdns, 28 batties, 2 trench mortar platoons, 10 tech comps; 34,085 foot, 842 horse, 104 guns

20 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - "Blitz" was actually an old torpedo-gunboat rather than a modern destroyer.

Commander = FZM von Scheuchenstuel

Chief of Staff = Col Sündermann

- . 53rd IR (GM von Pongracz) = 7884 foot, 393 horse, 22 guns
 - . 17 Mtn Bde (Col Karpellus) = k.u. Lst IR 19 (3); k.k. Lst Bns 44, 76; $\frac{1}{4}$ 6 Sqdn/DR 5; 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 12
 - . GM Karl Schwarz's Lst Inf Bde = k.u. Lst IR 3 (3), 6 (3); $\frac{3}{4}$ of 2 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 1; 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 10
 - . Divisional troops = k.u. Lst Eta Bns I/5, IV/15; 5 Sqdn/DR 5; 6 Can Batty/FHR 15, 8 Can Batty/FHR 35, 4 Can Batty/Mtn AR 4, 1 How Batty/Mtn AR 2; a March Comp of SB 13
- . Independent 10 Mtn Bde (GM Edl von Droffa) = 4256 foot, 89 horse, 22 guns. Bns I/48, I/62, I/90, II/92, III/BH 1; Res Sqdn/DR 5; $\frac{1}{4}$ 1 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 2; 4 Can Batty/Mtn AR 6, 2 How Batty/Mtn AR 9
- . 59th ID (FML Snjaric) = 8386 foot, 168 horse, 26 guns
 - . 9 Mtn Bde (GM Edl von Hrozny) = Bns IV/12, III/49, III/74, IV/84, IV/87; $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1 Sqdn/UR 12; 2 Can Batty/Mtn AR 7, 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 11
 - . 18 Mtn Bde (GM Skvor) = Bns III/31, II/60; FJB 3, 15, 26; $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1 Sqdn/Dalmatian MR Bn; 6 Can Batty/Mtn AR 4, 6 Can Batty/Mtn AR 6
 - . Divisional troops = 6 Sqdn/Hon HR 10; 6 & 7 Batties/FIR 24; 2 How Batty/Mtn AR 5; 7 Comp/SB 4
- . 57th ID (FML Heinrich Goiginger) = 8380 foot, 170 horse, 34 guns
 - . 2 Mtn Bde (Col Panzenböck) = Bns III/8, II/70, III/76, II/101, V/BH 4; $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1 Sqdn/Dalmatian MR Bn; 4 & 5 Can Batties/Mtn AR 5
 - . 6 Mtn Bde (Col von Hellebronth) = Bns I/6, III/38, IV/42, IV/50, IV/81; $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1 Sqdn/Dalmatian MR Bn; 3 Can Batty/Mtn AR 4, 5 Can Batty/Mtn AR 7
 - . Divisional troops = 3 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 4; 7 & 8 Batties/FKR 38, 1 & 2 How Batties/Mtn AR 13, 5 Batty/Heavy How Bn 2; 7 Comp/SB 6; 4, 5 & 6 Comps/PB 5; 4 Comp; PB 10
- . Haustein's Lst Inf Bde = 5179 foot, 22 horse, 8 guns. k.u. Lst IR 1 (3), 4 (2); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 1; 5 Batty/Hon FKR 6; 8 Batty/FHR 32
- . Corps troops = k.u. Lst Bns I & II/32; k.u. Lst Eta Bn III/2; 2 How Batty/Mtn AR 4, 3 Batty/Heavy How Bn 4; 22 cm T-M Züge 19, 20; 1 & 2 Comps/SB 4; 8 Comp/SB 9; a Lst sapper det

D. Directly under 3rd Army

- . Army troops = 4 Can Batty & 2 How Batties/Mtn AR 4, 1 Comp/PB 2, 5 Comp/PB 8, 2 & 3 Comps/Bridge Bn 1; Flieger Comps 9 & 15
- . Belgrade bridgehead (GM Kuchinka) = 4 bns, $\frac{1}{4}$ sqdn, 77 guns, 2 tech comps
- . Peterwardein Fortress (GM Grzywinski) = 1 bn, 93 guns

TOTALS for 3rd Army = 129 ½ bns, 6 fort MG dets, 10 ¼ sqdns, 115 ½ batties, 2 T-M Züge, 30 ½ tech comps, 4 flieger comps (dets); 101,010 foot, 1172 horse, 417 mobile and 530 fixed guns. Not reckoned in this total are 107 March companies not yet incorporated by their units (23,540 men).

Units of the Commanding General in BHD that weren't placed under 3rd Army

- . Coastal defenses from the northern tip of Dalmatia to Ragusa (FML Freih. von Wucherer) = 9 bns, 5 ½ batties
- . Sebenico Region (Counter-Admiral Zaccaria) - Sectors of Zara, Sebenico and Spalato (commanders not permanently assigned)
- . Mostar Region (FML Haala) = Sectors of Makarska, Slano and Metkovic (commanders not permanently assigned)
- . Fortress garrisons (5 ¼ bns, 15 fort arty comps; 26 mobile and 196 fixed guns)
 - . Kalinovik (Major Antosch) = ½ bn, 1 fort arty comp (10 fixed guns)
 - . Mostar (with Grad and Stolac) (FML Maudry) = 1 ¾ bns, 6 fort arty comps (10 mobile and 64 fixed guns)
 - . Sarajevo (GM Blechinger) = 2 ½ bns, 9 fort arty comps (10 mobile and 119 fixed guns)
 - . Brcko bridgehead = 1 comp
 - . Visegrad bridgehead = 1 comp; 6 fixed guns

The Montenegrin Army

Commander = King Nicholas

Chief of Staff = Col Pesic

Strength (excluding the Serbian supporting troops) = 52,400 men, 155 guns

- . Western front - Lovcen Group (9100 men, 50 guns), Herzegovina Group (13,300 men, 27 guns)
- . Eastern and northern fronts
 - . "Sanjak Troops" - Tara defense force (4000 men, 8 guns), Mojkovac Group (6500 men, 25 guns), Vasojevic Group (4500 men, 14 guns); the Combined Group from 1st SERBIAN Army (two inf regts, 4 guns)
 - . Old Serbia Group - 7500 men, 20 guns
- . General reserves - 7500 Montenegrin troops with 11 guns; one SERBIAN regiment and 6 guns

The Serbian Army

Commander = Prince-Regent Alexander

Chief of Staff = General Bojovic

Strength (including the three IR and ten guns detached to the Montenegrins) = 139,750 men (but only 55,000 armed riflemen), 81 guns

- . In the Scutari area
 - . 1st Army (Dunav Div II, Drin Div II) = 22,988 men
 - . 3rd Army (Dunav Div I, Drin Div I, Branicevo Det, Uzice Group) = 29,758 men
 - . Belgrade Armeegruppe (Sumadija Div I, Timok Div II) = 21,135 men

- . 2nd Army (Sumadija Div II, Timok Div I) = 15,092 men
- . In the Durazzo-Elbasan area
 - . "Troops of the New Territories" (Morava Div I, Morava Div II, Vardar Div I, a Combined Group) = 13,260 men
 - . Timok Armeegruppe (Krajina Det, Combined Div, Bregalnica Div, Cavalry Div) = 26,400 men

Italian Troops in Albania

Until 20 March 1916 they were commanded by GM Bertotti's "Special Corps for Albania"; then the HQ became XVI Corps under G.Lt Settimio Piacentini

. Units on 1 January - Savona Bde [IR 15 only], Verona Bde [IR 85, 86], Territorial Militia Bde [47 & 48 Militia IR], 10 Bersaglieri Regt (latter had been at Valona since 29 December 1914). Also 1 sqdn, 14 batties and 4 technical comps

. Reinforcements through 1 April 1916 - IR 16 of the Savona Bde; Bdes Marche [IR 55, 56], Puglie [IR 71, 72], Tanaro [IR 203, 204] and Arno [IR 213, 214]; 38 Territorial Militia IR; line IR 36; Cav Regt "Lodi." Also 21 ½ batties and 1 technical comp

TOTAL strength as of 1 April was 48 bns, 5 sqdns, 35 ½ batties and 5 tech comps. On 28 March the 38, 43 and 44 Inf Divs were formed to command the troops in Albania.

3. Fighting on the Montenegrin north front through the capture of Berane

According to the orders of GdI Kövess on 24 December (recorded above), while preparations for the offensive were completed on the western front of Montenegro the enemy units in the northeastern part of the country were to be pinned down; for this purpose the VIII Corps, supported by the left wing of 62 ID, was to take Berane with at least three brigades. This town was not only the starting point of a major road to Scutari; it lay on the border between the main area of Slavic-Orthodox settlement and ethnic Albanian-Islamic territory. Thus it also had political significance to the Montenegrins and to the units of the combined group from the 1st Serbian Army. In GFM Mackensen's orders of 5 December 1915 he had already referred to the special operational importance of this area and urged that all resources should be expended to secure the town of Berane as soon as possible. There were also military-political reasons for the Aus-Hung. forces to win a decisive success in this sector, because the Bulgarian high command - for transparent reasons which were unfavorable to Austria-Hungary - showed no desire to withdraw their 3 ID from

the Djakova-Prizren area on the borders of north Albania. The eventual relief of this Bulgarian division by 57 ID had to be postponed, presumably until the decisive phase of the operation against Montenegro had begun, because the bulk of 57 ID was still immobile at Pristina. Some weak detachments from the Division weren't expected to reach Djakova and Prizren until 8 January 1916. The Bulgarians had asked for equipment to bridge the Drin at Kula, which indicated that their 3 ID would attack in the area which had been allotted to 57 ID.

Although FZM Scheuchenstuel's VIII Corps hadn't been lagging behind (at least with its advanced detachments), he wanted to make sure that it was on schedule for carrying out the thrust to Berane, which was of such great operational and military-political significance. 10 and 18 Mtn Bdes were supposed to be ready on the line Gradina-Rozaj by 3 January, while 17 Mtn Bde was at Uglo; farther west the left wing of 62 ID was grouping to attack Mojkovac. Thus the units formed an arc facing southwest toward the Berane area. From this position, FML Snjaric was to advance on 5 January with 10 and 18 Mtn Bde toward the west, while 17 Mtn Bde struck south through Godusa to Berane. 53 ID would hold its current position at Bijelopolje and in cooperation with the left wing group of 62 ID would take the heights at Mojkovac. On the southern wing of VIII Corps the 9 Mtn Bde at Ipek would advance west to the end of the valley of the Bistrica Pejs and establish contact with FML Snjaric's 59 ID.

To defend northeast Montenegro the following forces were deployed within the arc of the Aus-Hung. line: the Mojkovac Group (6500 riflemen and 25 guns) opposite 62 ID and the Vasojevic Group (4600 rifles and 14 guns) opposite VIII Corps and 9 Mtn Bde; the combined group from 1st Serbian Army (two infantry regiments and 4 guns) was placed under the Vasojevic command.²¹ There was also a general reserve of Serbian units (an infantry regiment and 6 guns) at Spuz. However, before the decisive fighting these Serbian troops - except for some insignificant remnants and the few guns - were removed from the control of the Montenegrin Army. This wasn't due to any political-military considerations, but rather to the bitter complaints of Montenegrin authorities about the ruthless conduct and plundering of the Serbian personnel. Montenegrin soldiers had threatened to leave the front rather than to see their homes and farms ruined.²² Already on 4 January the Serbian council of ministers had to accede to King Nicholas' wishes; they removed their last combat troops from Montenegrin

21 Serbian Official History, Vol. XIV, p. 2

22 *Ibid.*, p. 18

soil and stationed them at Scutari where they could at least intervene in case of emergency. Therefore when the k.u.k. 3rd Army attacked the Land of the Black Mountain they were opposed only by Montenegrin units (except for a few Serbian guns).

The advance of VIII Corps and 62 ID

On 5 January on the left wing of 62 ID, GM von Reinöhl's Group (3 battalions of his own 205 Lst Inf Bde and the 3 bns of k.u. Lst IR # 6 from Schwarz's Brigade) assembled and spent the day readying their attack on Mojkovac. Meanwhile the brigades of VIII Corps were already advancing continuously over the snow-covered heights of the barren Bihor, the massive watershed between the sources of the Ibar and the upper Lim. Pushing back enemy outposts, 17 Mtn Bde reached Heights # 1400 west of Godusa and the town itself. Also 18 Mtn Bde, moving over the Krusevica planina at an elevation of almost 2000 meters, gained substantial ground. To their left, 10 Mtn Bde took the hotly-contested Turjak Heights on the 6th. Farther south the successes of advanced detachments of 9 Mtn Bde near the source of the Bistrica Pejs were already having an effect.

On the 6th there was also a clash in the sector of GM Reinöhl's Group. In the first onset the k.u. Lst IR # 6, which had gone ahead, mopped up the heights on the pass northeast of Mojkovac; however, they held off counterattacks by the numerically superior Montenegrins only by committing all their reserves plus reinforcements which came to the scene. Both sides suffered heavy casualties. In some places the enemy assaults continued during the night. In the morning of the 7th, k.u. Lst IR # 6 renewed its thrust on the heights southeast of Mojkovac, but was soon halted by strong counterattacks; at noon the Montenegrins went over to a general offensive on a broad front. Their main blow was delivered at Mojkovac and farther north against k.k. Lst IR # 409 of 205 Lst Inf Bde. The bitterly fighting Montenegrins penetrated our lines in some areas, but were driven off by counter-thrusts after all available units were engaged. Heavy snowfall and thick fog made it difficult for the few officers to control the fighting. The Brigadier himself was at the head of his last reserves when he launched the successful counterattack, after which the shaken enemy broke off the battle under cover of fog and of the arriving night.²³

The situation of GM Reinöhl's Group however was still quite desperate, since strong enemy detachments continued to threaten both flanks and forced them to take counter-measures. The offensive was resumed the next day to improve the tactical position, but the Montenegrins held onto Mojkovac and the heights to the southeast. On the other hand, an enemy detachment which

23 For this feat of arms GM Wilhelm von Reinöhl was decorated with the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order.

had driven over the Tara downstream from the town was hurled back over the river, and the flanks were secured. For the time being there was no prospect of continuing a general advance; in the last few days of fighting the Landsturm troops had lost more than 700 men (of whom 224 were killed), and were showing dangerous signs of complete exhaustion. Moreover, many of them were without winter clothing and exposed to the hardships of the weather. It's not surprising that GM Reinöhl had to decide to pause until he could make extensive artillery preparations for the assault; he had already achieved his mission of tying down the strongest possible enemy forces. The quiet that settled over the battlefield indicated that the Montenegrins' eagerness to fight was cooling considerably after the heavy casualties they had suffered.²⁴

The capture of Berane

Meanwhile the successes of Scheuchenstuel's troops had very favorably affected the overall tactical situation in the area. After fighting that in some sectors was very lively, the brigades of VIII Corps had overcome Montenegrin resistance and on 8 January they were already standing on the heights along the eastern edge of the Lim valley in a shallow arc extending from Bioca through the Vasojevici area to a point east of Berane. Therefore 59 ID could set Berane as the goal for the next day, while 17 Mtn Bde farther north was mopping up the eastern bank of the Lim. On the 9th however, the town of Berane itself wasn't taken, since the Montenegrins stubbornly defended the main entry routes. The advance through mountains covered with a meter of snow and on bottomless roads took place under a steady snowfall that impaired visibility and communications, and therefore was conducted methodically and very slowly. 59 ID finally broke the last enemy resistance in front of Berane, on the heights east of the place, on the 10th. The foremost troops of 16 Mtn Bde, in hot pursuit, also pushed over the burning bridge on the Lim to win the western bank and the town. The Montenegrins pulled back to the mountains south and southwest of Berane; however, in the ravines of the Mokra planina they blocked the routes to Andrijevica and Plav against the advanced guard of 9 Mtn Bde. Enemy units were also still in place on the heights southeast of Mojkovac, where for now GM Reinöhl's Group had to be satisfied with the ground they had already won. Anyway, considering the position and strength of the opposing forces there had been no expectation of an outstanding success here. The parts of 62 ID

24 205 bodies were found just in the sectors evacuated by the Montenegrins.

stationed on the Montenegrin northern front (GM von Vuchetich's Group and 209 Lst Inf Bde) had effectively prevented the transfer of enemy forces by constantly threatening the crossing points on the lower Tara at Nefertara and Prencanje.

3rd Army HQ received reports of the capture of Berane on 10 January at the same time they were learning of the successes of GdI Sarkotic's force on the Montenegrin western front. It was now clear that the enemy's main units, threatened in separate sectors and visibly shaken, would no longer be able to win local superiority at any point along the fronts. Therefore Scheuchenstuel's brigades which were in contact with the enemy were supposed to continue their pressure in the northeast toward Podgorica, while the general situation required 57 ID, which was finally arriving from Pristina, to advance toward Scutari as the Army's southern wing.

4. The offensive against the Montenegrin west front

a. Deployment and preparations

In order to ensure that all of the troops assigned to the Montenegrin western front had time to assemble - above all the combat-ready 14 Mtn Bde - along with the heavy artillery, GdI Kövess chose 8 January as the earliest date when the offensive could begin. GO Conrad concurred, and also declared his agreement with FML Trollmann's plans for using the heavy artillery and conducting the operation out of the Bocche di Cattaro. The contribution of the high command was limited to instructions that the key to success in the attack on Mt Lovcen, the main point on the Montenegrin western front, was to mass as much artillery as possible for a simultaneous bombardment of a restricted area. The infantry would first move up to their starting points under cover of this bombardment; then as soon as the artillery stopped firing they would immediately strike the area selected. 3rd Army HQ also played just a limited role in the development of the operation in GdI Sarkotic's sector; they merely ordered a short pause in the barrage by the heavy artillery to try to keep the offensive a secret.²⁵ On the other hand, on 4 January the HQ of 3rd Army temporarily suspended the rail movement of 21 Lst Mtn Bde so that they could send sufficient supplies to the units already in the area; the arrival of Hausser's Brigade was also delayed, apparently for similar

25 Sarkotic, "Die Lovcenaktion" (Sarajevo, 1916), p. 19

reasons.

The first operational orders, issued by Army HQ on 31 December 1915 as described above, were supplemented by GdI Sarkotic on 2 January 1916. He instructed that 14 Mtn Bde would deploy in the foremost line so it could take part in the attack. Since this Brigade wasn't at its full authorized strength, it seemed necessary to enlarge the front under attack by 47 ID; therefore in addition to 14 Mtn Bde and the Groups of Törk and Lottspeich, either the Fortress Inf Bde or Zhuber's Group would be employed. Another brigade from XIX Corps would attack on the 8th from the area around Han Pass to take and hold the ridge on the border at Bjelos; this would open the Dragalj-Nanove road, which could later be used to send supplies to Group Braun. This Brigade would already be at its jump-off point on the 6th so that it could mount a surprise attack in conjunction with the neighboring artillery while standing guard in the direction of Grahova. Brigade Hausser, as the Corps' reserve, would arrive at Zelenika between the 7th and 14th. The cooperation of the ships of the 5th Naval Division was arranged with the maritime officers.

FML Braun would attack out of the area east of Lastva with the mobile parts of the Trebinje garrison and Group Lörinczy (10 ½ battalions and 13 ½ batteries); his first objective was the line Omutic-Viljuse. The advance of his right wing would be supported by XIX Corps from Lisac. The units at Bileca and Avtovac would pin down the opposing enemy troops with brisk activity on their own initiative.

The 21 Lst Mtn Bde, as GdI Sarkotic's reserve, would intervene during the third week in January either near Cattaro or at Trebinje as the situation warranted.

The attack in the Lovcen area, scheduled to start on the 8th, would be delayed only if the weather became unfavorable.

The deployment as of 7 January

Based on this order, in the evening of 7 January the units of XIX Corps were deployed as follows:

- . FML von Sorsich's Group, with the Brigades of Schiess and Streith, on the line Traste-Sutvara;
- . FML Edler von Weber's 47 ID, with the reinforced 14 Mtn Bde and Group Törk, next to Cattaro (with a weak group that would make a demonstration between Cattaro and Orhova);
- . Lottspeich's Group at Veljeselo;
- . The Fortress Inf Bde behind the lines at Teodo; and

. 20 Lt Mtn Bde, as the Corps' reserve, at Baosic. The bulk of the heavy artillery were stationed on the Vermac Heights, with smaller groups north of the Grahovac and at Orahovac. The 5th Naval Division had most of its vessels on the Bays of Teodo and Cattaro, while the destroyer "Huszar" operated on the Bay of Traste. On the northern wing of XIX Corps, Zhuber's Group was southwest of Dragalj.

On 7 January the secondary force under FML Braun stationed its southern wing on the Lisac Heights and farther north along the border on a line from Mici motika to the Crkvica Heights. The mobile units from Bileca deployed northeast of their fortress, and those from Avtovac were southeast of that town.

As for GdI Sarkotic's reserves, the first transports carrying Hausser's Brigade had already reached their destination (Zelenika), while 21 Lst Mtn Bde was still outside the area of operations (at Rogatica).

GdI Sarkotic himself was at Bileca and Trebinje on 6 January, and moved to Castelnuovo on the 7th.

Despite all security measures, we had to anticipate that the troop movements in the deployment area couldn't remain hidden from the watchful enemy. In fact the Montenegrin high command had already taken their first defensive measures on the 4th; based on various reports they expected a general assault on 6 and 7 January. This conclusion was bolstered by information that was inadvertently revealed by some captured Aus-Hung. airmen.²⁶ The high command anticipated that the decisive action was imminent; they again tried with the help of the Serbs to assemble a reserve force in the Scutari area, while pressure from their opponents was already being felt on the northern front on the 5th.

b. Tactical considerations and plans for the storm of Mt Lovcen

The upcoming operation against Mt Lovcen exercised a special fascination not only upon the troops, but also upon their commanders and the staffs. From an operational standpoint, Lovcen was the most important stronghold of the small, never quiet Kingdom which had always been an irksome political opponent of the Danube Monarchy. The folk of the Black Mountain regarded this great massif as the principal bulwark of their entire

²⁶ Serbian Official History, Vol. XIV, p. 59

territory and their independence.

The choice of a point of attack

On the other hand, in the future the possession of the Lovcen area would be necessary for the security of the Bay of Cattaro as a military harbor of the Monarchy. The disadvantageous situation of this base, which had no natural defenses on the land side, had been manifested all too often since the war began. Thus it's understandable that for a long time the responsible commanders had busied themselves with all the tactical details (particularly involving the artillery) attendant upon this obviously difficult but attractive operation. Their planning was already ripe when they received the first operational guidelines from Teschen on 26 November 1915. The AOK ordered that "the Lovcen area should be taken by a frontal assault through the Krstac Pass, supported by nearby envelopment movements through Mirac on the one side and Vk. Zalesi on the other." It's not surprising that neither GdI Sarkotic nor FML Weber agreed that this was the best solution. These energetic and conscientious commanders felt that an attack against the enemy's thousand-meter tall rock wall, with only minimal support on the flanks, would be very costly and that success was doubtful despite whatever preliminary bombardment was laid down by the artillery. They sought to solve this technically difficult task with the most sensible tactics; they told the high command that the main attack should be delivered not through the Krstac Pass, but over the Solar (Point 1360), which was the key to the Lovcen position. The action would be easier if there were also envelopment movements on both sides of the Solar at approximately the same time.

Although GO Conrad was involved only with the overall guidelines for the entire operation against Montenegro and north Albania which was now developing - and thus wasn't attentive to local offensive measures - he still wanted the main blow to fall on the Krstac. On the other hand, he left it up to the local commanders to also deploy some of their troops on the low ground of the Zupa.

GdI Sarkotic transmitted these orders to FML Trollmann, who meanwhile had been entrusted with carrying out the attack. The latter had observed the terrain and conferred with his excellent subordinates in charge of the infantry, heavy artillery and naval forces; he declined to make the main effort through the Krstac because of the insurmountable difficulties. Trollmann decided to send the main body of his XIX Corps through the Solar and neighboring heights on both sides. Only detachments would climb

up from Cattaro and over the border line farther north. However, there would be a simultaneous attack by a strong group on the right wing out of the Zupa. Another attack on the northern flank toward Valista would start somewhat sooner. Only after the troops captured Kuk (at the end of a secondary road from Cetinje) would the effort be made to force the enemy away from the area of the Krstac Pass to open the principal supply line from Cattaro.

Assignment of objectives

On 2 January, GdI Sarkotic ordered his units to deploy on the western front of Montenegro in accordance with this plan of attack, which meanwhile was approved by the high command; on the next day FML Trollmann was thus able to assign goals to the various groups within his Corps:

- . FML Sorsich, directly adjacent to 47 ID, would advance with a strong left wing through Sutvara and Majstori to reach a line from Spas (1 km northwest of Budua) to Zabijo (1 km south of Majstori).

- . Farther north the main body of 47 ID (14 Mtn Bde, Group Törk and the Fortress Inf Bde) would advance to the line Trestanik Heights-Osma grk-east of Mali Bostur-Golobrdo-Bukovica-northern slope of Tatinjak; a subsidiary force (Group Lottspeich) would guard the northern flank of this thrust and aid it by securing the northern slope of the Tatinjak and reaching a line extending further north through Veli vrh to Gomilice.

- . Brigade Zhuber, on the Corps' northern wing, was to make a surprise assault against the Bjelos and Senj Heights along the border, while guarding in the direction of Grahovo; this would open a supply line along the Dragalj-Nanove road.

- . The detachment of XIX Corps which would be sent through Lisac toward Omutic to support Group Lörinczy was reassigned to FML Braun.

The artillery bombardment would end on the evening of the 7th. After twilight fell the principal striking forces would prepare to attack the next day; only Group Lottspeich would begin their advance on the 7th, in order to draw as many enemy troops as possible in their direction.

The artillery was placed under Col. Franz Edl. von Portenschlag and deployed in three groups:

- . Group "Traste" - One 7.5 cm "China" can batty, one 42 cm how batty, two 15 cm how batties, two 10 cm field how batties, two 15 cm Russian cannon, plus the artillery of the Traste fort; they were stationed in the vicinity of Traste and Gjurasevic

- . Group "Vermac" - Three 9 cm can batties, three 10 cm can

batties, one 12 cm batty, one 15 cm can batty, eight 15 cm how batties, a 24 cm mortar batty, five 30.5 cm mortar batties, one 42 cm how batty, plus the artillery of the Gorazda and Vermac forts; they were stationed in the vicinity of Vermac Ridge and Teodo

. Group "Orohovac" - One 15 cm how batty, one 24 cm mortar batty, one 15 cm Russian cannon, plus the artillery of the Sanik and Goli vrh forts.

(For artillery observation there was a balloon detachment, three airplanes and some searchlights.)

The mission of the artillery was to combine their fire on the points of attack and to neutralize areas from which the enemy could thrust on the flanks. The 5th Naval Division would cooperate in the bombardment.²⁷ Some of the heavy artillery would move ahead with the attacking infantry as soon as sufficient ground was gained.

27 Kriegsarchiv (Marinearchiv), "Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914-1918", pp. 264 ff. TRANSLATOR's NOTE - See also Nikolaus von Martiny, "Bild-Dokumente aus Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914-1918" (reprinted at Graz by Akademische Druck- und Verlags-Anstalt, 1973), Pictures 3, 15 and 16 with accompanying text. Picture 3 is a map that shows the positions of each vessel during the assault.

The terrain complicates the offensive and its logistics

The peculiar nature of the terrain made it necessary to thoroughly train the troops, to modify some of the equipment, and to introduce special measures so that supplies would flow smoothly.

The mountain massif of the Lovcen, 1759 meters tall, rose like a fortress almost a thousand meters higher than the inner ring of heights along the military harbor, thus offering the Montenegrins all necessary tactical advantages for their defense. The attackers would have to overcome an enormous difference in elevation by a difficult climb through barren, rocky wastes. Like no other part of the mountains on the Dinaric fault, the Lovcen gave evidence that it was formed of limestone. Although it lay in an area of frequent rain, the precipitation trickled quickly through cracks in the rocks and disappeared in caverns deep under ground; thus the whole area of broken terrain was very short of retrievable water. Since there were no pools or streams above ground, no valleys had formed and the area was a confusing tangle of rock formations that made any military operation difficult.

During the first day's action, supplies could be brought forward only by bearers, and in the central and northern sectors even bearers could be employed only with certain limitations. Columns of men to haul supplies were formed out of the numerous detachments of laborers in the military harbor. The lack of water caused great concern. In final orders issued on 6 January the HQ of 3rd Army had already decreed that water should be consumed sparingly; care would have to be taken to ensure that the existing resources, above all the conduit from Cetinje, should be captured intact wherever possible.

Despite all difficulties, it must be related that the assembled troops, most of whom were Landsturm men from all corners of the multi-national Monarchy, were ready to set to work regardless of sacrifices; they looked forward to the upcoming battle with confidence and with trust in their leaders.

c. The assault on Mt Lovcen

As ordered, on 7 January Lottspeich's Group continued the attack which they had already initiated on 28 December 1915 toward Gomilice and the heights on both sides of Valista. Since parts

of the Montenegrin Lovcen Group had been reinforced, the hard-fighting Landsturm Brigade wasn't able to gain some ground until the next day in the direction of Veli vrh and Ml. Zalesi; this helped detachments to climb up and advance from the inner bay at Dobrota.

8 January

At 6:00 AM on 8 January the sky was clear and full of stars, but the darkness of night still lay on the ground, which was free of snow. At this point Col. Portenschlag let the well-directed field and fortress batteries open fire. On the vessels of Counter-Admiral Hansa's naval detachment the horn signal "Clear the ship for action" was heard, and the red-white-red flags were hoisted. Several hundred guns pounded the main positions on the Lovcen, Krstin and Pestingrad - which had long been under observation - with a sudden hail of shells. Their thundering explosions repeatedly echoed off the rocky cliffs.

As soon as visibility permitted, the Montenegrin artillery returned fire with heavy howitzers and mortars, stationed in well covered positions on the Krstac and the Kuk. The naval vessels in particular, since they were clearly in sight, soon lay under a dangerous bombardment; hardly able to fight back, they either had to repeatedly change their anchorages or withdraw altogether out of the range of the Montenegrins. However, the superiority of our firepower soon became apparent. As the morning went on the enemy batteries were gradually silenced. Shortly after noon thick clouds covered the summit of the Lovcen and indeed filled the entire sky, until rain and snowfall hid the mountain from sight. However, the accurate artillery had already made it possible for the infantry to develop their attack.

In the coastal sector the brigades of Group Sorsich, supported by the Navy in the waters of Traste Bay, took Vranovic in the morning and by evening had worked their way up to the main enemy positions on a line through the Prcija glava; their left wing linked up with 47 ID east of Sutvara. This Division had already attacked the Montenegrin position on the Krimalj around 8:00 AM with parts of 14 Mtn Bde; the rest of the Brigade, along with Group Törk, started to climb onto the Solar and the heights farther north. However the massed fire of our artillery, repeated twice, had little effect on the ridge of the Krimalj, which was as sharp as a knife; therefore the attacking infantry gained no ground by noon. Only after accurate fire by heavy guns knocked out the machine guns that were stationed between the boulders did the last defenders evacuate their seemingly

impregnable natural fortress in the rocks in front of 14 Mtn Bde and Group Törk. This allowed the attacking groups, whose climb up the Solar had hitherto been hindered, to advance as far as the last bend in the mountain road.

Opposite Group Lottspeich on the left wing of 47 ID the Montenegrins offered unbroken resistance on the heights along the border east of Orahovac. With equal stubbornness they defended the crest of the Bjelos Ridge against Zhuber's Brigade on the northern wing of XIX Corps. However, by their envelopment operation both Lottspeich and Zhuber pinned down substantial numbers of the defenders of Mt Lovcen and kept them far from the decisive point of the operation.

9 January

After a stormy but otherwise uneventful night, the massed fire of our entire artillery resumed at 6:00 AM on Sunday, 9 January. The advance of almost all parts of Trollmann's Corps took place according to orders.

In the coastal area of the Zupa, the soldiers of Prince Peter already had to evacuate the Prcija glava during the first onslaught of Brigade Schiess, while Brigade Streith pushed ahead in the area of Pelinovo. Most of the enemy units fell back to the Mackova gomila, where they again came under flanking fire from the cruiser "Aspern" in the early afternoon. The cruiser, however, soon had to seek shelter in the harbor due to the approach of a large enemy squadron (two cruisers and four destroyers).²⁸ The Entente ships didn't interfere with Sorsich's Group, which by evening reached their objective for the day, the line between the Mackova gomila and Sisic.

Farther north the main body of 47 ID overcame all the obstacles of the terrain by stubborn endurance; after careful artillery preparation they took the Solar and the neighboring heights and thus broke through the main enemy positions along the summit of the highlands.

Besides losing their key defenses, the garrison of the Lovcen was bemoaning the destruction of all their heavy artillery under the deadly pounding of the Aus-Hung. long-range weapons.²⁹ In the afternoon of 9 January the ammunition depot at Kuk was blown into

28 Kriegsarchiv (Marinearchiv), "Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914-1918", p. 266

29 Serbian Official History, Vol. XIV, p. 71

the air by a direct hit, after which the defenders of this position at the end of the road lost all their courage; thus an important transportation artery into the heart of the country was left open to the attackers. Because of the desperate psychological condition of the Montenegrin troops, their King could no longer hope for a favorable turn in the miserable situation by continuing the fight on Mt Lovcen.

On the other hand, the northern units of the Lovcen Group had thus far kept the Aus-Hung. troops from gaining any significant ground. In front of Group Lottspeich they hadn't evacuated the Gomilice and Prosjenik Heights until the 9th, while opposite Brigade Zhuber they still held the Bjelos Heights.

10 January

In the sector of Group Sorsich's attack, the Montenegrin artillery was silenced in the evening of 9 January. On the next day, Schiess' Brigade advanced to the line Prijedor-Lastua, while Schiess' Brigade to the north took the Golis and Kolozun Heights and climbed ahead toward Zabija and Kolovir.

In 47 ID's area, the attack on 10 January soon gained ground that was tactically decisive. By noon all of the heights on the edge of the plateau had been crossed, and by evening the outlying hills of the Lovcen were reached. Only on the Krstac and on the slopes along the pass farther south was it necessary for the Fortress Inf Bde to break some final enemy resistance after bombardment by the heavy artillery. As darkness fell, rocket flares announced that the foremost troops of Brigade Türk had also climbed the summit of the Lovcen, the holy mountain of the Montenegrins.

Meanwhile Group Lottspeich had taken the heights on both sides of Valista after heavy fighting, and reached Ml. Zalesi with a detachment from the west. Although the enemy's resistance to Brigade Zhuber on the border heights was weakening under artillery bombardment and the threat to their flank, the attack here was going slowly because of the snow and cold.

After losing their main position on the edge of the plateau, the majority of the Lovcen garrison - deeply shaken by their opponents' artillery fire - had already pulled back in the night of 9-10 January to the line Stirovnik-Dolovi-Trestanik. During the 10th the last defenders of the Krstac Pass had also given up their now useless resistance under fire from the naval guns. Thus not only was the most important supply line open to the

advancing Austro-Hungarians, but also the main road to the capital, which was just a day's march distant.

The Montenegrin high command wanted to deliver themselves from this threatening situation with a counterattack in the night of 10-11 January. However, the war-weary troops refused to carry out the necessary orders. In vain the plucky commanders, along with Princes Mirko and Peter, tried to inspire their already mutinous men for a last attempt to free themselves.³⁰ Reinforcements brought up from the interior approached the battlefield sluggishly and hesitantly; no appeal could get them to hurry. Meanwhile the troops in the front lines announced that after several days of hunger, now "naked and barefoot", they could no longer even withstand the harsh weather, much less an overwhelming opponent; they must give up the fight.³¹ Even direct orders and threats from the King, relayed through the Princes, were without effect.

Developments to the north of XIX Corps

On 8 January FML Braun's Group advanced in several attacking columns from the line Lisac Heights-Skozji Grm village-Trebinjcica; they found strong units from the enemy Herzegovina Group on the border heights. Group Lörinczy was soon involved in lively combat around the outpost at Kozmac and the Vucija Heights, the most important enemy positions. On the next day the Montenegrins again denied us any tactical success by their stubborn defense, even though their artillery had already been silenced. The Vucija Heights were finally stormed on 10 January after several hours of bitter fighting; the shaken enemy troops fled toward Dugi Do. Meanwhile the flanking groups had passed the Omutic Heights in the south and broken the Montenegrin resistance in the north (on the Hercegovina and farther east).

Still farther north, on 8 January the mobile units of the Bileca fortress had taken the border sector Kovceg-Vardar from the right wing of the Montenegrin western front, and held onto the area the next day. Group Avtovac also pushed the outlying enemy troops over the border heights on the 8th; however they abandoned their gains on the next day and until the 10th mounted only feint attacks.

The situation on 11 January

30 Serbian Official History, Vol. XIV, p. 76

31 Serbian Official History, Vol. XIV, p. 76

The k.u.k. 3rd Army was naturally elated on 11 January by the capture of Mt Lovcen and the town of Berane, the two most important strong points of the enemy on each of the lines of approach into the heart of Montenegro.³² With increased enthusiasm the victorious troops strove for their goals despite their physical exhaustion and great privations. While the Montenegrins still offered successful resistance on their entire northern front and also on the northwestern border, there were already signs of a general retreat in front of XIX Corps. Thus in the morning the advanced guard of 47 ID was able to reach the line Blatiste-Jezerski vrh-Gobrdo and to directly threaten Cetinje.

In this dangerous situation, rendered hopeless by the collapse of the defenders of Mt Lovcen, the Montenegrin government had already advised their King the evening before to seek an armistice and open negotiations for the final cessation of hostilities.³³ At that hour the King, however, was still trusting in promises of help from the Russian Tsar and confident of his personal authority; he refused to make any concessions and demanded that the war should be carried on with all available means. Only in the morning of the 11th, when his last appeal to the fleeing troops went unheeded, did King Nicholas give in to the advice of his government. Order was already collapsing in the national capital amid scenes of general confusion. Vehicles carried the royal family and foreign ambassadors toward Rijeka in wild haste. While hungry refugees were already threatening to break into the supply depots, emissaries with full authority from the government were preparing for their journey to Canossa.³⁴

d. Negotiations open with the enemy

Barely an hour later the representatives of the Montenegrin government handed their message to the outposts of 47 ID on the Golobrd. Written by Minister President Mijuskovic, the note proposed an armistice for six days so that peace negotiations could open. 3rd Army HQ immediately sent the request to Teschen. The high command responded that the termination of hostilities

32 For the capture of Mt Lovcen, FML Ignaz Trollmann and FML Viktor Weber Edler von Webenau were awarded the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order.

33 Serbian Official History, Vol. XIV, p. 76

34 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - A "journey to Canossa" means a humiliating surrender. The reference is to the Italian town where Emperor Henry IV abased himself before Pope Gregory VII in 1076.

would occur only after the unconditional surrender of the entire Montenegrin Army and the expulsion of all Serbian troops still in the country. For the present, military operations would continue without interruption until full compliance with these demands.

These instructions were hardly necessary for the Aus-Hung. forces. 3rd Army HQ hadn't considered delaying their advance at all, and the troops' thirst for action - to say nothing of their leaders - hadn't slackened. There were a few units which at least for the time being had lost their edge and needed rest: the Brigades of Schwarz and Reinöhl because of heavy casualties and lack of supplies, and Zhuber's Group because of numerous cases of frostbite.³⁵ In general, however, the condition of the combat troops left nothing to be desired. The snowfall which originally had been so dreaded had relieved the lack of water in the highlands of western Montenegro and thus eased the logistical situation. Since 10 January the sunny winter weather had been salubrious in spite of increasing cold, heightened by a strong "Bora" wind.

Operations on 12-13 January

On 12 January the troops of GdI Sarkotic still encountered resistance on most parts of the Montenegrin western front, but on the next day they found the area ahead of them mostly clear of the enemy.

Near the coast, FML Sorsich led his troops onto the heights at Martinovic. His neighbors, the brigades of 47 ID, reached the high ground along the roads west of Bjelosi and Bajce. A scouting detachment from 14 Mtn Bde had already entered Cetinje without fighting in the afternoon of 13 January; Group Törk took over the royal capital in the following night. On the northern wing of XIX Corps Lottspeich's leading troops occupied the village of Ubli while Group Zhuber secured the Grahovo-Nanove area. In FML Braun's sector the heights east of Spila were free of the enemy; the Montenegrins had already withdrawn in front of the mobile groups from Bileca and Avtovac.

However, the enemy on the Tara and on the heights south of Mojkovac were still standing their ground opposite Group Reinöhl. Under VIII Corps the brigades of 59 ID also met substantial resistance on the heights on both sides of the Lim valley south of Berane; the passes to Andrijevisa were still barred against the advanced detachments of 9 Mtn Bde.

35 k.k. Lst Inf Bn # 6 alone reported 327 cases of frostbite.

Meanwhile the main body of 57 ID had reached the Prizren area. Their scouting detachments had already relieved the pickets of 3 Bulgarian ID along the Drin between Firza and Kula Lums; the main body of the latter Division had now moved to Mostar (Bitolj) to join the 1st Bulgarian Army. The only Bulgarian troops left in the newly-conquered areas of north Albania were a few detachments from 3 ID, while on the western flank of 1st Army some units from 8 ID guarded the border at Dibra and east of Elbasan.

Despite all the successes to date of the k.u.k. 3rd Army, the Aus-Hung. high command lamented the fact that there was insufficient pressure on the Montenegrin northern front, where the operational situation called for an advance through Kolasin into the center of the country around Savnik. Because of the hopeless logistical situation at this time, an advance by strong elements of 62 and 53 ID couldn't take place until the start of February; even then units which marched to the central Piva could be supplied only through Niksic. Even if the enemy retreated from the Tara River, the physical condition of the Landsturm troops after their privations was such that just some small detachments would be able to pursue - and then only if they didn't worry about their supplies.

3rd Army's analysis of the situation

The HQ of 3rd Army analyzed the general situation of the Montenegrin Army based on the fighting and on intelligence reports. Aside from the areas lost by the enemy combat troops, there had been little change to the original deployment of the Montenegrin units, caused probably by their reinforcement of the southwestern front. Losses of men and equipment had less effect on the Montenegrins' will to resist than the crushing burden of facing an overwhelming opponent and what they perceived as the shame of giving up Mt Lovcen. The hard-pressed Army and the starving population might be inclined to conclude peace, but the determination of the King meant that it was still possible that resistance could continue.

Therefore everything must be done to develop the offensive to full strength. Since the necessary pressure from the northeast would be delayed by many insurmountable problems, the main effort again would have to be made by the units in the southwest and west; they probably could reach the Podgorica and Niksic sooner than 62 ID or VIII Corps. Army HQ ordered that after GdI Sarkotic's troops took these places substantial forces would be taken away from the northeast, and the rest sent through Sarajevo

to the Montenegrin western front.

On this front the units in XIX Corps' reserves were already moving forward: 20 Lst Mtn Bde on the Krstac and Group Hausser in the area southwest of Cetinje. GdI Sarkotic's own reserve unit, 21 Lst Mtn Bde, was still held back at Sarajevo because of the low capacity of the supply line.

Course of the negotiations

Meanwhile Montenegro's military situation had significantly deteriorated; the troop desertions which originally had been restricted to the Lovcen sector were now spreading to the entire western front. The men who lived in areas that had been evacuated wanted to return to their homes; a great number of the other personnel also thought only of reaching their own towns. Serdar Vukotic was organizing the few soldiers who stayed with the colors for new resistance on the western bank of the Bojana River (on the Albanian frontier near the coast).

Under these certain signs of threatening collapse the King, although still feigning determination in front of his entourage, had to give in to the continued demands for peace from his ministers. He agreed to new negotiations with his opponents. The Serbs had meanwhile withdrawn their remaining artillery personnel on Montenegrin soil back to Scutari (without their guns or teams of horses). King Nicholas had wanted to delay this measure until he received a reply to a letter he'd sent to Emperor Franz Joseph I, in which he'd begged for an "honorable peace." Along with this hand-written note from Nicholas, in the evening of 13 January the HQ of 47 ID at Njegusi received a new peace proposal from the Montenegrin government. Both Emperor Franz Joseph and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs replied that the negotiations would begin only when the Montenegrins fulfilled the conditions already outlined. These messages were relayed from Teschen on 15 January and given by 3rd Army HQ to the Montenegrin commander without alteration.

There had been no substantial change in the situation by this date. GdI Sarkotic's combat troops moved up to the areas which their forward elements had already occupied on the 13th, and sent scouting parties a day's march farther ahead without meeting any resistance worth mentioning.

On the other hand, enemy resistance remained unbroken in northeast Montenegro. A battalion of 18 Mtn Bde was finally able to storm the heights at the mouth of the Bistrica (southwest of

Berane) on the 14th, but the forward detachments of 9 Mtn Bde near the sources of the Bistrica Pejs were still repelling an enemy attack. General Jankovic, Serbia's representative with the Montenegrin high command, even reported to his government on 15 January that the position of their allies seemed to be improving.³⁶ He thought that if the troops could be adequately supplied they would still be able to counterattack with some prospect of success.

³⁶ Serbian Official History, Vol. XIV, p. 113

5. Events until the surrender of the Montenegrin Army

Based on their opinion of the situation of both sides, the high command approved all the plans of 3rd Army HQ as outlined above. Thus the strongest possible forces were to advance on the northern front to Podgorica. To relieve the over-burdened supply system, the remainder of the troops would shift from that front by way of the Bosnian railroads to either the western front or the coastal area.

3rd Army resumes its advance

Based on this concept, on 14 January GdI Kövess instructed his units to resume their advance. He also ordered that the brigades of 53 ID should be transported on the Bosnian rail lines. The main body of XIX Corps would push through Rijeka toward Podgorica, while sending a brigade apiece toward Virpazar and Danilovgrad; only weak forces were deployed in the coastal area. Brigade Zhuber wouldn't be used until it had been considerably rehabilitated. The advance on the Montenegrin western front would commence on the 16th. The logistical preparations of Trollmann's Corps were well advanced, but the situation of Group Braun was less favorable because only parts of the Dragalj-Podbozur road had been rebuilt.

The uncertain attitude of Montenegro made it necessary to make plans for either continued fighting or for the enemy's surrender. If the operation had to continue, GdI Kövess wanted the troops on the western front to first reach the line Virpazar-Podgorica-Danilovgrad-Niksic, while reserves assembled at Rijeka and Cetinje. 59 ID would advance on Podgorica; 205 Lst Inf Bde would initially support this advance, then pull back. 209 Lst Inf Bde from 62 ID would follow 53 ID, which was departing the northern front; however, it wouldn't be able to shift to the western front since it would take three weeks to clear the already overloaded Bosnian railroads.

If Montenegro did surrender, GdI Kövess intended to move two brigades apiece of XIX Corps to Rijeka and Podgorica, and one apiece to Virpazar and Danilovgrad; the others would deploy at Cetinje and Njegusi. Most of Group Braun would move to Niksic, leaving a weak brigade in reserve to guard the coast by Trebinje. One brigade of XIX Corps would also be in the area of the military harbor (in the Zupa). In the northeast, 59 ID with 205 Lst Inf Bde would advance in echelon through Matesevo to the Podgorica area, where they could receive supplies brought up from

Cattaro. To guard the roads to Ipek the 17 Mtn Bde would deploy in the Berane-Andrijevica-Kolasin area, while Brigade Schwarz and 209 Lst Inf Bde initially assembled at Plevlje.

Until sufficient supplies were available the 57 ID, which was supposed to advance from the Ipek-Prizren line toward Scutari and Alessio, and 9 Mtn Bde would stay in place to secure the Serbian territory they had already captured.

To simplify the lines of command, on 15 January the XIX Corps, Group Braun and the 5th Naval Division were placed directly under 3rd Army HQ as the latter had suggested. GdI Sarkotic also agreed to this change, so that he could once more devote himself exclusively to his extensive responsibilities as military and political governor of Bosnia-Herzegovina-Dalmatia.

The capitulation

Since the Viennese government had rejected the Montenegrin peace proposals, and since there were signs that revolution might break out, it seemed that King Nicholas would bow to his ministers' demands that he surrender unconditionally.

At noon on 16 January, the Montenegrins came to Cetinje and handed over a note to the k.u.k. government accepting that the surrender of their Army would be the first step in peace negotiations, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had demanded in their communication of the day before. At the same time, Teschen advised 3rd Army HQ how to carry out the disarmament of the enemy and the cessation of hostilities. On 17 January, however, the Montenegrin negotiators suddenly departed. After the talks broke off the AOK considered measures to bring more pressure to bear. Since Serdar Vukotic had meanwhile expressed some reservations about laying down his arms, the high command threatened to resume fighting on 21 January. The deadline was postponed for one day based on the wishes of the Viennese government, and on the 23rd an agreement was reached regarding the capitulation. It wasn't actually signed until 25 January, although for two days the disarmament of the enemy was already moving forward quickly.

These delays in the negotiations were undoubtedly caused by the irresolute attitude of King Nicholas. On the 17th the King himself was still telling the Serbs that he and his court were postponing their movement into exile - which the allied ambassadors were urging - in the hope of obtaining more favorable

terms.³⁷ Just three days later, however, the King, his Minister President Mijuskovic, and the Entente representatives took an Italian torpedo boat to Brindisi. There Nicholas denounced all the Austrian demands and announced that the war would continue. He had left behind a rump ministry to carry on the negotiations.

6. Events through the end of January

These political chess moves of the King had no substantial effect on the military developments, because the disarming of his troops was proceeding quickly. The Montenegrin Army ceased to exist.

Miserable condition of the Serbs

The way was open for the k.u.k. 3rd Army to enter the north Albanian coastal plain. Here since the start of the month the remnants of the Serbian Army and countless refugees were near the harbors of San Giovanni di Medua and Durazzo; they'd been waiting in vain for the help they'd been promised. In these anxious weeks only a few Italian ships had hesitantly approached the coast to bring a negligible quantity of food.³⁸ The evacuation of the troops still hadn't started, and the hard-pressed Serbs were sending ever more urgent appeals for help from their negligent allies, in which they referred to Italian "chicanery."³⁹ This charge was echoed in French newspapers. In reality there was another reason for the Italians' delay besides the uncertainty in the Entente camp. The harbors on the north Albanian coast were very poor, and menaced directly by the Aus-Hung. fleet in its nearby naval base at Cattaro. The open harbor at Medua was particularly perilous, and it is understandable that the Italian ships preferred to use Durazzo. Finally, when the successes of Kövess' Army seemed to threaten Scutari, Paris decided to accelerate the assistance using the French Navy.⁴⁰ Although the Serbian high command at Scutari hoped that their troops could now embark for Corfu from Medusa and Durazzo, on the 17th their allies decided that the Serbs would have to be transported from Durazzo and Valona because of the threatening situation in Montenegro and the miserable condition of the harbor at San Giovanni di Medua.⁴¹

37 Serbian Official History, Vol. XIV, p. 127

38 Serbian Official History, Vol. XIV, p. 63

39 *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, p. 64

40 *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, p. 115

41 *Ibid.*, Vol XIV, p. 116

The necessary troop movements were another Way of the Cross for the Serbian units, already almost immobilized by exhaustion. Indescribable misery caused some individuals to take desperate actions which were repressed only with difficulty. The famished soldiers growled with resentment when they learned that the Serbian court had embarked, and that the King of Montenegro had fled. Their leaders were also agitated when the Italian General Guerrini at Durazzo stated on the 19th that some of the units would probably have to march as far as Santi Quaranta. The Serbian commander General Bojovic halted the troops who were already on their way to Valona and asked his government (which was on Corfu) to put an end to the "systematic destruction" of his soldiers.

Plans of the k.u.k. 3rd Army

The perplexity in the enemy camp didn't remain unknown at the HQ in Teschen, where GO Conrad on 16 January instructed 3rd Army HQ to send a mixed detachment over the Bojana into the coastal area south of Scutari as soon as possible. Thus on the next day GdI Kövess ordered that whenever possible two battalions and a mountain battery from 14 Mtn Bde should be sent through Virpazar and Stari Bar. Their goal would be to take Scutari by surprise and then advance toward Alessio-San Giovanni di Medua, spreading confusion and causing the enemy substantial damage. To back them up, a detachment of Brigade Schiess would move through Stari Bar to the Bojana and then would cross the river; also, a mountain brigade should follow them so that a stronger battle group would be available in this coastal area.

At the end of 1915, GO Conrad had already exchanged views over the general political war aims with Freiherr von Burian, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Conrad expressed the opinion that Serbia, Montenegro and Albania should completely disappear as independent states. The Monarchy would annex the parts of Serbia that weren't given to Bulgaria, all of Montenegro, and Albania as far as the Mati River. He also opined that in exchange for helping drive the Italians from the eastern Adriatic coast the Bulgarians should be promised central Albania with Durazzo, and the Greeks the southern part of the country (including Valona). The successes of Kövess' Army to date, and the wretched situation of the Serbs, now led to the decision to take military possession of the territory of north Albania as far as the line Mati-Dibra, and to clear it of the enemy.

To carry this out, in orders issued on 17 January the 3rd Army would reach the Scutari area with about eight brigades and some

heavy artillery. Four brigades of Trollmann's Corps would advance south of Lake Scutari and one to the north, while 59 ID and one brigade of 62 ID moved through Matesevo-Podgorica. Scutari was to be taken as soon as possible.

Depending on the situation, 57 ID and 9 Mtn Bde would be deployed either toward the southwest or the south. The main body of their battle group was meanwhile to stay on the line Ipek-Djakova-Prizren where they would receive a large amount of supplies and secure their lines of communication. Mixed detachments and Albanian volunteers should push forward to the line Scutari-Kruja as quickly as possible.

Three brigades from the northern front were withdrawn through Plevlje and sent along with 21 Lst Mtn Bde to the Sarajevo area; a fifth brigade was to be held at either Cattaro or Trebinje at the disposal of the high command. The departure of the five brigades was just the start of the gradual diminishing of the Balkan forces, which would be needed for the operation already being planned against Italy. 21 Lst Mtn Bde, however, was sent to reinforce 7th Army in the Bukovina.

The troops move south

The advanced detachment of 14 Mtn Bde under Lt Col. Krammer occupied Scutari on 23 January without fighting; on the next day they received an order to confiscate all available vessels, which would be very necessary to transport supplies.

Under Corps Trollmann, the leading troops of Group Sorsich reached the coastal plain of the Bojana at Katrkol, while parts of 47 ID entered Podgorica, where they received a friendly reception from the citizens.⁴² In Niksic, however, which was occupied by the advanced guard of Group Braun, the inhabitants

42 On the way they were approached by the royal Prince Mirko, who reported that atrocities were being committed in Podgorica, which he had just left. It turned out, however, that there had just been a scuffle between the Montenegrins and the local Albanians, in which Issa Boletini, the most notable Arnaut leader and their oldest freedom fighter, had perished along with his son. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - Mirko was the second son of King Nicholas. Since he was pro-Austrian, there was talk of making him the ruler of a south Slavic state dependent on the Monarchy, but nothing came of this scheme. See Arthur May, "The Passing of the Habsburg Monarchy 1914-1918" (Philadelphia, 1966), p. 114.

were very sullen or even hostile.

In general, however, the disarmament of the Montenegrins was making rapid strides. In the northeast part of the country, where hitherto resistance had continued, the enemy units in front of 62 ID began to lay down their arms. A detachment of 59 ID from Berane reached Andrijevica, so that the parts of 9 Mtn Bde which had been heading in this direction could pull back to Ipek. This Brigade was now placed under 57 ID, which in turn was assigned directly to 3rd Army HQ.

To carry out the orders of the high command, the following units were selected to participate in the advance into northern Albania:

- . 14 Mtn Bde, 20 Lst Inf Bde, the Fortress Inf Bde and the Brigades of Schiess and Streith from XIX Corps;
- . 59 and 57 ID from VIII Corps (the latter included 9 Mtn Bde); and
- . 205 Lst Inf Bde from 62 ID.

In the sector of Trollmann's Corps, the troops in Scutari would first be reinforced to two and then three brigades (as supplies became available) and would prepare bridgehead positions. In the meantime Virpazar and Podgorica would be occupied in greater strength, while reserves were held back at either Rijeka or Cattaro. Because of the logistical situation, 59 ID with 205 Lst Inf Bde wouldn't advance to Podgorica until the road between Cattaro and Krstac was repaired. The disposition of 57 ID with 9 Mtn Bde would depend on how operations developed; they would probably advance toward the south. The final organization of the higher HQ was left open for the time being. Units not chosen for the offensive would make up the garrisons of the Cattaro military harbor and of the occupied lands, or guard the coast.

Thus despite the urgency of the military and political situation it still wasn't possible for strong units to advance into the north Albanian plains due to the difficulties in bringing up supplies. According to reliable reports, the Italians had already left Durazzo, which indicated that the Serbian units in the area had moved south. Quick exploitation of this development was called for, especially since it was believed that the Bulgarians had similar intentions. Therefore the high command ordered that a well-armed mixed detachment should be immediately sent to the Durazzo area, while if possible an Albanian detachment should secure this important harbor and town.

The employment of Albanian troops was part of the plan to oppose

the Albanians who were under Italian influence by quickly winning over some of their compatriots to provide military assistance to the Monarchy. Because of the prevalent and long-standing hostility of this nationality against the Serbs and Montenegrins, the plan won considerable success. In the areas which until now had been occupied by Serbian or Montenegrin troops, the population had taken up arms as soon as they were free of the oppressive alien yoke, and were willing to take part in the further undertakings of the k.u.k. Army. Levies organized in the liberated Albanian districts were already marching toward the coast under the leadership of Aus-Hung. officers from Prizren who were familiar with the area.

Even ahead of these Albanian groups, however, on 31 January a scouting detachment from 2 Mtn Bde at Prizren had already reached Nerfusa, where several streams come together to form the Fani River. Meanwhile Krammer's Detachment from 14 Mtn Bde (four battalions and two mountain batteries) occupied Alessio and Medua and sent outposts ahead to the Mati.⁴³ On 24 January the Serbs had already left Medua for Durazzo; their rear guards were stationed on the Ismi River. Based on orders of 28 January, the main body of Trollmann's Corps was to concentrate at Scutari as soon as the supply situation and the need to guard the coast permitted, while placing a brigade at Rijeka at the disposal of Army HQ. 2 Mtn Bde was the only unit of VIII Corps which was to advance from Prizren through Dibra to Durazzo. The rest of the Corps would move to the Italian theater of operations - 59 ID (10 and 18 Mtn Bdes) through Podgorica-Zelenika and 57 ID (6 and 9 Mtn Bdes) through Belgrade. 205 Lst Inf Bde was to rejoin 62 ID through Plevlje.

Military and political developments involving the Entente states

The logistical situation of the Serbian Army, now based exclusively at Durazzo, had hardly improved. The operational situation had even deteriorated, since there were major differences of opinion in Rome regarding how to help their allies.

G.Lt Count Cadorna, who from the start had advised against any operation in Albania, now wanted the troops at Durazzo to evacuate the town and march overland to Valona. The Minister for

43 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - Krammer's own II Bn of IR # 72 was part of his detachment; however, at least one of the components was not from 14 Mtn Bde - Fortress Inf Bn # 4. See Schachinger, "Die Bosniaken kommen!" (Graz, 1989), pp. 95-105.

Foreign Affairs, Baron Sonnino, wanted to hold onto Durazzo as a political pawn. On 22 January the Italian Army commander insisted that these political considerations had to be subordinated to military necessities, and even threatened to resign.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the political circles decided to reinforce the expeditionary corps in Albania with a division and to place the troops in Durazzo directly under the Minister of War.

While King Nicholas and his Minister President Mijuskovic were already staying in Rome, on 28 January the Aus-Hung. envoy Eduard Otto initiated political discussions with the Montenegrin rump cabinet at Cetinje. However, Otto demanded that the head of government should either return or give the ministers who'd stayed in the country full power in writing. The Viennese government wanted the peace negotiations themselves conducted solely with individuals who'd been personally empowered by the King; contact with Nicholas was to be established through a neutral power.

On 2 February the Montenegrin representatives at Cetinje received a communication to be given to their King, demanding that he appoint peace negotiators in two days. However, France interfered with, and then thwarted, attempts to use Spain as an intermediary, so the Ballhausplatz ended the diplomatic negotiations and published the notes it had exchanged with Montenegro. They also gave in to the demand from the high command to introduce military government in the land of the Black Mountain.

Mijuskovic meanwhile claimed that the activity of the ministers who'd stayed in their homeland was unauthorized; the ministers, in turn, joined with Prince Mirko to state that the King had gone abroad without the knowledge of the government. This not only caused confusion, but also raised the danger of internal unrest.

At this time the entire German press was conducting a lively campaign for the most favorable possible peace conditions. The Foreign Ministry at Vienna complained to Berlin against any official widening of the war aims beyond what had been agreed between the Central Powers by treaty. In an exchange of views between the diplomats, however, Reich Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg also opposed any harsh conditions for peace. He suggested that Montenegro should be expanded at the expense of

44 Cadorna, "Altre pagine sulla grande guerra" (Milan, 1926), p.

Serbia, since the Chancellor had learned from confidential reports that the Ballhausplatz intended to have Serbia disappear as an independent state. Burian, on the other hand, felt that mild treatment of Montenegro would be a serious error. He wanted to make the Kingdom permanently harmless by detaching all of its territory that was inhabited by Albanians; as for Serbia, he told Bethmann-Hollweg that no final decisions had been taken. The German replied that the conclusion of a conciliatory peace would have a favorable effect on relations with the other small countries, with beneficial results for the war effort of the Central Powers; the enemy feared precisely such a development. Although there was some force to this argument, it was turned down by Vienna. Austria-Hungary intended that Montenegro should still exist under its national dynasty, but only as a client state within approximately the borders established by the Berlin Treaty of 1878. It would be bound to the Danube Monarchy by a secret military convention, a customs union, and a common monetary policy.

B. The conquest of north Albania

1. The advance to the Skumbi River

a. The march to Durazzo

In the first days of February, airmen reported that Serbian units had shifted into the immediate area around Durazzo, where they were embarking day and night on ships, while other enemy columns were moving through Kavaja toward Valona. Reports indicated that north Albania would also be evacuated by the Italians.

In fact the movement of some of the Serbs to Valona, which had been briefly interrupted, was flowing again. It was covered by the Timok Armeegruppe; meanwhile 1st Army protected Durazzo, where the 3rd and 2nd Armies were the initial components to embark. Only after the night of 8-9 February, when the Serbian rear guards withdrew over the Arsen, did the Italians finally take over responsibility for guarding the Durazzo harbor area.⁴⁵ Also on the 9th the Combined Division, serving as the rear guard for the Serbian southern group, left Elbasan for Valona where the embarkation had already started on 28 January.

45 Serbian Official History, Vol. XIV, p. 257

To pin down the enemy units still deployed in front of Durazzo, on 5 February the k.u.k. high command instructed 3rd Army HQ to send the strongest possible contingents from XIX Corps and 2 Mtn Bde to the scene and to place all the fighting troops under a unified command. To avoid constantly changing the titles of the units which hitherto had been known by their commanders' names, Sorsich's Group HQ had meanwhile become HQ of 63 ID, Brigade Schiess the 210 Lst Inf Bde, Brigade Streith the 211 Lst Inf Bde, the Fortress Inf Bde the 22 Lst Mtn Bde and Group Zhuber the 24 Lst Mtn Bde. The Brigade of Col. Rudolf Löbl (formerly Haustein's) became the k.u. 212 Lst Inf Bde while Brigade Schwarz became 23 Lst Mtn Bde.

Albania as a theater of operations

The advance to the south had meanwhile been making slow progress. Krammer's detachment pushed south of the Mati through Miloti and Mamuras, and on 3 February reached Teke Fusa Krujs, from which troops occupied Kruja, the home town of Skanderbeg. Scouts didn't exchange the first shots with the rear guards of the 1st Serbian Army until they were in front of Preza.⁴⁶ The Serbs held prepared positions on the southern slopes of the Ismi valley, and thus temporarily kept the attackers from gaining further ground. Meanwhile the rest of 211 Lst Inf Bde reached Mamuras on the 5th, while 210 Lst Inf Bde was still back at Alessio. The other units of XIX Corps involved in the operation (47 ID with 14 Mtn and 20 Lst Mtn Bdes) were in the Scutari area. 2 Mtn Bde, based at Prizren, sent a detachment under Lt Col. Zloch (1 ½ battalions and half a battery) from Kula Lums through Orosi to the middle Mati; their goal was to thrust through Kruja and Durazzo, followed by the main body of 2nd Brigade. The Albanian groups were moving toward the same points.

During the march to the Ismi the troops were already learning about a new enemy - the Albanian coastal plains with their large untamed rivers and extensive lagoons and swamps, interspersed with impenetrable woods and treacherous bogs. The most distinctive feature of the theater, however, was the climate; already under sub-tropical influences, the area was alternately arid and then rain-soaked, which led to outbreaks of malaria.⁴⁷

The rainy season usually begins in October and often lasts until April; it makes movement almost impossible, at least in the low

46 *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, p. 242

47 Veith, "Der Feldzug in Albanien" (Schwarte, Vol. V, pp. 512 ff.)

lands. Ever larger parts of the plains disappear under water; even the land that isn't submerged is completely soaked, so that it isn't feasible to camp for long in the open. Traffic is then restricted mainly to the sandy and prominent river banks, since the roads through the plains present almost insurmountable difficulties.

The condition of the roads was dictating the deployment of 63 ID at this time, with one of its brigades at Kruja and the other at Alessio. Both brigades would have to advance along the only available route; it was soon a bottomless ribbon of mud, parts of which were completely under water. Since it mostly ran between swamps and steep foothills, it was impossible to deviate from the path or send out side detachments. As the brigades of 47 ID followed they would also be forced to take this road. The crossing points over the highly swollen Mati River had to be constantly repaired. All these conditions added to the already difficult logistical problems.

After 3rd Army HQ received the AOK's order of 5 February (see above), they in turn instructed FML Sorsich to take Durazzo with 210 and 211 Lst Inf Bdes, 20 Lst Mtn Bde, 14 Mtn Bde and Albanian groups. Other Albanian groups should advance through Kruja in an envelopment movement toward Tirana and Kavaja.

The opposing forces deploy in front of Durazzo

At this time the Italian garrison at Durazzo consisted of the Savona Brigade, a battalion of Territorial Militia, two mountain batteries, 14 field cannon and four 12 cm guns.⁴⁸ According to orders issued on 30 January, they were supposed to be ready to evacuate, but would only do so if under heavy pressure from their opponents. General Ferrero was given the difficult job of deciding the right moment to abandon the harbor. In any event he was first supposed to cover the embarkation and departure of the rest of the Serbian Army. Despite great difficulties, this was accomplished by 9 February.

Meanwhile the first troops of FML Sorsich's 63 ID had reached the heights in the coastal area between the Ismi and Arsen without fighting, and on 9 February occupied Tirana (which had been evacuated by detachments of the Timok Armeegruppe two days previously).⁴⁹ The main body of 211 Lst Inf Bde left the Preza-Vorra area for Durazzo and secured the Mali Barzes Heights, which dominated the surrounding terrain; here an Italian assault was easily repulsed on the 11th. All parts of 211 Brigade, reinforced by troops of 14 Mtn Bde (Krammer's Detachment), arrived by 14 February and occupied a broad front opposite the Italians, on the heights east of the Arsen valley between Ruskuli and Mali Barzes. The leading troops of 210 Lst Inf Bde reached Larusku. The units of 47 ID were following; on this day the 20 Lst Mtn Bde was at Alessio and the main body of 14 Mtn Bde at Scutari. 2 Mtn Bde, advancing from Prizren through Fani and Orosi toward Kruja, already had its foremost troops in the line of battle at Preza. The first Albanian group that was ready for combat, about 600 men under Capt. Hässler, moved through Tirana to the heights north of Kravaja. When this town surrendered on 16 February the Italian position at Durazzo was completely cut off by land.

The enemy's main line of resistance ran along the left bank of the Arsen up river from its mouth to the hill at Bazar Sjak; then it included a bridgehead east of the river on both sides of the road to Tirana that extended back to the Arsen opposite Res. Then it again followed the river's left bank through Teke Aleksit. From here the line extended to the coast at the sandy heights of Skam (Sasso Bianco).⁵⁰ In this sector there was also

48 Cadorna, "Altre pagina", p. 162

49 Serbian Official History, Vol. XIV, p. 286

50 Ravenni, "Cenni sull'azione italiana in Albania dal 1914 al 1918" (Revista militare italiana for 1931, Issues 7 and 8)

a fall-back position for the right wing on the hills between the Arsen and the lagoons. Finally there were trenches to secure the two narrow isthmuses which connected the Durazzo peninsula with the mainland on both sides of the Knetia Durciti Lagoon.

The Italians debate evacuation

The position of the Italian garrison at Durazzo was certainly not favorable. The Savona Brigade could only hold such a small area that the harbor, already endangered from the sea, was also in constant danger from the land side. Moreover there was no prospect of timely relief by land from Valona, since the Bulgarian units on the upper Skumbi could interfere with such a movement from the flank. And the hope for political success in Albania which had justified taking military risks had faded. Except for a small remnant, Essad Pasha's recruits had deserted. This self-seeking rich landholder, who was mistrusted by his compatriots, lost his nerve and on 12 February had already asked to be allowed to take ship quickly for exile.⁵¹

This development caused the Italian consul in Durazzo to demand the next day that Rome authorize the immediate evacuation of the harbor. However, neither his demand nor the renewed exhortation of Cadorna compelled the political circles to voluntarily give up the city, because they were fearful not only of their future position in Albania but also of the impact of a setback in Italy itself. General Ferrero, on the other hand, who'd been entrusted by the politicians with the right to decide on eventual evacuation, wanted to leave immediately after he was advised on 14 February by Vice Admiral the Duke of Abruzzi, commanding the Adriatic fleet, that it would be dangerous to postpone the embarkation. Nonetheless the commander of the expeditionary corps at Valona, General Bertotti, ordered Ferrero to put off the evacuation, since the latest information was that neither the Austrian nor Bulgarian units represented a serious threat. After further protests against continuing to hold Durazzo remained fruitless, General Ferrero decided to offer resistance as long as possible; he was even compelled to send away the empty troop transports, which had been anchored in the open sea off the town despite danger from high waves.

The ship movements in the Durazzo harbor were naturally observed by the foremost k.u.k. troops; along with unmistakable measures on the Italians' land front, they indicated that the enemy was determined on prolonged resistance. XIX Corps HQ, on the other

⁵¹ Cadorna, "Altre pagine", pp. 163 ff.

hand, was still convinced by outdated intelligence that the Italian garrison would evacuate the harbor after the embarkation of the Serbs, which was now complete; they intended to interfere with the Italians' departure by rapidly attacking. On 17 February it was ordered that the assault should start the next day. 63 ID HQ, however, had now deduced the enemy's new intentions, and demanded that the attacking units should be reinforced by 210 Lst Inf Bde, the advanced elements of 2 Mtn Bde (Zloch's Detachment) and the artillery of 20 Lst Mtn Bde (which was moving forward ahead of the Brigade's infantry).

The latest intelligence reports sent through Teschen confirmed that Ferrero had decided to hang on. Therefore FML Trollmann agreed to postpone the thrust on Durazzo until not only the entire 210 Lst Inf Bde, but also 20 Lst Mtn Bde (now placed under 63 ID) could take part. Since the high command concurred, the attack was scheduled for the 21st; because of unavoidable delays in the troop deployment, it was postponed once more until 23 February.

Continuing logistical problems

When these three brigades moved onto the future battlefield around Durazzo, where 14 Mtn Bde was to follow them as a fourth unit, the attackers had already advanced considerably beyond the effective range of 3rd Army. The high command had originally intended to provide enough supplies to Kövess' Army so that six mountain brigades could be maintained indefinitely on the Skumbi. However, because of the demands of the southwestern theater of operations they now were restricting their commitment to Albania.

At this time the road from Scutari was only passable for less than half the distance to Alessio, and then only for bearers. Thus brigades could be readily supplied only up to the area just north of and including Alessio. A completely new line of communications would have to be opened to bring supplies further forward, but time and circumstances wouldn't permit this.⁵²

52 The plan was to construct a cable railway from Cattaro to Njegusi, from which trucks would be used to Lake Scutari. Vessels would ply the lake from Virpazar to Scutari, from which a field railroad and later a road for trucks would be built to Alessio. Another cable railway would extend to Preza. There were also plans to use sea traffic as far as San Giovanni di Medua, and finally to set up a second supply line from Ferizovic through Prizren, Kula Lums and Orosi to Pezana.

In analyzing the situation it must be remembered that the combat troops in front of Durazzo were dependent on a supply line that was already 100 kilometers long, and which didn't include a reliable road south of Scutari. The trains of bearers along the way had to use supplies themselves, which lessened the effectiveness of the system. The troops' capabilities were already reduced because they had insufficient rations.

FML Sorsich reminded his men that despite all their own problems, the situation of the Italian garrison - which they considerably outnumbered - was desperate. Moreover, the upcoming battle was very important because a victory would bring an end to their current sufferings in Albania.

Deployment for battle

Thus encouraged, the troops grouped themselves for the attack which would start on 23 February. On the right wing, parts of 210 Lst Inf Bde under Lt Col. Jurisevic stood on the lower Arsen in the Ruskuli area. In the center, around the enemy's bridgehead, Krammer's Detachment was on both sides of the road, next to 211 Lst Inf Bde (now commanded by Col. Lörinczy). In the southern sector, extending west of the Arsen to the coast, Col. von Farkas' 20 Lst Mtn Bde had been inserted; Zloch's Detachment and finally the Albanian group under Hässler made up the extreme left wing. The portions of 210 Lst Inf Bde that weren't at the front were either held in reserve or employed on urgently needed repairs to the roads.

Farther south the country as far as the Semeni River was mostly free of the enemy, since the friendly Albanians had broken the weak resistance of Essad Pasha's adherents and had already advanced to Berat. On 13 February an Aus-Hung. scouting group had reached Elbasan, which was also being approached by Bulgarian outposts.

Meanwhile the Serbian Cavalry Division, which the Italians had kept for a time on the Semeni, pulled back to Valona; originally these horsemen were supposed to ride through Tepeleni to Santi Quaranta to ease the traffic in the Valona harbor. However, the Serbs objected to moving overland, and were proceeding reluctantly; they felt that the Italian plans, even if based on tactical arguments or on naval requirements, were only causing unnecessary hardships.

However, it seems certain that the Italian high command was motivated solely by the requirements of their Navy in planning

the Serbian embarkation. This operation involved a large number of warships which guarded 81 transport steamers (totaling 223,000 tons); the transports made 322 trips between them. The fact that there were no significant losses is a credit to the Italian naval officers who oversaw the operation.⁵³

According to Italian sources, a total of 260,895 men, 10,153 horses and 68 guns were transported from the Albanian harbors; 193,514 of the men were Serbian soldiers or government officials. The Serbs themselves quote figures of 152,000 men and 10,153 horses.⁵⁴ The Italians also embarked 23,000 Aus-Hung. prisoners of war; they were the remnants of the 70,000 men who had been forced to endure the unspeakable march from Nish to the Adriatic.

b. The capture of Durazzo (23-26 February)

According to the final orders from HQ of 63 ID, the infantry was to be prepared to move so far forward before dawn on 23 February that they could break into the enemy position with one bound. Artillery preparation would start at 6:00 AM, the infantry assault at 7:30 AM. The individual attacking groups would make a concentric advance on Durazzo. According to a report from the naval detachment, the warships at Cattaro wouldn't be able to cooperate because of heavy seas. Therefore it would be perilous to assault the harbor itself, where airmen had counted thirteen enemy warships.⁵⁵

Since most of the approaches by sea could be observed on land, the attackers noted the arrival of more enemy troops on the 19th. These were two companies from Valona, which General Bertotti sent to reinforce the Durazzo garrison after he became alarmed by the pending offensive.⁵⁶ However, for General Ferrero this was hardly a sufficient replacement for the substantial losses his units had already suffered from illness. Regardless of what Rome ordered, he preferred to evacuate the town but had decided to

53 Kriegsarchiv (Marinearchiv), "Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914-1918", pp. 271 ff.

54 Bogdanovic, "The Retreat of the Serbian Army to the Sea" (in Serbo-Croatian: Zagreb, 1927), Appendix B

55 Kriegsarchiv (Marinearchiv) "Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914-1918", p. 278. Actually the evacuation of Durazzo was supported and covered by 15 Italian and 3 English large vessels, plus 19 smaller ones. Moreover the Italian battleship squadron at Brindisi was ready to intervene.

56 Cadorna, "Altre pagine", p. 167

resist stoutly because embarkation would be so difficult due to the heavy seas.

23 February

In front of Jurisevic's group on the lower Arsen there were only a few Italian outposts who didn't offer any noteworthy resistance since they were counting on the river as a barrier. The enemy was proved correct, since by the evening of 23 February only a few soldiers were able to cross to the left bank by swimming with the help of wooden beams.

In the Bazar Sjak bridgehead, on the other hand, the Italians defended themselves very stubbornly against the combined attack by Krammer's group and 211 Lst Inf Bde. The key points in the defenses were the positions on the dominating Kodra Sjak Heights and in front of Djepale; both were stormed at noon, after which the defenders withdrew over the Arsen and set on fire the bridge which carried the main road. Thus they decisively checked the rapidly developing pursuit and thwarted the plan of 63 ID HQ to deliver the main thrust into Durazzo along the road. Thus the burden of continuing the attack passed to the units fighting west of the Arsen under Col. Farkas. On the extreme left wing of this battle group, Capt. Hässler and his Albanians already had stormed the Skam in an early assault that took the Italians completely by surprise. Soon afterward the enemy also had to abandon the neighboring positions on Skalnjuri to Group Zloch. Farther east, as far as the Arsen, the Italians didn't start to retreat until shortly before noon, when with surprising speed they broke off their fight against the oncoming groups of 20 Lst Mtn Bde.

Since at the hour selected for the main assault the neighboring groups on the Arsen had already come to a halt, Col. Farkas decided to take over all responsibility for continuing the thrust himself, and to immediately advance on Durazzo.

Although the pursuit started immediately, the attacking units were moving through terrain that made it difficult to spot the enemy, and soon were unable to pin down the retreating Italians. A feint attack that was supposed to cross the half-burnt Knet bridge was shattered by enemy machine gun fire.

In their general retreat the Italian troops had withdrawn past the second position which had been prepared between Rastbul and Sinavlas; thus in the evening they were already stationed in the final line in front of the Durazzo peninsula, where they fortified the narrow strips of land that extended to the

peninsula on both sides of the Kneto Durcit lagoon. In these almost isolated positions the defenders could at least count on supporting fire from the overwhelming ships' artillery; further resistance on the mainland would have only endangered the embarkation which probably was already inevitable. The government at Rome decided by the end of 23 February to issue the order to evacuate; in the following night General Ferrero began to embark troops on the sheltered western coast of the peninsula.

24-25 February

The situation of 63 ID hardly changed during the night of 23-24 February, since all of the units on the right bank of the Arsen were still halted by this river barrier. The central group was finally able to deploy on the left bank in the morning of the 24th. However, the divisional commander held them back as a reserve; only their artillery was placed at the disposal of Col. Farkas, who by noon was ready to launch a powerful thrust from the rising ground between Rastbul and Sinavlas.

Although 63 ID HQ held fast in their determination to prevail in this sector, they were frustrated by the artillery on the enemy's ships, which made any thrust over the Knetta bridge impossible with a continuous barrage. Soon it was clear that our forces for the moment could interfere with the evacuation of the Savona Brigade, already in progress, only with long-range fire. Despite the overwhelming superiority of the enemy artillery, the otherwise unprotected roadstead lay almost entirely within the sight and range of the attackers. Around 1:00 PM the combined batteries of the 20 Lst Mtn and 211 Lst Inf Bdes suddenly opened fire, forcing the Italians to erect a protective wall of flour bags in front of the open harbor, which at least covered traffic to the piers. For the time being they were able to embark only personnel and such equipment as was easy to carry.

Similarly to the attackers in front of the Knetta bridge, Group Jurisevic stood inactive in front of the northern tongue of land through the end of the 25th. The heavy fire from the enemy ships continued, and relief from our own fleet could hardly be expected. All of its recent attempts to support the attack on Durazzo had to be abandoned because of "heavy seas."⁵⁷ The reasons why the 5th Naval Division had done so little while the remnants of the Serbian Army were embarking aren't explained in any existing documents. The armored cruisers and battleships weren't employed. The most likely explanation is that the size of the enemy's fleet was unknown and therefore it didn't seem wise to risk our most powerful ships against an apparently overwhelming foe.

Thus a *coup de main* against the temporarily impregnable harbor city was out of the question. FML Sorsich decided to prepare 14 Mtn Bde, which meanwhile had arrived at Vorra, for a thrust over the northern land connection to the mainland. They would relieve

57 Kriegersarchiv (Marinearchiv), "Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914-18", p. 277

the troops currently in the area, while 210 and 211 Lst Inf Bdes, except for their batteries, united behind the Arsen in reserve. This new deployment, however, was never carried out since the planned offensive was overtaken by events.

26-27 February

Before it could be relieved, Group Jurisevic scouted early on the 26th past the hill at Pala, which it found unoccupied. Grenz Jaeger Company # 3 followed the retreating enemy up to Portes. When darkness fell the Italian rearguard also evacuated this position; the Grenz Jaeger followed them and before midnight reached the city, which the enemy had already abandoned.

After the sudden artillery assault on the 24th, General Ferrero had to restrict the embarkation to the night hours, and had to briefly interrupt it at one point due to a lack of shipping. Despite these difficulties, and with noteworthy skill, he was able to complete the operation by the evening of the 26th. He had to leave behind all his guns and a large part of his rations; almost a thousand horses were shot. Even so, at the end the embarkation had to be completed with great haste.

The last Italian rear guards had just left the trenches on the Knetta, which were already untenable because of the accurate fire of the Aus-Hung. batteries, when the first troops of Group Farkas began their well-prepared advance.

The heavy ships' guns were still thundering, but the fires and mighty explosions that broke out in the city betrayed the fact that it had been completely evacuated. After some final shots from the fleet the Italians gave up Durazzo.

Despite the lack of enemy resistance, it took time and great caution to pass through the artfully contrived barriers along the lagoon in the darkness. The advanced troops of Group Farkas reached the area of the city over a ford which had been betrayed by a herd of buffalo the day before, and on rafts. They became engaged in a fight with the Grenz Jaeger, and were also hit by bombs thrown from a few k.u.k. planes. The situation was finally clarified at dawn, whereupon the Greek consul handed the city over to Col. Farkas.

Thus ended the operation against Durazzo, which cost the attackers 4 officers and 69 men (including 10 Albanians) killed, about 300 wounded, and 50 missing. On the other hand, on 23 February alone they took 17 officers and 742 men prisoner. The

booty included 34 guns, 1 machine gun, 14,000 rifles, a great amount of ammunition and entrenching tools, and 17 vessels plus enough rations to feed all of 63 ID for a week.

In addition to these losses, the hasty flight of the garrison reinforced the Albanians' negative impression caused by the Italian defeat, while it increased their belief in the success of the attackers. This was first evident in the very lively participation of the inhabitants in the victory celebrations, and sealed the victory of the Danube Monarchy in the political struggle with its rivals. It is no wonder that the responsible persons in Rome sought to conceal this mainly political defeat by referring to the "glorious evacuation" of Durazzo.

However, it had been a major error overall to "want to reach goals of international importance with insufficient means."⁵⁸ It was also a mistake to postpone the evacuation after success could no longer be won and a setback was unavoidable.

2. Events through mid-March

a. The new deployment; a pause in operations

FML Trollmann had already been planning a new deployment on 24 February. This would be necessary after the impending capture of Durazzo because all of the combat troops involved here had gradually been placed under 63 ID, while 47 ID HQ back in Scutari had been left out of the picture. Except for units in the north Albanian theater, most components of 3rd Army were already leaving to be employed elsewhere. It was necessary to quickly disentangle the remaining units and restore order to the chain of command.

Therefore 3rd Army HQ had ordered on 24 February that after Durazzo was taken most of XIX Corps should deploy in the area of this harbor and at Tirana. Kavaja and Elbasan would be occupied, and outposts advanced to the Skumbi; their mission would merely be to guard the river and to scout, since the goals of the Army would be met after north Albania was clear of the enemy as far as the Skumbi. The AOK agreed with these measures, and didn't issue

58 Cadorna, "Altre pagine", p. 166. See also Veith, "Der Angriff auf Durazzo" (Mil. wiss. u. techn. Mitt., Vienna, Special Edition # 2 for 1922).

additional instructions. At the same time, however, they ordered that 2 Mtn and 22 Lst Mtn Bdes should leave the Balkan theater, if possible in coordination with 59 ID and VIII Corps HQ through the Bocche. If the situation in the interior of Montenegro permitted, the 24 Lst Mtn Bde would move to Scutari to take the place of the 22nd, while a brigade of XIX Corps shifted from the Durazzo-Tirana area to Alessio. Finally the high command decided that XIX Corps HQ would be in sole command in Albania, because 3rd Army HQ - whose commander Kövess was promoted on 26 February to Generaloberst - was also leaving for another theater of operations.

The new deployment was carried out in accordance with these orders. 2 Mtn Bde (along with Zloch's detachment), 22 Lst Mtn Bde and several groups which meanwhile had mostly been converted to brigades headed north through the Bocche and through Trebinje to leave the theater. The HQ and units of Trollmann's corps were organized under instructions issued on 3 March. 63 ID HQ with 210 Lst Inf Bde went to Alessio, while 211 Lst Inf Bde deployed in the Mamuras-Kruja area. 47 ID HQ moved to Tirana with the main body of 14 Mtn Bde, while parts of the Brigade occupied Kavaja and Elbasan; 20 Lst Mtn Bde was stationed at Durazzo and Bazar Sjak.

However, all these movements were delayed by new high water in the rivers, which not only destroyed all the bridges but also flooded the most important stretches of the roads. Thus the Mati rose almost four meters; the columns heading north had to cross this river on skiffs and canoes hollowed out of logs. The high waters of the Drin delayed traffic between Alessio and Scutari, where some of the streets were also deep under water. There was no expectation that the supply lines would improve soon; until they did, XIX Corps had no prospect of advancing past its present location.

This restricted activity was consistent with the latest orders from Teschen, which had regulated the chain of command but hadn't called for any further offensive. After the departure of 3rd Army HQ (scheduled for mid-March), the commander of XIX Corps would have sole command of north Albania; he would guard this territory as far as the line Skumbi River-Rapon River-Dibra plus the coast between the Bojana and Skumbi against enemy attacks and landings. While a sufficient garrison held Scutari, the main body of the Corps would be held in readiness in the Durazzo-Tirana area.

Under these orders, with the agreement of the high command,

operations would pause despite a favorable general military and political situation. After the fall of Durazzo the Italians had pulled back completely to Valona, leaving the area as far as the Vojusa empty of their troops. The territory thus stood open for the Bulgarians, whose outlying units had already occupied Berat.

Nevertheless, it was unthinkable to continue military operations during the rainy season. Although it was necessary to at least send scouts ahead as far as the Italian front, for the time being this task was entrusted only to Albanian volunteers who could gain self-confidence by advancing. This was the assignment of the volunteer Captain von Ghilardi. With units recruited primarily in north Albania, by the end of February he already was ready for action on the Skumbi, while some of his irregular troops had even reached the Semeni.⁵⁹

b. The Italians at Valona

Ghilardi's operation gave the Italians the impression that strong enemy forces - estimated on 1 March by General Bertotti as two Aus-Hung. corps plus Bulgarian troops - were advancing toward Valona behind a large group of Albanian volunteers.⁶⁰

Although on 29 February the high command had been given control again over the Italian Expeditionary Corps, they could no longer prevent the reinforcement of the force to three divisions, which the government at Rome had already initiated. Cadorna however could not agree to the urgent political demand that Valona should be held to the last extremity even against a superior enemy. It appeared to him that too many resources were being committed to Albania, and that this would weaken his nation's principal front, where he feared an Aus-Hung. attack.

This attitude of the Italian General Staff was reflected in orders which were issued on 2 March. The existing front of 130 km on the Vojusa was to serve only as a forward security line, while the much shorter main position covered only the heights along the bay of Valona, which would be held in a purely defensive campaign in cooperation with the Navy. The Marine

59 Ghilardi was a former Aus-Hung. officer who had fought gallantly for Albanian freedom under the provisional government of Ismail Kemal and later under Prince Wilhelm von Wied. While the pro-Entente regime of Essad Pasha was in power Ghilardi had led bands in the service of Bulgaria.

60 Cadorna, "Altre pagine", p. 169

Minister, however, insisted on retaining the harbor, which was the eastern strong point of the Adriatic barricade, by all necessary means on land and at sea.⁶¹ Although his demand was supported by the Foreign Minister, Cadorna stuck to his opinion and even threatened to evacuate Valona if the Navy didn't use its own resources to meet its stated need for more artillery around the harbor. In response to this threat the naval minister offered five medium caliber batteries, which G.Lt Settimio Piacentini - the newly-appointed commander at Valona - said would be sufficient.

In mid-March the units of the garrison were organized as the 38, 43 and 44 ID of the XVI Corps, which also directly commanded the 10th Bersaglieri Regiment plus Territorial Militia IR # 38, 47 and 48. Thus in the last few months the number of battalions committed to Albania had risen from 3 to 48, the equivalent of two Italian army corps, thanks to political considerations and despite the will of the high command. Cadorna was still convinced that sending so many troops to a minor theater of operations couldn't be justified, since their opponents were separated from their supply sources by 300 km of barren territory which moreover was threatened from the sea. Therefore if the Austrians did eventually move against the city of Valona they would lack the necessary strength.

Actually the combat troops of the k.u.k. XIX Corps, who were in need of recuperation, could only receive the minimum amount of supplies necessary while they were deployed over a wide area (100 km deep). Had they moved south they would have used up all available rations, thus leaving their own supply trains without any food or fodder. Even the very small units which had crossed the Skumbi were experiencing logistical problems. Only the Albanian volunteers under Ghilardi were able to advance as far as the Vojusa, because they had taken control of the fruitful area around Muzakja, which the Italians had willingly abandoned. In the first half of March the Albanians deployed on the north bank of the Vojusa between its mouth and the bend at Kjosa.

And so the noteworthy campaign of the Aus-Hung. units in the

61 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - The Adriatic barricade was a network of small vessels and drift nets which was gradually being assembled to hopefully keep German and Austrian submarines from passing through the Otranto Straits into the Mediterranean. Its maintenance would have been much more difficult if the Entente had no base on the eastern shore of the sea.

western Balkans came to an end. Although the number of men engaged can't be compared with those in the great battles on the Isonzo or in the West, the troops who fought their way over Mt Lovcen and through the wilds of Montenegro and north Albania - almost untouched by civilization - had much to endure both in body and soul. This is all the more praiseworthy because by far the largest part of the army in the western Balkans was made up of militia units made up of relatively old soldiers and lacked a full cadre of professional active officers. It is a testimony to the soldierly qualities of all the peoples who once made up Austria-Hungary that the Landsturm men willingly took on all the challenges of this "colonial campaign." These included the physical challenges posed by the terrain (beginning with the climb up Mt Lovcen), the dangers to life and limb from an enemy who was admirably suited for partisan-type warfare, and above all the deprivations, hunger and illnesses. Thus this campaign belongs to the astounding deeds which were chronicled in the history book of the Habsburg Army before this significant book was closed forever by fate.

c. The German-Bulgarian front through mid-March

On the Macedonian-Greek border, the allies had agreed in principle on an offensive toward Salonika, but it hadn't started when the year 1915 came to an end. The border also remained quiet in the next few weeks. The general staffs of Germany and Bulgaria hadn't abandoned their plan, but political and military necessity kept causing new postponements. Above all it was necessary to be sure of the neutrality or friendship of the Greeks, whose army was deployed in two groups on either side of the area where the allies intended to advance. There were also great technical difficulties in mounting a major offensive in barren mountain terrain, where the Bulgarians' ox-drawn carts would be the principal means of bringing up ammunition, military equipment and rations. Therefore in mid-February it was decided that the attack couldn't start until 15 March. However, this goal also wouldn't be met.

The great storm in front of Verdun broke out on 21 February. Naturally the German General Staff didn't want to become involved in a second operation in a distant theater of war before the outcome on the French front was determined. Moreover, reports from Salonika indicated that the enemy were making themselves at home around the city and strengthening themselves every day. In fact, three French and five British divisions stood ready to defend the Entente's last position in the Balkans

with determination, and the intelligence services of the Central Powers erroneously estimated that even more divisions were present.⁶² Thanks to their uncontested supremacy at sea, the enemy forces could be reinforced at any time, particularly from Egypt. Against an army of this size, the attackers would need at least as many men plus equipment and supplies that weren't substantially inferior.

Meanwhile the course of the first week's fighting on the Verdun battlefield showed clearly that all the capabilities of the German Army would have to be committed if they were to win success in this operation. And thus a combination of factors led to the postponement of an offensive against Salonika to the uncertain future. Instead it was decided to restrict activity to the construction of the strongest possible defenses on the Greek border.

Plans for attacking Salonika seem to have played no part in the exchanges of ideas between Conrad and Falkenhayn after mid-December 1915. This may seem odd, since shortly before the Chief of the k.u.k. General Staff had so strongly emphasized the importance of completely driving the Entente out of the Balkan Peninsula. Like his Imperial German colleague, however, he was diverted by other developments and plans - by the campaign in the western Balkans, by the projects directed against Italy, and by political disputes with Bulgaria (which will be described later). Moreover it is possible that Conrad had gradually also begun to doubt whether this important project was feasible. It was obvious that any progress that the allies were making in their preparations to attack was being overtaken by the defensive measures of the enemy. Therefore after the first of the year the HQ at Teschen was content to just read the reports which they received from their liaison officers with GFM Mackensen and with the Bulgarians. There is no mention in any documents of an attempt to influence the decisions of our two allies. (Conrad had never counted on cooperation from the third ally, the Turks.)

Because this narrative is intended to describe only events on the Aus-Hung. fronts, it will not discuss in detail the question of whether an allied offensive toward Salonika would have been

62 Gallwitz, "Meine Führertätigkeit im Weltkrieg 1914/16" (Berlin, 1929), pp. 514 ff. Jochim, "Der Feldzug in Serbien" (in Schwarte, Vol. II, pp. 416 ff). Ministère de la guerre, "Les armées françaises dans la grande guerre" (Paris, 1923), Vol. VIII, Appendix 53 (this source referred to hereafter as "French Official History").

successful.⁶³ Since the operation didn't happen, history cannot determine how it would have turned out, and particularly how the Greeks - who were politically and economically dependent on contacts carried out over the seas - would have reacted. The best chance for military success was at the start of December, when the Bulgarians should have been able to thrust past Sarrail's weak divisions. Because of concern about Greece's reaction, Falkenhayn had prohibited an attack, a decision which the French author de Civrieux has judged sharply: "In this inexplicable decision to halt a victorious army on a line behind which their beaten enemy could again make ready for battle lies the seed of the collapse of the Bulgarian front in September 1918."⁶⁴

Whether or not this decision was an error, it is certainly another instance of the tragedy of the Central Powers. Here also, as in Russia in the previous autumn, the sword either was lowered or had to be lowered before the entire strategic task was completed.

⁶³ See Foerster, "Graf Schlieffen und der Weltkrieg" (2nd Edition, Berlin, 1923), p. 185; also Kuhl, "Der Weltkrieg 1914/18" (Berlin, 1929), p. 294

⁶⁴ Kuhl, "Der Weltkrieg im Urteil unserer Feinde" (Berlin, 1922), pp. 25 ff.

III. Austria-Hungary's Army from the Carpathian Winter through the Spring of 1916

A. Expansion of the armed forces

1. Consumption and replacement of personnel

The approach of another summer of warfare, in which both groups of contending powers would again lock arms in search of a decision, is a good point at which to look back at the inner developments which affected the organization and framework of the k.u.k. Army - as well as its combat abilities and morale - between the first two winters of the war. At the start of 1915 the armed forces of the Danube Monarchy had been badly shaken and greatly depleted in strength. The harsh Carpathian winter, with its unparalleled hardships, hadn't permitted any recovery; instead it had consumed the greatest part of the hastily assembled and insufficiently trained reserve troops in a series of crises which followed each other with breath-taking speed. In this time of greatest need we were living literally from one March battalion to the next. Although it was at least possible to maintain the basic framework of the Army's units, only the future would show whether it would again be possible to fill them up with the Monarchy's available reserves.

Then, however, a slow but unmistakable improvement occurred, even sooner than had been hoped. As the fighting in the Carpathians ebbed in April, quiet descended on ever longer parts of the front and the situation stabilized. The warming rays of the spring sun soon did more than was needed to drive away the terrors of winter. Thus losses from action diminished at the same time as those from sickness. Combat strength increased; at the start of May 1915 many divisions again had 8000 to 10,000 or more riflemen. Although other units could muster fewer than 5000 combatants, this was still an improvement over the situation of the preceding months. The troops were visibly healing in body and mind. The period of the advance shortly after Gorlice fostered this development. The men's capability and experience, as well as their self-confidence, were enhanced by successes. During this difficult assignment the remnants of the army of 1914 strengthened themselves and merged with the fresh troops to create a new, effective military machine.

An analysis of the casualties

Nevertheless, the successful operations in the north cost heavy new sacrifices; the average loss per month was 160,000 to 180,000 men. In June the southwestern front became active, and casualties there soon rose from 14,000 to 60,000 soldiers per month. The situation was more serious during the September fighting, when losses in Galicia alone exceeded 200,000 men. Only in the Balkan theater of operations were personnel losses really low throughout the year, even during the fall offensive.

TABLE ONE - Total losses from the start of the war through the end of April 1916, based on reports from the Armies

- a) Losses in 1914 - 1,268,696: 154,800 dead (12.2%), 480,459 wounded (37.9%), 285,473 ill (22.5%), 347,964 captured and/or missing (27.4%)
- b) Losses in 1915 on the northern front
- . From 1 Jan to 30 April
 - . Officers - 17,650: 1400 dead (8.1%), 4500 wounded (25.4%), 9100 ill (51.5%), 2650 captured/missing (15%)
 - . Men - 776,000: 65,100 dead (8.4%), 176,000 wounded (22.7%), 297,000 ill (38.2%), 237,900 captured/missing (30.7%)
 - . TOTAL - 793,650: 66,500 dead (8.45%), 180,500 wounded (22.7%), 306,100 ill (38.6%), 240,550 captured/missing (30.3%)
 - . From 1 May to 30 Dec
 - . Officers - 23,660: 2000 dead (8.5%), 6000 wounded (25.3%), 10,600 ill (44.8%), 5060 captured/missing (21.4%)
 - . Men - 960,600: 77,830 dead (8.1%), 329,290 wounded (33.7%), 236,750 ill (24.6%), 322,730 captured/missing (33.6%)
 - . TOTAL - 984,260: 79,830 dead (8.1%), 329,290 wounded (33.5%), 247,350 ill (25.1%), 327,790 captured/missing (33.3%)
 - . TOTALS
 - . Officers - 41,310: 3400 dead (8.2%), 10,500 wounded (25.4%), 19,700 ill (47.7%), 7710 captured/missing (18.7%)
 - . Men - 1,736,600: 142,930 dead (8.2%), 499,290 wounded (28.8%), 533,750 ill (30.7%), 560,630 captured/missing (32.3%)
 - . GRAND TOTAL - 1,777,910: 146,330 dead (8.2%), 509,790 wounded (28.7%), 553,450 ill (31.1%), 568,340

captured/missing (32%)

- c) Losses in 1915 on the Balkan front
. Officers - 1710: 120 dead (7%), 390 wounded (22.8%), 1130 ill (66.1%), 70 captured/ missing (4.1%)
. Men - 73,090: 3350 dead (4.6%), 17,450 wounded (23.9%), 48,360 ill (66.1%), 3930 captured/missing (5.45%)
. TOTAL - 74,800: 3470 dead (4.6%), 17,840 wounded (23.9%), 49,490 ill (66.1%), 4000 captured/missing (5.4%)
- d) Losses in 1915 on the southwestern front
. Officers - 6500: 760 dead (11.4%), 2070 wounded (31.2%), 3120 ill (46.9%), 700 captured/missing (10.5%)
. Men - 289,060: 30,920 dead (10.7%), 108,410 wounded (37.6%), 116,790 ill (40.4%), 32,940 captured/missing (11.4%)
. TOTAL - 295,710: 31,680 dead (10.7%), 110,480 wounded (37.4%), 119,910 ill (40.5%), 33,640 captured/missing (12.4%)
- e) Total casualties for 1915
. Officers - 49,670: 4280 dead (8.6%), 12,960 wounded (26.1%), 23,950 ill (48.2%), 8480 captured/missing (17.1%)
. Men - 2,098,750: 177,200 dead (8.4%), 625,150 wounded (29.8%), 698,900 ill (33.3%), 597,500 captured/missing (28.5%)
. GRAND TOTAL - 2,148,420: 181,480 dead (8.5%), 638,100 wounded (29.7%), 722,850 ill (33.6%), 605,980 captured/missing (28.2%)
- f) Total casualties for 1914 and 1915
. Officers - 77,580: 8380 dead, 23,010 wounded, 34,150 ill, 12,040 captured/missing
. Men - 3,339,536: 327,900 dead, 1,095,559 wounded, 974,173 ill, 941,904 captured/ missing
. GRAND TOTAL - 3,417,116: 336,280 dead, 1,118,569 wounded, 1,008,323 ill, 953,944 captured/missing
- g) Casualties from 1 Jan to 30 April 1916
. Northern front
. Officers - 4070: 172 dead, 443 wounded, 3326 ill, 129 captured/missing
. Men - 206,455: 6813 dead, 26,738 wounded, 167,164 ill, 5740 captured/missing
. Balkan front
. Officers - 612: 23 dead, 112 wounded, 472 ill, 5 captured/missing

- . Men - 23,040: 1230 dead, 3095 wounded, 18,371 ill, 344 captured/missing
- . Southwestern front
 - . Officers - 2444: 141 dead, 341 wounded, 1904 ill, 58 captured/missing
 - . Men - 132,101: 5886 dead, 22,767 wounded, 100,725 ill, 2723 captured/missing
- . Total for all three fronts
 - . Officers - 7126: 336 dead (4.7%), 896 wounded (12.6%), 5702 ill (80%), 192 captured/missing (2.7%)
 - . Men - 361,596: 13,929 dead (3.9%), 52,600 wounded (14.6%), 286,260 ill (79.1%), 8807 captured/missing (2.4%)
 - . TOTAL - 368,722: 14,265 dead (3.9%), 53,496 wounded (14.5%), 291,962 ill (79.2%), 8999 captured/missing (2.4%)

However, these reports need to be corrected; the "missing" category included not only individuals whose death was not definitely established, but also a certain number of men who were wounded or sick at the moment the report was made, but didn't remain for long in that condition. Moreover, some of the men who'd been separated from their units did return afterwards. Taking these factors into account, Table 2 presents a corrected estimate of the total losses since the start of the war.⁶⁵

TABLE TWO - Total losses between the start of the war and the end of April 1916

1914

- . Officers - 27,900: 4400 dead (15.8%), 10,300 wounded (36.9%), 10,400 ill (37.3%), 2800 captured (10%)
- . Men - 1,222,100: 184,600 dead (15.2%), 480,900 wounded (39.3%), 281,400 ill (23.1%), 275,200 captured (22.5%)
- . TOTAL - 1,250,000: 189,000 dead, 491,200 wounded, 291,800 ill, 278,005 captured

1915

- . Officers - 49,900: 5600 dead (11.2%), 13,100 wounded (26.1%), 24,300 ill (48.7%), 6900 captured (14%)
- . Men - 2,068,100: 236,400 dead (11.4%), 633,400 wounded (30.6%), 708,200 ill (34.3%), 490,100 captured (23.7%)
- . TOTAL - 2,118,000: 242,000 dead, 646,500 wounded, 732,500

⁶⁵ For further information on this subject, see Franke, "Die Entwicklung der öst-ung. Wehrmacht in den ersten zwei Kriegsjahre" (Mil. wiss. Mitt.; Vienna, 1933). Also see Ratzenhofer, "Verlustkalkül für den Karpathenwinter 1915" (Mil. wiss. Mitt.; Vienna, 1930), pp. 991 ff.

ill, 497,000 captured

1914 and 1915 together

. Officers - 77,800: 10,000 dead, 23,400 wounded, 34,700 ill, 9700 captured

. Men - 3,290,200: 421,000 dead, 1,114,300 wounded, 989,600 wounded, 765,300 captured

. TOTAL - 3,368,000: 431,000 dead, 1,137,700 wounded, 1,024,300 ill, 775,000 captured

1 January to 30 April 1916

. Officers - 7100: 350 dead (4.9%), 900 wounded (12.7%), 5700 ill (80.3%), 150 captured (2.1%)

. Men - 361,100: 14,800 dead (4.1%), 52,700 wounded (14.6%), 286,400 ill (79.3%), 7200 captured (2%)

. TOTAL - 368,200: 15,150 dead, 53,600 wounded, 292,100 ill, 7350 captured

Naturally the casualties substantially affected the fighting strength of the units. In summer and fall there were many instances when divisions shrank from full strength to 5000 or fewer combat troops. In general, however, the situation was still better than in the preceding winter. There were always opportunity for units to recuperate. Especially favorable was the half year of rest during the winter of 1915-16, interrupted only by the New Year's fighting in Bessarabia and east Galicia. Since the losses in this period - caused mainly by illness - were held in reasonable bounds, the average strength of the divisions in the northeast had increased by the end of December 1915 to 11,000 riflemen, and in the southwest to 9000. By May 1916 the figures were 15,000 in the northeast and 11,000 in the southwest.

The figures show that losses as a whole since May 1915 weren't as severe as in fall 1914 and in the difficult months of the Carpathian campaign. The change in the percentages of the different kinds of losses also clearly shows that the units were becoming steadier and the men's morale was improving. In the first four months of 1915, for every 10 men killed or wounded there were 10 taken prisoner and 12 sick. After May, for every 10 killed or wounded there were just 8 captured and 6 sick. These figures clearly represent a change, as do the corresponding statistics for the unfortunate month of September, when there were 4 men ill and 15 taken prisoner or missing for every 10 who were killed or wounded. The high troop morale on the southwestern front is shown by the fact that only 10% of the losses there were prisoners, while 40% were ill. The high percentage of men who were killed or wounded is noteworthy. In the preceding descriptions of the Isonzo battles we have mentioned how the stone splinters scattered by artillery fire on

the Karst increased the number of wounds. We also explained why the defense had to be inflexible, since it was so dangerous to give up any ground at all.

The loss of manpower in 1915 was once again very significant. Another 2,118,000 troops left the ranks of the field armies. Since the war started 3,368,000 men had been either temporarily or permanently removed from the battlefield, more than had been called up in August 1914. 756,000 had either been killed, mortally wounded or totally incapacitated from wounds, and thus were irretrievable casualties. Since 775,000 more were in the hands of the enemy, a total of 1,531,000 troops had been permanently lost; this was more than a fourth of the total who'd put on uniforms since August 1914.

The troop replacement process

To fill the gaps in the ranks of the combat troops, 17 series of March battalions had been sent forth, one for each month of the war. The number of troops in a series varied between 220,000 and 280,000 per month; during 1915 this involved 2,953,000 men, of whom about 360,000 joined new formations. About half the soldiers who'd been wounded or taken ill made a full recovery quickly, and thus provided an excellent kernel for the replacement units. On average, 54% of the officers and 20 to 40% of the rank and file of the March battalions were men who'd already experienced battle; in some cases the proportion of veteran officers was as high as 80%. By the end of 1915 about one third of the entire replacement force - a total of 37,693 officers and 1,032,554 men - were veterans who were going to the field for at least the second time.

A much larger part of the necessary forces, however, had to come from a steady stream of reserve manpower in the interior. Men aged nineteen and twenty entered the battle, and eligible men up to age 42 with pre-war service were called up again (this process was called "combing out"). By spring 1915, however, it was clear that such measures would only provide sufficient replacements until the end of the year, so longer range planning was needed. At the start of May, therefore, the conscription laws were altered; the maximum age was increased by seven years (to 50) and the minimum by one (to 18). Had this revision been enacted in peacetime it would have enabled the Army to fully utilize the available manpower. At this moment of the war, it had deep and painful repercussions on the economy.

The home front could more easily do without the eighteen year old

men; they were drafted in October and began to enter the line in January 1916 with the XVIIIth March Battalions. With these young soldiers, the number called to the colors since the end of mobilization reached 2,409,000 - so that a total of 5,693,000 men had already served. The Army was also using 300,000 civilian laborers who weren't eligible for conscription.

The domestic economy was greatly impaired by the absence of so many able-bodied workers. Because of the growing shortage of labor, the authorities had already had to exempt from service about 953,000 otherwise eligible men. To ensure a sufficient food supply for both the population and the Army, at planting and harvest times a total of 718,000 troops were sent on furlough, while another 62,000 were sent on work details to the fields or to food processing plants. About 25,000 drafted men - miners, railroad workers and food processors - had already been discharged. For this reason the authorities wanted to avoid calling up the seven oldest year groups (ages 43 to 49) for as long as possible; however, in the second half of the year they had to draft some men from these categories. It was foreseen that most of the older men wouldn't be able to cope with the physical demands of front-line service. Therefore at the end of the year it was decided that they would replace younger soldiers on the lines of communication, in the supply trains, and in other rear area functions, while the latter would enter combat units.⁶⁶

These energetic measures were successful. The authorities were able to report that they kept the number of replacements at least equal to losses; in good months they could even increase the overall front-line strength. Clearly the improved tactical situation played a part in this achievement. Thus at the end of 1915 there were 2,700,000 Aus-Hung. troops at the three fronts (a million more than the year before), with another 1,736,000 in the interior.

TABLE 3 - Summary of the movement of troops from the interior to the fronts in 1915

a) Troops available in the interior on 1 January 1915	
In Ersatz units and in various	
installations.....	881,000
In the Danube	

⁶⁶ This process of "exchanging" troops didn't begin until 1916, but by May about 4600 officers and 300,000 men had been made available for front-line service. It is estimated that afterwards another 2000 officers and 68,000 men were affected.

bridgeheads.....
48,000
 Sick and wounded in the
 hospitals.....583,000
 Thus there were 929,000 healthy and 583,000 recuperating men
 for a total (including 36,000 civilian workers)
 of.....**1,512,000**

b) Additional troops who became available during 1915
 The Army called up 2,042,000 troops and 232,000
 workers.....2,274,000
 Sick and wounded back from the
 front.....1,379,000
 Men exchanged between front and rear area
 service.....233,000
 During the year, 1,544,000 men recovered from wounds and
 joined Ersatz units, along with 245,000 who recovered from
 illness

c) Thus during 1915 the total number of men available in the
 interior
 was 4,735,000 healthy and 663,000 still wounded or sick, for a
 grand
 total of **5,398,000** (of whom 268,000 were civilian laborers)

d) Men who left the interior
 Replacement
 troops.....
2,953,000
 In new units (including 100,000
 laborers).....360,000
 Died in
 hospitals.....
89,000
 Permanently discharged as
 incapable.....196,000
 Discharged or on extended leave for economic
 reasons.....25,000
 Placed under civil authority as
 workers.....39,000
 TOTAL.....
**3,662,000**

e) Therefore, on 1 January 1916 there was available in the
 interior a total
 of **1,736,000** men (1,358,000 healthy and 378,000 sick or wounded),
 a figure

which includes 168,000 civilian workers

TABLE 4 - Overview of strength of units in the field in 1915

a) Changes during the year

As of 1 January 1915 the troops were distributed as follows...

. On the northern front.....	1,253,000
. On the Balkan front.....	440,000
. On the Italian border (under GdK Rohr).....	45,000
.	
TOTAL.....	1,738,000

(This includes 30,000 civilian workers)

Men gained in 1915...

. Replacements from the interior.....	2,953,000
. New units (including 100,000 workers).....	360,000
.	
TOTAL.....	5,051,000

Men lost in 1915...

. Casualties.....	2,118,000
. Transferred from front- to rear-area service.....	233,000
.	
TOTAL.....	2,351,000

b) Strength as of 1 January 1916

Thus the total at this point was **2,700,000** men. The ration strength

of the field forces was 100,000 men higher because it included some

worker detachments made up of enemy prisoners of war. The distribution was as follows....

. On the northern front.....	1,442,000
. On the Balkan front.....	370,000
. On the southwestern front.....	930,000
. In fortifications and in occupied Poland.....	58,000
.	

TOTAL.....
 ..2,800,000

This situation may have seemed quite satisfactory, but the responsible authorities had no doubt that replacing lost personnel in the future would be difficult. They knew that on the day when the XVIIIth March Battalions departed from their cadre stations, they left just 75,000 healthy men behind. Some more of the recuperated sick and wounded troops would soon return, and about 600,000 men had been selected for the draft and were just waiting to be called up. Thereafter the Monarchy's human reserves would be almost exhausted.

When the high command reviewed this situation at the end of October, they decided to alter the way in which replacements were organized; from January 1916 the March Battalions would be released to the front every six weeks rather than every month. This would reduce the number of releases per year by three. At this moment, when the strength of most units was good, such a measure was permissible. Nevertheless, it seemed that - as far as anyone could tell - the number of replacements would be sufficient only until fall 1916. Earnest consideration was being given to the idea of calling seventeen year old men to the colors.

2. Expansion of the infantry and changes in the cavalry

The widespread utilization of extra manpower also led to an expansion of the armed forces as well as the maintenance of existing units at their original strength. Except for the artillery, this didn't occur according to a pre-arranged plan. The expansion of the other arms occurred in response to specific needs.

The infantry

The development of the infantry is a good example of this process. There were no major changes in its size or organization by spring 1916, but its strength had increased somewhat (70 battalions by the start of May 1916), since many regiments hadn't used all their reserves to fill gaps in the ranks but instead to create new battalions.

TABLE 5 - Development of the infantry from the start of the war through 1 May 1916

a) First line, Landwehr and Landsturm units

August 19141 May 1916

102 IR (408 bns) regiment) (# 1-102)	104 IR (464 bns) (3 to 10 bns per regiment) (# 1-104, minus # 36, plus Res IR # 2)
4 KJR (13 bns) (# 2 = 4 bns, others 3)	4 Kaiser Jaeger Regts (18 bns)
4 BH IR (15 bns) (# 4 = 3 bns, others 4)	4 Bosnia-Herzegovina IR (18 bns)
29 FJ Bns (# 1-2, 4-14, 16-25, 27-32)	33 Field Jaeger Bns (# 1-32 plus Combined Bn)
1 BH FJ Bn	8 Bosnia-Herzegovina FJB (Formed from temporary Vth Bns of BH IR plus a fortress bn)
1 BH Reserve Bn	(Dissolved)
[New]	5 Fortress Inf Bns (originally there were 10, but 4 had been dissolved and one became BH FJ Bn # 4)
6 Grenz Jaeger Comps	Same (total equivalent to 1 ½ bns)
37 k.k. LW IR (113 bns) ([Mtn] # 4 = 5 bns, # 23 = 2, [Mtn] # 27 = 4; rest had 3 bns each)	37 k.k. LW IR (128 bns)
3 k.k. L-S Regts (16 bns) # I = 6 bns, # 2 = 5, # III = 5; extra bns formed border comps on the Italian frontier	3 k.k. Landes-Schützen Regts (13 bns)
32 k.u. Honved IR (97 bns) # 19 = 4 bns, rest had 3 bns each	42 k.u. Honved IR (134 bns) # 1-32 and 300-315, minus # 2, 5, 7, 8, 303 and 304
40 k.k. Lst IR	109 k.k. Lst Inf Bns

(136 bns) Some independent, some under HQ of Regts # 1, 2, 5, 6, 11, 13, # 1-38; I & II Tyrol; 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 51, 409 and 410
 number of bns varied
 from 2 to 4

32 k.u. Lst IR 92 k.u. Lst Inf Bns
 (97 bns) # 19 = 4 bns, Some independent; some were under HQ of Regts # 3, 5, 6, 17, 19, rest had 3 bns each 20 and 29

[New] 6 ½ bns of Gendarmerie

[New] 8 bns of k.u. Lst coast defense troops

[New] 4 comps of border guards (1 bn equivalent)

1 ½ bicycle bns 2 bicycle bns

164 March bns (All dissolved)
 (This total includes the
 March comps of the Feld Jaeger Bns)

Thus the total strength had increased from 927 ½ bns (not counting the 164 temporary March bns) in August 1914 to 1039 bns in May 1916. Strength of the bicycle troops increased from 1 ½ to 2 bns.

b) Volunteers

In August 1914 there were 3 Polish battalions

In May 1916 there were the following...

- . 6 Polish Legion IR = 18 bns
- . 1 Ukrainian Volunteer IR = 2 bns
- . 1 Bukovina Freikorps = 2 bns (1 Romanian, 1 Huzule)
- . 48 Tyrolean and Vorarlberg Standschützen Detachments (with 80 to 500 men apiece)
- . 1 Carinthian Volunteer Rifle Regt = 4 bns
- . 1 Upper Austrian Volunteer Rifle Regt = 2 bns
- . 4 Volunteer Rifle Bns (Salzburg, Krain, Kärnten, Küstenland)
- . 1 Young Rifle Bn
- . 1 Albanian Legion = 9 bns

Therefore strength had increased from 3 bns to 42 bns plus 48

Standeschützen Detachments

March formations had been hurriedly cobbled together and thrown into the fighting in the crises of the Carpathian winter and again during the creation of the southwestern front. Many of these units were excellent; although drawn from a wide variety of sources, the men developed a spirit of cohesion in the bloody actions and wished to continue the proud, though recent, traditions they had established together. Although this spirit was commendable, the high command didn't want the number of units to expand beyond their capacity to provide them with replacements, and therefore set strict limits to how many became permanent. Nevertheless, some independent March formations and other new units created in times of need became enduring parts of the order of battle; in the spring of 1916 they accounted already for 60 battalions.

Landsturm and volunteer units

The process by which new forces were assembled under the pressure of events is perhaps even clearer when we consider the development of the Landsturm, especially those of its detachments which were committed to combat. When the war started, 233 Landsturm battalions hastened to the battlefield along with the field armies. 30 Landsturm March battalions and almost 200 Landsturm battalions of the 2nd Levy were raised in fall 1914, and many of them saw action under Pflanzer-Baltin's Armeegruppe.⁶⁷ There was never any intention of providing all these units, which suffered greatly during the Carpathian winter, with ongoing replacements; therefore a large number were dissolved. By spring there were only about 300 Landsturm battalions, of which roughly a third were at the front; another 80 were guarding the rivers on the Balkan front, while the rest were in fortresses, on the supply lines, and in the Danube bridgeheads. However, by this time several distinguished Landsturm units had been recognized as very important parts of the order of battle. These included especially the 1 Lst Inf Bde (from the German hereditary lands), the Sudeten-west Galician 106 Lst ID, and several smaller groups serving under 7th Army. Also a large number of other headquarters included Landsturm troops in their ranks.

Many new Landsturm detachments hastened to the southwestern

⁶⁷ There were 130 k.k. Landsturm Territorial and 97 k.u.

Landsturm Etappen Battalions; 30 battalions stayed back in the Danube bridgeheads.

borders, which were menaced by a new enemy. Together with some independent March battalions and Standschützen detachments, in the hour of need they made up 13 brigades and 7 half-brigades, parts of which were organized under 6 new divisions. The majority of these units - 10 brigades and 4 half-brigades (4 divisions) - had a lasting existence.

When active troops were lacking for the offensive against Serbia, the Aus-Hung. Army proved for a third time that its Landsturm were a valuable force. The troops who'd been stationed in the Balkan theater as river guards and fortress garrisons were a badly-needed reserve. Their energetic commander, GdK von Tersztyanszky, correctly evaluated their capabilities. Already at the start of July 1915 he had created the 19 Lst Mtn Bde from detachments of the defense force on the Sava plus a battalion taken from the Sarajevo fortress, and in the same month had to send the new Bde to the southwestern front. In the following weeks there was brisk organizational activity, at the end of which (in September) almost all of the troops from the river cordons and the garrisons had been assembled in 13 mobile brigades, ready to advance into Serbia. Another brigade (205 Lst Inf Bde) had already been provided from the interior in July for this purpose.

The majority of these hastily raised and trained units had also played a distinguished part in the conquest of Montenegro. Without exaggeration, we can state that a new Landsturm Army had actually been created from the ground up. It was certainly a pleasant surprise to see how well these soldiers, who were no longer young, endured the difficult conditions which existed in the mountainous lands of Serbia, Montenegro, and the southwestern front. Since the Landsturm units were employed in so many different ways, and their titles kept changing, it was necessary at the start of November 1915 to simplify their organization. Henceforth their combat units were all called "Landsturm Infantry Battalions" to distinguish them from the "Landsturm Etappen Battalions" which had other missions. At this point, 210 of the 382 battalions were fighting at the front.

In spring 1916 there were 393 battalions - 201 Landsturm Infantry and 192 Landsturm Etappen. In addition to the latter, there was an even greater number of garrison and security formations, as well as labor detachments; some of them served on the lines of communication and the occupied territories, while others were in the interior. After sending their able-bodied men to replace less fit soldiers at the front, these fourth line units were made up of men of all ages who weren't physically robust. The

following table summarizes the organization of the rear area units, whose numbers and organization were constantly changing.

TABLE 6 - Development of rear area units from the start of the war to 1 May 1916

Units guarding the lines of communication

In August 1914...

- . 227 Landsturm battalions (actually formed during September 1914) - There were 130 k.k. Lst Territorial Bns and 97 k.u. Lst Etappen Bns
- . Railroad security detachments totaling 83,000 men
- . 22 bridgehead protection companies (in Galicia)

In May 1916...

- . 192 Landsturm Etappen Battalions (from both halves of the Monarchy)
- . 7 South Tyrol Standschützen Companies
- . 69 Landsturm Watch Battalions
- . 10 Landsturm Watch Companies
- . 8 Prisoner of War Guard Companies
- . 59 Landsturm Railroad Security Detachments

Labor units

In August 1914...

- . 267 Military Worker Detachments
- . 111 Landsturm Fortress Worker Detachments

In May 1916....

- . 248 Construction Companies
- . 252 Military Worker Detachments
- . 213 Landsturm Military Worker Detachments
- . 26 Landsturm Porter Detachments
- . 176 Landsturm Road Construction Detachments
- . 33 Landsturm Fortress Worker Detachments

Units made up of enemy prisoners of war

All had been formed during the war. In May 1916 there were 62 detachments of railroad construction workers, 26 of porters, and more than 300 of undifferentiated "workers." There were also 87 detachments made of Russian and Polish civilian workers.

No less important was the expansion of the volunteer units at the outbreak of the Italian war. The Tyroleans - from youths to old men - didn't hesitate to follow their proud traditions, and hastened to the threatened borders of their homeland. We have already described (in Volume II) how their Standschützen detachments provided the firm foundation of the extended front in the regions of eternal snow and ice.⁶⁸ We have also shown how

68 See also Pfersmann, "Vom stillen Heldentum eines Volkes" in Volume III of the collection assembled by Kerchnawe, "Im Felde

the men from the other Alpine lands (Carinthia, Upper Austria and Salzburg) followed the example of the Tyroleans, even though they didn't have pre-war statutory authority for their units. These new volunteer units - along with the earlier Polish Legion (which had been reinforced) and the detachments of Romanians and Ruthenes - represented additional manpower for the Army only to the extent that they included soldiers who otherwise wouldn't have been eligible for the draft. Nonetheless, they had added 42 battalions and 48 Standschützen detachments to the order of battle.

Arms and equipment of the infantry

There was no substantial change to the internal structure of the infantry. Although it had long been recognized that they needed more machine guns, the procurement process was slow. The only weapons factory which could produce them, at Steyr, did increase its monthly output from 180 to 320; thus by the end of 1915 there were already 4,084 more machine guns, and another 1,420 by the end of April 1916. 1,500 damaged guns were repaired in the major factories in the interior. However, the majority of these weapons were used to replace losses or to equip the new units and replacement troops. Each battalion was scheduled to get a second machine gun detachment (of two guns); 251 battalions had been thus equipped by December 1915, and 487 battalions by the end of April 1916. Units on the Italian front were given priority.⁶⁹ The remaining battalions didn't have their additional guns until the second half of 1916. In January the two detachments in each battalion had reorganized as one larger detachment (with 4 machine guns).

Production of rifles progressed similarly. The Steyr Works increased their monthly output from 22,800 in October 1914 to 74,500 in April 1916, while the Hungarian weapons factory increased theirs from 11,000 to 18,000. Thus by the end of April 1916 the former had turned out 1,072,252 weapons and the latter 349,758, for a total of 1,422,010 (including both rifles and carbines). In the same period the repair facilities in the

unbesiegt" (Munich, 1923), pp. 282 ff. Pfersmann also wrote an article, "Das Werden des Tiroler Standschützenkorps" in the Mil. wiss. Mitt. (Vienna, 1932), pp. 257 ff. and 449 ff.

69 At the end of 1915, there were 202 battalions on the southwestern front (not counting Tyrol); 160 had received their second machine gun detachments. Tyrol was even better equipped; its 90 battalions had more than 700 machine guns.

interior had fixed a substantial number of rifles (1,848,300).⁷⁰

Meanwhile a new infantry weapon was introduced at the start of 1916. A small 37 mm caliber gun was developed for use against well-entrenched enemy machine gunners whose weapons were protected by shields. The new infantry guns entered the field in detachments of two pieces each. By May there were already 168 detachments (serving under 158 infantry units). The number of trench mortars, on the other hand, increased just slightly prior to spring 1916. The infantry did gradually receive some 9 cm mortars, and a few larger caliber weapons also appeared at the front (mostly with the sappers). However, in comparison to the massive number of trench mortars owned by the enemy, especially on the Italian front, the total was insignificant.

The change in the outward appearance of the fighting troops was conspicuous. The old "pike-gray" uniform was slowly disappearing from the battlefield, as more and more March battalions were dressed in the new field gray, a shade with a mixture of green for purposes of camouflage. On the stony Karst, however, the majority of the troops continued to wear pike-gray for a long time. A more rapid change was the replacement of the sharp-looking hide packs with linen rucksacks, which were much cheaper and easier to produce in large quantities. Although the rucksacks impaired the soldierly appearance of the ranks, they had a greater capacity to carry all the small but important items which men needed during their long absence from the amenities of home. In addition to these personal items, the soldiers' burdens often included winter clothing, hand grenades, and equipment to construct trenches. At this time requests were increasing for yet more gear - the men needed steel helmets, especially on the Karst front where they suffered so much from flying splinters of stone. In the future helmets would become part of the soldiers' standard equipment.

Changes in the cavalry

Meanwhile the organization and use of the cavalry, whose outward appearance had already changed considerably, were more and more becoming identical to that of the infantry. The horsemen had found very little opportunity to fulfill their traditional function, and especially after the advent of trench warfare had fought almost entirely on foot.⁷¹ Attempts to increase the

70 Weapons data is from a manuscript in the military archives by GM Pflug, formerly an expert artillery adviser to the AOK.

71 See Czegka, "Die Wandlungen in der Verwendung und Organisation

number of mounted troops had been thwarted by insurmountable obstacles. At the start of 1915 the Honveds were able to create two new Landsturm Hussar Regiments, but mostly by merging Landsturm Hussar Battalions which already existed. For a long time it had been impossible to maintain the number of mounted personnel because there weren't enough horses available for use in training replacement troops. Therefore the foot detachments which the cavalry divisions had originally created on a temporary basis expanded in time to battalion strength; as "rifle squadrons" or "battalions" they were already permanent parts of the divisional organization.

In the first months of 1916 the shortage of horses - which were badly needed to haul new artillery batteries - became greater than ever. This forced a decisive change in the organization of the mounted arm. In February the cavalry regiments were restricted to four mounted squadrons, each of 150 men; however in April the number of men was reduced to just 120. On the other hand, each cavalry division received a second rifle battalion (and, if possible, also a third battalion). Thus in May 1916 there were already 31 rifle battalions. The divisions continued to exist only by completely changing their make-up. In December 1915 about two-thirds of the personnel of the divisions and brigades were still mounted, but thereafter the majority of the men were dismounted so that the units could still maintain their full strength. Since spring 1915 measures had been taken to increase the firepower of the cavalry regiments by providing them with more machine guns. At the start of May 1916, there were 49 regiments (twice as many as at the start of the war) which had a cavalry machine gun detachment of four guns.

TABLE 7 - Changes in the cavalry from the start of the war to 1 May 1916

August 1914

May 1916

15 DR (90 sqdns, 15 reserve sqdns) and 15 cav MG detmts)

15 Dragoon Regts (70 ½ sqdns

16 HR (96 sqdns, 16 res sqdns)
13 cav MG detmts)

16 Hussar Regts (81 sqdns and

11 UR (# 1-8, 11-13)
10 cav MG detmts)

11 Uhlán Regts (48 sqdns and

der Kavallerie-divisionen während des Weltkrieges" in Mil. wiss. Mitt. Wien for 1928, pp. 1 ff.

(66 sqdns, 11 res sqdns)

6 k.k. LW UR (36 sqdns)
MG detmt)

6 k.k. LW UR (37 ½ sqdns and 1 cav

1 Tyrol LW Uhlan Bn (3 sqdns) 1 Tyrol LW Uhlan Bn (4 sqdns, 1 cav
MG detmt)

1 Dalmatia LW Uhlan Bn (2 sqdns) 1 Dalmatia LW Uhlan Bn (2
sqdns, no MG detmt)

10 Hon HR (60 sqdns)
9 cav MG detmts)

10 Honved Huss Regts (47 sqdns and

10 k..u. Lst Huss Bns
of k.u. Lst Hussars
(30 sqdns)
in the bns; no MG detmt)

2 regts and 10 independent bns
(4 sqdns in each regt, 17 ¼ total

22 Cav MG Detmts
cav regt HQ (as shown above)

49 Cav MG Detmts, now assigned to

[New]
dismounted men)

31 Cavalry Rifle Bns (made up of

[New]

8 squadrons in the Polish Legion

TOTAL:

TOTAL:

**425 sqdns, 22 Cav MG Detmts 323 ¼ sqdns (including 8 in Polish
Legion), 49 Cav MG Detmts, 31 Cav Rifle Bns**

Summary of the increase in force

Thus the Monarchy's armed forces, despite all obstacles and despite the enormous casualties of 22 bloody months of war, had been able to reinforce the foot troops by more than 140 battalions.⁷² The increased strength is also reflected in the number of higher headquarters: under 26 corps and 1 cavalry corps there were 69 infantry divisions, 20 independent brigades,

72 In making this calculation, we excluded the 164 March battalions which existed at the start of the war; although temporarily available for fighting, their primary role was to provide replacements. For the same reason we also excluded the March units which were near the front in spring 1916, but not yet incorporated into their parent units.

11 cavalry divisions and 3 independent cavalry brigades. Compared with the situation at the start of the war this was an increase of 8 corps, or of 28 brigades and 4 cavalry brigades.⁷³

⁷³ However, the cavalry corps as well as three of the four independent cavalry brigades were only *ad hoc* groups of units from various units combined for tactical purposes. The only real increase in the strength of the cavalry was the creation of the Hungarian Landsturm Hussar Brigade.

TABLE 8 - Expansion of the corps, divisions and brigades

<u>August 1914</u>	<u>May 1916</u>
18 Corps HQ (I to XVII plus Armeegruppe Kummer)	26 infantry & 1 cavalry corps HQ (I to XIII; XV to XXI; FZM Benigni, GdI FML Hadfy, FML Hofmann, FML Szurmay, Tyrol Land Defense Command, GdK Hauer's Cavalry)
50 Infantry Divs (# 1-48, 95, 106)	69 Infantry Divs (# 1-22, 24-48, 50, 51, 53-55, 57-59, 61-63, 70, 90, 92, 94, 106, Landes-Schützen, FML L Goiginger (Pustertal), FML Koennen (Region III), FML Rollinger, FML Wucherer, Polish Legion)
112 Infantry Bdes (93 under divs, 19 were independent) # 3-5, 7-34, 37-92, 98, 129-132, 179-181, 111, 127, 128, 187, 96, 121, 122; Lndstm Papp, GM Steinhardt # 1, 35, 36, 40, 93, Fasser, Counter-Admiral # 97, 100-105, 107-112; Scotti, GM Andrian, Col Pfeifer, Col Rochel, GM Wojtechowsky, Col Piasecki	124 Infantry Bdes (111 under divs, 13 were independent) # 3-5, 7-34, 37-44, 47-84, 86-92, 96, 200-202, 207-208, 215; Lndstm # 1, 110, 209-212; 1-3 Polish Legion; Lt Col (Region II), GM Schiesser, Col Koudelka, GM Istvanovic, GM Kindl, Col Schmidt; the Antivari Group.
[New] # 50-53	4 Half-Brigades (all under divisions) -
14 Mountain Bdes (1-14) (9 in Divs, 5 independent)	31 Mountain Bdes (# 1-16, 18-22, 24-28, 55-59) (23 in Divs, 8 independent)
17 k.k. Lst Terr Bdes ⁷⁴	3 k.k. Lst Territorial Bdes (# 3, 6, 11)
9 k.u. Lst Etappen Bdes	(All dissolved or redesignated)

74 k.k. Lst Territorial Bdes # 1-17 and k.u. Lst Etappen Bdes # 1-9 were actually formed in September 1914; except for the three bdes still extant in May 1916, all the units were either dissolved or redesignated during 1914 and 1915.

14 March Bdes (1-14) (All dissolved in September 1914)

5 Lst March Bdes (1-5) (Created in Sept 1914; all dissolved or redesignated in the following months)

11 Cavalry Divisions Same (# 1-11)

22 Cavalry Brigades (All in Cav Divs) and GM Le Gay's # 1, 3-11, 13-24 Benes, Col Kranz	26 Cavalry Brigades 23 were in Divisions: # 1, 3-11, 13-24 3 were independent: Lst Hussar, Col
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44 Field Arty Bdes # 2-17, 19-46	64 Field Arty Bdes Mostly with same designation as the parent Inf Div, except: 1 Res FA Bde (in 7 Cav Div); Arty Commands of Col Smrcek (90 ID), Lt Col Mandich (94 ID), Col Pengov (Pustertal Div), Col Nadherny (Div FML Koennen). There were <u>no</u> arty bde HQ under 47, 63, or 92 ID, under the Divs of FML Rollinger or FML Wucherer, or in the Polish Legion
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5 Fortress Arty Bdes (1-5)	1 Fortress Arty Bde (# 4 at Pola)
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3. Expansion of the artillery

The greatest expansion in 1915 involved the artillery. At the start of the year there was a time of bitter need, which even worsened to a certain extent. The number of available guns shrank greatly. Damage, especially to the M.99 howitzers, was so great that concern arose that the older models might break down completely before new pieces were available in sufficient quantities. And in this difficult time it was also necessary to reinforce the artillery units on the new Italian front.

The commitment of all our energy and of the well-known Austrian skill at improvisation were needed to surmount this crisis. At first old cannon from the year 1875 were used to make up the most serious shortages. Gradually about seventy batteries or sections of these weapons, with Landsturm crews, were created and sent mostly to the southwestern front. Alongside them appeared guns of the most diverse types which had been captured in Russia and in Belgium. The Navy helped out by sending some cannon to the Isonzo front. Above all, many pieces from the pre-war reserve (900 guns, including 800 new cannon) were still available. Thus in summer and fall the number of field cannon batteries temporarily increased by 88 (to 357 units).

The main burden of the artillery fighting was borne for a long time by these cannon batteries and by the new howitzer batteries, which were only beginning to appear. While the old guns were performing their last service for as long as possible, their

modern successors were being turned out by hard-working factories. Industry proceeded according to the large-scale plans of expansion which the high command devised at the start of 1915. First the Skoda Works and the Arsenal, and later the Böhler Works, moved into high gear. 1847 guns of all calibers were produced by the end of 1915; 1428 more became available in the first half of 1916. Together with the original pre-war reserve of 900, the high command thus had available over 4175 guns of all calibers to provide replacements and equip new units.

The principal need, which was demonstrated anew repeatedly in the 1915 fighting, was to greatly increase the number of guns capable of high-trajectory fire. The eagerly awaited light and heavy howitzers didn't reach the front in large quantities until the second half of the year. They were followed by new mountain cannon and the long-range 10.4 cm cannon. Now it was possible to not only replace weapons as they went out of service, but also to equip the old howitzer batteries and some extra cannon batteries with the new 10 cm and 15 cm howitzers.⁷⁵ To create new units as rapidly as possible, some field batteries were given just four guns apiece instead of the usual six. The results of the artillery expansion were evident in the first months of 1916. At this point the new 10 cm howitzer batteries were grouped under field howitzer regiments; the heavy field howitzer and 10.4 cm cannon batteries were placed under heavy field artillery regiments. Finally all the artillery regiments were redesignated, so that each infantry division would have a field cannon, field howitzer and heavy field artillery regiment bearing the same number as its own.

The first goal for the mountain artillery was to increase the force to 14 full regiments, each of six cannon batteries (with new guns) and 2 howitzer batteries. The project was nearly completed by the end of 1915. However, it had been determined much earlier - back in March - that this expansion alone wouldn't nearly be sufficient. Therefore it was decided to further increase the mountain artillery to 36 regiments, each with 6 cannon and 3 howitzer batteries. This project was initiated in spring 1916.

By this point the most severe shortages of artillery had been rectified. At the start of May the field and mountain artillery consisted of 804 batteries (4018 guns). This was an increase of

⁷⁵ The total number of guns that went out of service in 1915 - including the old models which had been worn out - was about 1000.

54% (1408 guns) since the start of the war. No less important was the fact that the weapons had been greatly modernized. A good third of the guns were new models of the most modern types; if we also count the field cannon, most of which had been updated before the war, the proportion increases to two thirds. There were now 52 pieces per division (4 per combat battalion). Although this ratio was still far less than the ultimate goal of the high command, it was an enormous improvement over the situation when the war began, when there were just 42 pieces per division (2.8 per battalion).⁷⁶ Moreover the number of howitzers had increased from 24 to 37 per 100 guns.

Since fighting in the open field had for the most part been superceded by actions centering on fortified positions, and since the field armies lacked sufficient heavy guns, the fortress artillery gained great importance. Its mobile batteries were significantly expanded from 76 to 123 (from 280 to 420 guns). Its very versatile 30.5 cm mortars, of which there were now 21 batteries, played an important role.

TABLE 9 - Expansion of the artillery from the start of the war through 1 May 1916

(The summaries do not take into account the fact that some guns were temporarily out of service, *i.e.* for repair.)

A. Field and Mountain Artillery (unless otherwise noted, a battery had 6 guns)

August 1914

May 1916

1) Cannon & Horse Units

42 k.u.k. FKR (222 batties) 40 k.u.k. FKR (incl. 12 reserve regts) (194 batties)

8 k.k. FK Bns 8 k.k. FKR (for k.k. LW Divs) (31 batties)

(16 batties)

8 k.u. Hon FKR 9 k.u. Hon FKR (incl. one reserve regt) (36 batties)

(31 batties)

⁷⁶ According to the expansion plans of the AOK, discussed in an earlier volume, the divisional artillery was supposed to increase to 24 field cannon, 36 light field howitzers, 4 heavy field howitzers and four 10.4 cm cannon. Moreover, each corps was supposed to have 4 heavy howitzers and 4 heavy cannon for each of the divisions under its command.

9 k.u.k. Mounted Bns (27 batties)	Same 9 bns (but now 32 batties)
1 k.u. Honved Mntd Bn (3 batties)	2 k.u. Honved Mounted Bns (6 batties)
.....	4 field cannon batties in the Polish Legion
Each batty = 6 guns temporarily had just 4 Horse batty = 4 guns each had 4 guns	211 cannon batties had 6 guns; 50 guns; the horse & Polish batties
Total = 299 batties (1734 cannon)	Total = 303 batties (1642 cannon)

2) Howitzer Units

14 k.u.k. FHR (54 batties) regts) (146 batties) (2 batties in # FHR 14 had had howitzers mountain guns, and so are counted under mtn arty below)	39 k.u.k. FHR (incl. 11 reserve 8 batties actually had cannon, 138
8 k.k. FH Bns batties (3 cannon, 28 howitzer) (16 batties)	8 k.k. FHR (for k.k. LW Divs) = 31
..... cannon and 18 howitzer)	9 k.u. Hon FHR = 32 batties (14
.....	2 howitzer batties in the Polish Legion
Each batty had 6 guns 6 guns; 144 howitzer batties had 6 guns, the other 42, incl. the 2 Polish units, temporarily had just 2	The cannon batties in howitzer regts had
Total = 70 batties batties (1032 howitzers, (420 howitzers)	Total = 186 howitzer and 25 cannon cannon (Note - 120 batties had the new M.14 field howitzers)

3) Mountain Units

10 k.u.k. Mountain AR (72 cannon, 34 howitzer; batties: 50 cannon, 22 the new AR # 15-28 were just forming, with one to six howitzer; total incl. 2 batties apiece) batties from FHR # 14)	28 Mountain AR (142 batties: 108
1 Dalmatian Mtn Cannon AR # 17, above]	[Bn expanded to help create new Mountain

Bn (2 batties)
Each batty = 4 guns Same
Total = 208 cannon and **Total** = 432 cannon, 136 howitzers (100
of the
88 howitzers cannon batties had the new M.15 mountain
cannon)

4) Heavy Field Units

14 k.u.k. Hvy How Bns 32 k.u.k. Heavy FAR (incl. 2 reserve
regts)
(28 batties; each with four (86 batties - 59 had 15 cm how, 27
had 10.4 cm cannon batties)
15 cm howitzers) 8 k.k. Hvy FAR (in LW Divs) = 14 batties
(11 howitzer, 3 cannon)
 8 k.u. Hon Hvy FAR = 12 batties (11 howitzer,
1 cannon)
Total = 112 x 15 cm **Totals** = 31 x 10.4 cm cannon batties of
2 guns (62 total)
howitzers = 81 x 15 cm howitzer batties of 4 guns
(324 total)

 (45 batties had the new 15 cm M.14
howitzers)

5) Improvised field artillery units

. In **August 1914** there existed 3 k.k. Landsturm FKR (# 95, 100 and 106) - they had 12 batties each armed with 9 cm M.75/96 field cannon (for a total of 48); all three regts had been broken up and absorbed in other units by May 1916

. In **May 1916** the following existed:

- . 22 "mobile position batties", each of four 9 cm M.75/96 field cannon (total 88)
- . 25 "mobile position sections", each equivalent to a half batty, or two 9 cm M.75/96 cannon (total 50)
- . 4 mobile cannon batties, each of four 8 cm M.75 or M.05/08 field cannon (total 16)
- . 3 landing gun batties, each of four 7 cm guns (total 12)
- . 7 flak cannon batties, each of 4 guns (total 28)
- . 23 flak cannon sections, each of 2 guns (total 46)
- . TOTAL was thus 36 batties and 48 sections, or 240 guns

6) Field Artillery Grand Totals

August 1914

May 1916

299 cannon batties (1734 guns)

328 cannon batties (1792)

70 howitzer batties (420)	186 howitzer batties (1032,
including 716 new guns)	
52 mtn cannon batties (208)	108 mountain cannon batties
(432, incl. 400 new guns)	
22 mtn howitzer batties (88)	34 mountain howitzer batties
(136)	
28 hvy howitzer batties (112)
12 improvised cannon batties (48)
.....	31 x 10.4 cm cannon batties
(62 guns, all new)	
.....	81 x 15 cm how batties (324
guns, 180 new)	
.....	36 improvised batties (144)
.....	48 improvised sections (96)
Total = 483 batties (2610 guns)	804 batties and 48 sections
(4018 guns, incl. 1358 new)	

B. Fortress Artillery

(Includes only mobile batteries, not the many fixed pieces)

August 1914May 1916

12 x 30.5 cm mortar batties	21 x 30.5 cm batties (42 guns)
(24 guns)	
12 x 24 cm mortar batties	9 x 24 cm batties (36 guns)
(48 guns)	
.....	17 x 15 cm mortar batties
(68 guns)	
32 x 15 cm howitzer batties	36 x 15 cm howitzer batties
(140 guns)	
(128 guns)	
.....	2 x 15 cm long-range
howitzer batties (4 guns)	
.....	3 x 18 cm cannon batties
(12 guns)	
.....	10 x 15 cm cannon batties
(40 guns)	
.....	4 x 15 cm (Russian)
cannon batties (16 guns)	
20 x 12 cm cannon batties	8 x 12 cm cannon batties (32
guns)	
(80 guns)	
.....	13 x 10.4 cm cannon
batties (26 guns)	
Total = 76 batties	Total = 123 batties (420 guns)
(280 guns)	

Thus the artillery armaments were significantly improved, which was an organizational and industrial achievement in the midst of a war that was without parallel in Austria-Hungary. The high command was no longer under the crushing burden of operating against a superior enemy artillery, which had hitherto hampered their ability to make decisions. Operations such as the attack on Montenegro in January and the offensive against Italy in May 1916 would have been riskier several months earlier because of the lack of artillery.

Shortages of raw materials

The Monarchy's industries played an outstanding part in achieving this success. Their accomplishment should be appreciated all the more because a new obstacle had already been placed in their way: a shortage of raw materials. At the start of 1915, lack of copper, nickel and lead had caused the authorities to create a "Central Metals Office"; this was the first in a series of such measures that became increasingly necessary. Since domestic supplies of the metals named above were soon exhausted, and the ever more effective naval blockade hindered obtaining them abroad, copper roofs and church bells were melted down. The same fate befell a variety of items from businesses and farms, and even from the kitchens of middle-class households. In mid-1915 the high command reluctantly decided to stop making artillery with bronze barrels - the principal products requiring high-quality copper - and to finally go over completely to steel barrels. However, to produce steel the factories needed nickel, which was also in short supply. Pots and pans, solid pre-war products, were confiscated and along with other items yielded 500 tons of nickel. Coins of this metal were pulled from circulation and melted down to yield another 1900 tons. Shrapnel shells were filled with iron pellets to conserve lead.

Although the problem of obtaining certain metals continued, it was relatively easy to solve by the measures described above, and later also by exploiting raw materials in the occupied territories. A more serious and lasting danger was the lack of raw materials needed to produce chemicals which went into powder and explosives. As requirements mounted in the first half of 1915, attempts were made to expand the wholly inadequate industrial facilities of the Monarchy and to found new ones. Since these attempts couldn't solve the entire problem, the authorities resorted to a complicated system of expedients; assistance from Germany was all too little. It was necessary to temporarily cut back the production of ammunition for the heaviest guns and for infantry weapons, so that at least there

would be a sufficient supply for the light and medium guns.

Problems of other kinds arose. The production of hand grenades didn't make progress until they were made of cast iron, which made it possible to involve more work shops in the process. However, the quality of the grenades produced by the smaller shops left something to be desired. Because of all these obstacles, it's not surprising that efforts to simultaneously increase the artillery equipment along with the ammunition supply were successful only after great efforts, and that for a prolonged period there was still a shortage of ammunition. The urgent need to conserve artillery shells, even when they were needed to support the hard-fighting infantry, persisted through all of 1915. In July, for example, 7th Army had to cancel a major attack because they lacked shells.

It is true that the situation had improved considerably since the catastrophic period in the winter of 1914-15. Constantly prodded by the military offices, industry noticeably increased its production from week to week. When the war started, about 55,000 shells were turned out per week; this figure had already risen to 100,000 in December 1914, and soon thereafter to 200,000 or 250,000. For a while the factories were producing 300,000 shells per week. This was a great and very commendable achievement, but production still didn't keep pace with demand. The needs of the the southwestern front soon offset the newly-won gains. Moreover, it was necessary to accumulate sufficient ammunition for the new types of guns before they could be sent to the front. The introduction of these new weapons complicated the picture further. The Tyrol front, for example, required stocks for at least 45 different types of artillery. A total of 100 kinds of ammunition were being produced.

Thus it was a source of some satisfaction that in the second half of 1915 the Army had available about 200 rounds for each rifle, and 200 to 300 shells for each of its field and mountain guns. The high command also had a small reserve. The winter pause in operations in the north was a boon, since consumption of men and equipment was low. The ranks were filling up by spring 1916. Another example of the improving situation was the status of 11th Army in Tyrol as it prepared for the spring offensive. The Army had 2160 shells for each field cannon, about 600 for the field and 15 cm howitzers, and 1000 to 1400 for the mountain guns.

4. Development and performance of the auxiliary services and the Army organizations

Compared to the expansion of the artillery, the development of the remaining branches of the service was rather limited.

TABLE 10 - Development of the technical troops, the air forces, and the logistical organizations

I. Technical Troops and Offices

In August 1914.....

On 1 May 1916.....

a) THE SAPPERS

14 sapper bns (79 comps)	14 sapper bns (100 comps)
	1 special sapper bn (of 3 comps)
29 Landsturm sapper detmts	12 k.k. Landsturm sapper detmts
	3 k.u. Landsturm sapper detmts
48 divisional entrenching tool columns	16 corps entrenching tool columns
	64 divisional entrenching tool columns
	18 (improvised) brigade entrenching tool columns
4 mobile entrenching tool depots	11 (improvised) mobile entrenching tool depots
5 siege sapper parks	[Had been broken up]
.....	1 k.u. Landsturm mining detachment
	1 k.u. Landsturm mine workers' company
	5 electrified wire units
	15 x 10 cm aerial trench mortar platoons
	32 x 15 cm aerial trench mortar platoons
	12 x 14 cm trench mortar platoons
	39 x 22 cm trench mortar platoons
	129 grenade launcher platoons
	12 flamethrower platoons
	4 electrical pumping platoons
	4 air compressor units
	4 air storage battery units
	43 electric groups
	4 motion picture platoons

b) THE PIONEERS

9 pioneer bns (43 comps)	48 pioneer comps (no bn HQ)
1 bridging bn	2 bridging bns
4 mobile pioneer equipment depots	5 mobile pioneer equipment depots
3 river mining platoon	4 river mining platoons
122 military bridging sets	124 military bridging sets

c) THE TELEGRAPH TROOPS

11 Army telegraph detmts	16 Army telegraph detmts
5 special telegraph detmts	6 special telegraph detmts
11 radio stations	30 field radio stations
	34 hand radio stations
64 reserve tel. const. detmts construction detmts	83 reserve telegraph
60 reserve tel. operation detmts (Morse)	54 reserve telegraph operation detmts
37 field telegraph detmts (Hughes)	20 reserve telegraph operation detmts
16 corps telegraph detmts	23 corps telegraph detmts
16 corps telephone detmts	25 corps telephone detmts
47 divisional telephone detmts	81 divisional telephone detmts
3 mountain telegraph detmts	3 (same) mountain telegraph detmts
33 mountain telephone detmts	16 mountain telephone detmts
11 cavalry telegraph detmts	12 cavalry telegraph detmts
5 telegraph field depots	32 cavalry long distance signal patrols

d) THE RAILROAD TROOPS

28 railroad comps	39 railroad comps
9 field railroads (1 locomotive, construction detmts	8 locomotive field railroad
5 horse-drawn, 3 fortress)	3 locomotive field railroad operations sections
	5 fortress field railroad construction detmts
	5 fortress field railroad operations sections
3 mobile railroad construction construction depots	3 (same) mobile railroad
depots	4 horse-drawn rail lines (with 8
construction detmts and	12 operational sections)
	2 rail lines for trucks

1 funicular rail line construction comp
5 funicular rail line detmts
11 armored trains (identified by Roman
numerals)

II. The Air Forces

15 flying comps	23 flying comps
12 fortress balloon detmts	15 field balloon detmts
1 dirigible comp	[Dissolved] ⁷⁷

77 TRANSLATOR's NOTE - Despite some pre-war experiments, Austria-Hungary never had any operational dirigibles during the war. In 1917-18 some new types were developed, and one of the four projected ships was about to enter service when the Monarchy collapsed. See Reinhard Keimel, "Österreichs Luftfahrzeuge" (Graz, 1981), pp. 60-61

III. The Supply Train Troops

These troops were responsible for the mobile supply and medical columns. They also provided transportation for the entrenching tool columns, the military bridging sets, and the telegraph detachments that were under the higher HQ. In detail, the troops made up the following units:

In August 1914.....

On 1 May 1916.....

14 corps train commands	27 corps train commands
56 corps train group commands	70 corps train group commands
48 division train commands	61 divisional train commands
11 cavalry division train commands	[Dissolved]
28 brigade train commands	23 mountain brigade train commands
6 supply line train commands	13 supply line train commands
38 supply line group commands	14 supply line train group commands
15 army train field depots	59 army train field depots
16 corps train parks	70 corps train park sections
16 corps train workshops	129 corps train work shops
9 mountain train workshops	46 mountain train work shops
15 supply line train workshops	[Dissolved]
16 mobile horse depots	89 mobile horse depots
	11 supply line horse depots
16 mobile horse hospitals	98 mobile horse hospitals
	25 supply line horse hospitals

IV. Automotive Troops

58 auto train columns	191 truck columns
	26 medical truck columns
	10 post office truck columns

V. Field Logistical Offices

762 rations staffs	432 rations staffs
42 mountain rations staffs	39 mountain rations staffs
	30 improvised staffs
	110 train carter staffs
84 supply line train platoons	277 supply line train platoons
16 corps bakeries	22 corps bakeries
48 divisional bakeries	65 divisional bakeries
16 reserve bakeries	[Broken up]
7 mountain bakeries	75 mountain bakeries
	8 brigade bakeries
	8 cavalry bakeries

VI Medical Offices

44 infantry div medical offices offices	63 infantry division medical offices
11 cavalry div medical offices medical offices	11 (same) cavalry division medical offices
27 infantry bde medical offices offices	30 infantry brigade medical offices
14 mountain bde medical offices offices	39 mountain brigade medical offices
4 div wagon staffs for wounded the wounded	20 divisional wagon staffs for the wounded
132 field hospitals	155 field hospitals
42 mobile reserve hospitals	96 mobile reserve hospitals
14 field recuperation stations stations	49 field recuperation stations
182 reserve medical detachments	27 reserve medical detachments
	14 mobile hospitals for epidemics
	18 Red Cross volunteer hospital detachments
3 Red Cross field hospitals	4 Red Cross field hospitals
4 hospitals of the German Order German Order of Knights	4 field hospitals of the German Order of Knights
	13 mobile laboratories for epidemics
5 medical field depots	14 medical field depots
	25 mobile refreshment columns
33 hospital railroad trains	38 hospital railroad trains
14 permanent sick trains	43 permanent sick trains
	12 state railroad sick trains
	4 trains of sleeping cars for the sick
	22 trains for the infectious ill
6 hospital trains/Malt. Order Maltese Order (Knights of St John)	7 hospital trains of the Maltese Order (Knights of St John)
[New].....	6 bathing trains
	33 mobile holding stations for the sick
	38 field- and auxiliary- stations for refreshment
5 Red Cross field depots	9 Red Cross field depots
	28 field steam laundries

The air forces

The newest weapon, the airplane, had already become an indispensable instrument of the commanders. Planes had gained extraordinary importance not only in the mobile fighting on the

Russian front, where it was necessary to scout far behind the enemy's battle lines, but above all in tactical reconnaissance after fighting had degenerated into positional warfare.⁷⁸ Aerial photography - which had already progressed from simple snapshots to strip mosaics - became constantly more important. Moreover the artillery was increasingly relying on air observers to direct their bombardments.

Activity in the air had become livelier. The enemy had noticeably increased their air forces; already some of their planes had machine guns, and here and there were throwing bombs on railroad stations and other installations behind the lines. When the war started, this type of fighting had hardly developed beyond its origins, but now was quickly growing in size and importance. In July 1915 the position "Commander of the Air Troops" was created and given to Colonel Emil Uzelac. He was to direct all the field formations through "Staff Officers for the Air Troops", each of whom was responsible for all the air companies in one of the operational theaters; when necessary several of the companies could be placed under "air groups." However, Uzelac was to refer all questions regarding new equipment procurement to the Ministry of War.

Industrial capacity set a stricter limit to the development of aviation than to any other service. Initially almost entirely dependent on help from Germany, by the end of 1915 the Monarchy had already set up seven airplane and six motor factories. However, by this time they had only produced 408 planes and 512 motors, barely more than were needed to replace losses and to train new pilots and observers.⁷⁹ There had been 15 air companies in August 1914; by the time Italy entered the war only 3 more had been created, from very diverse sources. There was finally a major expansion in 1916; by the start of May there were 25 air companies - 12 on the northern front, 12 in the southwest and 1 at Castelnuovo. Another expansion was expected to begin shortly.

To deal on the ground with the increasing enemy air activity, since spring 1915 units in many parts of the front had already begun to create improvised defense forces using field cannon. It would be a long time, however, before attempts to devise special guns for this purpose were successful. By May 1916 only 7 flak

78 See Baur, "Wir Flieger" (Vienna, 1928)

79 Madarasz, "Die k.u.k. Luftfahrtruppen im Weltkrieg" (Mil. wiss. Mitt., Vienna, 1928), in the special issue "Luftflotten", pp. 552 ff.

(anti-aircraft) batteries and 23 platoons were at the front.

The balloon service hadn't been substantially augmented. The 12 fortress balloon detachments which existed in 1914 were joined by just three more in the first months of the war. Since the units found employment with the armies outside as well as inside fortresses, in January 1916 they were all redesignated simply "balloon detachments." Their numbers would increase during the year.

The technical troops

The technical troops were charged with a very wide field of activities. In the most difficult phases of an offensive the sappers stood in the midst of the foremost infantry, with whom they destroyed the enemy's barbed wire barricades. They also serviced all the new weapons, such as trench mortars, grenade launchers, land mines and flamethrowers, and thus were actual combat troops. Finally they initiated and supervised the enormous task of building and maintaining roads and bridges, as well as barracks and fortifications. Construction of the latter were especially their *forte* in the southwest, where digging into the karst and granite was an endless problem and where decisive progress could be made only by employing pneumatic boring machines.⁸⁰ These machines were one of the reasons why another sphere of activity was opened to the sappers - the need to provide electrical power for military purposes. Special detachments were also in charge of electrically charging water pumps, providing air circulation in shelters deep underground, and giving light. Of less importance were the so-called "highly charged obstacles" (wire entanglements carrying electric currents), which were first introduced in the southwest and then in winter 1915-16 appeared in several places along the Russian front.

Although the number of sapper companies increased to 100 - mainly by incorporating the best Landsturm sapper detachments - they were still not nearly enough to cope with these manifold tasks. This problem was somewhat redressed through the help of many construction and labor detachments, including some formed with prisoners of war.

The situation of the pioneers wasn't as favorable. They had already been very busy since the initial deployment against Russia, and had renewed their old reputation for heroism and technical proficiency in 1915 during the crossing of the Vistula at Ivangorod in summer and of the Danube in front of Belgrade in fall. However, it was more difficult to replace casualties in the pioneers than in any other body of troops. Service on the rivers demanded lengthy training, which often was impossible due to the pressing need for new personnel. Thus it wasn't feasible to expand the pioneers, and in fact by spring 1916 there were five fewer companies than had existed when the war began. One advantage that existed into the second year of the war was that the sappers and pioneers had only been divided into separate

⁸⁰ In spring 1916 there were 14 mobile stone-boring platoons.

branches shortly before 1914, so that if necessary personnel could transfer readily from one component to another. However, the number of troops who'd been in service prior to the split dwindled, while the difference in skills required on land and on the waters became ever more obvious.

The activities of the communications services greatly increased. As the number of higher headquarters multiplied and the areas which lay behind the armies expanded, the communications network became ever larger. Many new telegraph and telephone detachments were formed, as well as field radio stations. However, there were no substantial innovations in the equipment. As previously, the wireless telegraphy units were less involved with our own communications than in overhearing the enemy. On the other hand, radio gear was needed for air units to speak with their customers, especially the artillery. The higher headquarters preferred to use the telephone, and then the "Hughes apparatus" which quickly became popular. Messages sent by the latter medium couldn't be intercepted by the enemy, and also were automatically preserved in documentary form to prevent misunderstandings. Mid-level headquarters continued to use telephones as their principal means of transmitting orders and reports. In quiet periods of trench warfare, phone service could even be extended to the foremost trenches. Since both sides had already developed techniques for overhearing telephone messages, attempts were made to avoid interception by using a large number of code words (which, however, were never sufficient to cover all situations).

Importance of the railroad lines

In the narrative of the operations we have repeatedly referred to the really decisive role which was increasingly played by the railroads.⁸¹ This was most obviously evident in the troop movements, but perhaps even greater demands were made on the rail network of the Danube Monarchy by the provision of regular supplies to maintain the troops' fighting strength. Just to send replacement personnel to the front required roughly 100,000 rail cars in 1915; transportation of food required nearly as many cars, and military equipment of all sorts used even more. Meanwhile there was no less activity going on in the areas just

81 See Ratzenhofer, "Eisenbahn- und Schifffahrtswesen", in "Verkehrswesen im Kriege" (Carnegie-stiftung, Vienna, 1931), pp. 149 ff. Also by this author, see the following articles in the Mil. wiss. Mitt.: for 1927, pp. 301 ff., 433 ff. and 692 ff.; for 1928, pp. 56 ff. and 149 ff.; for 1930, pp. 231 ff. and 594 ff.; for 1931, pp. 1031 ff.

behind the armies. At home the railroads not only carried replacement units, wounded troops and prisoners of war as well as weapons and equipment throughout the realm; they also responded increasingly to the needs of the war industries. An indication of the enormity of this task is the fact that in 1915 alone 111,526 transport trains rolled through the interior. They carried 66,408 officers, 8,068,405 men, 466,907 horses and 49,461 wagons, as well as an unknown amount of equipment. And this isn't the whole story, since there were also many transports which carried troops and supplies within the zones of the operational armies and in the territories occupied by the allies.

In many areas the rail network wasn't prepared for such heavy use. During their victorious march to Brest-Litovsk the allies found that the Russians had thoroughly wrecked most of the tracks. Of these lines, the Aus-Hung. troops had to restore more than 6000 kilometers, of which many hundred had been severely damaged.⁸² Prolonged and heavy work was required in numerous places where the roadbed had been destroyed, and along the 2500 kilometers where wide gauge tracks had to be converted to standard size.

Inadequacy of the Russian railroads

Even more difficulties faced the armies of the Central Powers because the Russian territories which they were crossing had already been insufficiently served by railroads prior to the war. The Tsarist Empire had deliberately never established connections to the Austrian rail net between Granica and Brody; thus a zone 450 kilometers and long and 100 deep had been left without service. While the Russians occupied Galicia they had constructed military lines from Vladimir-Volynsky to Sokal and from Lublin to Rozwadow; they had also started a line between Ostrowiec and Nadbrzesie. However, precious time would be needed before we could use these hastily constructed and then substantially damaged connections. Since the railheads could only follow the armies slowly in other sectors as well, there were many difficulties during the advance to Brest-Litovsk.⁸³

82 Just in the 1240 kilometers of the rail network leading to Lemberg there were 291 destroyed sectors. The damage was so heavy that by the end of June 1917 only 192 of these sectors had been fully restored to service.

83 See the pertinent parts of Volume II. Especially the supply services had problems. There were times when Aus-Hung. troops were more than 150 km (as the crow flies) from the end points of their railroads. For example, at the end of August while

When the allied armies began to construct permanent positions, they had the areas with poor rail service in their rear. This compounded the difficulty of bringing up supplies through a few widely separated rail stations in parts of Poland where travel was very difficult. Thus traffic to Kovel, the chief rail center used to supply 4th Army, had to move through Ivangorod. Here, however, high water and ice floes twice destroyed the hastily built bridges in a period of four and a half months. When this happened traffic took a detour over the newly-built Russian lines, which still were being improved to handle larger loads. There were other difficulties, such as the cold weather which damaged some of the locomotives (30 of them became unserviceable within a few days in December), while snow storms blocked traffic. The railroad stations didn't have sufficient capacity, and there were shortages of personnel. All these factors led to a serious logistical crisis in 4th Army.

The most serious problem, however, was that under the current conditions it was impossible to quickly transfer reinforcements; travel between sectors of the front on roundabout routes was time-consuming. Any attempt to counter a major Russian offensive by large-scale troop movements would have been prevented by traffic snarls.

This truly critical situation was now overcome by spring 1916 through a series of large-scale construction projects; without exaggeration, they have been described as "building an infrastructure for the eastern front."⁸⁴ The capacity of the most important lines was increased along 1500 kilometers of track (especially on the three easternmost lines in the Carpathians); 234 kilometers of the lines built during the war by the Russians were restored, and 14 new shunting yards constructed. The most important improvement, however, was a new full-capacity 130 km line between Belzec to Rejowiec; it was already in service in April 1916, and could handle 30 hundred-axle trains. To make it easier to bring up supplies, several field lines (totaling about 1000 km) connected the railheads of the permanent lines with the troop deployment areas. Finally a gasoline-electric railroad was constructed to supply the southernmost end of the front. Already finished in February 1915, it led from Borgoprund through the Magura Pass to Dorna Watra to connect Transylvania with the Bukovina. Its operations were supported by a small branch line

the k.u.k. XII Corps was engaged in front of Brest Litovsk they were using a terminal west of the Vistula near Ivangorod. 84 By Ratzenhofer, "Dad Rückgrat der Dauerfront im Osten", in Mil. wiss. Mitt. (Vienna, 1932 edition), p. 974.

from Borsa through the Prislop Pass to Jakobeny.

Improvements to the rail lines on the southern fronts

Much less work was needed behind the stable front in the southwest. Besides some substantial improvement to the stations in the entire area of operations, the most important projects were the building of second tracks on the Salzburg-Wörgl and Branzoll-Calliano stretches, and of a gasoline-electric line between Duttoule and Kostanjevica. However, an extraordinary innovation on this front were the cable railways, without which it would hardly have been possible to supply troops in the high mountain sectors for any length of time.⁸⁵

In the Balkan theater of operations, the most pressing need besides repairing the destroyed infrastructure was to establish connections with the rail network of the Monarchy at the crossing points over the Sava and Danube. Train ferries were very quickly set up at Semendria and Belgrade to connect with the Serbian lines. The 380 meter long bridge over the Sava at Belgrade was restored at the end of December with Kohn and Roth-Wagner equipment.⁸⁶ Around the same time a new full-service railroad began to operate between Batanjica and Boljevcici; at first it could be reached from the Serbian Zabrez-Valjevo line by river vessels and a road bridge, and later by a train ferry. The principal railroad Belgrade-Nish-Skopje-Veles (including the Semendria-Vk. Plana branch) was under the direction of the German Military Railroad HQ # 7.⁸⁷ Therefore the Austro-Hungarians concentrated on the smaller Serbian railroads, which weren't inter-connected; Military Rail HQ South was established to run these lines. The attempt to connect the tracks involved much labor and time; it was only partly successful.

The supply and medical services

In general, the offices already in place to provide the troops with rations, ammunition and military equipment were able to meet the greatest demands. For a long time already, the armies had ceased to provide themselves mainly from the resources of the

85 See Brunner and Prohaska, "Die Seilbahnen und ihre Verwendung im Kriege" in Mil. wiss. Mitt. (Vienna, 1932 edition), pp. 104 ff.

86 See "Ehrenbuch der Feldeisenbahner" (Berlin, 1930), pp. 304 and 335.

87 However, the stretch between Belgrade and Vk. Plana was run by Aus-Hung. personnel under German direction.

lands where they were stationed. Instead, measures were taken to ensure that the inhabitants of these lands, most of whom lived in great poverty, received nourishment. Nevertheless, it was possible in some areas to obtain food to relieve the homeland, where bread was being rationed. Logistical crises like the one which afflicted 4th Army in December 1915 were exceptional. And even in this case there was sufficient food for the soldiers, but not for their horses. The animals soon weakened, and many perished.

Although this was a temporary incident in a limited geographical area, it highlighted a serious concern. Many horses had already succumbed to the privations of the early fighting in fall 1914 and especially during the Carpathian winter. By the end of 1915 about 320,000 horses had been lost. Since the needs of the Army continued to increase, the number of animals available in the Monarchy drastically decreased.⁸⁸ Therefore it was all the more important to enhance motorization. Early in the war there had been just 58 improvised truck columns, but they expanded into a new branch of service (the "auto troops"); at the start of May 1916 there were 227 truck columns, as well as many vehicles for carrying personnel or for special purposes.

The medical services, employing prudent measures, had not only overcome the great danger of cholera in winter 1914-15, but had known how to prevent the return of this menace.⁸⁹ Despite all efforts, the most important of which were vaccinations against cholera and typhoid fever, it was impossible to prevent the outbreak of typhus and dysentery, which in some cases spread greatly. This was because of the changing weather conditions in which the troops had to live. Typhoid fever was spread by lice, and unfortunately there weren't enough de-lousing stations.

88 According to a manuscript in the Military Archives, "Österreich-Ungarns Pferde-verbrauch im Weltkrieg" (by Major a.D. Dr. Stöller), when the war started there were 704,000 horses serving the military in the field and in the interior; at the end of 1915 there were 944,000. Statistics in 1915 indicated that the number of horses in the Monarchy had fallen from 3,900,000 before the war to 2,100,000. This was due in part to the fact that some areas which were home to a large number of the animals were in the hands of the enemy at the time the count was made; nevertheless, the downward trend is unmistakable.

89 In August 1915 the IR # 27 and 42 in east Galicia reported isolated cases of cholera; however, it was possible to cut off the spread of the disease.

Nevertheless, it was possible to prevent the outbreak of major epidemics.

Provisions for the care of the sick and wounded and for their transport into the interior were continually expanded and improved. The number of hospitals near the fronts increased, and many trains were built to accommodate the sick. As previously, the Red Cross and the German and Maltese Knightly Orders helped in this effort, and performed worthy service.

5. Military government in the occupied territories

a. In Poland

The allied armies had to set up special administrative organs as soon as the course of mobile warfare brought a considerable area of enemy territory under their rule; the line of communications offices that initially controlled this territory had to be replaced by a larger governing structure. Alongside economic considerations, political aspirations and plans played a great and not always helpful role in the division of the land as well as in the establishment of basic rules for its administration. Suddenly the Polish problem again became prominent. During the entire 19th century no solution had been found to this problem, which for reasons of domestic and foreign policy was approached from completely different angles by the Danube Monarchy and by the German Empire.⁹⁰

Dissension between the allies

90 There is a voluminous literature on the Polish problem. See (among others) Bilinski, "Wspomienia i dokumenty" (Warsaw, 1925); Burian, "Drei Jahre meiner Amtsführung im Kriege" (Berlin, 1923), pp. 62 ff.; Bethmann-Hollweg, "Betrachtungen zum Weltkrieg" (Berlin, 1921), Vol. II, pp. 25 ff.; Conrad, "Aus meiner Dienstzeit 1906-1918" (Vienna, 1921-25), Vol. IV., pp. 206 ff.; Dmowski, "Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa" (Warsaw, 1925); Fisher, "America and the New Poland" (New York, 1928); Gratz and Schüller, "Die äussere Wirtschaftspolitik Österreich-Ungarns" (Carnegie-Stiftung, öst-ung. Serie; Vienna, 1925), p. 261 ff.; Paic, "Das austropolnische Problem im Weltkrieg" (a manuscript in the Military Archives); Pilsudski, "Mes premiers Combats" (Paris, 1931); Roth, "Die Entstehung des polnischen Staates" (Berlin, 1926).

At first our German ally didn't have any particular plans for the future political form of Poland. This further raised the hopes of the leading Austrian circles. A proclamation naming the "Austro-Polish" solution as a goal was prepared at the start of the war; it was unanimously approved at least by the Austrian Poles, but it remained unpublished due to Tisza's intervention. The AOK nevertheless issued its own appeal to the inhabitants of Russian Poland, promising them liberation from the Muscovite yoke. The Russian commander-in-chief had also attempted to win the Poles over by issuing a manifesto offering full autonomy within the Russian Empire. This insincere promise met with little response.⁹¹

At first Austria-Hungary's wide-ranging goals seemed to be premature. However, after the victories of the Central Powers in December 1914 they were already administering a substantial amount of Polish territory.⁹² These lands were divided in an agreement that was concluded at Posen on 10 January 1915, despite Conrad's objections on economic grounds; the Danube Monarchy received the area south of the Pilica, with the exception of Czestochowa and the coal-fields and industries of the Bendzin-Dabrowa basin.⁹³ Soon seven district HQ began to run the territory, under the rear area commands of the 1st and 2nd Armies.

When the front north of the Vistula was pushed forward in May 1915, the number of these district HQ immediately increased; on 17 May they were placed under "Military Government" HQ at Kielce and Piotrkow. By the end of August the Central Powers had taken all of Russian Poland. It proved difficult to regulate relations between the two powers in the territories they'd conquered together. Interest in Poland by the German Empire waxed after the capture of Warsaw, while the plans and goals of the victorious "liberators" for the political future of the country soon diverged. Although Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg (the German Imperial Chancellor) hadn't hitherto opposed the Austro-Polish solution, wide circles in his country were now advocating the establishment of a Polish buffer state strictly dependent on

91 See Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe - Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgestaaten" (Vienna, 1929), pp. 31 ff. and 69 ff.

92 For the following discussion, see Mitzka, "Die k.u.k. Militärverwaltung in Russisch Polen" in Kerchnawe's "Die Militärverwaltung in den von den öst.-ung. Truppen besetzten Gebiete" (Carnegie-Stiftung, öst.-ung. Serie, Vienna, 1928), pp. 8 ff.

93 Conrad, Vol. V, p. 823

Germany. The Chancellor couldn't escape the pressure from these groups.⁹⁴

Administrative division of the occupied lands

In addition to these conflicting viewpoints, the situation was complicated by the efforts of various competing Polish parties. Therefore the most expedient solution was to divide the occupied lands into two administrative areas, one German and one Austro-Hungarian. The border between them was a line which ran from the old "Three Emperors' Corner" [where the pre-war boundaries of the three partitioning powers came together] along the railroad leading north; from Czestochowa the line turned east over the Wreczyca to the Warthe and then to the neighborhood of Sieradz. From here it ran east, following the course of the Pilica and the Vistula to Ivangorod. Thence it ran along the Wieprz and the Tysmienica and reached the Bug at Opalin, separating the areas of military administration as well as the rear echelons of the two Armies.

The Austro-Hungarians had desired that at least there should be a central, common office in charge of the administrative machinery, and that it should be established in the Polish capital.⁹⁵ However, this proved impossible for practical and technical reasons since Warsaw had been captured by German troops and lay in the middle of the area under German control. Therefore when the German "Warsaw General Government" was established on 25 August, a "k.u.k. Military Government" was simultaneously created to take the place of the erstwhile HQ at Kielce and Piotrkow. GM Freih. von Diller took over the new command; his HQ was originally at Kielce, and from October at Lublin. After prolonged negotiations ending in December with an agreement at Teschen, the Monarchy was represented at Warsaw by a liaison officer of the AOK and a representative of the k.u.k. Foreign Ministry.⁹⁶ Many additional questions, mainly involving economic issues, had already been settled in June (at the Kattowitz Agreement) and in September (at the Berlin Agreement).

There was a multitude of tasks involved in administering an area of 45,000 square kilometers, inhabited by about 4 ½ million persons and divided into 22 districts. The high command issued general guidelines for these tasks based on the decisions it had

94 Gratz and Schüller, pp. 267 ff.

95 Burian, p. 66

96 The liaison officer was Col. Ritter von Paic from the General Staff; the representative from the Foreign Ministry was Legation Counselor Freih. von Andrian.

made already in February 1915. The responsible military commanders were assisted in their work by civilian commissioners and offices, which were drawn mainly from the bureaucracy of the province of Galicia because of their familiarity with the language and psychology of the population. The first task was to maintain order, security and quiet. It turned out that the Russians had left agents and even some soldiers behind to spy, to agitate against the victors, and to commit acts of sabotage. Sometimes the population came under secret but strong pressure from such individuals, and even from entire gangs. The Russians also tried to exploit national animosities between the Poles and Ukrainians. It would be necessary to move decisively against such activities.

To keep the front supplied, it was especially important that the railroad network should be quickly restored and run in security. At the end of August 1915 a single HQ was established at Radom to run the "Northern Railroads", the Russian lines which had been returned to service; river traffic on the Vistula supplemented the major lines. As the armies and their line of communications troops advanced so quickly, they left much work to do behind them on the roads and bridges. Postal and telegraph services were restored, but for military reasons some restrictions were naturally placed on their use.

Economic exploitation of the occupied territory was of great importance to the Monarchy, which was already suffering from shortages of food and raw materials. The harvest of 1915 in Russian Poland was of only moderate size; moreover, lack of men and wagons hindered efforts of the military administration and rear area troops to bring in as much food as possible. Preparations were being made for the maximum exploitation of the fruitful land in 1916, and for procuring a large amount of livestock. The occupied territory also contained useful mines and foundries, where coal, lead, copper and zinc could be obtained. Since these raw materials were already in short supply at home, their procurement was urgently important. Although there were great obstacles to overcome, because of the wealth of these minerals in the occupied districts the situation did improve. However, lack of capital and of some other raw materials made it even more difficult to restore industrial production. Only the efforts to restore processing of food products could be carried out decisively and successfully.

Finally, the administration was also responsible for rebuilding destroyed towns and providing humanitarian assistance for the numerous refugees.

An obvious indication of the Army's presence throughout the land and its greatly expanded spheres of activity was the large number of occupation troops and worker detachments which soon sprang up. At the start of 1916 the districts and the "Government" HQ had at their disposal 16 Landsturm Etappen battalions and 4 Landsturm Hussar squadrons. 21 railroad security detachments guarded the tracks, 24 telegraph construction and operation detachments took care of the wires, and 18 labor detachments (11 of which were made up of prisoners of war) worked on the roads and bridges. In the first months of 1916 the number of labor detachments increased to 35 (of which 19 had prisoners of war). Efforts had begun already in fall 1915 to put a large part of the unemployed civilian population to work building roads and railroads. Since Russian agents spread rumors that this was a camouflaged recruiting effort, there were some disturbances at first. However, by the end of April more than a hundred Polish-Russian civilian labor detachments had been formed. Finally, a number of replacement units were quartered in the occupied territory; this relieved the homeland, and also gave the military governor means to restore quiet and order in emergencies.

b. In Serbia, Montenegro and Albania

Creating an administrative structure in occupied Serbia was perhaps even more difficult than it was in the north. The Monarchy had been interested in the Balkans for decades, and its own development was tied up with finding a solution to the problems of the South Slavs. Resolution of these issues would become even more important in the future. Therefore the Austrians naturally strove to win decisive influence in this land. However, the Bulgarians also had important interests here. The German OHL postponed any final agreements about the division of power in the areas to be conquered. Perhaps this was due in part to avoid anticipating events, and in part to keep the new Bulgarian ally in good humor. The operational borders between the armies, adopted by the allied high commands on GFM Mackensen's recommendation, thus were also in most cases the first borders drawn between the administrative areas and spheres of influence.

Differences of opinion between Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria

When the operations came to a standstill, however, it was no longer possible to postpone establishment of a long-term administration. Besides unavoidable disputes between allied

functionaries involving foraging and other activities, political factors required a solution. The Bulgarians had already begun to regard themselves as masters of all of Macedonia and a large part of Serbia. At the end of November Conrad had to exert his influence to ensure that the area on the line Mitrovica-Ipek-Scutari and farther north stayed in the Monarchy's sphere of interest.⁹⁷

An agreement was finally reached at the end of December. The Germans - for as long as their troops still operated in the western Balkans under German over-all command - were responsible only for running the main railroad south of Belgrade (as noted above) and for keeping garrisons at several supply points on this line. Otherwise the Danube Monarchy would administer the land west of the Morava, while Bulgaria had the area east of the Morava and of the Rasina (which flows into the former river at Krusevac). South of the Rasina the existing army boundaries remained in effect.

However, this didn't eliminate all difficulties. Although the two rivers formed a clear line of demarcation, the division proved impractical in economic terms; both zones were part of the same very fruitful and thickly populated valleys.⁹⁸ Moreover, the Bulgarians passed beyond their allotted area in the direction of the Adriatic, to establish themselves in the basins of Pristina, Prizren, Djakova and Elbasan; this led to substantial differences of opinion between Sofia and Teschen.⁹⁹ GdI Falkenhayn strove to act as mediator in these disputes; since he had been primarily responsible for winning Bulgaria as an ally he now felt it was his duty to represent the interests of his new friends. The Bulgarians mostly preferred to approach him rather than to carry on direct negotiations with the Danube Monarchy. Agreement wasn't finally reached until spring 1916.

The Aus-Hung. military government in Serbia

Meanwhile, the negotiations completed at the end of December 1915 led to the establishment of the "Military Government in Serbia" on 1 January. It controlled a territory of 29,664 square kilometers with 1,373,500 inhabitants, under 13 districts plus

97 See p. 334 of Volume III (in the original)

98 See Kerchnawe, "Militärverwaltung", pp. 4 and 53 ff.; Kirch, "Krieg und Verwaltung in Serbien und Mazedonien 1916-1918" (Stuttgart, 1928).

99 Cramon, "Unser österreichisch-ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege" (2nd Edition, Berlin, 1922), pp. 49 ff.

one independent HQ at Belgrade. The governor was FML Graf Salis-Seewis, a well-known expert on the Balkans and friend of the South Slavs.

The major tasks of the military administration were substantially the same as in Poland. These included repair and maintenance of the railroads, improvement of the roads, measures against disease (which in this area was a serious problem), and the construction of schools.

Since the land was suffering poverty and had been badly scarred by the war, at first there was hardly any chance that it could be economically exploited. Moreover, the administration was more concerned about providing for their own needs and motivated by the optimistic hope that they could make Aus-Hung. rule acceptable to the Serbs. Perhaps they also lacked the hardness that would be needed to extract the resources which, despite all that had happened, still existed in the country. In fact the garrison troops in Serbia relied entirely on supplies from the homeland, regardless of difficulties. The only hope was that this situation would improve in the future when a systematic economic plan was implemented.

There were major obstacles to the pacification of the country. The population had long been familiar with weapons, and were motivated by fanatic patriotism and great self-confidence; they didn't hesitate to do damage to the conquerors when the opportunity arose. Stragglers from the Serbian Army had stayed behind, in more dangerous numbers than the Russians in Poland. They lived either as unsuspected peasants in their villages or found refuge in hidden corners of the barren mountain wilderness. Although they weren't yet initiating major operations, frequent acts of sabotage were enough to keep the security troops and administrative offices busy.

The military forces which were needed to back up the governors of this restless country had to be substantially reinforced as time went on. When the Government HQ was set up, it controlled just 13 Landsturm Etappen battalions plus one reserve battalion apiece from IR # 23 and 33. By mid-March the number of battalions rose to 23, and soon afterwards to 44. There were also 17 gendarmerie platoons, 2 ½ squadrons, 1 bridging company, 3 river mining platoons, and 19 labor detachments. At first there were no replacement units stationed in Serbia, probably because there few local resources to support them. However, by the end of March the replacement units of one infantry and two cavalry regiments

were established in the occupied territory.¹⁰⁰

The administration of Montenegro and north Albania

When the pacification of Montenegro was completed in February 1916, it was necessary to also establish an administration in this country. On 1 March the "Military Government at Cetinje" was created; it was led by FML Weber, formerly commander of 47 ID. Conditions were difficult in this economically stunted country, much of which was a barren, stony wasteland.¹⁰¹ The territory was divided into seven districts. In the first weeks of March the garrison consisted of 22 battalions, 21 gendarmerie platoons and several labor detachments.

In similar fashion, administration of the occupied portions of Albania was entrusted to XIX Corps HQ.

B. Changes in the Army's planning and tactics

1. Development of new offensive tactics

The spring of 1915 witnessed an unmistakable turning point in strategic and tactical planning. The winter fighting in the Carpathians, which tied down a great part of the Aus-Hung. Army, was characterized by a constant alternation between attack and defense, with suffering and casualties on an unprecedented scale. The action swayed back and forth on barren, icy and barely passable mountain heights in the midst of destructive winter weather.¹⁰²

When this fighting came to an end, all the other parts of the front from the northern edge of the Carpathians to the East Prussian border had long been bogged down in stationary warfare. New tactics would have to be developed to bring a decisive change

100TRANSLATOR's NOTE - The number of Ersatz units stationed in Serbia increased considerably thereafter. As of January 1918, the units involved were the Ersatz battalions of IR # 37, 50 and 71, the Ersatz squadrons of HR # 3 and of UR # 5 and 12, and the Ersatz companies of FJB # 8, 19 and 23. See Plaschka, Haselsteiner & Suppan, "Innere Front" (Munich, 1974), Vol. II, Map # 1.

101Kerchnawe, "Militärverwaltung", pp. 270 ff.

102See also Anton Pitreich, "Der österreichisch-ungarische Bundesgenosse im Sperrfeuer" (Klagenfurt, 1930), pp. 163 ff. and 183 ff.

to this situation. Two continuous fronts stood opposite each other, visible lines of earthworks and barbed wire running through the landscape. The defensive positions would first have to be overcome before anyone could contemplate mobile warfare.

Conrad's preference had always been a deep envelopment of the enemy positions, but now there were no more open flanks which could be enveloped. Since it was disputed whether the same effect could be accomplished by the cooperation of forces on such widely separated areas as eastern Galicia and East Prussia, attention turned to the possibility of breaking through the enemy front instead.

The theory of the strategical breakthrough

During the first year of the war there was no lack of attempts to break through enemy fronts.¹⁰³ For several reasons, the breakthrough that started at Gorlice was originally intended to be on a relatively limited scale. Success here exceeded all expectations, leading for the first time to a breakthrough on a strategic level, although still not to the destruction of the enemy. Another concept, the double envelopment, was only carried out once, at Tannenberg; in this case it did lead to the enemy's destruction, as it had at Cannae.

Therefore the victorious armies of the Central Powers were given new goals step by step. Gradually a breakthrough was no longer regarded as a means of converting a continuous enemy front into a number of positions with open flanks; rather it was considered a mighty blow intended to throw the enemy out of their positions. It has already been explained how the advance of the military machine had turned into a series of frontal assaults with fluctuating groups used as shock troops. Wide-ranging plans with definite strategic objectives were rejected in favor of moving forward whenever and wherever it was tactically possible.¹⁰⁴

103For example in the Masurians in October 1914, and in the second battle of Masuria in February 1915; the operation to relieve Przemysl was also envisioned as a breakthrough.

104TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - This opportunistic strategy was deliberately chosen by Falkenhayn, who was bitterly opposed not only by Conrad but by his own colleagues Ludendorff and Hoffman. At one point in summer 1915, Falkenhayn told Conrad that "It is endlessly less important where Mackensen and the Army of the Bug break through, than that they should merely break through somewhere." This quotation is from Norman Stone in "The Eastern Front 1914-1917" (New York, 1975), p. 168;

Despite the great successes won by this approach, Conrad wasn't satisfied because he had much wider goals; in the Army as a whole, however, the strategy was popular. The troops had lost confidence in envelopment assaults because whenever they had moved against the enemy's flank they had always found a new front confronting them. Even in situations, such as the Rovno campaign, in which there were unmistakable possibilities of carrying out an envelopment in grand style, the tendency from the start of the operation was to avoid moving against the enemy flanks. Instead the units preferred a frontal assault in the hope of breaking through. For good or evil, this made it impossible to assemble overwhelming strength at one point. And, despite heroic efforts, such assaults never led to the complete collapse of the opposing front. Even when operations on the wings were carried out they led only to partial withdrawal of the enemy, whose forces were always able to avoid a destructive blow. All this dissatisfied Conrad considerably.

Tactical considerations

These disadvantages did nothing to prevent the triumph of the strategic concept of the breakthrough. Moreover, as a tactical method it quickly achieved overriding importance after Gorlice. Thereafter all orders down to the lowest level of the command structure referred to the "breakthrough." The lessons of the first ten months of the war were used to apply the theory to practice; the concepts which achieved a fixed form involved the importance of artillery preparation, of coordination between the two principal arms, and of a well-planned, systematic advance. It was recognized that nothing should be left to chance, and that success had to be organized.

When the infantry came upon a prepared enemy position, they no longer so often exhausted themselves in fruitless, bloody assaults; instead they first established themselves firmly on the terrain already occupied. The artillery then came up, speedily but without haste, along with sufficient ammunition. The best time and place for the bombardment was determined, and the shells were allocated. The enemy position was reconnoitered in detail, and combat sectors - delineated to points far behind the opposing lines - were assigned to the various units. Chances for success were good whenever there was sufficient time for such preparations (usually one or two days) and sufficient artillery

Stone's argument is that Falkenhayn rather than Ludendorff or Conrad had a better grasp of the strategic situation.

and ammunition (which almost always was the case for the German troops). While the artillery tore many holes in the enemy defenses and wore down the garrison's power of resistance, the infantry worked its way up to the enemy through shallow trenches which they had dug the night before. At the appointed time, the artillery shifted its fire to points behind the opposing front, and waves of storming infantry drove through the damaged portions of the barriers and into the defenders' trenches. If the latter had been already sufficiently demoralized, many were soon taken prisoner. The other defenders were overcome here and there in bloody hand-to-hand combat, after which it would be possible to proceed with the attack.

Although the basics of this method of attacking fortified positions had appeared in pre-war writing, in practice the doctrine was treated as something new. It was gradually adopted in different parts of the front, mainly as a large number of units became involved in the victorious advance to Brest-Litovsk. And not all units implemented this idea with equal fervor. It wasn't easy to cast aside the pre-war concept of massing troops for a decisive thrust in the open field and to admit that now we were always confronting more or less well-fortified positions. Some theorists still held to the "old belief that quickness ensured success, that it was necessary to take chances by striking the enemy unaware and to take advantage of favorable opportunities."¹⁰⁵ In reality, however, troops hardly ever fought without preparation. Only a well-prepared attack had any chance of success.

105Schön, "Die deutsch-böhmische 29. Infanterietruppendivision am Stochod (Reichenberg, 1926), p. 11

Limitations to the breakthrough method

Often, however, the attackers had insufficient strength to achieve a breakthrough. It was not unusual for infantry divisions with 5000 to 7000 riflemen to be attacking on a front of 20 to 30 kilometers. In even more situations the new offensive tactics, which relied on outnumbering the enemy artillery, foundered for a lack of high trajectory guns and ammunition. As noted previously, this situation only gradually improved. In the summer of 1915 many divisions carried out the entire advance with just 40 or even fewer guns, some of which were obsolescent. Although the artillery was still often able to help the attacking infantry win victories, the latter arm had to suffer substantially higher casualties than their allies in the German Army, most of whose divisions had 70 guns or more. There were situations when Aus-Hung. units had to lend the best of their own guns to other parts of the front, and yet they were still expected to attack.

Above all, a systematic attack required time for its preparation and implementation, often more time than the commanders believed was available. Many times, in critical situations, it was true that the attack simply couldn't be postponed. The infantry often had to attack without large-scale support from the artillery because the deployment of a large number of batteries would consume more time than was available in the judgment of the commanding officers. But then the assault didn't go forward as quickly as had been hoped. The advancing lines shriveled under the unhindered fire of the enemy's artillery and machine guns. When the attack stalled, men feverishly began to dig in. Here and there gallant subordinate officers moved the line forward a little until the hail of shells became so destructive that the fate of the offensive was sealed.

Despite all adversity, the gallant infantry often pushed ahead as far as the enemy's barbed wire entanglements. These, however, they found to be intact, covering enemy troops who were unscathed. If perhaps the attackers persisted in their assault with all too obedient bravery, some would be left hanging on the barbed wire and the rest were forced to fall back with substantial losses. Then the attack was resumed by nearby troops and reserves were deployed; blood would make up for the lacking artillery support. Now the hours turned into days. Attempts were made to achieve at night what couldn't be accomplished during the day. Sometimes the efforts were finally successful, but often they failed. The regimental histories relate many actions that developed in this fashion, and caused very heavy

sacrifices.

In some instances the heavy fighting was just starting when the foremost Russian trenches were taken. The captured position was immediately "turned around" to defend against the anticipated counterattacks. The further course of the action depended mostly on the reaction of the enemy. When a penetration was successful on a narrow front, there were attempts to widen the breach by rolling up one or the other flanks; this would lead to ever escalating fighting with hand grenades and bayonets in the maze of trenches.

As a rule, everyone was urged to continue moving forward after a successful penetration. For a long time, however, neither the commanders nor the troops recognized the importance of quickly overrunning the second and third enemy lines to suppress their artillery as quickly as possible. When the attack was carried out by just thin lines with few reserves and insufficient artillery, in most cases this was simply an impossible task. And as long as the enemy's guns remained in place to support the defense, even the most brilliant initial successes were followed by setbacks during counterattacks.

Nature of the pursuit

In sectors where the Russians' prepared positions had been overcome despite all obstacles, there ensued several days of lively mobile warfare. This involved long marches by numerous parallel columns through the sand or swamps of Galicia and Poland, through wide forests, past burning villages and destroyed railroad installations, past burnt or blown up bridges, and through streams that had been artificially diverted or through muddy standing water. In many cases these marches were accompanied or interrupted by local actions of varying intensity, in which entire regiments or even larger units were engaged; this fighting was not so regulated as in the well-organized breakthrough battles. Here the troops struggled with quickly changing situations where both the terrain and the size of the enemy forces were unknown. The bitter and wild fighting around towns, farms, woods and streams involved mixed units. Both sides suffered surprises and were offered opportunities; the initiative of the lower-ranking commanders and the gallant bearing of individual soldiers were the most valuable commodities. A great amount of information about these combats is also available in unit histories.

These were mostly actions with Russian rear guards, who carried

on a stubborn fight to win time with no less skill than their high-ranking commanders displayed in the extended retreats. Our troops often had to spend a bloody day trying to secure a position which was abandoned in the same evening by its defenders. The Russians' successful retreat usually wasn't discovered until the next morning.

The accomplishments of these weeks can only be properly appreciated by remembering that the k.u.k. armed forces had to give its young and old recruits just eight weeks of training before committing them to the mobile actions. Even this short period of preparation in the homeland suffered from several deficiencies, most notably the fact that there was a shortage of rifles. The March formations weren't issued fire arms until shortly before their departure into the field; soldiers were given only two short lessons in marksmanship. Improvement was expected after June 1915, when the training period was divided into just four weeks at home plus four further weeks near the front, where classes were conducted under more favorable conditions by personnel with greater knowledge of the war. However, valuable days were lost during the railroad transport and marches behind the front. Complaints about the insufficient preparation of replacement troops continued unabated; the men were still learning their trade through bitter experience. Beginning in the fall it was finally possible to devote three months to training troops for battle; the period included four weeks on the lines of communications.

In all the battles and actions the cavalry seldom functioned as a separate arm. Like the infantry they relied on machine guns, carbines and spades as their principal weapons. Even when mobile warfare was raging for four months over a wide stretch of territory they had no real opportunity to operate as had been envisioned in pre-war theory. At most, they were useful during quick advances because of their greater speed. When the Russians pulled back their front to the edge of the Pripyat Marshes and our armies turned south toward Rovno there was finally an opportunity for true mounted actions to protect the flank during this attack. Gradually seven Aus-Hung. and one German cavalry divisions were deployed here against a strong force of Russian horsemen.¹⁰⁶

106Czegla, "Wandlungen", p. 10

2. New ideas and lessons for the defense in positional warfare

At a time when the troops were victoriously advancing, there naturally was neither reason nor opportunity to address the problems of defensive strategy. Enemy counterattacks were either opposed in the maze of trenches which had just been taken, or were defeated in the open in the manner already outlined above. There were hardly any instances where systematic defensive concepts were needed.

When operations temporarily came to a halt because of large-scale enemy counter-thrusts or other reasons, the lines of riflemen immediately disappeared into the soft earth. For a long time now trenches were no longer scorned, and the men were well used to preparing them. If the pause was lengthy, a more or less quiet period of stationary warfare ensued; this involved constant work on the fortifications, and skirmishes between patrols and outposts. The troops derived some comfort from being able to take care of their personal needs and to briefly rest in the quickly-built dugouts or in the wretched huts of the villages which still remained standing. Such idylls soon came to an end, either because we resumed the offensive or the Russians once again retreated.

The permanent position

As the fall campaign wound down at Rovno, the next task was to prepare for a new wartime winter by systematically building a permanent position.¹⁰⁷ The troops started with the methods they were already familiar with. In the sectors they occupied at the end of the fighting they constructed a continuous line of trenches, which they prepared with great toil and care to be both habitable and defensible. These lines spread over the countryside; they were dug deep in the earth except in swampy areas (where they had to be built up). Every eight or ten meters they were divided by traverses. They were protected by a network of barbed wire, which was expanded every night and reinforced by hand grenades set to go off automatically, mine fields, trip wires, and foot traps. The trenches had loopholes and shrapnel shields. In many sectors a second line was built a few paces to

¹⁰⁷For development of field fortifications in this phase of the war, see also the articles by Engineer Col. Borsch-Aarenau in the Techn. Mitt. (Vienna, 1920), p. 112 and by Engineer Col. Schneck in the Mil. wiss. Mitt. (Vienna, 1927), p. 54.

the rear to protect traffic. Communications trenches ran in a zig-zag course toward the rear. Dugouts, built either in the foremost trenches or nearby, provided easily heated shelters for all the troops during the war's second winter. Simply constructed using material from houses and fences in the neighborhood, they were made ready as quickly as possible. They usually provided sufficient protection against shrapnel fire.

This work was initiated by the troops themselves based on their usual practice; the commanders soon also intervened. In their desire to ensure that the positions to be constructed in the following months were as strong as possible, the staffs naturally looked for ideas to the experiences on the Western and Italian fronts. However, they didn't automatically apply these ideas to the Russian theater of operations. On other fronts, the Central Powers were opposed by well-equipped industrialized countries on relatively short fronts; here they were fighting over a wide area against an enemy richer in manpower than in military equipment. It was believed that in the East the enemy's artillery was weaker, although already in November 1915 this was no longer true everywhere on the front. Nevertheless, it was difficult to maintain our strength along such an extended line.

Theoretically, it would be possible to abandon even substantial amounts of territory without suffering any decisive damage (unlike the situation in the West or on the Isonzo), as long as the units remained intact. However, some bitter experiences during the Carpathian winter and the fall campaign of 1915 had shown that even a small-scale penetration by the enemy could force the defenders to pull back on an extended sector of the front. This was primarily due to nervousness about fighting with exposed flanks; the same attitude was apparent during the offensives among commanders and especially among the troops. Many times other factors helped the enemy turn partial successes into much greater achievements - errors by local commanding officers, the fact that a weak garrison was spread out evenly along a front that was much too long, over-exertion, and in a few cases the unreliability of certain troops. Therefore it seemed inadvisable to continue to base the defenses on one position, and usually on just one line.

Instructions for the preparation of fortifications

Already at the end of November 1915 the AOK issued "Guidelines for the Preparation of Field Fortifications." They prescribed that second and third positions were to be built at distances of two to three kilometers behind the first line; this would prevent the enemy artillery from overcoming two positions at once. Each

position would consist of two to three continuous, easily defensible lines. Several strong points would be constructed in the rear to deal with enemy breakthroughs. Switch positions (usually the communications trenches) would hinder any enemy attempt to roll up the defenders' flanks.

As for the course of the various lines, the high command recommended that if possible they should be located on slopes facing away from the enemy for camouflage purposes; this instruction was never properly implemented by our troops. Greater attention was given to ensuring that all parts of the trenches were protected against flanking fire; to provide cover, machine guns were either situated so they could fire over the positions or placed in nests right in front of the trenches.

It was forbidden to fully cover the trenches, a practice that unfortunately was popular with the troops; the dangers of a continuous row of fixed shrapnel shields was already fully recognized. At most, some light temporary roofs were permitted on small stretches of the line for protection against rain and snow. On the other hand, the entire garrison should be able to find cover against massed artillery fire in shell-proof installations. These included dugouts under the wall of the foremost trenches, foxholes dug four meters deep behind the trenches, or - as time went on - concrete bunkers. The artillery, provided with similar shelters, should be deployed as closely as possible behind the foremost infantry and in position to provide flanking fire.

These were very wise instructions, but naturally there was difficulty in getting them implemented on the entire front. There weren't enough men to perform the necessary unending labor; the troops would literally have had to dig throughout the day and night. Moreover, positions not only had to be constructed but also maintained. Walls of wicker work (or, less often, of boards) were needed to keep the sides of the trenches from collapsing; the positions, including the loopholes, had to be kept clean of snow. Despite all precautions, whenever there was a thaw great parts of the trenches lay under water; wood constructions (shrapnel shields, dugouts, etc.) which had been built on frozen ground sank when the weather warmed, and had to be restored. It is no wonder that the rear positions received only slight attention, and that they were hardly constructed as planned. The fall-back trenches that were completed weren't maintained on a regular basis, so many of them fell apart after a short time.

There was no consistent introduction of new concepts to all parts of the front; this was due to local differences in the terrain and the ground, different opinions of the higher-level staffs, and varying attitudes among the troops toward defending and toward digging in the earth. Orders regarding construction of fortifications multiplied, and some of them contradicted each other. Tasks that were already completed had to be undertaken anew. Based on new experiences on the Western front, the preparation of a "hundred-meter line" was ordered. "No one understood the purpose."¹⁰⁸ Later there was talk of a "five hundred-meter line." All of this was merely another reference to the second and third lines that had already long been part of the plans, but there were many misunderstandings. The restrictions on use of shrapnel shields were ignored, since the troops felt they had advantages. In many sectors high earthen walls were thrown up between the front-line trenches and the lines of communication trenches; they were called "positions over the parapets" or sometimes "night-" or "snow-positions." Opinion varied over whether they were useful; during thaws these mounds of earth, which were penetrated by many trenches, began to collapse and required new labor. The troops, who were also required to carry out tiresome patrols and outpost duty, could hardly find even a little rest, even when they were relieved from the front and in reserve. At these times they were supposed to build and restore reserve positions and roads, for which the necessary material was brought up at night by construction companies. And finally at least a little training was needed to maintain discipline. This left no time at all for tactical training - especially for attacks - which was if possible even more important; also most of the higher-level staffs displayed little interest in the subject.

In general both commanders and troops focused their attention on the details of constructing positions (which admittedly were important). However, there was no consensus of opinion on how we were supposed to carry out defensive actions in these positions, or at least no standard tactical doctrine. The only firm conviction was that the foremost line was to be held at all costs; all preparations were aimed at maintaining the action in and around this line.

Lessons from the New Year's Battle

This was the situation when the Russians attacked our troops and positions east of Czernowitz and on the Strypa at the end of the

¹⁰⁸Max Pitreich, "Die Schlacht bei Okna" (Vienna, 1926), p. 43

year. The troops passed this test with flying colors. Although the Russians for the first time massed artillery fire to overwhelm the trenches, in most places their strong attacks - mounted with great stubbornness by up to 16 waves of infantry - were repulsed with bloody losses. The foxholes withstood the bombardment well, and won the confidence of soldiers who at first had been skeptical. When the attacks didn't collapse under the defending artillery fire, as was often the case, the garrison was almost always able to leave their dugouts in time to oppose the enemy troops who'd advanced through the destroyed barricades in hand to hand fighting; when other methods failed, they could choose the right moment when they noted that the Russian artillery had shifted its fire. Even when the enemy was able to take over part of a trench, resistance in the supporting lines and in the quickly occupied switch positions prevented them from deepening or widening their penetration. Counterattacks by small reserve forces, which had been stationed very close nearby, almost always recovered the lost ground.

Until now two contradictory concepts regarding defensive tactics had always been debated:

- . the knowledge that when the enemy entered the lines the best way to stop them was with a coordinated counterattack by strong forces, supported by well-prepared artillery, and
- . the hope that initial enemy successes could be limited by isolated but quick troop movements to plug the holes in the line.

The latter concept certainly reflected the fact that our means were always limited. During the New Year's Battle, on a limited front, the method undoubtedly brought success. However, this was partly due to the terrain, which favored an immediate counterattack (a long stretch of rising ground made it necessary to post the reserves nearby). It was still questionable whether the application of this method to another battlefield might not lead to breaking up the reserves, so that they wouldn't be effective. This debate, and the argument as to whether a decision should be sought in combat in the foremost line at all, remained the essential unresolved problems involving rigid defensive tactics until late in 1917.

Thus the lessons of the battle didn't lead to unquestioned conclusions. There were different opinions about how far the various lines should be separated, and even about the effectiveness of lines in the rear.¹⁰⁹ The foxholes won universal approbation, but it wasn't easy to decide what size holes were

109Max Pitreich, "Okna", pp. 43 ff.

the most effective. The desire that the entire garrison should be able to assemble as quickly as possible led to the construction of large shelters that could hold 30 to 50 men; however, the larger works weren't as safe as smaller ones. In heavily forested areas the men had used a lot of wood in the positions, especially to reinforce the earthen walls and to build shrapnel shields. Under the heavy artillery fire of the New Year's Battle this practice had unfortunate results. Flying tree-trunks and beams killed many people; the debris blocked the trenches and hindered traffic. Now there arose the cry "Get rid of the shrapnel shields!" - but it didn't reach all parts of the front. And, despite the dangers of reinforcing the walls with wood the practice continued since there was no other material available.

All in all, the lessons of the New Year's Battle and the subsequent new construction of positions were the first harbingers of the future doctrine of defense in depth. However, before this doctrine evolved there would have to be a substantial psychological change. No matter how many lines and positions were planned and - eventually - built, the ideal method was still to check the enemy onslaught in the foremost trenches. The troops themselves supported this method, since with their toil they had created positions where they had stored not only all the personal items that made their lives tolerable, but also all their weapons. The latter included an ever increasing number of machine guns, but also infantry guns, grenade throwers, trench mortars and in some places even some artillery pieces. Although the commanders recognized the inherent danger of accumulating all the equipment in one place, they only objected half-heartedly, since ultimately they too believed that holding the foremost line was the most certain recipe for success.

It was believed that the artillery had the least need to review their tactics. In fact they had played an extraordinary role in all the successes to date. Their well-prepared barrage fire had once again been very effective in the New Year's Battle. In some cases, more than 40 batteries had coordinated their fire on one sector. Since the batteries were deployed very close to the front they could make maximum use of their range and were able to deliver flanking fire as was so much desired. Experience gave the lie to concerns that batteries deployed in this manner could all too easily be lost if the infantry was defeated. The unavoidable question that arose in difficult moments - "to hold on or to save the guns?" - in fact never led to a withdrawal by the gallant artillery men. Naturally the theories that had been proven true in the New Year's Battle were retained and further

developed.

Developments in the first months of 1916

Months would pass before the more or less optimal solutions to all these problems were once more put to the test. Meanwhile there were many changes in positional warfare. The pause in operations which again set in at the end of January was neither universal nor lasting. In many places the opposing trenches lay directly next to each other; in such areas there was no end to skirmishes involving sharpshooters and hand grenade throwers. Any careless soldier who stuck his head over the protecting position had to pay a bloody price. Just like on the Italian front, there was toilsome and nerve-wracking mine warfare at many points along the Bukovina-Bessarabia front, as well as at Cebrow northwest of Tarnopol. In areas where the opposing lines lay far apart, fighting soon developed for control of the intervening "No Man's Land." For this purpose, in 1915 several units had already established some "Hunting Commandos", made up of especially skillful and enterprising troops. In the second winter of the war such detachments appeared on almost all parts of the front; their romantic and dangerous task was to carry on many skirmishes with similar Russian groups and outposts. Then the stillness of the night, in which the only signs of activity were the play of colored lights when both sides sent up signal rockets or the constant motion of searchlights, was suddenly shattered by rifle fire. When morning dawned, the patrols would return through the barriers, almost invisible in their white winter overcoats. They often brought back unwounded enemy prisoners, but many times also some comrades who had paid for their heroism with their lives or severe wounds.

Usually during the day the only brief interruption to the quiet was "harassing fire" by the artillery of one side or the other, which broke out at more or less regular times. If this bombardment swelled past its usual intensity, the opposing side would answer with sharp "reprisal fire", and often an artillery duel would develop. Sometimes there were also small or large local infantry actions, for example to bring back prisoners for intelligence purposes or to improve the location of an unfavorable part of the trenches. At other times "special operations with limited goals" were conducted merely to keep up the troops' attacking spirit. Such operations, which were opportunities to coordinate systematic artillery fire with an infantry thrust, were not rare. However, their success wasn't always worth the cost of the casualties that were incurred.

Care already had to be taken against a new weapon - poison gas. At first such measures were quite primitive. Wool cloths or hemp, later provided in specially designed packs, were available in the trenches so the troops could cover their mouths and noses against the gas. The first gas masks from Germany began to arrive in winter 1915-16. A special alarm service was set up, so that bells and similar devices would warn the garrison in time when gas clouds approached from the enemy trenches. The Aus-Hung. troops themselves didn't use this weapon. Although some grenades were filled with the so-called "T-Material" (a liquid that when released could form a vapor of malodorous gas), the chivalrous Emperor Franz Joseph vehemently forbade their use. In a report about gas warfare in October 1915 it was stated that k.u.k. troops wouldn't think of using such tactics.

Meanwhile in the new year 1916 the troops had many tasks to perform during the stationary warfare, but there were also some limited but welcome times of rest. Weeks of service in the trenches alternated with periods in reserve positions. With skillful hands the men created many camps in the forests which consisted of entire colonies of block-houses, including some "villas" surrounded by gardens; they were furnished with items taken out of villages that had been demolished. Soon these settlements, along with the roads and significant points in the landscape, were given names, mostly after locations back home or after popular commanders. The men retained some contact with the world they had left behind through letters, gift parcels, and (finally) short periods of leave. Good and (at least temporarily) plentiful food made up now for many privations during the preceding months. This was supplemented occasionally by stolen domestic poultry or wild fowl.

Songs from home were heard in the warm block-houses in the dark nights. Some men wrote poetry or works of folk or soldiers' humor. And on the Lord's Day hundreds of veteran soldiers stood around simple field altars in the frosty woods; they bowed their heads before God and thought of the many good comrades who had already been taken from their side by bullets, and of the peace for which they still had to fight.

3. Special character of the fighting in the Italian theater

The fighting in the special situation in the southwest developed according to its own rules. From the beginning the campaign was at most times strictly defensive. This was necessary because there weren't enough men available to mount even limited relief

attacks. The enemy's political goals - Görz, Trieste and Trent - lay directly behind the battle lines or just at the edge of the range of the Italian guns. Under these conditions it was urgently necessary to hold onto every foot of ground with grim determination.

At the start it seemed doubtful that with our inadequate means we could hold off an enemy force that was numerically superior and much better equipped. However, with few exceptions the strategy of "rigid defense" was successfully followed through all the battles of the Isonzo. We have already described the troops' exhausting toil on the unyielding soil of the battlefield, and the difficulty of living on the barren, desolate Karst or on the equally empty, rocky heights stretching as far as the Carnic crest.

Nature of the fighting on the Karst

For long months, the companies fighting and living in the foremost lines could rely only on walls of stone or - at best - knee-deep trenches for protection. The lower level HQ and the reserves found shelters in caverns called "Dolinen." The heroic fighters regularly were exposed almost without protection for hours and days to the murderous fire of the enemy's guns and trench mortars, suffering heavy losses. Before an Italian offensive the number of soldiers on hand, ready to oppose the onslaught with grenades and rifles, was thus steadily worn down as the hours passed. When the enemy infantry finally advanced it was almost a relief, because at least the hail of iron and stone splitters died down; despite everything, the surviving defenders held fast to their hastily assembled piles of stone. Meanwhile they used red rocket flares to summon effective barrage fire against the attackers, whose advance broke down into a multitude of individual actions. As the brave but uncoordinated groups of Italian infantry pushed ahead, they were pummeled by hand grenades and by bullets from machine guns. Countless assaults were thus nipped in the bud. Here and there a completely destroyed trench had been evacuated by the defenders, and was lost. However, there were still machine guns clattering behind granite rocks, and reserves sprang out of their "Dolinen" to initiate a bloody melee. The Italians threw new regiments into the fray, but the defenders also received reinforcements. Both sides again fired their artillery, throwing earth and pieces of stone into the air, tearing deep holes into the mass of troops (friend and foe alike). The infantry fired signal rockets toward the heavens to call for artillery help through the thick fog of dust and smoke. The defenders pushed ahead step by step in hot

and bloody action until they recovered their original line, marked by tangled barbed wire and piles of stone. The latter were reduced to small heaps which had to be rebuilt in the following nights. New battalions, already reduced by casualties during their approach march, now repeated the same action behind the quickly restored stone defenses. This went on until the exhausted attackers returned to their starting points, or built their own stone piles behind which they sought some rest.¹¹⁰

Then the troops prepared without pause or rest for the next battle. Once again walls were constructed by piling up blocks of the gray, sharp-edged stones plus sand sacks filled with smaller pebbles; gaps in the barriers were filled with new barbed wire and iron "Spanish riders", while new rows of obstacles were erected. Once again every bit of shelter had to be carved with toil out of the hard earth; it became possible to dig deeper and with less difficulty only after the introduction of explosives and hand drills. Boards and sheets of corrugated iron were still the only shelter against the "Bora" storms and the sirocco rains. Truly shell-proof shelters, here called caverns, could only be made ready after very long work with the drills and explosives. Even in December 1915 very few of them had been constructed.

At the front, all life revolved around the night-time hours. The regimental history of IR # 47 speaks about this¹¹¹:

"Activity like in an ant hill began in the fortifications after darkness fell. Relieving units came and went. Parties of sappers took over from their comrades who were constructing caverns; labor detachments brought up Spanish riders and technical equipment, posts and boards. Now it was finally possible to carry the wounded back to the regimental medical stations. The dead, except for those buried in nearby Dolinen, were also carted away. Damage from the bombardment of the day before was inspected and repaired. Damaged telephone lines, which couldn't be replaced by their gallant crews during the day, were improved. Activity was similar along the inadequate routes leading to the front. Endless columns of bearers, artillery ammunition staffs, transports of wounded, and columns of

110Very stirring accounts of such Isonzo actions are presented by Kaltenboeck in his book "Armee im Schatten" (Innsbruck, 1932), pp. 147 ff. and by Weber in "Menschenmauer am Isonzo" (Vienna, 1932).

111Vogelsang, "Das steirische IR 47 im Weltkrieg" (Graz, 1932), pp. 330 ff.

troops all marched in great hurry to and from the trenches. Pauses in the Italian artillery fire were used to move safely over the dangerous stretches.

The glad cry "Food is here!" announced the start of the high point of the endless day in the trenches. The boxes of food were brought as far forward as possible by bearers, and then into the positions by the men of the company themselves; the boxes were soon emptied of their contents. Eagerly awaited letters and newspapers also appeared. However, the troops had to always be on the alert, because occasionally Italian shells struck, releasing showers of stone splinters; fire balls and shrapnel exploded, and bullets fired by the infantry rattled. Beams of light from Italian searchlights harshly illuminated the terrain, or sudden rocket flares lit up the skies, set off by the very nervous "Welsh."¹¹²

The night-time labor of the cooks and bearers, and of the non-commissioned officers responsible for the accounting, required quiet heroism that is too little appreciated. Besides ensuring that daily rations were available within reach of the fighting battalions, they had to maintain so-called "barrage rations", emergency supplies that could last for three days - including canned meat and coffee, hardtack, tobacco, and about one liter of water for each man. This reserve was provided for situations when heavy artillery fire temporarily made it impossible to bring up the regular supplies.

Meanwhile, sappers and labor detachments were working behind the fighting troops on a whole series of carefully planned fall-back positions. However, these lines weren't intended to facilitate a more elastic defense; even though in some places hundred- or five hundred-meter lines were constructed (here they were called "b" or "c" positions), they were to be used only to shelter supporting troops or men moving back and forth to the first line. When boring machines later became available in greater numbers, some of them were used to hasten the completion of the rear positions and caverns.

In Volume III, we have already described in outline the actions with the enemy and the hardly less dangerous forces of nature in

112TRANSLATOR's NOTE - In the slang of the Alpine German lands, the Italians were often referred to as "Welsh", based on an old Germanic word for "strangers." (This, of course, was also the origin of the English designation of the Celtic inhabitants of western Britain.)

the mountains on the Carinthian border and in the granite and glacier world of Tyrol.¹¹³ A series of successful thrusts had also proved that it was possible to attack in the high mountains. The commanders had learned the importance of good organization. The thrusts that hadn't succeeded at least provided valuable lessons for future operations.

Even more obviously, the troops had accommodated themselves to war and to its new form in the barren, very difficult mountain terrain of the Balkans, where they had defeated a stubborn and skilled enemy.

Comparison of the Italian and Russian fronts

There is no doubt that in nearly two years of fighting the Army had passed the tests presented by this new and unprecedented war: both to attack and - when necessary to avoid casualties due to numerical inferiority - to defend; the key was to prevail with a minimum amount of force. Confidence in the efficacy of these lessons was the basis for the plans which the high command wanted to implement in spring 1916. They now wanted to mount the first offensive in the southwest, and had sound grounds for relying on the defensive ability of the other parts of the Army.

In retrospective analysis, there certainly were differences in the military lessons to be learned from the defensive battles in the northeast and the southwest. Due to many factors, the defensive procedures on the Italian battlefields followed set rules. Although the nature of the terrain hindered construction of strong fortifications, outside of the thinly held lines there were many places where individuals could find emergency shelter, and which provided small groups the possibility of gathering for a surprise counterattack. On the lowest level of the command

113 Besides the literature mentioned earlier, see the following - Baxa, "Alpen im Feuer. Mit den Kärntner Achterjägern an der italienischen Front" (Klagenfurt, 1931); Czant, "Alpinismus und die Gebirgsfronten im Weltkrieg" (Berlin, 1926); Frölich, "Der Kampf um die Berge Tirols" (Bregenz, 1932); Jakoncig, "Tiroler Kaiserjäger im Weltkrieg" (Innsbruck, 1931); Krug, "Alpen-krieg" (Graz, 1918); Langes, "Front in Fels und Eis" (Munich, 1933); Ompteda "Bergkrieg" (Berlin, 1932); Pichler, "Der Krieg in Tirol 1915-16" (Innsbruck, 1924); Weber, "Feuer auf den Gipfeln - Südtiroler Alpenkrieg" (Regensburg, 1932). A long list of authorities is given by Mell, "Österreichische Literatur über den Gebirgskrieg" (Mil. wiss. Mitt.; Vienna, 1927, pp. 640 ff.).

structure, tactics revolved around a rigid defense, in which the fighting took place around - but not in - the foremost line.

The situation in the northeast was different. It is true that the January battle was won by methods which had long been practiced successfully on the Isonzo. However, it was not possible to safely follow this example throughout the front. In most parts of the hills and plains of east Galicia and Volhynia, the foundation of the entire defensive system would be lost as soon as the heavily fortified first line was in the enemy's hands. Most of the positions farther back were weak, and weren't comparable to the excellent natural lines of resistance which the troops could quickly and easily find in the southwest.

Moreover, the troops had to defend a much larger area in the northeast. Some of the divisions in the southwest, such as 18 ID at Görz, held lines 20 km long, and in less threatened parts of the front the length could be as great as 36 km (48 ID on the Carinthian crest). However, in the sectors under the heaviest assault, as at Doberdo, six or seven division with 60,000 riflemen were deployed on a front of 16 km; the artillery units had about 20 light and 6 heavy guns per kilometer.

In the Russian theater of operations a similar or even greater concentration of force was possible only in the victorious New Year's Battle, when the defenders of the Toporoutz-Rarancze sector had 15,000 riflemen at the front, backed up by 15,000 more who were ready to provide relief, as well as 180 guns. However, as a rule the commanders on this front had to be satisfied with much smaller forces. At the start of May 1916, the 7th, German South and 4th Armies (including all their reserves) had just one division per 10 km; in the large sector between the Sereth and Pripyat there was just one per 25 km. Although the Russian lines were equally thin, the size of the front always had a decisive influence on the course of the fighting. Moreover, it shouldn't be overlooked that in general the best units had been sent away to the Italian front. Finally, it seems that the psychological state of the soldiers on the two fronts was different.

4. Psychological factors and morale

In the preceding sections we have described the progress which Austria-Hungary's armed forces made between spring 1915 and spring 1916 in expanding their size and equipment. Despite the specters of a menacing lack of manpower and growing shortages of raw material, at least the upcoming actions could be anticipated with confidence and equanimity. This was true of the Army's

physical condition and also - with certain reservations - of its spirit. May 1915, the month of Gorlice, had been a time of spiritual as well as meteorological spring. In the same month a new and dangerous enemy had drawn its sword against the Monarchy in the southwest, but this had only increased the determination of the military. The multi-national realm on the Danube experienced its last rebirth, in the ranks of its venerable Army, under the Imperial flags that waved along the Isonzo and on the mountainous border of Tyrol. Meanwhile in the north the Army and its German allies were engaged in a great victorious advance from Gorlice and Tarnow through Lemberg and Ivangorod to Brest-Litovsk and the edge of the enormous Pripyat swamps. By defeating the millions of men in the Russian Army, our own forces - which had defended the Carpathians by expending their last reserves of strength - regained lasting self-confidence.

Despite these successes in the war with Russia, the subsequent erection of a permanent defensive position had certain disadvantages. The troops suffered physical privation in the exhausting work on the fortifications and from the harsh Russian winter. The enemy had indeed in great measure lost their aura of superiority. In the long period of quiet that followed in most sectors of the front, the common soldiers lost their fighting edge; sub-consciously many believed that they could sit out the rest of the war in the positions they'd constructed with such great toil without having to defend them against a serious Russian assault. Such a malaise never developed in the southwest, where combat kept the soldiers on edge. Moreover, the bulk of the troops here fought with a stronger feeling that they were defending their homeland directly than was the case in the far northeast, and the Slavs in particular weren't troubled by the fact that they fighting a related nationality.

Attitudes of the various nationalities

Naturally the test of strength which the Monarchy and its Army had passed in spring 1915 was most exhilarating to the two leading national groups, the Germans and Magyars. It is a historically symbolic fact that the last unit which the aged Emperor Franz Joseph reviewed before he passed away was a regiment of Jaeger from Tyrol.¹¹⁴ The German-speaking regiments had never stopped believing that the war was a struggle for their very existence. Their only wish now was that they could take

114The Emperor reviewed Col. von Soos' KJR # 1 when the Regiment passed through Vienna on its way from Russia to the Italian theater of operations.

part in the defense of their home soil against the new Italian enemy; this wish was fulfilled for most of them by spring 1916 at the latest. The Magyars were equally encouraged when the Russians withdrew from the Carpathians. With understandable pride their leaders, headed by Count Stephen Tisza, proclaimed the glory of their troops to the world with all the fervor of their national temperament. It is true that these proclamations always included demands which gave pause to the other nationalities - their ardent desire for further development of a Hungarian "national state" and especially a "national army."

As previously, the Croats, Slovenes and Slovaks still stood firm as a rock on the side of the Monarchy. However, the uniformed sons of the other Slavic nationalities also were influenced by the improving overall situation. At least the politicians considerably muted their opposition when the Empire's fortunes waxed. The soldiers at the front couldn't fail to be impressed by the Army's revival after the harsh Carpathian winter. Moreover, the South Slavs rallied against their Italian arch-enemies, while the Poles were encouraged by the liberation of their territory from the Russians, as were the Ruthenes by the recovery of the greater part of their homeland.

Nevertheless, in the first weeks of the Gorlice offensive at least the k.u.k. 4th Army suffered on several occasions when some of its Slavic units showed a lack of fighting spirit. IR # 36 from Jung-Bunzlau, just like the Prague 28th IR two months earlier, even had to be stricken from the rolls of the Army. Soon afterwards, however, reports from the Isonzo indicated that the XI March Battalion of IR # 28, which hadn't yet been dissolved and whose officers were deeply hurt by the punishment inflicted on their unit, had performed splendidly in the first battles on the Karst. Therefore the high command felt compelled a half year later to restore the Prague regiment.¹¹⁵ Meanwhile there was a growing number of reports from the Russian front of gallant actions by various Slavic units.

Even Imperial German observers now and then praised such deeds. They also noted the good performance of the Transylvania Romanian regiments that served in the ranks of XII Corps during the advance through Ivangorod to Baranowicze. The improvement in living conditions since the Carpathian winter played an important role in bolstering members of the less culturally-advanced

115IR # 28 continued to recruit mainly in its old canton, where the population was 94% Czech. The majority of the officers, however, spoke German.

nationalities. As always, the word and example of gallant officers helped to create a common spirit, as did the smoking "goulash cannon", as the portable kitchens were called in the soldiers' jargon.

Nevertheless, there continued to be incidents of more or less crass dereliction of duty, especially in critical situations. Thus during the heavy fighting of fall 1915 there were once again complaints caused by the national composition of the Army. Some of the incidents involved units which hitherto had won praise. In a report to the Emperor-King's Military Chancellery, GO Conrad identified the failure of some troops for nationalistic reasons as a factor contributing to the heavy setback in the Rovno campaign. At this same time, in east Galicia a Bohemian division reported losing almost 5000 missing in a period of barely 48 hours; most of them were from one Czech and one Bosnian regiment. In October, an east Galician division and a Czech Landwehr regiment under GdI Linsingen suffered substantial defeats which were also attributed to their national composition. Other examples could be given. On the other hand, many commanders sought to blame panics, which in fact break out sometimes even among the best troops, on the soldiers' nationality when they occurred in regiments with "unreliable" personnel. In most cases it's not correct to attribute failures in the Slavic or Romanian regiments to strictly political causes.¹¹⁶ Politics played a major role only among the intellectual classes. It is true that national-political influences did make it easier for some psychologically broken troops, already tired of the war, to decide to seek safety by being taken prisoner or even by going over to the enemy.

Difficulties on the home front

It had already long been evident that the morale of the units in question was always at greatest risk while they were incorporating replacement personnel from the interior. The condition of the Ersatz and March battalions in the areas where there were political and national difficulties, especially in the Bohemian lands, had left much to be desired for quite a while. Repeatedly when new recruits were called up or left for the

116When the war with Italy began, the Italian-speaking troops were left on the Russian front, and those who'd been in the Tyrolean Kaiser Jaeger Regiments formed special detachments. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - For an analysis of Italian troops in the k.u.k. Army during the war, see Sondhaus, "In the Service of the Emperor" (New York, 1990), pp. 104-116.

front, there were large-scale riots (in which the local citizens naturally took part) and mutinies. The military administration in the interior sought to avoid these regrettable circumstances by moving the most endangered replacement units into German- and Magyar-speaking districts; thus the troops on their way to the field would at least be removed from the influence of their civilian atmosphere for the last few weeks before their departure. In the field armies, the Slavic, Romanian and Italian replacements were temporarily divided among units of other nationalities. Although this was an obvious solution, there were too many disadvantages. The language problem was exacerbated even more, and thus it was difficult for the officers to control their men; also the calm of politically reliable units was endangered.

Thus it's understandable that the high command wanted to address the root cause of this evil, which was to be found in domestic politics and administration. In the territory where they were in charge, the "zone of the armies" (which stretched far into the interior) they took harsh action, especially in the beginning. Their tools were martial law, restrictions on personal liberty, and confinement in internment camps. "It cannot be denied that along with guilty parties many innocent persons suffered. Even German-speaking Austrians weren't spared this fate. Many individuals who'd been favorably disposed to the Monarchy were driven into the ranks of its opponents by such irrational and over-zealous policies."¹¹⁷ Moreover, the high command didn't believe that their job was finished by their measures in the zone of the armies. The state of emergency during the war and the fact that military courts had jurisdiction in cases of high treason and related crimes gave them the opportunity to also influence daily life much deeper in the interior of the Monarchy, at least in its western lands (Tisza resisted them in Hungary).¹¹⁸ Thus many political figures in the Bohemian lands were arrested at the urging of the military; some of them did belong to "the Mafia" a secret revolutionary organization, although at the time this wasn't known. Also a whole series of political initiatives

117Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", p. 65. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - And this was the judgment of an Austrian Nazi! The attempts of the AOK to interfere with domestic affairs in cis-Leithania (they had no success in Hungary) remain a controversial point in more recent writings. For a balanced description of the issue, see Führ, "Das k.u.k. Arbeeoberkommando und die Innenpolitik in Österreich 1914-1917" (Graz, 1968).

118Redlich, "Österreichische Regierung und Verwaltung im Weltkriege" (Vienna, 1925), pp. 120 ff.

were taken.¹¹⁹ More or less serious mistakes were also made while implementing this policy. It must at least be said that the high command was reacting to a correctly perceived need to act against movements which were greatly hindering and influencing the war effort.

For the same reason the high command made many suggestions for domestic political reform; "often the Chief of the General Staff prepared them at the urging of his eager advisers. The old Emperor ignored most of them. The quest to appoint military governors to run Bohemia, Croatia and Galicia was successful only in Galicia (because it was in the zone of the armies).¹²⁰ In Bohemia the high command had to be satisfied when Prince Thun, who was friendly to the Czechs, was replaced by the pro-German Count Coudenhove."¹²¹

The many political refugees and other emigres from the disaffected nationalities made sure that the Monarchy's fight with its opponents in the Army and in the interior was made known in foreign countries, including neutral states as well as the Entente powers. From summer 1915 the undisputed leader of the anti-Habsburg circles abroad was the Czech Professor Masaryk. He had left his fatherland with permission in December 1914, and at the Huss Festival in Zurich and Geneva in June 1915 announced his program for a "revolution abroad." It involved:

- . unification of all political and propaganda activity under special "national councils",
- . financial independence of the movement from all foreign powers, and
- . the creation of "legions" of combat troops to fight on the side of the Entente for the "liberation" of their peoples, for which they would pay with their blood.¹²²

It was intended that the legions would be formed partly from Habsburg citizens or their descendants already living abroad, but mainly from prisoners of war. Until deep into 1916, the only such unit in existence was a "Czecho-Slovakian Legion" on the

119See also, among the many works on this subject, Masaryk, "Die Welt-Revolution, Erinnerungen und Betrachtungen" (Berlin, 1925); Benes, "Der Aufstand der Nationen" (Berlin, 1928); Ronge, "Kriegs- und Industrie-espionage" (Vienna, 1930).

120GdI von Colard was named governor of Galicia; when he died in spring 1916 he was succeeded by GM Freiherr von Diller who in turn was succeeded in 1917 by GO Count Huyn.

121Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", p. 66

122*Ibid.*, pp. 174 ff.

Russian front. At the very start of the war, individuals of Czech descent in Russia (mostly Russian citizens) had formed a small unit called the "Czech Druzhina." Prisoners of war began to join it early in 1915. At the front the Druzhina was employed on reconnaissance and propaganda missions rather than as a combat unit. Although there were hundreds of thousands of prisoners, a Czecho-Slovak regiment wasn't raised until the end of 1915; a second was formed in the following summer. Because of international laws, the Tsar and his government always opposed the creation of volunteer formations. The South Slavs also learned this at the start of 1916 when they wanted to create a volunteer division out of Austrian and Hungarian Serbs. A South Slavic Legion of several thousand men had been created much earlier in America from emigrants, but the United States and Great Britain prevented it from shipping out to Europe.

Thus for the time being the "revolution abroad" was operating only within very limited bounds. Nevertheless the AOK was convinced that it could have serious consequences for the spirit of the troops as well as for the state as a whole, and events would prove that this was correct.

The military leadership of Austria-Hungary bore many burdens that the commanders of nationally cohesive armies were spared. The fact that the Army nevertheless was still a very trustworthy weapon as the war was already entering its second year proves that the ancient traditions of state and soldierly solidarity had been little affected by even the most serious threats.

IV. The Three Theaters of War through mid-May 1916

A. Winter on the southwestern front

1. Plans and development of the Italian Army

The fighting on the Isonzo, which finally stopped with the advent of winter, had not led to the victory which the Italian people and Army had anticipated, despite the exertion of very great force and an enormous sacrifice in casualties. Görz hadn't been conquered; instead, the Italians had to be content with taking the hitherto unknown village of Oslavija.

The military misfortune didn't just shatter confidence in the pronouncements of the armed forces; it also deeply wounded the Italian Army itself. The confidence in victory with which the high command had opened operations in mid-October was replaced by gloomier feelings.¹²³ Moreover, the Italian fall offensive hadn't brought relief to any of their allies. During this period the Central Powers had not only withstood furious attacks by the French and British in Champagne and Artois, as well as by the Russians in Volhynia and east Galicia. They systematically carried out their plans in the Balkans for overthrowing the Serbian kingdom and opening the land route to their Bulgarian and Turkish allies, winning very significant military successes.¹²⁴

After the end of the autumn battles, the Italian Army moreover had to overcome a temporary crisis in its system for replacing personnel. Because of insufficient precautions, nearly all the

¹²³The official Italian record of the war acknowledges this depression in the introduction to its Volume III with the words "In December 1915 the hardest period of the war for us came to an end." (Ministero della guerra, "L'esercito italiano nella grande guerra 1915-1918" [Rome, 1927], hereafter cited as "Italian Official History.") Cadorna also labeled the fighting which had just ended as the "most difficult period of time in the entire war." (Cadorna, "La guerra alla fronte italiana" [Milan, 1917], Vol. I, p. 156.)

¹²⁴Cadorna asserted ("La guerra", Vol. I, p. 155) that Italy substantially helped the operations of its allies by its offensives; at least in 1915 this was not true.

replacements for troops who'd become casualties or taken sick were used up already in the second half of November. Although the two Italian Armies still had almost twice as many troops and guns as the opposing Austro-Hungarians on the Isonzo front, their relative weakness lasted for quite some time. Only after considerable reinforcements were provided starting in December 1915 and increasing in spring 1916 was it possible to fully overcome this problem.

Planning for the winter

Toward the end of November 1915 (during the fourth Isonzo battle) the Italian high command had already issued guidelines to its armies for operating during the winter months. In these orders they held firmly to their earlier ideas for carrying on the war, "to maintain resistance on the mountain front with a minimal force, while the main body increases the pressure on the Aus-Hung. positions on the middle and lower Isonzo; they will strike holes in the enemy lines to increase our freedom of movement and capability to maneuver as we prepare to reach our stated goals."¹²⁵ During the winter they wanted above all to take parts of the Aus-Hung. positions using the tactics of siege warfare; this would provide favorable jumping-off points for the general offensive in the spring.

In carrying out this plan, the task of 3rd Army was particularly important. It was instructed to take Mt S Michele and the heights on the southern edge of the Karst at Monfalcone by mid-January at the latest; this would assist the start of the general offensive to capture the Doberdo plateau.

In December 1915 the 2nd Italian Army was ordered to launch limited assaults against the Aus-Hung. positions west of the Isonzo at Tolmein, as well as on the Mrzli vrh and against the Vodil ridge. Because of the poor weather conditions on the upper Isonzo at this time of year, the Italian high command later modified this order, directing that from mid-January 1916 the attacks were to be directed mainly against the Görz bridgehead.

The Carnic Group was merely to hold firm against its opponents, without undertaking any operations of its own.

Cadorna wanted the bulk of the Italian Army - except for units which were absolutely needed on other fronts - to concentrate by spring 1916 on the Isonzo after they were completely re-built, re-equipped, and re-trained. Strengthened by new units to be raised during the winter months, they would open their offensive as envisioned by the allied war council at Chantilly in December 1915; this would be timed to coordinate as closely as possible with the general offensive of the Entente armies on the other fronts.

In reality, however, the Italian high command was compelled by the total exhaustion of their troops to abandon the initiative

125Italian Official History, Vol. III, Text, p. 141

and to restrict operations from mid-December through early March to a pure defense. The Italian generals' decision to stay on the defensive was also caused by completely unjustified concerns regarding concentrations of enemy troops on the Isonzo, and a supposedly imminent attack by Aus-Hung. and German troops out of Tyrol.¹²⁶ In the first half of December the Italian HQ were even starting to doubt whether their troops could hold their current positions on the Isonzo against an Aus-Hung. assault. Therefore Cadorna now ordered immediate work on all positions in and behind the battlefield, especially on the "main line of defense." The latter fortifications, whose construction was decided already at the start of the war, consisted of at least two lines (in some places more), intended as a fall-back position in case of an overwhelming enemy attack. They ran along the main crest of the heights along the Isonzo - Mt Matajur, the Kolovrat Ridge and the Korada, then crossed the hilly country of the Coglio about five kilometers west of the Görz bridgehead on the heights of San Martino-Bigliana-Medana and Spessa. Finally they ran along the western bank of the Versa, the Torre and the Isonzo down to the coast.

In addition to the defensive installations being built right at the front and the "main line" described above, there were four other positions farther back as far as the western bank of the Tagliamento.¹²⁷ They enabled the Italian high command to hope that the tiny areas they had won at such a high price could also be held against an overwhelming Aus-Hung. assault.

For the time being the deployment of the Italian units remained essentially almost unchanged. The units which had suffered the most losses in the autumn battles were pulled from the front; the

126Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, p. 157

127The territory 50 to 60 kilometers wide between the front and the Tagliamento had been turned into a defensive zone. The three foremost positions each had several lines, consisting of trenches reinforced with concrete, strong points, dugouts, machine gun nests and observation points, plus many barriers. The crossing points on the Tagliamento had already been covered before the war; permanent fortifications with armored works existed in the bridgeheads of Codroipo and Latisana, and in the San Daniele-Gemona fortified zone. On the lower course of the river dams were prepared so the area could be flooded if necessary. The position on the western bank of the Tagliamento was still under construction, and featured especially strong works in the Mt Simeone-Cornino-Pinzano sector.

divisions which stayed in the first line mostly held their positions with just one brigade, while the other brigades were able to pass the winter in comfortable rest and recuperation camps rather far behind the front. At the end of December a strategic reserve at the disposal of the high command was created in the Codroipo-Udine-Cervignano area. It consisted of around seven divisions - X Corps (19 and 20 ID), XIV Corps (28 and 30 ID), the 9 and 10 ID, the Caltanissetta and Granatieri di Sardegna Brigades, and one independent infantry regiment.

To protect the southern coastal flank of the Italian land front against any landing attempts was the task of troops from VII Corps, along with small naval detachments (motor and torpedo boats plus seaplanes) which had excellent stations in the Grado lagoons. West of the mouth of the Aussa the entire Italian coast had its own protection force, made up of third-line units. The Cavalry Corps, parts of which had been on coastal service until fall, moved in October 1915 to winter quarters in the interior; some of its units even returned to their peacetime garrisons.

There were no changes on the mountain front in the Julian and Carnic Alps; the harsh Alpine winter hampered any military activity there.

As previously recorded, toward the end of the autumn fighting the "Royal Italian Special Corps for Albania" was created (in December) and then was moved gradually to Valona where on 20 March it became XVI Corps. This measure meant that the main front had lost around three infantry divisions.

Expansion of the Italian Army in 1916

In expanding the Army, the Italian high command was following guidelines prepared already by Cadorna in May 1915, instructions from the government in fall for major improvements to be implemented by spring 1916, and the agreements at the military conference of Chantilly. This involved not only a significant increase in the number of units and higher HQ, but also an extraordinary concern for the Army's material well-being. By spring the Western powers were supposed to provide Italy with very rich support so that the country would be in a position to carry out most of its assigned tasks.

Originally Cadorna had demanded that by spring the Army should be expanded by around 270,000 men and 440 guns, to reach an effective strength of 1,340,000 men and 2344 guns. The government strongly resisted this demand on the grounds that its

implementation would "overtax the resources of the country and cause bad blood."¹²⁸ In the event, however the cabinet soon had to bow to military necessity (and also to pressure from France) and gave its approval to even much larger sacrifices.

In long negotiations, a plan emerged for the creation of a significant number of new units, which were supposed to be ready to fight at the front by early summer 1916. The first step, in December 1915, was to call up the eligible draftees who'd been born in 1896; along with some men who'd been born between 1892 and 1895 but not yet drafted, this provided about 300,000 soldiers. Most of the units created from this group were ready for employment already in the first half of 1916.

The expansion of the infantry involved 38 regiments (114 battalions), which formed 19 brigades. Thus by 1 August 1916 the field army had 92 infantry brigades (about 184 regiments). At this time each regiment already had 3 to 6 machine gun sections. The Bersaglieri were expanded by 14 battalions, and the Alpini by 26. Moreover, 72 Bersaglieri and 34 Alpini companies were reformed to bring already existing battalions up to strength.

The expansion of machine gun formations was especially extensive. The manufacture of this most important infantry weapon, which hitherto had lagged behind, was undertaken in grand style by Italian industry. Nevertheless, the country's own production was insufficient. Many orders had to be placed in France, England and America. At the start of the war the Italian Army had just 309 sections (618 machine guns); by the end of 1916 it had 4478 weapons available, and each battalion had its own machine gun companies. Moreover, by August 1916 there were about 500 sections and by the end of the year 1000 sections of "light machine guns" (or machine pistols). 11 machine gun squadrons were formed for the cavalry. There were also 6 armored car detachments, also armed with machine guns.

The expansion of the artillery was carried out with no less zeal. Although the field artillery, due to more pressing needs, was increased by just 19 new batteries, there was a great rise in the number of heavy guns and in the siege artillery park. Since 8 field artillery batteries had been lost, 6 sent to Libya, and 36 more converted to anti-aircraft units, the number of batteries actually decreased. After the number of infantry divisions was

128 Italian Official History, Vol. III, Text, p. 5. See also the "Memoires du maréchal Joffre" (Paris, 1932), Vol. II, pp. 178 and 285 ff.

raised in 1916, there were just 28 light field guns per division, as opposed to 41 in 1915.

25 new mountain artillery batteries were formed in 1916, as well as 56 batteries of portable artillery. The latter had been particularly useful in the mountainous terrain of the theater of operations and required fewer porters than the mountain guns; they were needed even more due to a shortage of horses.

The heavy artillery of the field army expanded greatly. At the start of the war there were 28 batteries (112 guns), which increased by summer 1916 to 98 batteries (392 guns).¹²⁹ The siege artillery experienced the greatest expansion. When the war began there were 46 batteries (158 guns of 149 to 305 mm caliber); in August 1916 there were 663 batteries (64 heavy, 399 medium and 200 light). There were ten times as many guns. The expansion of the siege artillery was not only due to the casting of new pieces and contributions by Italy's allies; a great number of pieces were obtained from all the fortified places and from un-needed naval guns. To serve the many heavy batteries, the number of fortress artillery companies was increased by about 250.

Because of the course of the war, in which the Italian Army was on the offensive against stubborn defenders, and the new nature of positional fighting, it was necessary to create trench mortar formations. Italy had entered the war with 200 improvised mortars. The high command initiated a far-reaching expansion of their "Bombardier Corps" in winter 1915-16; by the end of 1916 there were 2062 trench mortars (of 58 to 240 mm caliber), which were organized as sections and mixed groups.

During the winter the cavalry were pulled back into the interior, leaving just their machine gun sections and one squadron for each corps at the front. 22 squadrons were dissolved. In February the high command dismounted all four cavalry divisions, intending to send them back to the fighting as infantry. However, two of the divisions were again mounted at the end of May.

In addition to the combat arms, all the technical troops and special services were considerably expanded (and some specialties were formed for the first time). For example, there were 161 new sapper companies. The Army transportation troops had 10,000 trucks, 900 automobiles, 400 motorcycles and 570 tractors.

12940 batteries had 149 mm howitzers, 42 had 105 mm cannon and 16 had 102 mm cannon.

At the start of the war the Italian air corps consisted of 15 squadrons (75 planes). In the first expansion program, 45 new squadrons were raised by June 1916. By the end of May there were 279 new planes at the front. In the second expansion program, the total of all planes reached 1195 (with 370 in service) at the end of 1916. Nine flying schools were responsible for training the crews.

In 1916 the number of dirigibles increased to 10; half of these, however, were shot down. Thereafter the rest of them were used only in the interior.

A new anti-aircraft arm was created. In 1916 it consisted of 22 batteries, 315 unattached guns, 400 machine guns and 4 armored trains. Nine squadrons of fighters and 37 more unattached planes were also available for this service.

To ensure that these powerful forces had sufficient ammunition and equipment of all kinds, Italian industry made great strides, while the country also imported supplies from abroad. In May 1916 there was enough artillery ammunition available to fire 50,000 rounds per day (as opposed to 14,000 at the start of the war). At this time the armies at the front had 7,000,000 rounds for their 4075 guns of all calibers.

The creation of new units made it necessary to also expand the number of higher HQ. To replace troops sent to join XVI Corps in Albania the 46 and 47 ID were created in Italy. At the end of April the 45 ID was raised from extra troops and deployed in front of the Görz bridgehead; here it joined 4 ID (which had been a third division of VI Corps) to form the new XX Corps. In May some troops who'd returned from Libya created the 48 ID, which was assigned to VIII Corps. Using men who were back from Albania plus some drawn from other units, in June the 3rd Army created 49 ID and 1st Army (in the Adige sector) created 37 ID. 2nd Army's Bersaglieri Division had already been redesignated 36 ID in March. XVIII Corps was created during the June fighting in south Tyrol (in the Brenta-Cismon sector). In May the Italian high command formed a new 5th Army from VIII and XX Corps (drawn from 3rd Army), 2 and 3 CD, and the new XXII, XXIV and XXVI Corps, and deployed it in the Padua-Vicenza-Cittadella sector. Thus in the first half of 1916 there were one new Army HQ, five corps HQ, and eight infantry divisions.

2. Winter months on the mountain front

a. Actions in Tyrol

Since the start of the war, the 1st Italian Army had been deployed opposite Tyrol in a wide arc stretching from the Stilfserjoch to Rolle Pass, but hadn't been able to break through the steel cordon of the defenders at even a single point. At the start of November 1915 the high command demanded that the Army's commander should report his immediate plans. In the Judicarien he wanted to attack the fortifications at Lardaro and capture the Val dei Concei; in the Adige valley he would occupy the Rovereto basin and secure it by capturing the mountain peaks of Biaena, Creino and Finochio; finally, in the Val Sugana he would thrust against the defenses of Levico and Panarotta. The latter attack would occur as soon as the operation to occupy the Cadinjoch and Rolle Pass in the Fassaner Alps, already being prepared, was making good progress. However, just two weeks later the Army commander, G.Lt Brusati, reported that heavy snowfall in the mountains made it impossible to carry out the planned offensives against the Fassaner Alps or on the plateau of Folgaria and Lavarone. Thus the other plans also fell through before Army HQ issued its general orders for the winter. These orders prescribed that 1st Army would stay on the defensive, improve its defenses, and keep its opponents on edge; it would undertake only such local operations as were needed to improve the course of the foremost line. In a peculiar contradiction to this assigned task, the Army was also, however, urged to win the line Borgo-Cadinjoch-Cavalese, since according to the high command there were just four Austrian battalions with about 10 guns in the Fassaner Alps and the Fleims valley. Aside from this desire, Army HQ left their subordinates freedom to decide their further activity.

Events on the western and southern fronts of Tyrol

Consequently, starting already at the end of November and lasting until deep in the new year the winter on the western front of Tyrol was quiet. Brief artillery duels broke out here and there, but the thunder of the cannon faded in the snowy mountains as quickly as the occasional rattle of rifle fire by reconnaissance patrols.

In the Judicarien, 6 Italian ID sought to capture Mt Nozzolo and Mt Cadria. After several days of heavy bombardment against the fortifications of Lardaro, which had been mostly been stripped of their armament, and of the defensive positions covering the two mountains, on 9 December about two battalions launched an

envelopment assault against the Austrian strong point at Mt Vies, which lay in front of the main position. They failed to reach their goal, and suffered heavy losses. However, it was possible that the small garrison could be cut off, so in the night of 9-10 December the sector commander (Col. Spiegel of 50 Half Bde) had Mt Vies evacuated; the enemy didn't notice. On the next day the Italians occupied the mountain without fighting. They gained little advantage from this operation. After they failed to capture the main position on Mt Nozzolo in the next few days, the Italians on Mt Vies found themselves in an awkward position. Dug in literally on the mountain slope and exposed to fire from their opponents on the opposite crest, they couldn't give up the terrain whose occupation they had proclaimed with boastful words.

An Italian advance east of Lake Garda (in front of the Riva and Rovereto defensive sectors) also failed to improve their position. Here they climbed down from the heights to move their lines north to the line Furche Lopio-Mori and to get closer to Rovereto, even crossing the Terragnolo valley.¹³⁰ Thus they were exposed on the slopes below the Austrian position, which they were unable to assault. During this general advance by V Italian Corps there were some short, lively artillery duels but only small skirmishes in the wide area in front of the defenders' lines. When a fire broke out in the hamlet of Manzano (3 km east of Lake Loppio), the Italian Corps HQ hoped that their opponents were already preparing to retreat. Therefore they drove their left wing sharply against the trenches at Mga Zurez, southeast of Torbole. But the commander of the 6th Alpini Regiment wasn't able to win the triumph he was seeking. On 30 December some Alpini detachments pushed into the trenches, but were soon thrown out by the gallant Landsturm garrison. The Italian casualties were substantial, and included two dozen prisoners; the defenders lost 18 killed and 54 wounded.

After New Year's Day there was winter quiet in the southernmost part of the Tyrol front, broken only by the usual cannonades. On 19 February the Italians directed a rain of 28 cm shells on the fort at Carriola (Por), the last armed fortress of the Lardaro group. Despite several direct hits, the damage was slight. However, the nearby villages in the Chiese valley were blown to pieces by the continuing fire of the enemy artillery.

Activity in the Sugana valley and around the Col di Lana

¹³⁰Italian Official History, Vol. II, Text, pp. 604 ff. and Vol. III, Text, p. 311

The winter was somewhat livelier in the Sugana valley. Here the Italian 1st Army HQ was clearly hampered by the contradictory guidelines they'd been given (as mentioned above). If 15 ID crossed the line Salubio-Borgo-Armenterra, which they'd reached and industriously fortified in the fall, they wouldn't find any defenders in their immediate front. As long as most of their troops stayed in the current liens, 6 to 8 km distant from the Austrian front, 15 ID could hardly "trouble and keep [their opponents] in suspense"; nor would they be able to interfere with traffic on the Caldonazzo-Folgaria road, which was a goal of V Corps HQ. As a result, they adopted half-measures. On 23 December a reinforced Alpini battalion attacked Mt Carbonile, but suffered a sharp repulse from the Kaiser Jaeger Streif company which was holding the mountain. In January the active defenders of this border sector advanced several times with raiding parties and strong patrols past the outpost line Collo-Novaledo-Mt Carbonile, and harassed the enemy cordon. This compelled the Italians to try to seize the above-mentioned line. On 1 February the 15 ID received the order to attack. Once again, however, it reacted indecisively. On 9 February several companies climbed Mt Collo, but were pinned down by fire from the defenders. The small garrison (part of 52 Half Bde) held out gallantly, and the peak of the mountain remained in our hands despite renewed attacks. Italian thrusts against S Osvaldo and Mt Carbonile in the first half of February also failed. Then the advent of strong snowstorms led to the suspension of fighting in the Val Sugana.

While the defenders of the Fassaner Alps spent the entire winter watching patiently while the enemy stayed out of range, the Dolomites were repeatedly attacked. Here the Col di Lana was the principal Italian target, as if some curse demanded that ever new sacrifices were offered on this mountain where so much blood had already flowed. With strong words the HQ of 4th Italian Army ordered IX Corps to seize Mt Sief and the Col di Lana regardless of circumstances. The attack was supposed to be renewed on 11 December, but five days filled with artillery fire transpired before the group of assaulting infantry was ready. They formed three columns - seven companies on the left, five and a half in the middle and four and a half on the right - which climbed forward from the south, east and northeast. The II Bn of L-Sch Regt # III stood ready to hold the mountain with proud and heroic stubbornness. Under their raking fire, the sound of which was drowned by the accurate shots of the defending artillery, the attackers broke down completely; they fell back to their starting points, covered by a snow storm which broke out in the afternoon. The New Year's greeting of the Italians was unfriendly - first

they heavily bombarded the Col di Lana and then the entire Dolomite front. These bombardments were often repeated at various points during January and February. Meanwhile the Italians sought to gain what they'd been denied in open fighting by digging into the earth. They were preparing mines deep under the rocks.

As winter was winding down, GdK Dankl was called to assume greater responsibilities. He handed the Tyrol Land Defense Command over to GdI Roth with the satisfaction of knowing that the defensive front in Tyrol remained unbroken.

b. Activities on the Carinthian front (mid-December 1915 to the end of March 1916)

After XV Corps was placed under GdK Rohr's Armeegruppe, the latter was responsible for over 140 kilometers of front. At the start of 1916 it consisted of 73 battalions with 60,000 riflemen. XV Corps' area was also called the Armeegruppe's new "Sector V."

Just as in Tyrol, military activity on this front - which except for the two basins on the upper Isonzo and in the Fella valley at Malborgeth consisted almost entirely of high Alpine ranges and mountain massifs - was restricted in the winter months to mobile thrusts by small infantry and ski-troop detachments, intended to obtain information and to improve the course of the line. Otherwise the winter quiet of the Alps was disturbed only by the fire of the guns and the loud roar of avalanches.

Local operations are mostly successful

Of the operations undertaken in December, the most important was the storm of the trenches southwest of Dolje (2 ½ km northwest of Tolmein), which had been lost in September. This was accomplished by the II Bn of the west Hungarian IR # 72, which defended its prize against all later attempts by a much larger enemy force to recover the position. The efficient troops of XV Corps and 44 LW ID, accustomed to the mountains, carried out a series of small but always successful thrusts, which brought back a large number of prisoners.

In January and February, small detachments of the defenders once again advanced at Tolmein, on the slopes of the Javorcek and the Rombon, and in the area of the Plöcken Pass. They brushed aside enemy outposts, entered the Italian positions, destroyed

fortifications and installations, and brought back prisoners. In some places they held onto the captured terrain. On 3 January, one such operation led to the capture of an Italian trench north of Dolje; on the 4th a strong enemy counterattack was repulsed in fighting involving hand grenades and artillery. On the Rombon slope a small Italian outpost was taken on 18 January, and held despite attacks on the 22nd and 23rd.

At the start of February the 8 Mtn Bde was able to recover terrain on the western slope of Heights # 588 by Tolmein, which had been lost in August 1915. After a week of digging saps against the wing of the point where the Italians had broken in, their position on the slope was rendered untenable. In the night of 31 January-1 February the Italians quietly evacuated the area and pulled back beyond the Ciginj-Selo road. Then 8 Mtn Bde moved their foremost line ahead almost as far as this stretch of road. The enemy's abandonment of this position which they had only captured after many difficult actions spared the troops of the k.u.k. 1 ID the long-planned attack which would have been necessary to restore their original front. The advantage of the new foremost line was that it shortened the front and provided an opportunity for our own artillery to provide effective flanking fire.¹³¹

A few days later - on 12 February - parts of LW IR # 4 from 44 LW ID on the Rombon fought a brilliant action and were also able to recover an outpost that had fallen into the enemy's hands in August. Here a battalion of Alpini with a mountain battery had established a strong outpost on the Cukla Heights, a peak about a kilometer southwest of the summit of the Rombon. It was a standing menace to our weak forces in this difficult high mountain sector, since it completely dominated the positions on the slopes, where it made any movement nearly impossible. Moreover, the outpost provided enemy artillery an excellent observation point on the flank and behind the lines of 44 LW ID. To overcome this disadvantage, the commander of the Flitsch sub-sector, Col. Arthur Edl. von Schuschnigg, planned to occupy the heights in a night-time *coup de main*.¹³²

131In the recovered area, the enemy had left behind over 3000 rifles with 300,000 rounds of ammunition, plus a large number of tools and other equipment. 800 dead Italians had been buried here.

132TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - This colonel was the father of Kurt von Schuschnigg, the chancellor who surrendered Austria to the Nazis in 1938.

To carry out this thrust, after darkness fell on 12 February two companies of LW IR # 4 began to move ahead through snow that was piled as high as a man, and were deployed to attack the enemy position from below. Around 3:00 AM the sentries were quietly disposed of, the slope was climbed, and the surprised Italians driven out after a short melee.¹³³ Counterattacks were initiated immediately, and repeated on 13, 14 and 20 February, each time after careful artillery preparation; they were repulsed. On 17 February some adjacent parts of the position were mopped up, and several dozen prisoners and a machine gun were taken.

Many special operations were carried out on the upper Isonzo in February, and almost all were successful. Thus storm troops from the Javorcek garrison repeatedly struck enemy outposts, in one sector nine times. On 10 February a small detachment from 8 Mtn Bde thrust against the Italian occupied Mt Woltasch (or "Mt Calvary") and destroyed their positions and installations. Finally, on 22 February a battalion from 3 Mtn Bde occupied the Italian trenches on the western slope of the Mrzli vrh, but they had to give up their prize on the next day due to enveloping counterattacks. These minor operations clearly showed that the attacking spirit of the k.u.k. troops was unbroken despite the long positional warfare.

Thereafter heavy snow storms in the mountains led to a long and complete halt to any fighting. Meanwhile activity picked up on the middle Isonzo and in the coastal sector. Artillery fighting intensified on the Karst and around Görz in the first days of March. The 5th k.u.k. Army was engaged anew along its entire front from 11 March. At the same time the commander of the Italian 2nd Army, G.Lt Frugoni, ordered his left wing on the upper Isonzo to advance in accordance with the guidelines which had been given for the winter fighting. He assigned occupation of the Mrzli vrh as the first goal of IV Corps, and of the hills still held by Aus-Hung. troops around the Tolmein bridgehead on the western bank of the Isonzo as the goal of VIII Corps. However, in these sectors the next few days witnessed only a heavy bombardment of the positions, and feeble attempts by the Italian infantry to move closer to our lines. They were implemented without force or elan, and never achieved success.

1331 officer and 82 men were taken prisoner, and 4 machine guns were captured. The attackers lost 1 officer and 4 men killed, 30 men wounded. During the counterattacks and bombardments from 13 to 20 February another officer and 26 men were killed, 3 officers and 60 men wounded; total enemy casualties were 18 officers and 384 men.

Finally both Italian corps broke off all their military operations in mid-March because of bad weather.

By restricting themselves to just weak assaults on the upper Isonzo, the enemy failed to exploit a very favorable opportunity to win some easy success. This was because the defenders were carrying out troop movements that substantially lessened their power of resistance, and brought older troops and those with less mountain experience to the front.

Transfer of troops from Rohr's command to other sectors

GdK Rohr's Armeegruppe, which became the k.u.k. 10th Army on 25 January, had become a welcome reservoir of available units for the high command after it fought its last major actions in October 1915. Since there were few casualties in the long period of winter quiet, while replacement troops continued to arrive, both the units of the common army and the Landwehr regiments were able to create extra companies and battalions. Thus in January when the Armeegruppe had to give up a Honved battalion it was replaced by three Landsturm battalions.¹³⁴ At the end of the month units began to leave for the upcoming offensive in southern Tyrol which the the high command had meanwhile authorized. The result was a series of substantial troop transfers within 10th Army's sector, which were finally completed at the end of March.

HQ of the Southwest Front had first ordered that the Army should be ready to give up about a fifth of all its field and heavy howitzer batteries, so that they could be employed at other points along the front that were more threatened. On 9 February there followed an order to give up 48 ID, which was supposed to be ready by 1 March in the area Oberdrauburg-Greifenberg. Since at this time the plans of the high command hadn't been revealed to 10th Army HQ, the HQ of Southwest Front justified this order by stating that "the general situation makes it necessary to hold the Carinthian-Julian front with a minimal number of troops, and to move the units thus made available to another theater of operations." Army HQ thus couldn't count on receiving any replacements for the troops who were leaving; they would have to pull some of their best men from other sectors to defend the important Plöcken area. They decided that Sector I (Plöcken) would consist of Col. Joseph Fasser's group (which was staying) and a group led by Col. Ritter von Wasserthal (from XV Corps);

¹³⁴The unit in question was the I Bn/Hon IR # 13, which was sent to the k.u.k. 4th Army; it was replaced by k.k. Lst Inf Bns IV/10 and IV/34 plus k.u. Lst Inf Bn I/7.

the latter consisted of 25 Mtn Bde, three battalions from 44 LW ID, and 57 Mtn Bde from 92 ID. FML Kuczera's 94 ID HQ, which hitherto had been responsible for Sector II, took over Sector I on 28 February. In turn, GM Globocnik took over Sector II; on 1 April his troops became the 26 Mtn Bde.¹³⁵

These changes in Sector I had just been implemented when 10th Army HQ received an order to give up a mountain brigade from XV Corps, since the Army was getting 22 Lst Mtn Bde from the Balkans. By 20 March they were also supposed to pull 44 LW ID out of the front and prepare it to move elsewhere.

8 Mtn Bde was chosen to be reassigned from XV Corps. It was relieved by 22 Lst Mtn Bde in the last days of March without difficulty, since a new offensive by the enemy wasn't anticipated after their evacuation from in front of the southern wing of the Tolmein bridgehead. It was far more difficult to replace 44 LW ID, in its important and inaccessible high mountains sector, with new troops who hadn't become accustomed to the Alps and who were unfamiliar with the local style of fighting. For this purpose the HQ of Southwest Front (through 10th Army HQ) sent BH IR # 4 to GM Greiner, who was placed in charge of the sector. The Bosnians had hitherto fought on the Russian front and had to receive new equipment for the mountains. Moreover, k.k. Landsturm Bn # 41 came from Sector II, FJB # 20 from Sector III, two battalions of k.k. Lst IR # 26 from Sector IV and Battalion I/91 from Sector V. Finally, several companies of 44 LW ID stayed in the area temporarily to back up the new and untested troops. XV Corps stretched its right wing to the north to take over the lines formerly held by 44 LW ID on the Krn. The relief of the 44th took place between 16 and 24 March. By the end of the month the men began to move by train from the Tarvis-Kronau area. Meanwhile, by 4 April the 8 Mtn Bde was being shipped from the Assling area. From 1 April the troops holding Sector IV made up 27 Mtn Bde.

Since 10th Army had given up its best units and many batteries, its combat strength was significantly reduced. At the start of April it had just 13 active battalions, plus many Landsturm troops. Somehow this difficulty would have to be overcome until further units became available. Although the Carinthian front

¹³⁵During January and February the k.u.k. 10th Army gave up a total of 16 battalions (15,000 riflemen), 40 machine guns and the following batteries - 5 of mountain cannon, 2 mountain howitzer, 2 field howitzer, 2 heavy field howitzer and 1 ½ of heavy mortars.

was protected by snow-covered mountains which made movement difficult, the positions in the valleys by Malborgeth, Flitsch and Tolmein remained vulnerable to attack.

Hardships of the winter season

Although the troops stayed mainly on the defensive, winter itself claimed its victims. By mid-March, 600 men in 10th Army had been killed just by avalanches, despite the measures taken by ski detachments, Alpine instructors with each division, and special personnel to deal with these catastrophes, all of which took part in rescue operations. Regardless of precautions and the advice of many Alpine specialists, the troops were still powerless against this "white plague", as it was called by the famous skier and mountain-climber Mathias Zdarsky in his letters from the front to the 10th Army's Chief of Staff. Naturally the enemy had to contend with the same problem.

Winter also made it much more difficult to get supplies to the front lines. On the other hand, in December the opening of the rail line in the Gail valley as far as Kötschach-Mauthen eased the flow of supplies and other traffic for Sector I, while completion of a tunnel for the winter road on the Predil did the same for Sector IV. The importance of the latter was all the greater because the road over the Mojstrovka Pass which had been built in fall, as well as the cable railway, were often closed for months in winter because of avalanches. At the end of February a lengthy snowfall made the winter road on the Predil impassable; at this point the only supply line to the positions at Flitsch was the tunnel at Raibl which had been opened to traffic in the fall.

3. Operations of the k.u.k. 5th Army from the start of the year to the start of March

It was clear to the Southwest Front HQ that the Italians were hardly likely to attack in the winter months; however, in the spring they would probably resume their assaults in the same sectors as previously - mainly on the Isonzo. Intelligence reports soon confirmed that in Italy preparations had begun for powerful operations on a large scale.

Thus the objectives of the defenders of the Isonzo for the immediate future were pre-ordained. At this time they were still unaware of the secret plans of the high command for 1916. All

they could do was to use their available resources and strength to repair the positions which had been heavily damaged in the autumn fighting and to improve them as much as possible. They would also build up ammunition supplies for the upcoming campaigns and keep the troops in readiness to fight. The latter goal could best be achieved by pushing back the Italians who'd dug in right in front of our lines, especially in front of the Tolmein bridgehead, with well-prepared small thrusts. This was all the more necessary since the enemy apparently planned to overcome the defenders' bulwarks at the key sectors of the earlier fighting - where they'd been defeated despite a great expenditure of firepower and masses of men - by mine warfare. Our leadership had the impression that it was necessary to at least slightly improve the layout of the cramped and narrow Görz bridgehead.

The deployment of the Aus-Hung. troops on the Isonzo was basically unaltered for the time being. After XV Corps was reassigned to Rohr's Armeegruppe, the 5th Army covered the battle front between Auzza and the sea with three sectors -

- . Sector I (ex II) extended from Auzza to the Wippach; it was led by XVI Corps (18 and 58 ID, 9 and 60 Inf Bdes);
- . Sector II (ex III.a) extended from the Wippach to Mt dei sei Busi (inclusive); it was led by III Corps (6 and 28 ID, 106 Lst ID, 22 LW ID, and most of 187 Lst Inf Bde); and
- . Sector III (ex III.b) covered the line to Duino; it was led by 61 ID HQ (over 9 ID and 9 Lst Inf Bde).

The Coastal Sector IV was extended in mid-December to include the Sistiana Cove, hitherto under Sector III. Besides its original units, it now had the remaining two battalions of 187 Lst Inf Bde. Southwest Front HQ ordered that the Sector's commander, Counter Admiral Freih. von Koudelka, would be responsible for all ground and naval forces in the area.¹³⁶

136The unified Army-Navy command was necessary because of increased enemy activity on the Gulf of Trieste, where Italian destroyers had repeatedly attacked our mine-layers and other vessels at the start of December and bombarded the Sistiana Cove. The commander of 187 Lst Inf Bde, Counter Admiral Koudelka, simultaneously led the Trieste naval district, where however GM Ritter von Wasserthal had also been in charge as commander of Sector IV. Therefore it had been necessary to clarify the chain of command. GM Wasserthal remained commander of the Trieste city garrison. To improve the harbor defenses some heavy guns were sent to Sector IV, while the fleet HQ expanded and added to the mine fields.

Coastal Sector V (Fiume) was unchanged.

At the end of 1915 the troops directly under 5th Army HQ consisted of VII Corps - with 17 ID at Ranziano and Selo, 20 Hon ID around Comen - and 16 Lst Inf Bde (at Schön Pass).

On 20 December the high command ordered 9 Inf Bde to be transported to southeast Galicia, where the Russians were preparing a new blow against the Aus.-Hung. front on the Dniester. The Brigade, which had been assigned to XVI Corps, was relieved from the front and between 22 and 29 December sent by train to the East. In its place the 16 Lst Mtn Bde was placed under XVI Corps.

Shortly thereafter, the 14 Mtn Bde also had to be given up because of preparations for the offensive in Montenegro. As a reserve of the AOK it assembled at Haidenschaft, and entrained in the last days of December.

Since the start of the autumn fighting the Isonzo front had been reinforced by two infantry divisions (6 and 9) plus two infantry brigades (206 Lst and 9). In the same period, however, three brigades (10 and 14 Mtn, 9 Inf) had to be given up and one (206 Lst Inf) was dissolved. Thus at the start of January 1916 there were two more brigades available than at the start of the fall battles; however, this gain had been offset by casualties and losses from illness. The rifle strength of 5th Army at the front (including that of XV Corps, which had temporarily been reassigned) was about the same as at the start of the autumn fighting, despite the larger number of units.

The fighting on the heights at Oslavija

In the period between the end of the autumn battles and the start of March 1916, the most significant of the operations undertaken by the k.u.k. troops on the middle and lower Isonzo was the storm of the heights at Oslavija.

In the last days of November the enemy had seized an area along the road from St Florian to Pevma, reaching a point just one kilometer from the Isonzo River. This was a direct and permanent menace to the shaky position of the defenders of this sector; at any time the Italians could use the area as the starting point for a breakthrough into the already precarious bridgehead.

Dismal weather, which especially hampered the effectiveness of

artillery, and continuing humid conditions which turned the entire area between the lines into a deep swamp delayed the plans of GM Zeidler, the bridgehead commander, for improving the situation. Nevertheless, in December some small detachments and storm troops pushed the enemy on the Podgora back by about 200 paces. At Oslavija, however, a well-prepared operation couldn't be carried out until mid-January.

After a systematic bombardment of the area occupied by the Italians, seven companies advanced in bright moonlight on the evening of the 14th. As planned, within half an hour they captured all the enemy positions from Heights # 188 to the "Church Ridge" at Oslavija (inclusive). Over 1000 prisoners (including 34 officers) were taken, along with several machine guns and trench mortars.

The brilliant thrust by this small group had an effect similar to swatting a wasps' nest. All of the overpowering artillery of the Italian VI Corps and of the northern wing of Aosta's Army quickly responded with a storm of fire of unprecedented magnitude. It was directed against the recovered position, the bridges on the Isonzo and the city of Görz. From all directions G.Lt. Capello, whose VI Corps had been the target of the operation, assembled his reserves in the direction of Oslavija. Heights # 188 were held by just a few platoons because of the massed enemy fire, and on 15 January they had to be evacuated when hit by strong counterattacks. An attempt to again recover the heights was a failure, and on the 16th the Italians, after committing significant reinforcements, also took the Church Ridge in a desperate struggle.¹³⁷ Therefore our operation had to be canceled. In three days' fighting the 58 ID had lost 600 men (including 34 officers); the enemy's casualties were 68 officers and 1440 men from 27 ID, and 43 officers and 741 men from 11 ID.¹³⁸

On 20 January the Italian high command ordered 11 and 27 ID to be relieved by the Granatieri Brigade from the strategic reserve and by three brigades from 1st Army. Of these troops, the grenadiers joined VI Corps by 24 January, and the brigades from the Tyrol front joined in February. This measure was supposed to make it

137By 16 January, parts of six infantry regiments and three bicycle battalions were identified at Oslavija. By evening of this day, the neighboring II Corps sent two battalions to the scene of the fighting, and four more came from the reserves of the high command.

138Italian Official History, Vol. III, Text, p. 167

possible for VI Corps to continue attacking with siege-warfare tactics.

Meanwhile on 19 January GM Zeidler had proposed to XVI Corps HQ his plan for a second and final attempt to recapture the Oslavija heights. This time the infantry assault would occur in daytime after a brief artillery preparation. The operation was planned to take place on 24 January. A total of 3 ½ battalions¹³⁹ were deployed early on the 24th in caves and fortifications along an arc covering about 1 km, opposite the advanced enemy position between Heights # 188 and the southwestern slope of Church Ridge. The 24 batteries assigned to the operation opened a preliminary bombardment, and then increased the intensity for two hours in the afternoon. Around 5:00 PM the infantry advanced, aided by some fog that was developing. In the first onslaught, the half battalion of the Hungarian IR # 69 seized Heights # 188 from the enemy, while the Dalmatian Landwehr on the left wing drove the Italians from Church Ridge without any difficulty. The only heavy fighting took place in the area between these two heights. Bn II/52 in the center was finally able to advance after sappers broke through the strong barriers with ecrasite explosives and flame throwers; here also the enemy was overcome. The carefully prepared operation was a complete success. By 7:00 PM all of the positions lost in the fourth Isonzo battle were back in our hands, along with 1200 prisoners and 6 machine guns.¹⁴⁰

However, strong counterattacks in the night of 24-25 January (involving ten battalions)¹⁴¹ forced the temporary evacuation of the Church Ridge; thanks to our continuing artillery fire the enemy was unable to occupy the position. For the time being the k.u.k. troops used the trenches here only as an advanced outpost at night; finally in March the ridge became a permanent day-time position.

Although the Italians had assembled about 20 to 23 battalions opposite the northern wing of the bridgehead by evening on the 25th, they didn't make any further counterattacks. Thus after just two days the new front was established on a makeshift basis, and the situation in the Oslavija sector could be considered secure. Casualties to the attacking group on 24 and 25 January

139In the first line were Bns II/52, ½ III/69, and III/LW IR 37, a total of 10 companies; in reserve was the I Bn of LW IR 37.

140The 1200 prisoners included 45 officers (2 were from the staffs); the men were from five different regiments, mostly from 27 ID.

141Italian Official History, Vol. III, Text, p. 171

had been 9 officers and 325 men, while the Italians lost 120 officers and 2200 men.¹⁴²

Other operations through the start of March

The fighting at Görz led to diversionary attacks by the 3rd Italian Army against III Corps on the Karst. On 24 January all the Italian artillery started to bring both the Karst plateau and the Görz sector under heavy fire. The fire increased from dawn on the 25th. Around 10:00 AM the Italian XI Corps plus a brigade from XIII Corps attacked Mt S Michele. This feeble assault hardly reached the outer barriers.

To ensure that assaults against the Görz bridgehead and the Karst were overseen by one headquarters, on 30 January the Italian high command removed VI Corps and 4 ID from 2nd Army; they were placed under the Duke of Aosta, whose 3rd Army thus extended now as far as Mt Sabotino.¹⁴³ At the end of January, an exchange of brigades was initiated between the Tyrol and Isonzo fronts, apparently with the intention of bolstering the main front with fresh fighting troops. Three brigades from Tyrol entered the line in front of Görz in February and two more in March; further exchanges were halted due to changes in the situation.

From 1 February the enemy's activity increased, especially in sectors where the two battle lines lay very close together - at Plava and Oslavija, on the Podgora, and in the northern part of the Karst. The winter quiet of positional warfare was broken almost every day by renewed artillery fighting; at night there were skirmishes between patrols, and actions involving hand grenades and mines. An attack by several enemy companies west of San Martino on 13 February was unsuccessful. From 25 February the Italians pretended they were about to attack by bombarding our positions along the entire front. Most detachments they sent forward to scout were pushed back by long-range fire; only on the 27th was a battalion able to twice set foot in our trenches southeast of Peteano. However, it was driven out by a counterattack, in which it lost about 130 men as prisoners and 100 others dead or wounded.

¹⁴²*Op. cit.*, p. 172

¹⁴³From this time the Italian VI Corps consisted of 4 and 11 ID, each of three brigades, plus 12 ID with two brigades. As previously, they were opposed by the k.u.k. 58 ID (one infantry and two mountain brigades).

4. The Fifth Battle of the Isonzo, 11-16 March

a. The k.u.k. 5th Army at the start of the battle

The changes in the composition of 5th Army since the start of the year involved placing some good units and artillery at the disposal of the high command. The Common Army and Landwehr regiments were only partly replaced by Landsturm units which were less likely to succeed in the Isonzo fighting.

The AOK issued its first order for the troop concentrations on 8 February - III Corps with 6, 22 and 28 ID was to be held in readiness to be transported to "another theater of operations." The order also announced that 18 ID would probably also be involved. Moreover, the Army would give up a number of batteries - especially those of new heavy caliber guns. As a partial replacement, 5th Army received the following units, a total of 23 battalions, by mid-March:

- . From the Balkans came 62 ID on 17 February and Lt Col Maderspach's group of four Landsturm battalions on 8 March;
- . From the Russian front came 21 Lst Mtn Bde on 20 February and k.k. Lst IR # 11 on 2 March.

Since these Landsturm units couldn't rely on receiving regular replacements, it was decided that the 21 Lst Mtn Bde would gradually give up troops to 62 ID, so that for a time at least the Division could be kept strong enough for battle. Army HQ sent all the newly-arrived forces to the XVI Corps sector, and intended to have 62 ID replace 18 ID when the latter departed. The other troops served as the Army's reserve, ready to relieve front-line units.

The first priority on the Karst plateau was to have VII Corps relieve III Corps. 20 Hon ID took the place of 6 ID while 17 ID relieved 28 ID. This troop movement was carried out between 14 and 18 February. On the latter day the VII Corps HQ once more took over control of Sector II. 106 Lst ID, to which 187 Lst Inf Bde was assigned, had already sent the 187th to take over 22 LW ID's sector on 11 and 12 February; the Division once more held the front between Ruins # 143 and Mt dei sei Busi. In addition, Army HQ had ordered 12 field batteries (11 cannon and 1 howitzer) to leave the front to serve as light field artillery for III Corps; the Corps' heavy artillery then followed these batteries. Yet more heavy batteries were still supposed to leave.

22 LW ID consisted of 43 LW Bde and of 18 Inf Bde (the latter hitherto had been part of 9 ID). To replace the 18th, Sector III received 16 Lst Mtn Bde from XVI Corps. Hereafter the 61 ID would command 16 and 19 Lst Mtn Bdes, while 9 ID contained 17 Inf Bde plus 60 Inf Bde (the latter, however, was serving in the Görz bridgehead).

By 1 March the III Corps was ready to move to its new assignment, with 28 ID at Oberlaibach-Loitsch, 22 LW ID at Opcina, and 6 ID at Ranziano. The three divisions left by train between 12 and 26 March. By 3 March the 62 ID had arrived in XVI Corps' sector from the Balkans and had relieved 18 ID, which departed between 13 and 23 March.

At the middle of March, just when fighting flared up into the Fifth Battle of the Isonzo, the strength of 5th Army waned due to the departure of these four well-tried divisions and of the heavy artillery.¹⁴⁴ The number of battalions declined from 147 to about 100 (of which more than half were Landsturm), and the number of guns from 693 to 467. Since the high command hadn't revealed their plans to their immediate subordinates, the latter naturally had many concerns. On 15 February GdI Borojevic reported forcefully that his front could not be weakened any further and that he was concerned about a possible Italian attack. The high command responded that they were aware of the temporarily difficult situation of 5th Army, caused by their decision, and that they appreciated the calm and confident attitude that Borojevic's report also revealed. Anyway they did intend to redress the numerical imbalance of forces on the Isonzo (including that of the artillery) if the Italians mounted a major new offensive.¹⁴⁵ Finally on 3 March the high command informed Army HQ about their own plan of attack.

144By the end of March, the following batteries had left the Isonzo front - 12 of field cannon, 8 of mountain cannon, 8 of field howitzers, 2 of mountain howitzers, 6 of heavy cannon, 8 of heavy howitzers, 2 of 15 cm mortars, 2 of 24 cm mortars and 3 of 30.5 cm mortars.

145In mid-March the AOK drew up an estimate of the relative size of the two forces, based on the latest intelligence regarding the enemy. The ratio between the k.u.k. 5th Army and the Italian 3rd Army plus II Corps was 1 to 2.6; between the k.u.k. 10th Army and the Italian Carnic Group, IV Corps and VIII Corps it was 1 to 1.7; between the k.u.k. units in Tyrol and the 1st and 4th Italian Armies it was 1.9 to 1.

Order of battle of 10th and 5th Armies on 10 March 1916

Both armies (as well as the troops in Tyrol) were under HQ of the **Southwestern Front** at Marburg

Commander = GO Archduke Eugene

Chief of Staff = FML Alfred Krauss

10th Army (ex Armeegruppe Rohr, redesignated on 25 January 1916)

Commander = GdK Rohr

Chief of Staff = FML Scotti

Sector I (94th ID) (FML Kuczera)

Strength = 13,600 foot, 98 horse, 88 guns

. Col Fasser's Group = Bn II/7; FJB # 30; II Bn/Carinthian Volunteer Rifle Regt

. Col. Konstantin, Ritter von Wasserthal's Group = Bns III/7, III/57; FJB # 8; k.k. Lst Inf Bns 10, 43, IV/34

. 57 Mtn Bde (GM Freih. von Henneberg) = Bns III/18, I/LW IR 2, II/LW IR 4, I/LW IR 27; k.k. Lst Inf Bn 149

. Divisional troops = One high mtn comp, 7 ski dets, 2 ski MG dets; $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1 Ma Sqdn/DR # 4; k.k. Lst Sapper Det 4/3, 5 Comp/PB 7

. Artillery (under Lt Col Mandich) = 9 Batty/FKR 40, 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 4, 5 Can Batty/Mtn AR 6, 2 Can Batty/Mtn AR 10, 5 Can Batty/Mtn AR 11, 5 Can Batty/Mtn AR 13, 2 How Batty/Mtn AR 1

. Attached from Army HQ = 3 Batty/FHR 17 [from 17 ID of 5th Army], 1 & 2 Batties/FHR 44 [from 44 LW ID], one 12 cm improvised can batty, one 15 cm L.40 marine cannon, half of 15 cm How Batty 57; 15 cm Mor Batties 3, 6, 7; three 9 cm fixed can platoons; four 7 cm mtn cannon, seven 47 mm marine cannon; 2 heavy and 50 light trench mortars, 2 grenade launchers

Sector II (Group Globocnik) (GM Globocnik)

Strength = 5211 foot, 40 horse, 25 guns

. Sub-Sector West (Lt Col von Gautsch) = k.k. Lst Inf Bns 40, 150

. Sub-Sector East (Lt Col Fritsch) = k.k. Lst Inf Bns 41, 153; a combined vol rifle bn [of volunteer Salzburg & Young Rifle troops]; five ski dets, two ski MG dets

. Artillery (Major Kniha) = 5 Can Batty/FHR 17, 7 Batty/FHR 34, 1 & 2 Can Batties/Mtn AR 5

. Sector troops = $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1 Ma Sqdn/DR 4; 6 Comp/PB 3

. Attached from Army HQ = One 15 cm L.40 marine cannon, $\frac{1}{2}$ 15 cm Mor Batty 13; one 9 cm fixed cannon platoon; 4 heavy and 20 light trench mortars

Sector III (92nd ID) (GM Fernengel)

Strength = 7458 foot, 98 horse, 76 guns

. 59 Mtn Bde (Col Edler von Dietrich) = Comb FJB, k.k. Lst Inf Bn

151, k.u. Lst Inf Bn I/7; Carinthia Vol Rifle Regt [3]
 . Lt Col Scotti's Group = I & IV Bns/7; FJB # 20; 13 & 14 Comps of LW IR # 4; two ski dets, one ski MG det
 . Artillery (Lt Col Petak) = 7 Batty/FKR 42, 5 Can Batty/Mtn AR 2, 2 Can Batty/Mtn AR 8; $\frac{1}{2}$ 1 How Batty/Mtn AR 11
 . Divisional troops = 3 Ma Sqdn/DR # 4; 7 Comp/SB 3
 . Attached from Army HQ = 12 cm Can Batty 13, 12 cm Belgian Can Batty 2; one 12 cm improvised Can Batty; one 15 cm L.40 marine cannon; $\frac{1}{2}$ 15 cm How Batty 11, 15 cm Belgian How Batty 8; $\frac{1}{2}$ 15 cm Mor Batty 4, $\frac{1}{2}$ 15 cm Mor Batty 13, $\frac{1}{2}$ 30.5 cm Mor Batty 18; ten 9 cm fixed can platoons; two 47 mm marine cannon; 2 heavy and 30 light trench mortars; Armored Train X
 . Fort Malborgeth = 8 Comp/Fort Arty Bn 2, 1 Comp/Fort Arty Bn 14 (8 guns)
 . Fort Raibl = $\frac{1}{2}$ 2 Comp/Fort Arty Bn 14 (12 guns)

Sector IV (44th LW ID) (FML Nemecek)

Strength = 11,294 foot, 150 horse, 75 guns

. 44 LW Inf Bde (Col Majewski) = [Mtn] LW IR # 4 [2 $\frac{1}{4}$], 27 [2 $\frac{3}{4}$]; one ski MG det
 . 87 LW Inf Bde (GM Jellenchich) = LW IR # 2 [2 $\frac{1}{2}$], 21 [3]; one ski MG det
 . 44 FA Bde (Col Edl. von Ellenberger) = 3 & 4 Batties/FHR 44, 4 Batty/Turkey How Regt; 1, 3, 4 & 5 Can Batties and 2 How Batty/Mtn AR 3; $\frac{1}{2}$ 1 How Batty/Mtn AR 11
 . Divisional troops = Res Sqdn/DR 10; 7 Comp/SB 7, 3 Comp/SB 11
 . Attached from Army HQ = $\frac{1}{2}$ 15 cm How Batty 11, $\frac{1}{2}$ 15 cm Mor Batty 4, 24 cm Mor Batty 2; four 9 cm fixed cannon platoons; two 37 mm marine canon, three 47 mm marine cannon; 2 heavy & 30 light trench mortars, 8 grenade launchers
 . Fort Flitsch = $\frac{1}{2}$ 2 Comp/Fort Arty Bn 14 (11 guns)

Sector V (XV Corps)

Commander = GdI Edler von Stöger-Steiner

C/Staff = Col Theodor Edler von Körner

Strength = 24 bns, 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ sqdns, 24 batties, 4 tech comps; 24,500 foot, 258 horse, 127 guns

. 50th ID (FML Edler von Kalser) = 10,120 foot, 150 horse, 36 guns
 . 3 Mtn Bde (GM Gerabek) = Bns II/18, IV/30, IV/37, III/46, IV/80; 3 newly formed extra comps; 3 Can Batty/Mtn AR 2, 2 Can Batty/Mtn AR 13
 . 15 Mtn Bde (GM Edl von Wieden) = Bns IV/33, II/34, I/61, II/66, I/91; 2 newly formed extra comps; 3 Can Batty/Mtn AR 5, 3 Can Batty/Mtn AR 13
 . 50 FA Bde (Lt Col Gallistel) = 3 & 4 Batties/Hon FKR 6, 4 Can Batty/Mtn AR 13, 2 How Batty/Mtn AR 7

- . 4 Sqdn/Tyrol LW Uhlan Bn, 8 Comp/SB 13
- . 1st ID (FML Schmidt Edl von Fussina) = 10,850 foot, 108 horse, 36 guns
 - . 7 Mtn Bde (GM Ströher) = Bns II/5, IV/25, III/85, III/86; BH FJB # 6; 4 newly-formed extra comps; 6 Can Batty/Mtn AR 3, 4 Can Batty/Mtn AR 10
 - . 8 Mtn Bde (GM Wossala) = Bns IV/24, III/35, IV/53, IV/58; BH FJB # 5; 5 newly-formed extra comps; 4 Can Batty/Mtn AR 11, 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 14
 - . 1 FA Bde (Lt Col Nowakowski) = 7 & 8 Batties/FKR 39, 1 How Batty/Mtn AR 1, 2 How Batty/Mtn AR 11
 - . $\frac{3}{4}$ 1 Sqdn/UR 12; 4 Comp/SB 13
- . Corps troops = k.k. Lst IR # 26 [3]; 3 Batty/FKR 21, 4 Batty/FHR 17; 1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ 2 How Batties/Heavy FAR XV; 2 Comp/SB 6, 2 Comp/PB 8; 24 heavy & 50 light t-mortars, 6 medium grenade launchers
- . Attached from Army HQ = 10.4 cm Can Batty 1, 2 How Batty/Hvy FAR 20; 15 cm Mor Batties 1, 8; $\frac{1}{2}$ 15 cm Mor Batty 4; $\frac{1}{2}$ 30.5 cm Mor Batty 18; three 9 cm fixed can batties; four 7 cm mtn cannon, three 8 cm improvised Flak cannon, two Russian flak cannon, one 37 mm marine cannon, one 47 mm marine cannon

TOTALS for 10th Army = 61 bns (plus 42 newly-formed extra comps), 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ sqdns, 66 batties (45 light, 21 medium or heavy), 16 fort arty comps, 10 tech comps (plus 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ RR comp), 1 flieger comp¹⁴⁶, 1 armored train. 62,052 foot, 644 horse, 391 guns (314 light, 77 medium or heavy); 180 light and 40 heavy t-mortars, 16 grenade launchers, 40 flamethrowers

Following was in 10th Army's sector (by Oberdrauburg and Lienz), but under the AOK...

- . 48th ID (FML Gabriel) = 10,000 foot, 150 horse, 32 guns
 - . 11 Mtn Bde (GM Lawrowski) = Bns I/10, IV/20, I/21, IV/77, III/BH 3; three ski dets, one sk MG det; 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 1, 2 Can Batty/Mtn AR 4
 - . 12 Mtn Bde (GM Prince Schwarzenberg) = Bns I/3, II/37, II/57, I/93, II/100; two ski dets, one ski MG det; 5 Can Batty/Mtn AR 14, 3 Can Batty/Mtn AR 20
 - . 48 FA Bde (Col Koppensteiner) = 1 & 2 Can Batties/Mtn AR 6, 1 How Batty/Mtn AR 3, 1 How Batty/Mtn AR 7
 - . 1 Sqdn/Tyrol LW Uhlan Bn; 7 Comp/SB 2
- . Attached to 48 ID from Army HQ - FHR 3 [4 batties]; 3 & 4 Batties/FHR 22, 6 Can Batty/Mtn AR 2, 2 How Batty/Heavy FAR 28; 15 cm How Batties 3 & 34; 15 cm Mor Batty 2; 30.5 cm Mor Batties

146TRANSLATOR's NOTE - The flieger comp included in the totals isn't listed in the order of battle; probably it was Flik # 16 (based in Carinthia throughout 1915-17).

1, 10

5th Army

Commander = GdI von Boroevic

C/Staff = FML von Le Beau

Sector I (XVI Corps)

Commander = FZM Wurm

C/Staff = Col Graf

Strength = 30 bns, $\frac{3}{4}$ sqdns, 44 batties, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ tech comps, 3 Flieger comps; 24,574 foot, 78 horse, 191 guns

. 62nd ID (GM Novak von Arienti) = 10,056 foot, 65 horse, 40 guns
(The Division arrived from the Balkans on 17 February)

. 205 k.k. Lst Inf Bde (GM von Reinöhl) = Fort Bn # 6; k.k. Lst IR # 409 [3], 410 [3]; $\frac{1}{4}$ 3 Sqdn/DR # 14

. 209 k.u. Lst Inf Bde (Col von Pacor) = k.u. Lst IR # 2 [3] (had not yet joined); k.u. Lst Inf Bns VI/4, III/5, IV/26, VI/30, III/31; $\frac{1}{4}$ Res Sqdn/HR # 10

. 62 FA Bde (Col Vollgruber) = 6 Batty/FKR 15, 6 Batty/FKR 17, 1 & 2 Batties/Hon FKR 6; 5 & 6 Batties/FHR 34; also 7 Batty/FHR 36 (attached from 21 Lst Mtn Bde)

. $\frac{1}{4}$ 2 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 4; 6 Comp/SB 13

. 58th ID (GM Erwin Zeidler) = 14,518 foot, 13 horse, 48 guns

. 4 Mtn Bde (Col Lercher) = Bns II/52, III/69; LW IR # 37 [3]

. 5 Mtn Bde (GM Nöhrling) = Bns II & III/22 (had joined from 18 ID to replace Bns I & V/22 in the Bde); LW IR # 23 [3]

. 60 Inf Bde (GM Ritter von Gruber; officially the Bde belonged to 9 ID, where it replaced 18 Inf Bde when the latter transferred to 22 LW ID) = IR # 30 [3], 80 [2]

. 58 FA Bde (Lt Col Grund) = 3 Batty/FKR 26; 6 Batty/Turkey FHR. Attached from 61 ID: 8 & 9 Batties/FKR 21, 6 Batty/FKR 31, 6 Batty/FKR 39, 7 Can Batty/FHR 7, 6 Can Batty/FHR 17; 1, 2 & 3 Batties/Turkey FHR [latter 3 batties later organized as Res FHR 58]. Attached from 9 ID: 2 Batty/FHR 9

. 2 Ma Sqdn/LW UR 6 (detached to Sector VI, Trieste); 7 Comp/SB 9

. Corps troops = Heavy FAR XVI [3]

. Attached from Army HQ = 1 & 2 Batties/FKR 44, 5 (Belgian) Batty/FHR 11; 12 cm Belgian Can Batty 1; 15 cm Can Batty 6; 15 cm Fixed Can Batty 9; 15 cm Russian Can Batties 1 & 3; one 15 cm L.35 marine cannon, on 15 cm L.50 marine cannon; 2 How Batty/Hvy FAR 9; 15 cm How Batties 26 & 43; 15 cm Mor Batties 10 & 15; 30.5 cm Mor Batties 12 & 13; one 7 cm automatic flak cannon, three 8 cm autom. flak cannon, two 8 cm Russian flak cannon, two 8 cm improvised flak cannon; one 9 cm mobile can batty, three 9 cm fixed can batties, two 9 cm fixed can platoons; two 8 cm fixed

cannon, fourteen 7 cm mountain cannon. Comps 7/SB 1, 8/SB 3, 3/SB 6; ½ k.k. Lst Sap Det 3/3; 4 Comp/PB 7. Flieger Comps 2, 14, 19; Fort Balloon Det 1. Armored Train II. 10 heavy and 4 light t-mortars, 4 medium grenade launchers

Following was in Army reserve, stationed behind XVI Corps...

. 21 k.k. Lst Mtn Bde (Col Mändl; at the end of January had moved from the Serbian to the Russian front, whence on 24 February it had been sent to 5th Army) = BH FJB # 3; k.k. Lst IR # 11 [3], 27 [3]; k.k. Lst Inf Bn 75; ¼ 5 Sqdn/DR 6; 7 Batty/FHR 36 (latter detached to 62 ID). Total strength was 7260 foot, 22 horse.

Sector II (VII Corps)

Commander = GdK Archduke Joseph

C/Staff = Lt Col Eisner-Bubna

Strength = 40 bns, 1 ¼ sqdns, 34 ½ batties, 8 tech comps, 1 Flieger comp; 25,670 foot, 85 horse, 159 guns

- . 20th Hon ID (GM von Lukachich) = 6720 foot, 42 guns
 - . 39 Hon Inf Bde (Col Stadler) = Hon IR # 3 [3], 4 [3]
 - . 81 Hon Inf Bde (Col von Sarkany) = Hon IR # 1 [3], 17 [3]
 - . 20 FA Bde (Col Pohl) = HFKR # 8 [4], HFHR 20 [4 - incl. 2 cannon batties], 2 How Batty/Heavy FAR 20
 - . Res Sqdn/HR 3 (detached to Sector IV, Trieste); 6 Comp/SB 14
- . 17th ID (FML Edl von Gelb) = 8640 foot, 40 guns
 - . 33 Inf Bde (Col von Soos) = IR # 39 [3], 61 [3]
 - . 34 Inf Bde (Col Boleslaw Wolf) = IR # 43 [3], 46 [3]
 - . 17 FA Bde (Col Braun) = FKR 21 [5], I Bn/FHR 17 [2], Heavy FAR 17 [3]
 - . Res Sqdn/HR 16 (sent to Sector IV, Trieste); 5 Comp/SB 7
- . 106th Lst ID (FML Kletter) = 7240 foot, 85 horse, 42 guns
 - . 110 Lst Inf Bde (GM Maag) = k.k. Lst IR # 31 [2], 32 [2]
 - . 111 Lst Inf Bde (Col Karl Göttlicher) = k.k. Lst IR # 6 [3], 25 [3]
 - . 106 FA Bde (Col Czapp) = 9 cm Can Det Budapest [5 - incl. an independent cannon batty], II Bn/FHR 11 [2]
 - . Res Sqdn/UR 1; 1 Comp/PB 4
- . 187 Lst Inf Bde (GM Edl von Lüftner; had 3070 foot) = V Bn/LW IR 37; k.k. Lst Inf Bns 30, 37, 42, 152, 157; ¼ 1 Ma Sqdn/DR 15 (latter detached to Sector IV, Trieste)
 - . Attached to Corps from Army HQ = 3 Can Batty/Heavy FAR XV; 13 cm GERMAN Can Batty 106; 15 cm Can Batties 4 & 7; 15 cm fixed Can Batty 10; one 15 cm L.50 marine cannon, one 15 cm tower howitzer; 15 cm Mor Batty 16, 24 cm Mor Batty 6, 30.5 cm Mor Batty 7; two 8 cm autom. flak cannon, two 8 cm Russian flak cannon, two 8 cm improvised flak cannon; one 9 cm mob can batty, one 9 cm fixed can batty, one 9 cm fixed cannon platoon; six 7 cm mtn cannon.

1 Comp/SB 1, 3 & 4 Comps/SB 2; 5 Comp/SB 5; 1 Comp/SB 6.
 Flieger Comp 12; Fort Arty Balloon Det 1/3; Balloon Det 13.
 11 heavy and 14 light t-mortars, 4 medium grenade launchers.

Sector III (used HQ of 61 ID)

Commander = FML Winkler

C/Staff = Lt Col Lausch

Strength = 17 bns, 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ sqdns, 14 batties, 3 tech comps, 1 Flieger comp. 15,770 foot, 180 horse, 78 guns

- . 61st ID (FML Winkler) = 10,080 foot, 80 horse
 - . 16 k.u. Lst Mtn Bde (Col Bernatsky) = k.u. Lst IR # 17 [3], 29 [2]
 - . 19 k.u. Lst Mtn Bde (Col von Szabo) = k.u. Lst Inf Bns III/1, III/3, I/4, I/6, II/12, IV/19
 - . 61 FA Bde (Col von Dobner; all batties at this time were with XVI Corps) = 8 & 9 Batties/FKR 21, 6 Batty/FKR 28, 6 Batty/FKR 31, 6 Batty/FKR 39, 7 Can Batty/FHR 7; 1, 2 & 3 Batties/Turkey FHR
 - . $\frac{3}{4}$ 2 Sqdn/Tyrol LW Uhlan Bn; 6 Comp/SB 7
- . 9th ID (GM Krasel) = 5690 foot, 100 horse, 40 guns
 - . 17 Inf Bde (GM Ritt von Mossig) = IR # 91 [3], 102 [3]
 - . (60 Inf Bde was with 58 ID)
 - . 9 FA Bde (Col Edl von Steiner) = FKR 24 [4], 4 Batty/FKR 9, 1 Batty/FHR 9, 1 How Batty/Hvy FAR 9
 - . Res Sqdn/UR 12; 5 Comp/SB 2
- . Attached from Army HQ = 10.4 cm Can Batty 7, 12 cm Can Batty 15,; two 12 cm marine cannon, five 15 cm marine cannon; 15 cm Mor Batty 14; two 7 cm autom. flak cannon, three 8 cm improvised flak cannon; one 9 cm mobile can batty, one 9 cm fixed can batty, one 9 cm fixed can platoon; two 7 cm mtn cannon, two 47 mm marine cannon. 4 Comp/SB 1. Flieger Comp 8 (arriving from Tyrol); Balloon Det 1/5. Armored Train V. 10 heavy, 2 medium and 14 light t-mortars. 4 medium grenade launchers.

Sector IV (Trieste coastal area)

Commander = Counter Admiral Freih. von Koudelka

Strength = 5 bns, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ sqdns, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ batties. 4540 foot, 358 horse, 31 guns

- . One naval bn; "Trieste" Vol Bike Bn; Vol Rifle Bns Marburg IV, Laibach VI, Trieste VII; Lst Watch Bn "Trieste"; Police Bn "Trieste." 12 coast defense dets; 18 gendarme and 17 finance watch posts
- . Res Sqdns of HR 3 and of HR 16; $\frac{1}{4}$ 1 Ma Sqdn/DR 15, 2 Ma Sqdn/LW UR 6
- . Arty (Col Wilhelm Lang) = Russian FK Batty Trieste; seven 47 mm marine cannon, two 7 cm marine cannon, one 15 cm marine cannon, two Russian 15 cm cannon; one 9 cm fixed can batty, one 9 cm

fixed can platoon; two 7 cm marine flak cannon, two 8 cm flak cannon, one 8 cm improvised flak cannon

Sector V (Fiume coastal area)

Commander = GM von Istvanovic

Strength = 1 bn, 1 batty; 2640 foot, 4 guns

. k.k. Lst Inf Bn 155; one vol rifle comp; 2 watch dets; several Lst coast defense dets plus gendarme, police & finance watch posts

. One 9 cm can batty

TOTALS for 5th Army - 101 bns (48 field, 50 Lst, 3 volunteer rifle), 7 sqdns, 97 batties (63 light plus 34 medium or heavy), 19 fort arty comps, 8 tech comps, 5 Flieger comps, 4 balloon dets, 2 armored trains. 80,454 foot, 723 horse, 463 guns (347 light plus 116 medium or heavy); 104 light t-mortars, 32 medium or heavy t-mortars; 10 grenade launchers, 6 flamethrowers

Following were in 5th Army's area, but at disposal of the AOK...

a) III Corps

Commander = FML Ritter von Krautwald

C/Staff = LT Col Freih von Karg

Strength = 37 bns, 3 sqdns, 42 batties, 5 tech comps. 34,030 foot, 381 horse, 194 guns

. 6th ID (FML Prince Schönburg; at Comen) = 11,160 foot, 151 horse, 44 guns

. 11 Inf Bde (Col de Brunfaut) = IR # 27 [4], BH # 2 [3]

. 12 Inf Bde (GM Rudolf Müller) = IR # 17 [3]; FJB # 7, 9

. 6 FA Bde (GM Kratky) = FKR 9 [4], II Bn/FHR 6 [2]; 1 & 2 How Batties/Hvy FAR 6

. 1 Ma Sqdn/DR 5; 5 Comp/SB 8

. 22nd LW ID (GM Schön until end of March, then GM Edl von Kochanowski; at Opcina) = 10,870 foot, 114 horse, 80 guns

. 18 Inf Bde (Col Mietzl) = IR # 11 [3], 73 [4]

. 43 LW Bde (Col Edl von Merten) = LW IR # 3 [3], 26 [3]

. 22 FA Bde (GM Gärtner) = FKR 22 [4], I Bn/FHR 22 [2]; 1 How Batty/Hvy FAR 22

. Res Sqdn/DR 12

. 28th ID (FML Schneider Edl von Manns-Au; at Oberlaibach & Unterloitsch) = 12,000 foot, 116 horse, 48 guns

. 55 Inf Bde (Col Rada) = IR # 87 [3], 96 [3]

. 56 Inf Bde (GM Hugo Schmid) = IR # 47 [4]; FJB # 24 [from 17 ID]; IV Bn/LW IR 37

. 28 FA Bde (Col Rohrhofer) = FKR 8 [4], FHR 28 [4]; 2 How Batty/Hvy FAR 28 (with 10 Army; Regt's 1 How Batty in Tyrol)

. Res Sqdn/DR 3; 4 Comp/SB 14

. Attached to III Corps = 6 Can Batty/Mtn AR 7 [from 18 ID], 4 Can Batty/Mtn AR 12 [from 62 ID]; 10.4 cm Can Batties 4, 5, 7; 12 cm Can Batty 14; 15 cm Can Batties 3, 8; 1 How Batty/Hvy FAR 44; 15 cm How Batties 18, 23, 30; 15 cm Mor Batties 9, 11; 24 cm Mor Batties 1, 7; 30.5 cm Mor Batties 2, 3, 4. 7 Comp/SB 8, 4 Comp/PB 9 [from 62 ID]

b) 18th ID (GM Stracker; at Ranziano) = 11,000 foot, 122 horse, 32 guns

. 1 Mtn Bde (Col Teus) = Bns I/1, IV/4, I/51, I/63, I/102; 5 Can Batty/Mtn AR 4, 3 Can Batty/Mtn AR 7

. 13 Mtn Bde (Col Edl von Barza) = Bns I & IV/22 [joined from 58 ID to replace II & III/22], V/22, III/64, III/BH 4

. 18 FA Bde (Col Secullic; all batties were from 62 ID) = 1 & 6 Can Batties/Mtn AR 13, 1 How Batty/Mtn AR 5, 1 How Batty/Mtn AR 9

. 1 Sqdn/UR 5; 6 Comp/SB 1

Sector of the Pola Military Harbor

Commander = Vice-Admiral Ritter von Chmelarz

C/Staff = Col Funk

Strength = 11 bns, 1 sqdn, 2 mobile batties, 33 fort arty comps, 1 tech comp; 13,000 foot, 80 horse, 577 guns

. The city garrison

. 112 k.k. Lst Inf Bde (GM Szentgyörgyi) = LW IR # 5 [3];

k.k. Lst IR # 5 [3]; k.u. Lst Inf Bns IV/8, II/27, V/29;

Naval Bns 1, 2

. 4 Fort Arty Bde (GM Hlavacek) = 15 fort, 8 reserve and 10 march comps of Fort AR 4; one comp of Fort AR 7; one flak platoon; Balloon Dets 1 & 2/4

. Res Sqdn/DR 4; Res Can Batty/FKR 6; 6 Batty/FKR 14; 4 Comp/SB 6

. Coastal sectors of Parenzo-Rovigno and Albona = Seven coast defense dets plus gendarme posts and finance and cable guards

. Lussin Island = One inf comp, one marine Lst det; 4th Fort & 4th Res Comps of Fort AR 4; gendarme posts and finance guards

b. Planning and implementation of the Italian attack

In the first days of March, traffic was extraordinarily busy on the Italian railroads in Venetia, and reached a peak toward the middle of the month. We couldn't determine the reason for this activity; some of the transports apparently were carrying troops back and forth from Tyrol, as well as replacements. There were no signs that enemy strength was diminishing. Also the heavy artillery deployed in front of 5th Army seemed to be as plentiful as ever.

Order of battle of the Italian armies on 10 March 1916

Commander-in-Chief = King Victor Emanuel III

C/Staff = G.Lt conte Cadorna (the King's plenipotentiary)

1 Army (Trent front) (G.Lt Brusati)

. III Corps = 5 ID (reinforced), 6 ID

. V Corps = 37 ID (reinf.), 35 ID, 34 ID, 15 ID; also fortress garrisons; many battalions in Corps' reserve

. Fortress Verona = One or two mobile militia brigades

. TOTALS - Six ID (some reinf.); 2 to 3 brigades. 135 bns, 233 batties (71 light plus 162 siege batties of various calibers; had 520 light, 261 medium and 24 heavy guns - total 805)

4 Army (Cadore front) (G.Lt di Robilant)

- . IX Corps = 18 ID, 17 ID
- . I Corps = 1 ID, a combined ID, 1 ID
- . TOTALS - Five ID. 75 bns, 88 ½ batties (66 ½ light, 9 medium and 13 heavy; had 272 light, 33 medium and 24 heavy guns - total 329)

Carnic Group ("Zona Carnia") (G.Lt Lequio)

- Had just XII Corps = 26 [combined] ID, 24 ID (reinf.)
- TOTAL = 2 reinf. ID. 41 bns, 52 batties (28 ½ light, 17 ½ medium, 6 heavy; had 126 light, 55 medium and 12 heavy guns - total 193)

2 Army (upper and middle Isonzo) (G.Lt Frugoni)

- . IV Corps = 36 ID (ex Bersaglieri Div; reinf.); Alpini Groups A and B; 8 ID (reinf.), 33 ID
- . VIII Corps = 7 ID (reinf.), 13 ID
- . II Corps = 3, 32 ID
- . TOTAL - Seven ID (some reinf.), 2 Alpini groups. 114 bns, 133 batties (93 light, 32 medium, 8 heavy; they had 372 light, 109 medium and 20 heavy guns - total 501)

3 Army (in front of Görz bridgehead and on lower Isonzo) (G.Lt the Duke of Aosta)

- . VI Corps = 4, 11, 12 ID
- . XI Corps = 29, 22, 21 ID
- . XIII Corps = 25, 31 ID
- . VII Corps = 16, 23, 14 ID
- . TOTAL - Eleven ID. 162 bns, 217 batties (141 light, 52 medium, 24 heavy; they had 564 light, 195 medium and 65 heavy guns - 824 total)

Reserves of the high command (in the Udine-Cervignano-Codroipo area)

- . X Corps = 19, 20 ID
- . XIV Corps = 28, 30 ID
- . Independent - 9, 10, 27 ID; 1, 2, 3, 4 CD (3 CD had horses, rest were on foot)¹⁴⁷

147The cavalry divs were in winter quarters, some of them in the interior, and were being dismounted except for 3rd CD. In each foot cavalry regiment a sixth sqdn was formed; the strength of a sqdn was upgraded to that of an infantry company, and additional MG dets were created. During winter, there remained at the front one squadron for each corps plus the cavalry MG dets.

. TOTAL - Seven infantry, four cavalry divisions. 78 bns, 20 mounted sqdns, 72 dismounted sqdns; number of batties unknown.

As of 10 March 1916, the k.u.k. 5th Army, XV Corps and 44 LW ID were opposed by twenty seven ID, two Alpini groups and four CD, with about 354 bns and at least 350 batties (not counting the artillery in the reserves of the high command).

In the period between 10 March and 15 May 1916 (the start of the k.u.k. Tyrol offensive), the Italian 1st Army would be reinforced by 4 ½ ID and 1 Alpini group (totaling 82 bns) from other parts of the front, from the strategic reserve, and from Albania. The 5th Army was formed in the Vicenza-Cittadella-Padua area. It had XXII Corps (23 and 24 ID), XXIV Corps (32 and 33 ID) and XXVI Corps (4 and 46 ID) plus 2 and 3 CD. At that point the strategic reserve consisted of X and XVI Corps plus 27 ID (a total of six divisions), stationed on the Tagliamento where they could be transported by train or on trucks.

The Italians' plans

The reason why fighting on the Isonzo was resumed in March despite unfavorable weather and before preparations for the planned general offensive were complete was revealed by the high command in the orders issued to start the operation. The first sentence states, "The general situation makes it necessary, based on our duties to our allies, to pin down the enemy forces on our front with the greatest energy, and to hinder their transfer to other theaters of the war."¹⁴⁸

The concentration of strong Aus-Hung. forces in south Tyrol hadn't been concealed from Cadorna; for this reason he didn't want to prematurely open an offensive on the front near the coast. However, two factors substantially influenced his decision to attack in March. One was that by fighting he could get a glimpse into and some knowledge of his opponents' still unclear situation and intention. The second, and more important factor, was that the French high command had been led by the events at Verdun to demand a relief attack in accordance with the agreements reached in December 1915 at Chantilly.

The Italian high command didn't issue a fixed plan for carrying out this relief offensive; Cadorna also more or less left the choice of operational goals to his army commanders. They were to

¹⁴⁸Italian Official History, Vol. III, Tex, p. 178; Documents, p.

pick their own objectives based on their experiences to date during the positional warfare and the situation in their own sectors. However, they were also supposed to keep in mind the overall goals of the earlier battles - the capture of Görz and Tolmein. Because of the indifference which apparently attended this offensive, and the lack of an overall plan, the battle consisted of a series of unrelated partial assaults that had no success. The hope that Aus-Hung. troops would be pinned down on the Isonzo front wasn't fulfilled, because the planned departure of the divisions to Tyrol continued at full speed at the very point when the Italian attacks were at their peak.

Since weather still wouldn't permit major operations on the upper Isonzo, the 3rd Italian Army bore the main brunt of the battle. The Duke of Aosta gave his strong VI Corps the mission of capturing the Podgora; XI Corps would attack in the Mt S Michele-San Martino sector while simultaneously trying to cross the Isonzo at Mainizza or at least occupying the small gravel island by the town. XIII Corps was supposed to capture several stretches of trench (spelled out in detail in its orders) and VII Corps would take the outlying parts of the Aus-Hung. positions east of Selz and on the main road at Bagni (east of the Adria Works). As a deception measure, the fighting was to be initiated by small thrusts and operations on 8 March.

Course of the battle

On 11 March the Italian artillery directed a lively fire against the Aus-Hung. battle positions and approach routes along the entire front, with guns of all calibers. Despite weather which restricted visibility, this continued throughout the night and the following day, while combat patrols tried to destroy the barricades in front of our trenches. Finally on 13 March the Italian infantry opened their limited assaults at the well-known key points of the front; though limited in geographic scope, some of them were strongly delivered and led to hand-to-hand fighting.

Only a few battalions of VI Corps were able to temporarily enter a small part of the trench on Heights # 184 near Lucinico on the 14th, but XI Corps attacked more stubbornly on the Karst plateau. Here the strongest attack was delivered on 13 March by about six to eight battalions of 21 ID at San Martino, where the gallant east Hungarian IR # 46 held its ground victoriously against six assaults. On the same day the Italians also attacked at Selz. Groups in battalion to regimental strength struck at Kote 111 (on the road east of Polazzo) on the 14th, next to Heights # 197 west of San Martino on the 15th, and southeast of Peteano on the 16th.

The thrusts were completely shattered, and may have cost the enemy substantial casualties.

As noted earlier (in the account of 10th Army's operations), the IV and VIII Corps of 2nd Italian Army were also ordered to attack, but accomplished nothing.

The Italian operation, which had involved the expenditure of a significant amount of ammunition, may be considered to have ended as of 16 March.¹⁴⁹ Although the attacks hadn't reached the intensity of a major action in any sector, the defenders designated the episode as the "Fifht Battle of the Isonzo" to deceive the enemy into believing they had been seriously concerned about the outcome. They hoped to thus make the Italians believe that no Austrian units would be removed from the Isonzo.

As further deceptive measures troops were moved about as part of the training of March formations. There were also exercises involving the debarkation of soldiers from railroads, and new installations were constructed. Finally a series of attacks were planned, which should also lead to improving our positions at certain points along the front.

On 14 March the high command, anticipating that 5th Army might become involved in heavier fighting, did start to assemble 34 ID, which through the 25th was arriving from the Russian front, in the Army's reserves at Ranziano. With this Division the Army again resched a strength of 113 battalions; thus the temporary tension caused by the departure of III Corps and of 18 ID was overcome. Since the situation on the Isonzo again became quiet, the 34 ID was soon placed at the disposal of the AOK and on 2 April it moved on to Tyrol.

5. Preparation for the spring offensive against Italy

a. Conrad's final decision for the offensive

The serious personal discord between the Chiefs of Staff of the two allied Central Powers, caused by differences of opinion regarding military leadership in the Balkans, ended in reconciliation in late January 1916 thanks in large part to

¹⁴⁹In this period the Italian 3rd Army lost 81 officers and 1800 men; the 5th k.u.k. Army lost 485 dead and 1500 wounded.

mediation by Generals Metzger and von Cramon. The obviously favorable outcome of the operations against Montenegro and Albania made it easier for Conrad to decide to write the letter of apology which Falkenhayn had requested. The underlying reason for this step, however, was the urgent need at this time to reach an understanding about the next objective in the war. Uppermost in Conrad's thoughts was his well-researched and promising plan for a combined offensive against Italy, which Falkenhayn had turned down in December 1915.

On 27 January it was noted that both Chiefs of Staff were seated in friendly conversation at one table while celebrating the birthday of the German Emperor.¹⁵⁰ The bridge had been built, so Conrad asked the chief German military liaison officer to raise his proposal with Falkenhayn. GM Cramon has stated that Conrad emphatically declared to him that the offensive "could be carried out only in cooperation with German units."¹⁵¹ The mission didn't turn out as Conrad had hoped. On 3 February the Chief of Staff himself went to Pless and pictured the prospects of success to Falkenhayn with persuasive words. It was all in vain! At this time the German guns were already deployed in front of Verdun, and the attacking divisions were preparing for the gigantic battle which was supposed to start on 12 February. Due only to bad weather, it was postponed until the 21st.

But Conrad didn't abandon his opinions. He was resolved to initiate an offensive against Italy under all circumstances, if necessary without his allies. At any rate, the first guidelines for the attack in the southwest were issued on 6 February, which may be considered the date of his final decision, although the composition of the attacking group remained to be determined.¹⁵² Conrad now had to pick Aus-Hung. units to take the place of the German troops he'd intended to employ.

150Cramon, "Bundesgenossen", p. 46

151Cramon, "Bundesgenossen", p. 47

152TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - The reasoning behind Conrad's decision is described by Gerhard Artl in "Die österreichisch-ungarische Südtirol-offensive 1916" (Vienna, 1983), pp. 50-51. Artl states that the victory of 7th Army in the New Year's Battle was a turning-point, since it convinced the AOK that it would be possible to guard against Russia with less-reliable units, freeing up the better divisions for the Italian expedition. Thus German assistance was unnecessary, and Conrad anyway preferred to run his own operation without having to defer to allies as had been the case in the Balkans.

In these guidelines issued to the commander of the Southwest Front, the AOK stated that we would "now attack Italy." GO Archduke Eugene was to seek a decision "with a thrust by an army group from south Tyrol, if possible into the rear of the main enemy forces." The still-changing general situation didn't yet make it possible to draw up a detailed order of battle for the army group. It was planned to have a strength of 14 divisions with 60 heavy batteries. The Land Defense Command in Tyrol would become 11th Army HQ, with GdK Dankl at its head. The projected organization of 11th Army would include III Corps (with its usual three divisions), VIII Corps (57 and 59 ID), XVI Corps with two divisions,¹⁵³ and a new corps (XX) to be created by re-uniting the two divisions of the former XIV Corps. The latter would be commanded by the Archduke-Successor Karl Franz Joseph, who meanwhile was promoted to Feldmarschalleutnant.

The mission of this Army was sketched boldly - "The main body, well concentrated between the Adige and the Sugana Valley, would thrust over the Folgaria-Lavarone plateau to Thiene and Bassano." On the other hand, there were only hints regarding the composition and use of "another Army, which would deploy behind the 11th; its employment would depend upon the situation, but if possible it will exploit our success after we emerge from the mountains."

GO Archduke Eugene was furthermore instructed that the parts of the Tyrol Defense Command that weren't in the sector of the offensive would come under the command of GdI Roth (XIV Corps HQ). Preparation of the supplies and equipment, as well as the assembly of "Army Group Archduke Eugene", would be directed by the AOK, and should take about eight weeks.

The plans of Archduke Eugene's Army Group HQ and of 11th Army

For almost a year, GO Archduke Eugene and his Chief of Staff, FML Alfred Krauss, had pondered ways in which the costly and unproductive positional warfare on their Southwest Front could be brought to an end. The favorable development of the general situation at the end of 1915 kindled hope in Marburg (the Archduke's HQ) that the time wasn't far off when it would be possible to strike a powerful blow against the enemy who'd been gnawing away at the Southwest Front. The high command, however, refused Eugene's request to exchange views on this subject. Thus the guidelines of the AOK, which Front HQ received on 6 February,

¹⁵³Later the XVII Corps HQ was assigned rather than # XVI; it was given 18 and 48 ID.

weren't unexpected; the staff, however, was surprised by the preciseness of the orders, in which the decision to mount an offensive only from south Tyrol had already been settled.¹⁵⁴

The Front HQ immediately outlined their ideas about carrying out these orders to the AOK. They frankly gave their opinion that reaching the line Thiene-Bassano would only be the first step. The intended exploitation in the rear of the main enemy force would make it necessary for 11th Army to continue the offensive without a lengthy pause after reaching this line. This necessity in turn brought the question of logistics into the foreground. The three roads over the mountains wouldn't be enough; to maintain its operational effectiveness after entering the plains the 11th Army would need a railroad line. Therefore it would be necessary to take the Brenta valley as soon as possible, indeed at the very start of the campaign.

The report of the Southwest Front HQ continued: "However, tactical considerations also support a broader deployment of the attacking group to include the Val Sugana. In the area selected for the main body's assault, which is just 20 km wide, our great superiority of strength cannot be brought to bear. On the other hand, the narrowness of the front will substantially increase the danger of enemy operations against the flanks, especially as we leave the mountains. The new Army, which is intended to assemble in the mountains behind the 11th, will cause great difficulties as it attempts to intervene. Inevitably the units will become intermingled and changes will be needed to the chains of command." Archduke Eugene therefore suggested that both armies should be deployed next to each other from the start:

- . one of them, seven divisions strong, in the area from the Adige as far as but not including the Sugana Valley; and
- . the other, initially with two divisions, in the Valley and in the area farther north up to about the line Castel Tesino-Fonzaso.

The terrain, which is clearly divided into two parts by a steep slope south of the Brenta, also was conducive to this separation of the Armies' zones. Furthermore, it was asserted that a very substantial initial success by the Sugana group would offer the great advantage of a possible flank attack out of the Fleims valley, which would have a negative impact on the enemy units by Borgo. According to Army Group HQ, the five divisions which arrived later would be deployed as indicated by the situation, either with the "Sugana Army" or the 11th. Thus Group HQ, since

¹⁵⁴Krauss, "Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage" (3rd Edition, Munich, 1923), p. 185

it would direct both Armies, would be able to influence the implementation of the breakthrough. However, if only 11th Army broke through, the Army HQ would be solely responsible for carrying out the exploitation. In this case the Army Group HQ would be merely an unnecessary intermediary between the high command and 11th Army.

The AOK studied this report, which bore witness to the lively eagerness of Southwest Front HQ. They responded evasively that now they would be issuing a supplement to the first orders for carrying out this task, which would give their subordinates full freedom in carrying out the mission. Although they had broadly sketched the limits to the area where 11th Army would attack, this didn't preclude a necessary advance by some units north of the Sugana valley. The other proposals of Southwest Front HQ, which would speed up the relief of units to be sent to Tyrol and thus went beyond the limits of the original orders, were fully approved at Teschen. GO Conrad also assented to the idea of having the officers from the Land Defense Command who'd in future hold responsible posts on the staff of 11th Army receive a complete briefing about the plans of the high command.

In accordance with orders issued from Marbury on 11 February, GdK Dankl, commanding the Tyrol Defense HQ, was now "given an opportunity to exert his own influence on all the preparations, especially the use of the heavy artillery; he would know how the 11th Army could best carry out their assigned mission."

Several days later, however, the limits assigned to 11th Army's sector by the high command were being questioned. Southwest Front HQ shared with GdK Dankl the main points of their proposal to the AOK, as well as the latter's reply, and instructed him to make plans in accordance with the intentions of Front HQ. After considering and studying several possibilities, GdK Dankl responded on 18 February. He intended to send XX Corps over the Folgaria plateau, with the heights north of the Posina valley, including the Borcola Pass, as its objective; III Corps (with three divisions) would advance over the Vezzena plateau toward the area of Asiago. VIII Corps would initially be held in readiness as the Army's reserve in the area Calilano-Matarello. XVII Corps should capture the Borgo-Strigno basin, then the Castel Tesino-Brocon-Canale San Bovo area; for this purpose it would deploy one division in the Sugana valley and the other in the Fassaner Alps (up to the Sforc. di Sadole). To cover the flank of the main thrust as it moved south, GdK Dankl proposed the creation of a division from troops in the Tyrol Defense Command; its principal component (88 L-Sch Bde) would thrust

forward between Lake Garda and the Adige on the line Altissimo-Vignola, while 181 Inf Bde held its position on the line Mori-Rovereto-Serada.

An intended visit by Archduke Eugene to Tyrol for a conference with GdK Dankl was canceled at the request of the AOK, which feared it might draw too much attention. Instead, the Chief of Staff of 11th Army (GM Pichler) visited Southwest Front HQ, where the plans were thoroughly discussed on 27 February. Although Pichler and Krauss didn't come to a complete understanding, this meeting was the basis of an order which Front HQ issued to 11th Army on the 28th:

"Attack between the Adige and the northern slope of the Vezzena plateau. Goal: the line Thiene-Bassano. The main body will advance over the plateau of Folgaria and Lavarone. A smaller group on the right will advance over the Piano della Fugazza to capture the fortifications of the Val Legra group and drive through Schio. Flank protection on the line Mori-C Levante-Mt Zevola. Moreover, part of the Val Sugana group will advance toward Pergine, and part will mount a flanking attack from the Fleims valley; the group will capture the Primolano fortifications and then the rail line as far as Bassano. Flank protection on the line Cima d'Asta-Brocon-Fonzaso. It won't be necessary to hold an Army reserve, since by the time 11th Army starts to attack the 3rd Army will already have two to three divisions on the scene. If needed, these divisions can be committed by Army Group HQ to assist units of 11th Army whose advance is held up. I am informing Your Excellency that I provisionally intend to deploy 3rd Army on the left of 11th Army."

At almost the same hour when this order was being sent to Bozen, the HQ at Marburg received a request from the AOK for a report about the how 11th Army intended to carry out the breakthrough, how they would deploy the heavy artillery, and the possible uses of 3rd Army.

On 1 March the Front HQ responded by reporting the order issued to 11th Army (recorded above). They explained that they wanted to deploy 3rd Army to the left of 11th Army mainly because they anticipated that strong enemy forces would appear from the east to counter the Army Group's attack.

These plans were emphatically rejected by GO Conrad. On 3 March he ordered:

"Based on the plentiful experiences in the various theaters

of war, the AOK must insist that for the first and decisive goal - the breakthrough - all of 11th Army must be assembled in depth with its entire artillery so that it can strike with full force, without attacking toward the right or left. There can be no question of a simultaneous thrust on the Sugana. The Italian front there will no longer be tenable after a successful breakthrough at Arsiero-Asiago. Then it will be time to bombard the works at Primolano, since the necessary artillery will finally become available. An advance following these orders will allow us to hope that 11th Army can achieve its goal, the breakthrough to Bassano and Thiene, using only its own strength; 3rd Army should not be committed prematurely, but will remain in the hands of the Army Group HQ to deal with unforeseen circumstances."

There could be no further appeal against this specific order. Therefore the Southwest Front HQ canceled the instructions it had given 11th Army on 28 February. Only the initial guidelines of the high command and their order of 3 March remained in effect.

Thus the high command had once again set in stone the tasks assigned to the attacking group. Until this point the question of the forces to be deployed on the right wing of 11th Army had remained unsettled. GdK Dankl raised objections by telegram against the idea of having a subordinate group on the right advance through the Piano della Fugazza and Schio. Because of the thick snow cover in the area it could hardly succeed at the start of April. Moreover, if two divisions were committed to this operation the Army's strength would be divided and it couldn't carry out the order "to thrust over the Folgaria-Lavarone plateau with the well-concentrated main body." The Southwest Front HQ sought to counter this assertion, and justified the diversion of force because there would be room for at most only five divisions on the plateau when the offensive began.

This difference of opinion was now also resolved by the intervention of the high command. Based on the order of 3 March, Front HQ - to remove all doubts - instructed that the Sugana group (whose 48 ID had already begun to arrive in the Fleims valley at this time) and its attached artillery would be placed under 11th Army for use on the plateau. The intended relief of the Land Defense troops in the Val Sugana borders sector by parts of XVII Corps was canceled. Thus VIII Corps would be available to carry out the attack through the Piano della Fugazza which was so urgently requested by Army Group HQ.

The plan of attack of 11th Army, which would also guide the logistical preparations, the assembly of troops and the deployment of artillery, was issued by GdK Dankl on 31 March after its approval by Army Group HQ. The Army would break through between the Adige and the Brenta on the northern edge of the plateau with XX Corps in the center (objective: Asiago), VIII Corps on the right (initial objective: Coni Zugna-Col Santo-Borcola Pass) and III Corps on the left (objective: Asiago). A specially selected detachment from III Corps would seize the Kempel Ridge by surprise. XVII Corps, stationed at Pergine and south of Trent, made up the Army's reserve.

The high command acknowledged this plan with a note: "The first objective of the offensive shouldn't be too far-reaching, *i.e.* it shouldn't lay beyond a number of enemy fortified lines. In our experience this tends to weaken the strength and orderliness of the thrust." The AOK continued, "the main strength of 11th Army should remain concentrated in the center to prevent the corps on the wings from advancing too widely."

b. Preparations and assembly of the units

1) *The basis of the preparations*

Preparing the offensive presented the General Staff with tasks which it had never previously faced, even in this all-encompassing war. A large mass of troops would first have to deploy in the long but narrow Adige valley.

The first task was to assemble the infantry divisions and heavy artillery from the Balkans, the Russian front, Carinthia and the Isonzo. It was also necessary to ship a huge mass of ammunition, rations and various types of military equipment down the double lines of the Western Railroad (from Vienna to Innsbruck).¹⁵⁵ Then there were difficulties moving further over the snow-covered Brenner Pass and especially along the single track of the Puster valley line, which at Sillian was in range of enemy fire, as far as Franzensfeste. Traffic finally detrained in a series of stations which were quite small because of the narrowness of the valley, and transferred to the only highway in the area, which

¹⁵⁵Construction of the second track of the Western Railroad on the Schwarzach-St Veit-Saalfelden and Kitzbühel-Wörgl sectors was finally finished on 25 August 1915. From this day forward traffic could use two tracks along the entire line.

always ran along the railroad. Eventually all units had to use this road, and bringing the men and equipment forward on time was a great concern. Avoidance of delays and traffic jams was one of the reasons why the authors of the original operational plan had decided on the unusual but apparently justified idea of dividing the units into two armies. One army would be especially outfitted for the breakthrough; the other, intended for the exploitation, would have to deploy behind the first in the narrow Adige valley. Based on a suggestion of the Land Defense Command, the units were temporarily sent into some of the high valleys to the side (which also kept them from being spotted by enemy airplanes). However, this only slightly diminished the congestion in the Adige valley. Many times units had to take detours, which the AOK had wanted to avoid.

Preparation of equipment and getting it to the right spot, as well as regulation of the supporting offices, was assigned by the high command to General Staff Col. Ziller, who arrived at Trent on 10 February. He was given extraordinary powers, and took orders only from the AOK.

The terrain

From the mild climate of the Adige valley, which between Bozen and Trent was about 200 meters above sea level, the troops had to move through the narrow bottleneck at Trent and prepare to fight in the Lessina Alps, which formed a barrier 2000 meters high and about 30 km wide between the Adige and Brenta, blocking the way to the plains of upper Italy.

The different parts of this mountain wall are usually called "plateaus", but this isn't completely accurate. The wall can better be compared to an enormous slope of limestone which has been battered by nature. The fragments lie in all directions, divided by deep valleys and ravines. There are very few really level plateaus, and many times they're broken up by slopes; thus the small ridge between the Adige and Vallarsa contains the Coni Zugna (1865 m) and Cima Levante (2021 m) mountains. On the other side of the Vallarsa there is a large massif which includes the Col Santo (2114 m) and Mt Pasubio (2236 m), and which descends on the east into a narrow ridge featuring the smaller elevations of Mt Novegno (1552 m) and Mt Priafora (1653 m). The massif that lies between the deep valleys of the Terragnolo and Posina brooks on one side and the Val d'Astico on the other is broken up and jagged. Its northwestern portion can be called a "plateau", but only by comparison with the steep and rocky slopes on its other edges; this portion descends in irregular steps toward Folgaria

(1163 m), but beyond the town are the mighty pyramids of Cornetto ("Hornberg" in German - 2052 m) and Filadonna (2150 m). In the southern part of the massif are the unconnected heights called Mt Coston (1753 m), Laste alte (1821 m), Coston d'Arsiero (1779 m), Mt Campomolon (1855 m) and Mt Toraro (1899 m). Mt Maggio (1857 m) and the Cima Malingo (1874 m) crown the southwest corner, which sends out a narrow spur to rugged Mt Majo (1500 m). Farther east the massif is connected through the Spina Tonezza (1696 m) to the Tonezza plateau, which terminates abruptly at Mt Cison (1230 m).

The massif on which the community of Lavarone stands can more accurately be called a plateau. Most of the elevations are only between 1150 and 1400 meters. Only the Hochleiten (1528 m) on the northern edge is higher. The portion of the mountains farther east, between the Rio Torto and the Austro-Italian border, are often called the Venezia plateau. It is highest on its northern edge, which features the Cima di Vezzena (1908 m) and Cost' alta (2051 m).

East of the Astico, and on the other side of the border, is the area called the "Sieben Gemeinde" ("sette comuni" - "seven communities"). Here two mighty and irregular massifs may be seen from a distance. The first of these is highest in the north, where Mt Kempel (2310 m), Cima Dodici (2338 m) and Cima Maora (2125 m) tower over the Val Sugana; it descends in broken slopes generally toward the south and southeast. A deep cleft, the Assa Ravine, separates part of the massif - including Mt Verena (2109 m) and the Cima di Campolongo (1710 m) - from the rest. The northern portion is especially rugged and features a maze of peaks and gaps, among which two ridges can be distinguished: one runs from Mt Kempel (2310 m) toward Mt Meata (1845 m), and the other through the Corno di Campoverde (2129 m). Its eastern portion is a barren and isolated group of mountains, including Mt Meletta (also called Mt Fior - 1827 m) and the cone of Mt Lisser (1636 m), which descend into the Brenta valley.

The second large massif lying around the Sieben Gemeinde is toward the south; its highest points - Mt Cengio (1351 m), Mt Pau (1420 m), the Cima di Fonte (1519 m) and Mt Bertiaga (1358 m), can all be glimpsed more or less clearly from the north. The lower Assa valley, the Valle dei Ronchi and the Frenzella Ravine separate the two massifs, which come together only at the Asiago basin (1000 m).

Thus in its entirety, as well as in detail, the area to be crossed during the fighting was by no means a plateau which could

easily be traversed. Steep heights, deep valleys and impenetrable walls of rock formed a rugged terrain that in places was very poor in water. It had been converted by the Italians into an almost impenetrable fortress with several lines of positions following one behind the other.

In order to move and fight in this very difficult terrain, the troops would need at least some of the special equipment that was called "mountain armament" for short. Some of the divisions that were sent here didn't have the equipment already, which was yet another reason for dividing the attacking force into two armies.

Only a very small part of the mountain wall, the plateau of Folgaria-Lavarone, was already in Aus-Hung. hands, thanks to the strong fortifications which GO Conrad had constructed in peacetime. Therefore this position was naturally a jumping-off point for the offensive; it now assumed the greatest importance as a point to concentrate the great mass of artillery which would be needed to overcome an enemy who was so well protected by nature and by engineering skill. Control of the artillery deployment, which if possible involved moving the guns to their positions immediately after they detrained, was entrusted to two of the most distinguished officers of the artillery staff, Colonels Joseph Janecka and Franz Portenschlag. Based on their suggestions, the AOK insisted that as many very heavy batteries as possible had been moved to the heights by the intended start of the offensive (toward the end of March). Super-human efforts were required to get the many heavy guns and their ammunition through the mountain roads. Many labor detachments were used to keep the roads in shape, to build funicular railways, and to construct emergency installations and campsites.

Logistical factors

The protected area of Folgaria-Lavarone would also be a logistical base at the future point when most of the Army Group had broken through the enemy positions and reached the edge of the mountains. Connected to the railroad by three roads, as well as by an energetically constructed funicular railway which could finally bear loads up to 300 tons, the area was a depot for all types of military equipment which could then be forwarded on the routes through the Sieben Gemeinde and Arsiero to the troops. When the group on the right advanced from Rovereto on both sides of the Vallarsa, they would also open up a supply line to the south over the Piano della Fugazza and through the Borcola Pass. Technical troops were available so that the various units could quickly repair the roads - which the enemy would presumably

damage - and to maintain the routes which already led up to the front lines. Also held in readiness were bridging equipment and other construction material, as well as trucks to move supplies forward.

In the response of Southwest Front HQ to the initial orders of the AOK, they had already drawn the attention of the latter to the long-range goals of the offensive and the necessity of quickly capturing the Sugana railroad to relieve the supply situation. However, this line could easily be destroyed by the enemy - outside the Primolano fortress it crossed a long bridge, in the Canale del Brenta it ran right next to granite cliffs, and it passed through no fewer than eleven tunnels before it reached the plains at Bassano. Therefore the high command didn't agree that capture of the railroad was important, since its restoration would take an inordinate amount of time.

As the troops advanced farther, they would be dependent for supply on trucks and wagons which would have to be prepared in advance. Map 7 (in the original) shows the road connections which were most important for this purpose.

2) *Massing the troops*

In the first orders, the k.u.k. AOK had addressed the prospective order of battle of Archduke Eugene's Army group only in general terms. The core of 11th Army was to be provided by the forces already in the southwest - from 5th Army came III Corps (with 6 and 28 ID plus 22 LW ID¹⁵⁶), then 18 ID; from 10th Army came 48 ID. Finally the 8 ID (which was later redesignated the "Kaiser Jaeger Division") was already in Tyrol. VIII Corps came from the Balkans with 57 and 59 ID. 3 ID, which together with 8 ID was to make up XX Corps, came from the Russian front¹⁵⁷, as did XVII Corps HQ (which took over 18 and 48 ID instead of XVI Corps HQ).

In February the AOK could say nothing further regarding the composition of 3rd Army, other than that:

- . they planned to form a new division from the Landes-Schützen regiments stationed in Tyrol;
- . they would take 44 LW ID and 8 Mtn Bde from 10th Army;
- . they would call 10 Mtn Bde from the Balkans; and
- . they would bring three or perhaps four divisions from the northeast front.

Removing troops from Russia was the subject of considerable deliberation because of agreements made with the German OHL, which had pulled two of their own divisions out of Volhynia at the start of March. Finally it was decided to send I Corps HQ, 10 ID (made up of 20 Inf Bde plus the 21 Inf Bde which had originally belonged to 11 ID), 34 ID and 43 LW ID, along with BH IR # 4 and later the Battalion IV/96 (which would go to Carinthia to partly make up for the loss of 44 LW ID).

The AOK wanted to ensure that the weakening of the northeast front was offset by the commitment there of new units and the incorporation of replacement troops. They also wished to avoid further weakening the Isonzo front. Meanwhile the HQ of Southwest Front, which had entered their new assignment with great energy, reported that they didn't need a replacement for III Corps, but that 5th Army would need another unit to replace 18 ID. For this purpose the AOK made available:

15622 LW ID consisted of 43 LW Bde plus 18 Inf Bde (IR # 11 and 73), which originally was part of 9 ID.

1573 ID consisted at this time of just three infantry regiments; later it received IR # 50 from 7th Army as a fourth component. Other units which came from the northeast front were FJB # 22 (used to complete 6 ID), FJB # 11 (which joined 28 ID) and Bn IV/3 (for 48 ID).

- . 62 ID, a mainly Landsturm unit which was no longer needed in the Balkans;
- . Lt Col Madersprach's Group (k.u. Lst IR # 2 and Fortress Inf Bn # 6), which reinforced 62 ID, and
- . from the northeast the 21 Lst Mtn Bde (which had come from the Balkans to east Galicia at the end of January) plus k.k. Lst IR # 11, which was reassigned from 46 LW ID to 21 Lst Mtn Bde.

5th Army HQ, which hadn't been advised about the purpose of diminishing their forces, anyway had a different opinion than did the Front HQ at Marburg. They were suspicious about surrendering four of their best divisions plus 20 heavy batteries. On 20 February, GdI Boroevic wrote "We must emphasize the serious weakness of our position once 18 ID departs. This Division, which has held its sector since the start of the war, is so familiar with the area that it represents twice as much combat strength as any other division, regardless of its quality. Moreover, retention of the 18 ID's sector is essential for retaining Görz." At Teschen the staff was aware of the temporarily difficult situation of 5th Army. They praised the attitude of the Army commander (who was still calm and confident), and promised him help in the event of a large new Italian offensive on the Isonzo front. 18 ID, however, left for Tyrol.

The departure of units from 10th Army didn't significantly weaken the front lines, since the Army had already received 42 new companies from March formations in mid-February.

According to the plans of the high command, the following heavy batteries would take part in the offensive:

- . 31 from the Southwest Front (20 from 5th Army, 4 from 10th Army, plus 7 already in Tyrol),
- . 15 from the Northeast Front
- . 2 from the Southeast, and
- . 16 from the interior (including Pola and Cracow).

Also available were three 42 cm howitzers, two 38 cm howitzers of a completely new type, and one 35 cm cannon.¹⁵⁸ The AOK also took

¹⁵⁸The 38 cm howitzers had a 16 km range, and fired shells weighing 740 kg. They left the Skoda Works at Pilsen in March and proved to be more versatile than the 42 cm howitzers, which originally had been intended to be permanently fixed in coastal defenses. The latter had a range of 15 km with 800 kg shells, and 13 km with 1000 kg shells. The 35 cm cannon was a converted naval piece which was ready in mid-March. It could be carried only by a first-class railroad, and thence to a

measures to ensure that the units that went to south Tyrol were equipped with the newest available field artillery. To make sure that they were at full strength, 51 mountain batteries were sent to Tyrol.

Although 14 infantry divisions and 64 heavy batteries were concentrated in south Tyrol, the total strength on the Italian front had increased at the start of April by only about 8 divisions and 39 heavy batteries since the end of November 1915 (when there were 23 ½ divisions at the close of the Fourth Battle of the Isonzo). Later, but before the start of the offensive, the 24 1st Mtn Bde came from the Balkans to join 5th Army, which in turn sent the new 21 Mtn Bde to Archduke Eugene's Army Group.

On 21 March the high command issued guidelines to 5th and 10th Armies which they would follow if the development of the offensive in south Tyrol permitted them to take the offensive. If this happened the 5th Army would hold one combat-ready division apiece on the railroads at Görz and Tolmein.

3) Measures to preserve secrecy and deceive the enemy

All imaginable measures were taken to conceal the planned operation from the enemy, to distract their attention, and thus to prevent them from taking any counter-measures. The AOK laid such great emphasis on the secrecy of the preparations that they strictly ordered the HQ of Southwest Front to also keep silent in communications with their subordinate Army commanders. Troop movements were camouflaged as necessary for a planned offensive against Russia. Even the Land Defense Command in Tyrol, where the deployment of 11th Army would take place, was given only absolutely necessary information. The latter restriction was anyway soon lifted, since GdK Dankl, as the future commander of 11th Army, had to be knowledgeable so that he could be involved in the deployment. However, the veil of secrecy wasn't lifted for the commanders of the 5th and 10th Armies until mid-March, at which time it was also necessary to notify the Ministry of War.

position close to the rails, but had a range of 31 km with 700 kg shells. Since the start of the offensive was delayed, some additional pieces were employed; these were four state of the art, self-propelled 15 cm howitzers, which were given a first opportunity to demonstrate their increased range and versatility. See Padiaur, "Die schwere Fernkampf-Artillerie in der alten öst.-ung. Armee" (Mil. wiss. u. techn. Mitt., 1923, pp 52 ff.).

For the time being the secret was also kept from the German liaison officers at Marburg and Bozen. However, in the course of their normal business these officers soon glimpsed what was going on and reported it to their superiors; this was particularly galling to the staff at Teschen, where all preparations were only discussed in a very narrow circle and mentioned to the German military plenipotentiary just in general terms.

The first large-scale movement of artillery and ammunition was supposedly "to modernize the armament of the Trent fortress." Each type of battery had a code name which was used in the very restricted communications by telegraph. All non-military rail traffic in the immediate area of the front was prohibited on 1 March, and leave was canceled. Unfortunately the Swiss border was still open. Austrian border guards were stationed in the Principality of Liechtenstein, but there was no strict military supervision of traffic from Switzerland into the Principality. Finally the border between Austria and Liechtenstein was completely sealed at the end of March.

The HQ of Southwest Front also had a part to play in these efforts. Preparations for the movement of this HQ to Bozen, which would take place as late as possible, were disguised as a "transfer to Laibach," and facilities for the staff were actually set up in the latter city. Quarters were openly prepared for an Army HQ at Klagenfurt. GO Kövess, who was notified very late that he would command the newly-assembled 3rd Army, would stay in Cattaro until 17 March and then spend several days on Lake Wörther.

A visit by the Archduke-Successor to the Isonzo and Carinthian fronts on 20 March was also designed to mislead enemy agents, as were false but plausible reports which were disseminated through our own and the neutral press. Incorrect information even appeared in many newspapers of the enemy states. Deceptive reports were also broadcast by radio.

Diversionsary operations were prepared. They mainly involved an increase in artillery activity and several local thrusts on the Carinthian and coastal fronts, plus strikes by airplanes.

XV Corps of 10th Army started their major diversionsary operations in the evening of 17 March. On the 19th and the following days there were also demonstrations in the Army's other sectors. The operation planned by 5th Army for the 24th had to be postponed due to inclement weather. Initially this feint attack was to involve poison gas. After ongoing study, it had been decided at the

start of March that a gas attack was possible in the area southwest of Görz. Although dangers to our own troops could be minimized by careful preparations, some risk was unavoidable and this led to serious objections by lower-level commanders. In this difference of opinion the AOK finally took a position against the Southwest Front HQ: "It isn't advisable to insist that commanders employ such a dangerous and untried weapon as gas if they don't whole-heartedly support the idea." Nevertheless preparations for the assault went ahead, since they still had some worth as a deceptive measure.

To confuse enemy observers, in good weather columns of troops moved forward to the front in daylight, while marching back again at night. An Italian daily report of 11 April indicates that these movements had an effect.

The Navy was also supposed to cooperate decisively. GO Conrad oriented naval HQ about the upcoming offensive in general terms and mentioned his expectation that the fleet would undertake a major thrust in the second half of March to inflict major damage on the enemy. The naval command believed that the Army wanted them to cooperate directly with ground units on the coast, and declared that this was impossible based on their experiences to date. Then Conrad offered a clearer hint that the high command expected "a ruthless operation by the fleet on as large a scale as possible, similar to the effective assault on the Italian east coast which was carried out right after the declaration of war." After Conrad had further explained the reasons for his request, Admiral Haus felt compelled to decline the task he'd been offered. This upset Conrad, who responded that he would remember this response "especially during the important future deliberations about the usefulness of battleships."

Naval planes meanwhile took part in the air operations. One such flight was directed against Milan on 14 February, when 11 planes hurled 47 bombs on the electrical works. On the other hand, several bombing raids on railroad stations in Venetia didn't achieve any great success.

The creation of a so-called "Lagoon Flotilla" was also ordered. It consisted of small, flat-bottomed vessels - gunboats, armed speedboats, and tugs - which could navigate the shallow canals of the lagoons and penetrate the rivers into the plains. Although the prospects of success in such operations were small, the preparations at Trieste and the neighboring coastal towns served to divert the enemy's attention. The Lagoon Flotilla was ready at the end of March, although it wasn't actually employed.

4) The Aus-Hung. diversionary attacks on the Isonzo and on the Carinthian front, 17 March to 7 April

On 7 March the AOK had already ordered that around the end of the month the 5th and 10th Armies should mount diversionary attacks. This would conceal the departure of the six and a half divisions with numerous batteries from the Carinthian and coastal sectors, as well as the real intentions of the Southwest Front. The first of these attacks was scheduled for 19 March.

When the fifth battle on the Isonzo had burnt out after just a few days, it seemed to be an opportune moment to start the planned thrusts, deceiving the enemy with counterattacks over a wide area. These well-prepared operations could also eliminate the irritating emplacements and saps which the Italians had built in front of the most hotly-contested sectors in the previous battles. Contrary to the order of the AOK, XV Corps would make the first attack already on 17 March. This was because the commanders wanted to be able to use 8 Mtn Bde before it departed, and felt that the longer the diversionary assaults continued the greater would be the overall impact on the enemy.

10th Army

In the evening of the 17th, in 8 Mtn Bde's sector the BH FJB # 6 [from 7 Mtn Bde] attacked on the northwestern slope of the Sv. Maria Heights at Tolmein, supported by its neighboring battalions; they took the first Italian position, along with 16 officers and 542 men from 7 ID, 3 machine guns and a trench mortar. The assault continued in the following days, well supported by the accurate artillery fire of XV Corps' batteries, especially those stationed on the Lom plateau. Battalions of the k.u.k. 1 ID broke into the enemy trenches at Ciginj and farther south and captured another large number of Italians. After systematically destroying the positions as planned, they evacuated these enemy lines, which were unfavorably sited on the plain. Simultaneously with this attack, some scouting detachments and storm troops advanced west over the Ciginj-Selo road against the Italian positions on the Cemponi Ridge and against the Hrad vrh. These troops dug in firmly on the mountain slopes in front of the enemy, harassing the entire front of VIII Italian Corps. The enemy artillery, apparently believing that a general offensive had begun, opened a powerful fire on the positions of 3 and 8 Mtn Bdes between Sleme and Selo; the enemy

counter-thrusts were repulsed.¹⁵⁹ Since the 7 Italian ID was unable to restore the original situation on the Sv. Maria, VIII Corps ordered the Division to pull back into the second position. The success on this day was crowned by a surprise assault on the important Heights # 854 south of the Mrzli vrh, defended by troops of 8 Italian ID; here Battalion III/46 of 3 Mtn Bde captured 5 officers, 120 men and 3 machine guns. The enemy counterattacked immediately, but were thrown back.

Just as at Tolmein, there were also actions at Flitsch on 19 and 20 March, despite the deep snow and the ongoing departure of troops and artillery; parts of LW IR # 4 launched two thrusts to improve the position of the lines on the slope of the Rombon. They succeeded in setting foot in the Italian works, took many prisoners, and repulsed all counterattacks.¹⁶⁰ In these actions it was determined that the entire 24 Italian ID was deployed in the Flitsch basin.

Because of the snow, it was only possible in the other sectors of the k.u.k. 10th Army to annoy the enemy with powerful artillery fire and increased patrol activity, while inflicting casualties and pinning down units. Observations at the front and the interception of enemy broadcasts indicated that this objective was also met. In particular it seemed that the tactics of shifting troops in areas watched by the enemy during the day, and then returning them at night or in fog had indeed given the Italians the impression that the Carinthian front was being reinforced. When the weather changed in the night of 20-21 March it was possible to inconspicuously halt all the deceptive measures and skirmishes. They would be resumed in the Plöcken sector and at Tolmein when the weather improved.

5th Army

Under the k.u.k. 5th Army, XVI Corps intended to carry out the assigned diversionary assaults by occupying the ridge ahead of our lines north of Heights # 188, as well as the heights northwest of the Podgora. VII Corps HQ wanted to improve their foremost position by moving forward between S Martino and Point # 111 (on the highway). 61 ID HQ planned to take the La Rocca

159Through noon on 19 March a total of 19 officers and 760 men were taken prisoner in front of the Tolmein bridgehead, along with 4 machine guns.

160The enemy lost 17 officers, 542 men and 2 machine guns (3 officers and 221 men were prisoners); the attackers' losses were very light - 3 dead and 8 wounded.

Ridge. Before the fighting started, on 19 March the Görz bridgehead command was given the newly arrived k.u. Lst IR # 2, and on the 21st the infantry of the k.k. 21 Lst Mtn Bde¹⁶¹ from the Army's reserve, to help with their part of the mission.

After several small-scale storm troop operations on 19 and 20 March, the attack in the northern sector of the Podgora was delayed by very unfavorable weather; it finally started in the afternoon of the 26th. After two and a half hours of artillery preparation, two battalions of LW IR # 37 stormed the enemy trenches on Grojna Ridge; they captured 24 officers and 632 men of the 11 Italian ID as well as 2 machine guns. The Italians brought up all available reinforcements between Plava and Cormons and launched five counterattacks, which were repulsed. Then in the night of 27-28 March the fighting was broken off as planned; the captured positions were destroyed and the Dalmatian Landwehr pulled back to their starting points in perfect order. They had lost 9 officers and 250 men, while the defenders had lost 69 officers and 1200 men.

Soon thereafter, in the evening of the 29th, two battalions of IR # 80 attacked on the road along the ridge north of Heights # 188. They also achieved their objective and pushed the enemy back, capturing 9 officers and 350 men of the Granatieri Brigade. However, the ground gained couldn't be held.¹⁶²

After the first thrust from the Görz bridgehead, on 27 March the Italian high command ordered the Duke of Aosta to immediately have the main body of his Army open an offensive on the Karst plateau to support VI Corps while it counterattacked. The enemy assaults on Mt S Michele, at S Martino, and at other points of the front were unsuccessful. However, in the night of 27-28 March a battalion of the Italian 14 ID established themselves in the position of 16 Lst Mtn Bde on Heights # 70 (east of Selz), and on the 29th widened their penetration to about 400 paces. In the following days there was lengthy and costly fighting around this part of the trenches, which the enemy defended stubbornly. Prolonged and strong bombardment of the neighboring areas by the Italian artillery increased the difficulty of recovering the lost trenches. After a counterattack by 16 Lst Mtn Bde failed on the 29th, the commander of Sector III (HQ of 61 ID) asked VII Corps for support by committing the reserves of 106 Lst ID, the

¹⁶¹The infantry of 21 Bde consisted of k.k. Lst IR # 11 and 27 plus k.k. Lst Inf Bn 75.

¹⁶²Total enemy losses were 38 officers and 629 men; the attacking battalions lost 13 officers and 409 men.

neighboring unit to the north. When VII Corps in turn reported this proposal to 5th Army HQ, the latter felt compelled to place Sector III under GdK Archduke Joseph and to entrust that general with leading the counterattack at Selz. The necessary preparations, especially for the artillery, required a long time, so that the attack didn't materialize until the night of 5-6 April. Battalion IV/91 of 17 Inf Bde, admirably supported by the artillery of 9 ID and the heavy batteries of both Sectors, was able to recover and retain a great part of our original foremost line. The other parts of the lost trenches were systematically destroyed as planned, and left to the enemy. Now there was relative quiet by Selz until mid-April.

Further diversionary actions

The renewed winter weather in the Carnic and Julian Alps had just improved again when the k.u.k. 10th Army also resumed its offensive operations. On 26 March the Carinthian FJB # 8 in the sector of 94 ID captured the Italian positions on the rugged summit of the Klein Pal with a brilliant thrust. Those of the enemy garrison who weren't killed or taken captive sought safety in flight.

This success on the Klein Pal endangered the Italian front on the Carinthian crest east of the Plöcken Pass, which from there could now be rolled up, and therefore the enemy immediately opened strong counterattacks. Heavy fighting raged in the entire Plöcken sector in the following days. Despite a bombardment of the positions on the heights for several hours by Italian artillery, the first enemy attack was repulsed after bitter hand-to-hand fighting. However, the Italians brought up reinforcements and after renewed artillery preparation stormed the entire front from the Plöcken Pass through the Freikofel to the Gross Pal, and then the captured positions on the Klein Pal had to be evacuated. The enemy continued to attack until 31 March, but gained no further success.

The k.u.k. high command ordered the air forces to attempt to destroy the Piave bridges. This operation was carried out early on 27 March with one group apiece from Tyrol and the Isonzo plus some naval planes; because of contrary weather, it won little success. Of the 27 planes committed by 5th Army, 2 were lost. As a result, targets chosen in the future were closer and easier to destroy; thus on 7 April the railroad stations at Casarsa and San Giorgio di Nogara were successfully bombed.

During the actions described in this section, significant tracts

of terrain were taken and retained only in a few instances. However, the primary goals of the operations - concealment of our troop movements, pinning down Italian units on the fronts of the two Armies, and driving the enemy from the immediate vicinity of certain vital points - were fully achieved.

c. The deployment in south Tyrol

As far as could be determined in mid-February, the assembly of 11th Army would be finished by about 20 March. Preparation of equipment for the entire operation, the artillery deployment and the assembly of 3rd Army would take until the end of March. To make success possible, the AOK felt that when the attack started the full fire-power of the artillery would have to be available, and all of at least 11th Army would have to be fully operational.

The plans called for the equipment and artillery to be shipped first. However, since their railroad trains were ready to roll at different times and from a multitude of starting points, there were gaps in the schedule which could be used to move the troops and supply trains of 11th Army. This was the best method of using the rail network, but had the disadvantage that some units, HQ and supporting services - 3, 57 and 59 ID; the HQ of VIII Corps; and the supply services of III and VIII Corps and of 48 ID - didn't arrive together. Moreover, they had to be unloaded in the area north of San Michele and then moved forward by foot to their assigned areas farther south to make room for 3rd Army. Because of the decisions of 11th Army HQ, the first parts of 48 ID assembled in the Fleims valley. The movement of most of III Corps from the Isonzo, and of 18 ID, was supposed to start around 10 March, after the deployment described above; they would detrain directly in the assembly area of 11th Army south of San Michele. It was intended that 3rd Army would thereafter assemble in the sector north of this town. Thus it was hoped to avoid some of the inevitable traffic jams so that the very difficult deployment in the narrow Adige valley would be carried through on time.

Snowfall delays the deployment

Then an obstacle arose that couldn't be mastered - bad weather. In mid-February, in the middle of the preparations, the hitherto mild winter deteriorated. Thick snow fell incessantly, especially after 1 March. This caused delays and accidents on the railroads and reduced their capacity. By 10 March, only 500

of the planned 1500 troop trains had unloaded in south Tyrol. All activity at the stations became difficult, and dampness damaged some equipment. A constant battle with the elements had to be waged so that the roads stayed clear for the artillery deployment. Artillery officers stamped down the deep snow on the plateaus to indicate the places that would have to be shoveled for the batteries. A report of Col. Portenschlag, Chief of Artillery for 11th Army, depicts conditions at this time:

"On 9 March the Calliano-Folgaria road became impassable two kilometers in front of Mezzomonte...Carbonare can be reached only by sleigh. Areas that are shoveled are always covered again by the continuing snowfall. The snow lies four meters deep in the basins; it's simply unthinkable to work with the batteries, bring up the guns, etc. Fog and driving snow hamper visibility. Under these circumstances it's impossible to calculate when the artillery deployment will end."

Guns remained stuck. The trucks, which by this time had only iron rims, slipped on the roads.¹⁶³ Only light, horse-drawn carts could climb the heights. Moving the 18,000 tons of ammunition and other supplies to the plateaus was extremely difficult. Col. Ziller had to report on 10 March that "only insignificant amounts have been accumulated to date", and "that preparations for the artillery deployment have already been delayed, even if there is no further snowfall."

Also it was extremely dangerous, and at times impossible, to relieve the Jaeger and Landes-Schützen who were supposed to make up 8 ID and the L-Sch Div from the snow-covered Alpine mountain chains on the western front of Tyrol and in the Dolomites. Avalanches occurred, covering the mountain roads. Work continued day and night, despite the continuing danger of new occurrences. Nevertheless, the Centa road (from Caldonazzo to Carbonare) was blocked until the 15th; the Fricca road (Matarello-Carbonare), whose route included a large bridge which had been swept away by an avalanche, was blocked until March 22. Here, as everywhere in the mountains, the white death claimed its victims. Between 20 February and 18 March, 1050 men were buried in all of Tyrol; half of them were dug out alive, and 220 bodies were recovered.

In mid-March the weather finally cleared up, and the stalled deployment was again in full swing. However, the remaining

163TRANSLATOR's NOTE - By 1916 rubber was in short supply throughout central Europe due to the English blockade, and tires were a rarity.

equipment transports had to be stopped to make more room for the arriving troops. The later arrived in quick succession after 16 March - 18 ID, III Corps, the rest of 48 ID and of 57 ID, 44 LW ID, 8 and 2 Mtn Bdes, I Corps HQ, 43 LW ID, and 10 ID. Finally the 3rd Army HQ came at the end of March; it was stationed at Bozen, where Army Group HQ had also been established since 25 March. 11th Army HQ moved ahead from Bozen to Trent on 20 March.

The units of 11th Army which had earlier detrained north of San Michele meanwhile moved south. However, the stretch of road between Zambana and Trent - a second continuous route in the Adige valley - wasn't ready until the end of March. The ongoing construction of funicular railways was also now making good progress. By exerting all our strength we were trying to make good the delays in the artillery deployment. Although the commanders had wished to avoid doing so, they had to use entire combat battalions to aid the numerous labor detachments and the Front's reserves in shoveling snow on the plateaus and helping the gunners. A great amount of work was accomplished.¹⁶⁴

On 20 March, VIII Corps took over the border sector between Biaena Ridge and Serrada (inclusive), XX Corps the sector farther east as far as the Torrente Astico, and III Corps the sector from there to C. di Vezzena. "Border Sector # 6", which stretched through the Val Sugana to the Kreuzspitz, came under the direct command of 11th Army HQ.

¹⁶⁴As of 17 March, only six heavy and one mountain batteries had been placed in new positions. By 10 April there were 68 heavy, 50 field and 47 mountain batteries. In addition, there was a 38 cm howitzer which had ben brought through Calliano and Folgaria to a position 1400 meters high near Fort Lusern. A 42 cm howitzer was brought over the Fricca road to a position 2 km south of Mt Rover, at an elevation of 1250 meters above sea level. Especially noteworthy was the movement of a heavy 10.4 cm cannon at this time of year up the steep Vezzena summit (1900 m). Then in the next few days, moving quickly after each other, one 42 cm howitzer apiece were stationed at Calliano and Levico, plus a 35 cm cannon at Calceranica. By mid-April about 10,000 tons of ammunition and more than 3000 tons of technical equipment had been delivered to the high plateaus. The rations were held in readiness at Calceranica, Folgaria, Lavarone, Pergine and Trent; there were more than 270 "divisional daily rations" available, i.e. there were enough foodstuffs to last the men and horses for 9 divisions for 30 days.

The relief of units in the portions of the front that had thus changed hands was delayed by blowing snow. Some movements were actually postponed so that the enemy wouldn't be prematurely alerted. For the same reason, the preparation of the attacking groups on the plateaus wouldn't occur until as shortly as possible before the start of the battle.

Now, however, the original timetable was placed very much in question. GdK Dankl had reported on 10 March that in the opinion of men who knew the plateaus from years of experience, "the enormous masses of snow which lie there now won't have melted enough in four weeks to permit infantry to advance in battle formation." Toward the end of March, as the artillery deployment was again in full swing, the General hoped he could start on 10 April, weather (especially the snow situation) permitting; on 31 March he told the III, VIII and XX Corps to be ready to attack on the 10th. However, the spring sun wasn't as effective as had been hoped. Shortly before the intended starting time the situation was still highly unfavorable, and the corps commanders unanimously requested a further postponement. Archduke Karl Franz Joseph reported: "The snow is so deep and so yielding that a heavily-laden infantryman will sink several times up to his hips, making it impossible to either move quickly or to take cover....Therefore the prospects for a successful assault are null."

On 6 April GdK Dankl halted all troop movements leading up to preparation of the attacking groups and reported as follows to Army Group HQ: "In the area where the attack is to be launched - especially on the C. di Vezzena, the entire plateau of Folgaria, and on the Col Santo - the snow is still deep, and is only hard enough to be traversed in part and at night. Any infantry attack could move forward only slowly, and would soon result in the exhaustion of the troops." This would cause high casualties and place victory in doubt. Since no fundamental improvement in these conditions was expected in the next few days, GdK Dankl asked that the final decision about starting the offensive should be left to him. He gave assurances that he was fully aware of all the consequences. Reluctantly, but based on their own agreement with this assessment, Army Group HQ agreed to his request.

d. Counter-measures of the Italians

On 20 February the HQ of 1st Italian Army produced a detailed report about the situation on the Trent front. It included

information from the intelligence service of the high command; the latter had stated on 28 January (the date is significant) that for the coming spring Austria planned an offensive on the entire Italian front but especially out of Tyrol. The goal was to strike the Italian Isonzo armies in the flank and rear, and to cut them off.¹⁶⁵

The Army's report gave an exhaustive description of all available fortifications, plus those under construction; it stated that their strength was insufficient and closed with a plea for reinforcements, especially medium artillery, and for reserve units which could be held in readiness. Cadorna turned down this request. He responded that Italy's wartime goal remained unchanged - to concentrate very strong forces on the Julian front and therefore to limit those in front of Tyrol. 1st Army would be able to carry out its assignment, since the length of front for which it was responsible had been significantly reduced (from 380 to 213 km) and since its diligent preparation of defensive positions were freeing up more units. The Chief of the General Staff didn't share the concern of Army HQ that they wouldn't have time to get reinforcements in the event of an Austrian offensive. Several times he stated that experience showed how well-prepared positions could hold out much longer than the nine to fourteen days which Army HQ believed would be necessary to bring up the necessary reserves. The defenders would have to commit all their strength in an effort to win along the first line, which was the most heavily fortified. The "first line", however, wasn't necessarily the occupied posts closest to the enemy, but rather the foremost line which ran along the parts of the mountains that were easiest to defend. There was no point in mounting more guns in the lines which lay farther in the rear. Nevertheless, these positions should also be strengthened as much as possible.

For better or worse, 1st Army HQ had to be content with these exhortations. Anyway they did order their subordinate commanders to employ all means of building up the fortifications. However, they couldn't decide to take far-reaching measures, such as giving up the very unfavorably located first line positions which existed along many parts of the front.

¹⁶⁵Italian Official History, Vol. III, Documents, p. 383

The Italian defensive positions

The fortified system east of Lake Garda and as far as the Cismon (a tributary of the Brenta) was made up primarily of three fortified zones, lying one behind the other. Between the Lake and the ridge which ran from Terragnolo through Borcola Pass to Posina, the first zone consisted of several lines; the line which extended through the Altissimo, the Coni Zugna and the Col Santo was the principal position. The other lines making up the first zone were field fortifications, neither well sited nor particularly strong. The second zone had been built along the pre-war boundary, and the third consisted of the forts of the Rivoli-Verona group.

Between the above-mentioned ridge and the Astico valley, the first and second zones merged into each other. Several series of very strong fortifications, some of which had been started before the war (like the group at Mt Toraro and Mt Campomolon) were capable of offering prolonged resistance. In the next sector, as far as the precipice leading down to the Brenta, there were once more two distinct forward zones. The first was a row of strong installations which had been built on the Costesin and Marcai Ridges; the second position, also very strong, included the armored works at Cima di Campolongo and Mt Verena, as well as fortifications at the Porta di Manazzo. Behind the latter two sectors there was a third zone; it consisted of the "Agno-Posina" group of forts and some older works south and east of the Assa ravine. Bending east at Mt Kempel, this third zone was like an impregnable fortress wall. Even if it were taken, there was a detached fall-back position on the flank in the Asiago area which linked up farther east to the "Brenta-Cismon" fortress group.

In the Sugana sector, which extended beyond the Cismon River, there were supposed to be "seven" lines in succession according to the reports of 1st Army. There were serious differences of opinion between the commanders regarding where and how to build these lines, and where to place the garrisons. Cadorna didn't agree that the line Armentera-Borgo-Salubio should be the principal position; he preferred the line Ospedaletto-Cimon Rava, which he wanted to be strongly fortified. When he first had time to visit the Sugana valley in April, he claimed that in reality little more existed - outside the foremost position - than some colored lines on the map.¹⁶⁶ On the other hand, on the Austrian side it had been determined by ground and aerial reconnaissance that in the Sugana sector, as in the others, there were three

166Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, p. 187

more or less continuous line of fortified zones by spring 1916.

Changing plans of the Italians

In the midst of the precautions which 1st Army HQ was taking in case there was an Aus-Hung. offensive, they received a short order by wire from their high command. It stated "On 11 March the offensive will be resumed on the front of 2nd and 3rd Armies to exploit the advantage that the enemy hasn't sent reinforcements toward Italy, and to aid the allies by pinning down our opponents. 1st Army will simultaneously carry out an energetic operation just as it did in October 1915." This order acted as a wake-up call to resume the military activities which had been interrupted during the winter. Concern about an offensive by the other side disappeared, while many bold plans were developed. V Corps immediately announced their intention of thrusting ahead in the Adige valley to Calliano and in the Val Sugana through Caldonazzo to Vattaro; this double assault would cause the entire Austrian position on the Folgaria-Lavarone plateau to fall. The commander of III Corps had more moderate aspirations. He didn't want to renew the failed attacks which had been made in the Judicarien in autumn and winter, but this time wanted to have his right wing break the enemy line near Lake Garda. Raw weather, however, hindered carrying out either of these schemes. 4th Army, which had received the same order and whose left wing was boring under the Col di Lana, also had to remain inactive due to the winter conditions. Meanwhile the offensive of 2nd and 3rd Armies - called the Fifth Isonzo Battle - had ground to a halt.

On 22 March the Italians received the first reliable reports about the assembly of strong Aus-Hung. forces in Tyrol and about their intention of attacking over the plateaus.¹⁶⁷ Now the Italian high command revoked an order which it had given 1st Army HQ a short time before to give up two of its brigades; instead, the transfer of the Valtellina Brigade from the Isonzo to the Tyrol front was accelerated, and six newly-formed infantry regiments as well as several heavy batteries were assigned to 1st Army. Cadorna, who at the time was in London, wired G.Lt Brusati that if the Austrians attacked, the foremost troops should pull back to the well-prepared main defensive position, where the most stubborn resistance would be offered.

The reinforcement of 1st Army

¹⁶⁷Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, p. 192

In the first days of April, 1st Army HQ reported that the disturbing reports were being further confirmed. The high command was receiving similar information from various sources. Therefore they decided to move part of the strategic reserve - the 9 and 10 ID - from Friauli to the Thiene-Bassano area; also they intended to form a group of 10 Alpini battalions and 6 mountain batteries and assign it to 1st Army. At the same time Cadorna spoke soothingly to the alarmed Army commander, expressing the confidence with which Supreme HQ at Udine viewed the situation. Cadorna's calmness was evident in a letter he wrote a few days later (on 8 April). He told the Army commander that both 9 and 10 ID, then on the march, would remain in the strategic reserve; they were being stationed in the area of 1st Army only in case of some unforeseen emergency. He, however, was "confident that an enemy breakthrough won't occur, and that our opponents' activities are designed primarily to mask some other movements."¹⁶⁸

Meanwhile the commander of 1st Army reported that the measures taken recently by the high command gave him an assurance that even in the most unfavorable situation (if the enemy broke through on the plateaus), his front could withstand the assault. He hadn't, however, significantly reinforced the threatened V Corps with any of his own resources. Only two Alpini battalions and several batteries had been transferred from III Corps. On the other hand, he'd ordered the latter Corps to open active operations as quickly as possible to force the Austrians to divert some of their units. In the same spirit he instructed V Corps to carry out the planned operation in the Sugana valley very soon. However, he canceled the attack from the Terragnolo valley toward Calliano, which had no prospect of success.

Also, the 4th Italian Army was waiting only for improved weather so they could start their operation against the Col di Lana. Therefore in April, as the weather did temporarily become better in the mountains, there was lively fighting at several points along the Tyrolean front.

Correctly foreseeing the point where the Austrians would make their principal thrust, at this time G.Lt Brusati demanded assurance from the commander of V Corps that the fortifications in every sector of the plateaus were capable of prolonged resistance.

168Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, p. 195

e. Events on the Tyrolean front from early April to mid-May

1) Actions west of the Adige

When spring began, the defenders of the Ortler sector (Area I) again assumed their so-called summer deployment. The Italians also once more climbed to their positions on the heights. About two companies of Alpini attacked Mt Scorluzzo (3094 m) on 13 April, but suffered a substantial setback under the eyes of Swiss observers on the Dreisprachen Summit. Thereafter patrol activity continued in the sector when there were no snow storms.

Command of the Tonale sector (Area II) was taken over by GM Steinhart after the departure of the 88 L-Sch Bde. The garrison in April consisted only of a combined (later IV) battalion of L-Sch Regt # I, one Landsturm and two Reserve battalions plus 770 Stand-Schützen. Nevertheless, the chain of outposts at Tonale Pass was reinforced, and the main line of resistance established in front of the fortification.

Believing that a frontal assault against the heights along the pass couldn't succeed, the commander of 5 Italian ID had already decided in December 1915 that when military operations resumed in the new year he would first advance over the glacier of the Adamello Alps to the source of the Val di Genova. Then he would thrust north through the frozen ponds by the Mandron Heights to take the defenders of the Tonale Pass from behind. The operation was carefully prepared; the Italians built roads, paths and cable railways while stocking up Alpine equipment of all types. Troops familiar with the mountains were selected and trained for this special assignment. Numerous patrols were sent out to find and mark paths over the glacier and snowfields.

However, this activity didn't remain hidden from the defenders. On 3 April Col. Spiegel, commanding the right sector of Area III, stationed five small outposts (with a total of 57 men) on the Dosson di Genova, a vein of rocks in the middle of the mighty Adamello glacier. At the same time, he had to report that the enemy was also active in the Val Daone and in Judicarien. Similar reports came from GM Schiesser of the Riva sector, which now made up the left wing of the shortened line of Area III (still commanded by FML Edler von Koennen-Horak). At the start of April this western portion of the Tyrol Land Defense Command

still held a line about 60 km long with nine battalions (mostly Landsturm), 1760 Stand-Schützen and 128 guns. Army Group HQ didn't want to divert troops from the units held in readiness for the offensive to secondary missions unless there was a compelling reason.

The unsuccessful Italian attack at Riva

It was soon apparent that the alarming cannonades and the thrusts of small units out of the Val Daone and in the vicinity of Mt Vies were diversionary maneuvers; on the other hand, the activity of the enemy between Lakes Ledro and Garda had a definite goal. In fact the 6 Italian ID was carrying out its plan for a breakthrough against Riva with seven battalions assembled on its right wing, supported by plentiful artillery. The storm was heralded by several 30.5 cm shells which descended on this lovely town on Lake Garda. The first attacks were directed on 5 April toward Costa di Salo and Cima d'Oro. They were shattered by the gallant defenders (half of III Reserve Bn of the Banat IR # 29 plus a Kaiser Jaeger Streif Company). The enemy suffered the same misfortune on the following day when they resumed their attack, which this time also included the heights of Passumo and Capi. On the 7th the Italians broke into a sap at the Cima della Rocca. Kaiser Jaeger and Landsturm troops were brought up by cable railway and drove them back in the evening. The fighting around the positions on the heights now markedly slackened off. On the other hand, it flared up on the shores of Lake Garda. The hottest point was the so-called "defensive wall", a small fortification held by just 110 men and 2 machine guns. Despite several days of bombardment, in which several batteries joined in from the eastern shore of the Lake, the brave garrison repulsed the first powerful assault on 8 April. On the following days the Italians once again were pushed back with bloody losses. Finally in the evening of the 10th, after continuous heavy fire from the Italian guns had decimated the reinforced garrison, the smashed defensive wall fell into the enemy's hands.

Army Group HQ now approved some reinforcements, placing two battalions of IR # 50 at the disposal of Region III. Two companies from this Regiment recaptured the defensive wall on the 11th. In the following days the enemy stubbornly tried their luck again, but in vain. The sector commander recognized, though, that the fully destroyed position no longer offered any real protection to the defenders; he ordered it to be evacuated on the night of 13-14 April. The garrison took up another position about 100 meters farther back. The Italians were content with this, and restricted future activity to artillery fire. FML Koennen-Horak was able to return both battalions to IR # 50. Now his attention was drawn all the more to his right wing, where the 5 Italian ID was carrying out the offensive they'd been planning for several months over the 3000 meter high Adamello glacier.

The fight for the Adamello glacier

The operation was started in the night of 11-12 April by about 400 Alpini ski-troops, organized in several groups that came together for the thrust. They climbed from the Garibaldi Chalet to the Brizio [Brisio] Pass, and then onto the large Adamello glacier. Two more groups (120 men) were supposed to advance from the south out of the Val Adamè and the Val Salarno. From the north, the attackers would be aided by the garrisons on Mt Mandron and Mt Venezia, along with four guns which had been brought to these heights after considerable toil. The surprise was complete. The Austrian outpost on the Dosson di Genova was overwhelmed; only some troops on Mt Fumo were able to hold out until the 17th. However, the Italians failed to exploit their advantage by immediately moving against the next ridge of rocks, which ran from Crozzon di Fargorida through the Crozzon di Lares to Corno di Cavento, and represented the eastern edge of the great glacier. They believed that this position was strongly held. Snow storms also delayed their exploitation. This gave the defenders time to hastily man the ridge. Meanwhile the first successful thrust encouraged the Italian divisional commander to attempt further deeds. He wanted to considerably reinforce the attacking group, overcome the rock barrier, and advance into the Val di Genova. However, he was underestimating the difficulties which nature inflicted on all operations at these high elevations.

Fourteen days passed before the new preparations were half-way finished, four Alpini battalions were assembled, and the weather improved. Finally, in the night of 28-29 April the first wave of attackers crossed the glacier; by dawn they were nearing the rocky ridge between Crozzon di Fargorida and Corno di Cavento, defended by about 150 Landsturm soldiers with 4 machine guns. The garrison of Crozzon di Lares was taken by surprise and surrendered after a short fight; 50 men and two machine guns fell into the enemy's hands. The outpost on the Passo di Cavento, with 20 men, held out gallantly until the afternoon, but then was also overwhelmed. Bitter fighting developed around the Fargorida and Topete Passes - the main objectives of the attackers. Two companies attacked in succession, but were thrown back with bloody losses. The commander of the 4th Alpini Regiment, who was responsible for the operation, wanted to renew the attack at night but wasn't successful. Meanwhile Col. Spiegel set all the reserves of his lengthy sector in motion, so that by the dawn of the new day the defenders had been reinforced by about 300 men from the Salzburg Landsturm Battalion # 161. Spiegel also asked for help from his superiors; Army Group HQ assigned him the

Battalion X/14, which was to be brought up by truck. Although this unit wasn't yet available on the 30th, when the Italians again attacked at dawn they were once more repulsed. The attacks, delivered with noteworthy determination, reached their height around noon. The Italian literature testifies to the heroic self-sacrifice of the defenders; it mentions that an advanced position in front of the Fargorida Pass was only taken after 18 men had fallen dead, so that the remaining 11 were forced to give up.¹⁶⁹ Although fighting lasted until evening, the Italian thrusts were ever more disjointed; they were clearly faltering, and also lost 90 men as prisoners. When night fell over the shimmering glacier, both passes were securely controlled by the Austrians. On the Crozzon di Lares, however, the enemy had undisputed control since the day before; now it was learned that they had also established themselves on the unoccupied Crozzon di Fargorida (to the north of the disputed Fargorida Pass). Area HQ wished to recover both points, and requested further support. Besides Battalion X/14, they were given Battalion X/59.

An onset of ice-cold mountain fog in the first days of May caused the fighting to die down and enabled the Italians to relieve some of the fully-exhausted attacking troops. The weather and the difficult climb to the glacier from the east delayed implementation of the counterattacks, which had been hastily decided but couldn't start without comprehensive and time-consuming preparation. Parts of Battalion X/14 tried but failed to recover the Crozzon di Lares. Groups from Bn X/59 and a high mountain company also strove in vain to overcome the natural obstacles and to drive the enemy from the Crozzon di Fargorida. A snowstorm on 5 May caused heavy losses.¹⁷⁰ North of the Presanella Alps, troops from Area II attacked on 2 May in a failed attempt to capture the Castellacio.¹⁷¹ On 7 May Col. Spiegel's Adamello front became an independent sector (directly under Area III). On the 10th the enemy seized a favorable opportunity to advance from the Crozzon di Lares and occupied the Passo del Diavolo, lying one km farther east. This setback meant

169Italian Official History, Vol. III, Text, p. 308

170Ehnl, "Das X Bataillon des oberösterreichischen Infanterieregimentes Ernst Ludwig, Grossherzog von Hessen und bei Rhein # 14" (Vienna, 1932), pp. 46 ff.; Hoen, "Geschichte des salzburgisch-oberösterreichischen k.u.k. Infanterieregimentes Erzherzog Rainer # 59 für den Zeitraum des Weltkrieges 1914-1918" (Salzburg, 1931), pp. 410 ff.

171The Castellacio peak lies near Grenzbug, 1 km north of the C. Lago scuro.

that the garrison which was so bravely defending the principal passes, and was already hard-pressed, now was menaced from the rear. A decision to withdraw them had been under consideration, and now was accelerated. Their retreat on 11 May wasn't noticed by the enemy, who didn't climb the abandoned passes until three days later. The Austrians occupied a new line in a wide arc from Mt Carè alto through Mt Covel, Stavel, C. del Tamala, C. delle Ciere and C. delle Rocchette to C. Presena. A line of pickets was stationed in front of this position, including an outpost on the Crozzon di Cavento which caused the Italians much trouble. This was the end of the fighting in the Adamello sector. Bns X/14 and X/59 could soon be returned to 11th Army; they were relieved by Landsturm Infantry Battalions 160 and 164.¹⁷²

Considering the number of troops engaged, the conquest of the Adamello glacier was the largest military operation which had taken place to date amid the snow and ice of the highest mountains. The operation was a mountaineering masterpiece. The defenders, equally challenged by nature, displayed extraordinary steadiness (with a few exceptions). The casualties of the two sides were approximately the same - 68 dead, 176 wounded and 163 missing for the defenders, and 62 dead, 177 wounded and 124 missing for the attackers. According to the testimony of the commander of 5 ID, General Cavaciocchi, the Italians "didn't reach their final objectives" largely due to the insurmountable difficulty of providing supplies to a large body of men in the zone of eternal ice.¹⁷³ Exhaustion set in very quickly, driving some of the men to the edge of desperation; according to some Italian prisoners there were even incidents of mutiny against the commanders.

2) The explosion of the Col di Lana

Like Rayon III, the Tyrolean eastern front was attacked by the Italians at two widely separated points - in the Val Sugana and in the Dolomites. The Val Sugana attacks had a significant impact on the development of the Austrian offensive from south Tyrol, and therefore are described farther below in that context. The attacks in the Dolomites were opposed by the defenders of Area V, who took their orders from FML Ludwig Goiginger, the commander of the "Pustertal Combined Division" (Col. Vonbank's 96 Inf Bde and GM Eccher ab Echo's 56 Mtn Bde). In March this

¹⁷²See also Fahrner, "Salzburger Landsturm im Hochgebirgskrieg" (Salzburg, 1924)

¹⁷³Cavaciocchi, "Limpresa dell'Adamello" (Turin, 1923), p. 61

Division had undergone a considerable reorganization and reduction in its fighting strength. Most of its Kaiser Jaeger left to join XX Corps, leaving just three battalions and several Streif Companies. L-Sch Regt # III was replaced by LW IR # 36, but its relief was delayed by the danger of avalanches.¹⁷⁴ A completely insufficient reinforcement was provided by three so-called "Trachom-battalions", which consisted of individuals from the entire Army who had dangerous diseases of the eyes. Landsturm troops, plus 3000 gallant Stand-Schützen, made up the majority of the garrison on the Area's front of about 70 km; the most important bastions were still occupied by the Kaiser Jaeger who'd stayed behind. Although the number of troops hadn't diminished very much - on 1 April the order of battle included 20 battalions - the physical and psychological powers of resistance of the defenders were considerably less. Moreover the departure of many light batteries and almost all heavy batteries caused significant weakening.

The fighting on the Rauchkofl

The goal of the Italian IX Corps, which was still deployed at the front with 18 ID on the left and 17 ID on the right, continued to be the capture of the Col di Lana. The first blow, however, was struck by I Corps, opposite the left wing of the Pustertal Division, against the Rauchkofl. This was a ridge along the border, which stretched northeast from Mt Cristallo; together with Mt Piano, it kept the enemy from entering or observing the area by Schluderbach. The 2 Italian ID had vainly tried to capture the Rauchkofl several times in fall 1915.

Careful planning and preparation of all details of the new operation started in February 1916; the truly bold night-time operation began in the evening of 30 March. A reinforced company, guided by an experienced mountaineer, made the difficult climb through a narrow, very steep and snow-covered furrow in the granite. Then the morning of the new day dawned. The Italians remained concealed by the rocks, awaiting the next night to resume their arduous climb. They finished at dawn on 1 April, when they overcame the sleeping sentries; soon thereafter they overran the principal outposts as well. The neighboring

¹⁷⁴The 36th was an east Galician Landwehr regiment which belonged organically to 43 LW ID. Since it was the fifth regiment of its division, however, it was repeatedly detached and thus it wound up in the Dolomites. The Ruthenian troops of the Regiment couldn't easily adjust to the unfamiliar conditions of the high mountains.

detachments of LW IR # 36 (whose troops had also manned the lost position) tried in vain to recover the highest ridge of the Rauchkofl, which the Italians had so quickly seized. The east Galicians were strangers to the mountains; all their attempts to attack in the next few days were equally unsuccessful. Three companies, one after another, tried with little skill to ascend the same path through the snow, which was now in range of enemy machine guns. The counterattacks were repeated four times, and finally repulsed by Italian bayonets.¹⁷⁵ At least the assaults pinned down and weakened the enemy, despite their reinforcements, and prevented them from advancing any further. FML Goiginger's patience had been sorely tested. The lost outpost would have to be recovered, and if LW IR # 36 couldn't do it the task would have to be assigned to men who were familiar with the area and with mountains. He formed small detachments with men from Landsturm Battalions 171 and IV/2, from the Silz Stand-Schützen, and from the best elements of LW IR # 36. An Alpine detachment from L-Sch Regt # III was also committed. These skillful groups, placed under one commander, attacked in the morning of the 7th after increased artillery preparation. After three hours of combat the enemy was thrown off the mountain. They lost many killed and wounded, plus 100 prisoners and 2 machine guns. This was the end of the temporarily disturbing episode on the Rauchkofl. The fighting had further delayed the departure of the parts of L-Sch Regt # III which hadn't yet been relieved.

Mine warfare on the Col di Lana

Another week went by, involving meaningless patrol actions and feint artillery bombardments along the entire Pustertal front. Then the 18 Italian ID opened an assault to capture the Col di Lana-Mt Sief mountain massif, which they hoped would be decisive. By boring tunnels and galleries, the Italians were laying mines underneath the Aus-Hung. position. The preparations had taken almost the entire winter. Work was suspended at the start of April because it was believed the Austrians were constructing a counter-mine; the latter in fact was exploded on 5 April, but was ineffective. After this pause the Italians resumed their boring, and finished the job on 12 April. There were two mine galleries, containing a total of 5500 kg of nitroglycerine. An infantry brigade would conduct the assault, concentrating on the area where the mine would go off. Nine companies would storm the mountain peak after the explosion, and then push against Mt Sief without pausing. The powerful artillery - 84 light and 25 heavy guns - started to bring the Col di Lana and the surrounding area

¹⁷⁵Italian Official History, Vol. III, Text, p. 345

under destructive fire on 15 April.

The defenders had already become suspicious in January, and had set up listening devices on the ground. Concern subsided for a while because the Austrians believed the sounds they heard occasionally were from trench construction rather than mining. In mid-March, however, there were new fears - and they quickly increased. Small counter-mines were bored, but still there was no certainty regarding the enemy's intentions. Opinion remained divided as to whether there was any danger. Since February the II Battalion of KJR # 2 was responsible for the defense of the Col di Lana sector, which included Mt Sief, the position on the southwestern slope of the Col di Lana, the so-called "Mountain Sap" and the "Roth Trenches", and the works on the ridge north of Mt Sief. In mid-April the units stationed on the summit of the mountain were the Regiment's 6th Company and a sapper platoon; there were also several gunners and artillery observers.

The Italians finally revealed their intention to attack with powerful artillery fire. On the 16th and 17th the full force of the enemy guns was unleashed. The garrison suffered greatly. Their wire connection with the rear was severed. Late in the evening of the 17th a wounded soldier brought back a written message from the company commander on the Col di Lana: "The position is totally wrecked; the sap, the flights of stairs, and the path to the tunnel are piles of rubble. Staying in the cavern has gradually become impossible, and the situation is frightful. I have no further ideas. We will do our best when the enemy attacks, but all the routes to us are nearly impassable..." These disjointed sentences were accompanied by an assurance that they hadn't been composed in a state of great excitement, but rather reflected "most tragically the facts." The regimental chaplain, Father David Blumenschein, was greatly concerned by this message and hastened toward the summit. While on his way, he was killed by a shell.

The garrison met its fate in the night of 17-18 April. Shortly before midnight an electric current triggered the enormous mine. "The summit of the mountain cracked apart with a dull roar; large blocks of stone flew into the air, while the breastworks collapsed for a length of 25 meters, burying the defenders."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶Italian Official History, Vol. III, Text, p. 336. Among the voluminous literature about the fighting around the Col di Lana, the most noteworthy works are: Pengov, "Die Kämpfe um den Col di Lana 1915/16" (Mil. wiss, Mitt., Vienna; 1923 edition, pp. 393 ff. and 450 ff.) and Langes, "Front in Fels

Immediately afterward the artillery pounded the target area with massive fire, and the Italian infantry went into motion. The blown-up principal summit was soon occupied, and the northeastern knoll taken after a brief action. However, the companies which advanced over the southwestern slope were repulsed by the Kaiser Jaeger. When morning dawned, the attackers hadn't advanced past the area which they had captured in their first onset. 170 prisoners, 4 machine guns, 2 trench mortars and 1 mountain gun fell into their hands; the other 280 defenders were dead or buried alive.

The Austrians retain Mt Sief

The result of the action remained unknown to even the neighboring sector commanders for several hours. Meanwhile some small groups, either already on the scene or assembled by chance, carried on the defense. Thus the ridge between the Col di Lana and Mt Sief remained in the hands of the defenders, thanks to the courage and coolness of an Ober-Jaeger and his men. As the situation gradually was clarified, the commanders decided to recover the position. The counterattack was to take place during the next night. The Italians, however, likewise wanted to resume their operation against Mt Sief after darkness fell, and had sent two fresh battalions to join the attacking group. These new troops were available to oppose the counterattack which was opened by two Kaiser Jaeger companies after 11:00 PM. Under these circumstances the Kaiser Jaeger couldn't break through, but they weakened the enemy, who thus lost their last favorable opportunity. Driving snow also hindered the Italians' plans on 19 April. Meanwhile their 18 ID brought up a third regiment, so that maximum force would be committed to gain their objective. The assault would take place when darkness fell in the night of 20-21 April; the left wing of 17 ID would attack simultaneously.

FML Goiginger came to the scene of the fighting in the evening of the 20th. Although he wanted to recover the Col di Lana, he was convinced that without strong artillery support an attack would just lead to useless sacrifice by the already hard-pressed Kaiser Jaeger, who then would have to be quickly replaced by Landsturm companies.¹⁷⁷ The Austrians would therefore stay on the

und Eis", p. 6. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - This action has remained of great interest to Austrian historians. The most complete of the later studies is Fedrigotti's "Col di Lana: Kalvarienberg dreier Heere" (Munich, 1979).

¹⁷⁷The artillery operating in this area consisted of 18 modern and 40 obsolescent guns of various calibers.

defensive. The night-time assault by the enemy was opposed by the defenders of the ridge, the "Mountain Sap", and the "Roth Trenches." The two latter points were lost after bitter fighting. At dawn the important strong point on the ridge was still holding out, and the Kaiser Jaeger and Enneberg Stand-Schützen were also still in possession of the Sief ridge. The Italians renewed the offensive in the following days. Their efforts were in vain, and casualties were heavy. The attack never fully developed because of the barrage of fire from the defending artillery. The principal Italian objective was the strong point on the ridge, held by a small but heroic band of men from Landsturm Battalion 162. The Italians finally laid down their weapons on Easter Monday (the 24th), exhausted from the fighting and cold weather, and from the loss of 2000 men. What their commander had tried to avoid had come to pass - "Mt Sief became a second Col di Lana."¹⁷⁸

178Italian Official History, Vol. III, Text, p. 340

Other actions in the Dolomites

The fighting of the last few days had drawn in all of the reserves who'd originally been earmarked for the counterattack. In the Col di Lana area there was a total of 8 Kaiser Jaeger and 5 ½ Landsturm companies, plus 3 Stand-Schützen detachments. Overall the Italians enjoyed an enormous numerical superiority. For this reason they were able to capture the Sentinella gap in the Drei Zinnen sector by a *coup de main* on 16 April. The commander of Area III, who always considered the overall situation, had hoped that Col. Vonbank could find the reserves he needed from among his own resources. However, the Tyrol Land Defense Command felt that reserves could and should be sent to shore up Vonbank's weakened lines, especially since the great offensive was being delayed. Army Group HQ complied with this request, and on the 27th ordered that the k.u.k. 21 Mtn Bde, which was detraining northwest of Bozen under 3rd Army, should transfer to the Puster valley; here there were to be further actions in the second half of May.¹⁷⁹

A more distant action associated with the fighting around the Col di Lana occurred on 30 April. About two Alpini companies climbed up to the Marmolata glacier and captured a small post on the left wing of Area IV. Since the Italians were content with this outcome, FML Edler von Scholz could decide to forego proposed counter-measures. The units at his disposal - at the start of April they were 7 ½ Landsturm battalions plus 2470 Stand-Schützen - were still sufficient to garrison the most important ridges in the Fassaner Alps. Moreover the Italians were probably aware of the presence of 48 ID in the Fleims valley, and therefore didn't undertake the operations which Cadorna had so strenuously urged during the winter.

The overall outcome of the spring attacks by the Italians against the Tyrol defenses in spring wasn't significant. Our Army Group HQ had soon recognized the limited goal of the operations, and so diverted just five battalions from their original mission.

f. Events on the Isonzo and on the Carinthian front through mid-May

179The 21 Mtn Bde consisted of Battalions V/BH 1, V/BH 2, II/LW IR 5, V/LW IR 37 and BH FJB # 3, plus ¼ of 5 Sqdn/DR 6. The Area HQ divided the Brigade and placed its components under both of the brigade commanders who were already at the front.

The commanders of 5th and 10th Armies were placed directly under the high command on 25 March; they had been informed about the structure of the attacking group four days previously. At the end of the month, when the start of the great operation was still planned for the start of April, both Army commanders received instructions to prepare for the possibility that the enemy might have to substantially weaken their eastern front or even evacuate it behind a covering force due to quick successes by Archduke Eugene's Army Group. The principal task of 5th and 10th Armies would be to identify this moment correctly and then to exploit it with determination.

Because of the balance of forces, the impetus for such an offensive could come only from the commanders at the front; higher-ranking generals would just keep the movement within the correct limits. On 1 April the XV Corps was returned to 5th Army, which was then once more organized in four sectors (I, II, III.a and III.b). The guidelines for this Army indicated that any advance after the withdrawing enemy to the fortifications on the Tagliamento River should take place south of the line Krn-Monte Maggiore-Gemona, while 10th Army would move to the upper reaches of the River. 5th Army HQ ordered that aggressive reconnaissance should be carried out so that the right moment for the advance wouldn't be missed. They also relieved 9 ID from the front to prepare a reserve of troops capable of energetic marching and fighting; the Division's 17 Inf Bde was stationed at Selo and 60 Inf Bde at Dornberg. They were replaced in the line by the k.k. 21 Lst Mtn Bde and k.u. Lst IR # 2. In the first half of April the 5th Army had to give up a mountain brigade to Tyrol (in addition to 34 ID). For this purpose the new k.u.k. 21 Mtn Bde was formed with battalions taken from five different sectors; on the 10th the Brigade was ordered to move from the Wippach valley to Tyrol. On the other hand, at the start of May the 5th Army received 24 Lst Mtn Bde from the Balkans; it was placed in reserve at Comen.¹⁸⁰

Based on the guidelines issued to 10th Army, it would have its main body (94 ID and the 92 ID farther east) advance over the Carnithian crest between Plöcken Pass and the Fella valley. 27 Mtn Bde was ready to move in the Isonzo valley through Saga, while the weak forces between the Fella and Flitsch basin would just pin down the enemy. A reserve of five battalions was stationed at Nötsch in the lower Gail valley.

180The 24 Lst Mtn Bde, under Col. von Zhuber, had the following units - FJB # 2; k.k. Lst Inf Bns 6, IV/39 and 83; k.u. Lst Inf Bn VII/17; 6 Can Batty/Mtn AR 12, 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 21

The Italian units opposite the k.u.k. 10th Army - XII and IV Corps - were also reorganized in March and April. The most important change was that 36 ID of IV Corps at Flitsch changed places with 24 ID of XII Corps in the Fella sector. After the changes introduced by both sides, the two Italian corps between Mt Peralba and the Krn were numerically twice as strong as Rohr's Army. At this time he had just 38 battalions (of which 13 were from the Common Army), 24 field and mountain batteries, and 11 medium and heavy batteries. There were 37,000 riflemen, 150 field and mountain guns, and 88 medium and heavy guns. The XII Italian Corps and the parts of IV Corps as far as the Krn totaled 71 battalions, 54 field and mountain, and 35 medium and heavy batteries. They had about 70,000 riflemen, 232 light guns, and 95 medium and heavy guns.

Some minor actions

When the attack from Tyrol was still scheduled to open at the start of April, the 5th and 10th Armies were supposed to initiate feint operations. By schedule, artillery bombardments at Görz on 10 April, at Tolmein on the 11th and in the Plöcken area on the 12th would escalate into seemingly serious barrages; unit movements behind the front, infantry thrusts, and air operations were to simulate the development of attacks from Carinthia and on the Isonzo. However, bad weather and changed orders interrupted this activity.

On the other hand, the Italians again became active in the southern coastal sector. On 15 April they repeated the attacks against Heights # 70 east of Selz. Here in March the HQ of 61 ID had already canceled their plans for recovering the La Rocca Ridge due to lack of strength and the need to economize the effectiveness of the fighting troops. The enemy were able to win some small and temporary successes. VII Corps HQ ordered 61 ID to change places with 106 Lst ID at the end of April so that the latter Division could restore the situation at Heights # 70. Before this measure could be carried out, however, there was a new enemy attack on the 22nd. This led to lively fighting until 25 April, when detachments of 19 Lst Mtn Bde inflicted a bloody check on the advancing Italians, then pushed them back so far that almost all the lost territory was recovered. Thus ended the actions around Heights # 70 which had continued to flare up since 28 March. Sector HQ III.b was abolished on 1 May. Thereafter the HQ of VII Corps was in charge of all four divisions on the Karst plateau in one sector (III).

While it was generally quiet north of the Wippach, the Italians in the Mt S Michele sector increased their activity; in response, our troops began to oppose the forward advance of the enemy sappers. This warfare of saps and mines led to constantly recurring combat, which took place mostly at night and involved much hand-to-hand action. There were larger engagements at Mt S Michele from 24 April. At this time there were indications that the Italians were stepping up the mining operations in the Mt S Michele-Heights # 197 area. VII Corps HQ decided therefore to anticipate the enemy. After just three weeks of mining, on 8 May the 17 ID west of S Martino and the 20 Hon ID next to Point # 124 on the western slope of Mt Michele opened two attacks with mine explosions. By occupying the craters left by the mines and the strong point which had been the head of the enemy's forward sap, they substantially improved our position.¹⁸¹ In the following days and nights the Italians strove unsuccessfully to recover the lost positions. At the same time, they over-hastily and prematurely set off their own numerous mines, which didn't damage our installations. Thus the threat from the network of mines under S Martino was laid to rest.

In XVI Corps' sector there were just some insignificant actions in no-man's land through mid-May. On the 4th, the defensive batteries and fighter pilots at Görz shot down an Italian dirigible in flames. Under XV Corps, the 3 Mtn Bde was successful in some minor offensive operations on the Mrzli vrh and at Dolje through mid-April. Corps HQ planned a greater assault to capture the Jeza Heights on the Kolovrat Ridge, which dominated the Isonzo valley and the Tolmein basin. However, the departure of troops made it necessary to cancel the operation. There were no significant military operations through 10 May. Artillery actions and skirmishes finally started on 11 May, and developed into a larger operation around the middle of the month.

On the Carinthian front, April passed with just small actions of only local significance. Deteriorating weather on the 12th and again on 23 April hindered any larger undertaking in the mountains. At the end of the month the weather caused disruptions in traffic and avalanches which claimed their victims. Noteworthy actions in 10th Army's sector included the occupation of Mt Ciadenis (in the Peralba Group) on 21 April and a series of successful thrusts on 26 April and on 2 and 4 May which ended in the occupation of the Rombon by parts of k.k. Lst

¹⁸¹The commander of the operation after the mine explosion at S Martino, 1st Lt Geza Heim of IR # 46, was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order.

Inf Bn 41 and of BH IR # 4. This led the commander of the 24 Italian ID to seek to recover the Cukla Heights, which had been the starting point of the Austrian sorties. After very strong artillery preparations, four Alpini battalions advanced on 10 May against the three companies of Bosniaks on the Cukla and overwhelmed them in a bitter melee.¹⁸²

g. April actions in the Sugana valley

In December 1915 the HQ of V Italian Corps had already instructed 15 ID, stationed in the Val Sugana, that when the time was appropriate they should occupy Levico and Caldonazzo and if possible thrust as far as Vattaro. First they were supposed to quickly seize Mt Broi and the heights at San Osvaldo and of the Collo.¹⁸³ After unsuccessful attempts to achieve these goals in January and at the start of February, bad weather which began in mid-February prevented further activity. Finally, after four weeks in which the heavy snowfall on the southward-facing slopes gradually melted, Italian detachments moved closer to the chain of Austrian outposts which ran from Mt Carbonile (south of the Brenta) to the mountains mentioned above. On 22 March they attacked the sentries at S Maria and on Mt Broi, and in the night of 24-25 March also those on Mt Carbonile. All these efforts were repulsed. In the following days spring storms brought fresh snow to the mountains, and rain showers to the valleys. Skirmishing between the outposts diminished. Only the artillery of both sides kept up their fire, which had been growing heavier since mid-March. Observers reported correctly that the enemy was deploying many new batteries. On the Sella plateau (at Marter and Roncegno) and in front of the Collo they were diligently entrenching and obviously receiving reinforcements. From the other side, the Italians noticed the heavy traffic at Caldonazzo, even though the roads had been well camouflaged with reed mats. They fired artillery in this direction; as a reprisal, the Aus-Hung. batteries shot at Borgo and Marter.

At the end of March the commander of Border Sector 6, Col. von Sloninka, commanded L-Sch Regt # I, the bicycle battalion of Major Edl. von Schönner, k.k. Lst Inf Bn 164, and one Kaiser Jaeger Streif Company. There were about 2000 Stand-Schützen from the Battalions of Kaltern, Zillertal, Reutte II, Meran II,

¹⁸²The three companies of BH IR # 4 lost about 250 men, of whom half were taken prisoner. In the fighting on the Cukla Heights between 10 and 12 May the enemy lost 18 officers and 516 men.

¹⁸³Italian Official History, Vol. III, Text, pp. 315 ff.

Bludenz and Rattenberg, plus two independent machine gun companies and nine batteries. Furthermore, six mountain batteries and four 10.4 cm cannon from 11th Army had recently deployed in this sector. On 25 March the border sector, which stretched from the Cima Vezzena to the Kreuz summit, was placed under XVII Corps but with the proviso that the final deployment of the Corps wouldn't take place here. The troops of 18 ID, assembled around Pergine, would stay hidden from the enemy. Since L-Sch Regt # I was supposed to help form the Landes-Schützen Division, it would have to be relieved by units taken from other parts of the Tyrol defenses. For this purpose the III Reserve Battalion of IR # 37 plus 4 Landsturm companies and the Upper Austrian Volunteer Rifle Regiment (of just 6 companies) were sent to Pergine.

The fighting on the northern slope of the Sugana Valley

In the first days of April the Italian 15 ID again tried to capture the area Glockenturm-San Osvaldo-Mt Broi. After powerful artillery fire, in the morning of the 4th about three battalions struck the sentries on Mt Broi and at Votto and pushed them back a little. The Landes-Schützen soon drove the Italians back again from these outpost entrenchments. The enemy's intentions were made clear by strong troop concentrations at Roncegno, the advance of reinforcements toward Votto, a concentration of heavy artillery fire against Mt Broi, and the continuation of the attacks during the 5th. The planned relief of the Landes-Schützen was postponed, and parts of 18 ID held in readiness. The enemy artillery concentrated their fire against the ridge between San Osvaldo and the Larganza ravine; it was carried on without interruption during the morning of 6 April. Then about two infantry battalions attacked. The outposts, held by two Landes-Schützen companies, were powerfully supported by our artillery; they held out gallantly despite serious casualties. They repulsed four storming attempts and then withdrew to the somewhat higher position on the Fratasecca, leaving sentries in San Osvaldo. Meanwhile the Italian artillery continued to fire on Mt Broi, toward Novaledo, and as far as Calceranica. The impression of these events on the higher HQ is reflected in an order which was issued in the evening by XVII Corps: "To prevent the enemy from gaining a view of the area south of Caldonazzo-Calceranica, Army HQ orders that the line Novaledo-Mt Broi-San Osvaldo-Glockenturm-Collo-Mt Cola must hold out under all circumstances." The HQ of 18 ID, which had already ordered Battalion I/63 to the Panarotta, on 7 March also sent Battalions IV/4 and I/1 to climb in the direction of these heights to Brennstall [Brenstal]. Per the instructions of Corps HQ, these

three battalions were placed under Col. Sloninka, but he was told to keep them in reserve and only commit them if he received further orders. Six other battalions were held in place, but ready to go.

Despite our expectations, in the next few days the Italians just dug in within rifle range of the Aus-Hung. outposts. Only their artillery continued to thunder. On 9 April, 150 heavy shells fell on Caldonazzo, which began to burn and had to be evacuated. It was possible to relieve parts of L-Sch Regt # I. They were replaced at Glockenturm-Collo by III Reserve Battalion of IR # 37 and in the Garollo-Mt Broi area by the Upper Austrian Volunteer Rifles.

A radio message intercepted on 10 April described lively movement on the Sella, at Borgo, and at Roncegno; it indicated that new Italian attacks were imminent. They started on the 12th. Four groups - each containing two battalions plus a battery - had Glockenturm, Spigolo-Fratasecca, Mt Broi-Novaledo and Mt Carbonile as their objectives. Four battalions made up the reserve in the Borgo area.

Most of the outposts along the line of heights under attack were still weakly held, since we wanted to hide the battalions of 18 ID from the enemy and therefore kept them behind the main fortified position. However, the defenders had powerful artillery support; there were no fewer than 112 guns in the area, and some of the batteries of III Corps could also be used if necessary.

The continuing alarm in the Sugana valley was still keeping L-Sch Regt # I in Border Sector 6. 11th Army HQ had already decided that the Landes-Schützen Division, whose formation was delayed anyway by local difficulties involving the relief of the other Landes-Schützen units, should assemble behind this sector. It would be responsible for the security of the Val Sugana, so that 18 ID (all of which would be needed for the upcoming major offensive) wouldn't be drawn into the fighting.

But Army Group HQ didn't think that the enemy thrusts in the Brenta valley posed any danger. "Experiences to date involving the Italians' ability to attack in general, and in the Val Sugana in particular" made it unlikely that the enemy could quickly gain ground in this area, even if they were opposed solely by the normal border defenses. They vetoed the proposed deployment of the Landes-Schützen Division, because it might complicate preparations for the offensive.

In fact, during the latest Italian attacks on 12 and 13 April they had moved forward just a little. After strong artillery preparation they pushed back the reinforced outposts at the Glockenturm and east of Fratasecca. However, the attackers were still pinned down in front of the main posts by a barrage from numerous batteries. The Italians' courageous attacks against Novaledo fared no better. They drove the sentries out of S Maria, which was set on fire, and back to the dam on the Torrente Rosa; then they fell back under the defensive fire of the bicycle troops and the artillery, and the offensive gradually subsided. The Landes-Schützen counterattacked on the slopes of Mt Broi and took two dozen Italian prisoners on 13 April. The enemy suffered their heaviest losses in the fighting around Mt Carbonile. Here they were able to take three strong points from half of a Landes-Schützen streif company despite a gallant defense. They were literally blown out of one of these positions by the accurate fire of Lt Col. Schmidt's and Col. Janecka's artillery groups. In the evening of the 13th a company of Landes-Schützen who had hastened to the scene helped the streif company to fully recover all this important peak. Our own losses in most of these actions were also significant. In the evening of the 12th GM Kindl, who'd taken over command of Border Sector 6, asked if he could bring the three battalions from 18 ID in the area closer to the battle lines of the defenders of the Panarotta. XVII Corps HQ placed two more battalions from this Division in readiness in the Brenta Valley, and declared that possession of Mt Carbonile was especially important for any offensive over the Sella plateau. The mountain was to be held under all circumstances.

Plans for a counter-thrust

In mid-April it was still uncertain when the offensive over the plateaus could begin. Therefore 11th Army HQ decided to put an end to the continuing enemy pressure in the Sugana valley. At noon on the 13th they ordered XVII Corps to undertake "a short offensive thrust with as strong a force as possible to throw the enemy back from Marter-Roncegno-S Anna." GdK Dankl justified this decision to Army Group HQ with the remark that "special measures to secure the Val Sugana are all the more necessary because danger on the left flank will be particularly unwelcome during the offensive over the plateaus." He gave this opinion: "The activity and strength of the enemy in the Val Sugana will continue to tie down substantial forces from either 3rd or 11th Armies; the presence of the Italians in the Borgo area during the offensive will always be undesirable and cause moments of danger." Again he proposed "that the higher level HQ should

permit parts of 3rd Army to be deployed as demanded by the situation and the enemy's activity, at least until the capture of the Borgo area." In these suggestions the original plan to send a subsidiary force down the Val Sugana surfaced again in an altered form. In their response, Army Group HQ referred to the explicit order of the high command which forbade a simultaneous thrust in the Val Sugana and a premature commitment of 3rd Army. Army Group HQ didn't share Dankl's concern for the northern flank of his Army. "The counterattack by 18 ID which 11th Army HQ is planning should anyway soon neutralize the pressure from the enemy in the Val Sugana which the Army finds so objectionable." Army Group HQ saw no danger in the presence of the Italians around Borgo during the offensive over the plateaus. More likely the enemy in the Sugana valley would themselves be endangered when our offensive was in motion over the heights which dominated the area south of the valley.

According to the orders of XVII Corps HQ, GM Stracker was to attack with the main body of 18 ID plus the troops of Border Sector 6 who at this time were engaged in the Mt Broi-Fratasecca-Glockenturm-Collo position; they would recover the original line of outposts which lay about one to two kilometers ahead. GM Kindl would assist this attack in the Brenta valley and on the southern slope of Mt Broi with the bicycle battalion (already stationed there) and two half battalions of 18 ID. A half battalion of L-Sch Regt # I would hold onto Mt Carbonile.

Preparations were difficult and time-consuming. The snow on the mountains was still a meter deep, and the artillery was immobile. Therefore the attack couldn't start until 16 April, with limited objectives.

Meanwhile the Italians were trying to improve the position they'd occupied since the indecisive conclusion of their attacks on the 12th and 13th. Their efforts - furious bombardments and thrusts by small detachments against the Fratasecca and Mt Broi (on the 14th) and against Mt Carbonile (on the 14th and 15th) - were in vain. However, they dug in with speed and skill along their new foremost line, which was strongly occupied.

The counterattack by the k.u.k. 18 ID

The following missions were assigned by HQ of 18 ID:

- . Col. Edl. von Barza, the commander of 13 Mtn Bde, led Battalions III/BH 4 and IV/22 plus half of III/L-Sch I over the Portella to attack on both sides of the Glockenturm;
- . Col. Teus, the commander of 1 Mtn Bde, advanced over the

Weitjoch with Battalions I/63, III/64 and IV/4; he would pick up I Battalion/L-Sch Regt I and then deliver the main blow south of the Larganza ravine through San Osvaldo;

. Major Hildebrand led the southernmost group - Battalions I/1 and II/L-Sch I - east through Garollo to throw the enemy away completely from Mt Broi;

. Three battalions of the Division were in reserve, while the Stand-Schützen and Upper Austrian Volunteer Rifles stayed back in the main position.

Before the morning fog lifted on 16 April, Col. Barza's group advanced without artillery preparation. They completely surprised the enemy and moved past the line assigned as their objective. Their right flank nearly reached Postoi, but had to pull back toward Tezzel under pressure from strong counterattacks.

In Teus' group, at daybreak Battalion IV/4 was held in readiness near the crest of the Fratasecca, while Battalion I/63 was on the northern slope. The artillery hammered away for three hours. Around 10:00 AM the battalions advanced and took the enemy positions; the Deutschmeister reached San Osvaldo and then turned toward Valcanai, while the Transylvanians of the 63rd moved to Votto. The attackers' casualties were significant, but those of the enemy were even greater - in this position they lost more than 300 prisoners plus 4 machine guns.¹⁸⁴ However, the Italians stubbornly held onto the well-constructed second line at Votto and Height # 1213. To avoid further casualties, in the evening Col. Teus halted the assaults against these points. The night hours weren't long enough to complete new preparations and bring up artillery. On the 17th Valcanai was occupied; however, the Aus-Hung. artillery couldn't get at the trenches in the woods by Votto, while the enemy's guns could inflict substantial losses on the unprotected lines of infantry along the slope. Next morning the Battalions I/63 and III/64 stormed and took a short stretch of the trench, but the enemy - who'd received two battalions as reinforcements - didn't withdraw.

The action of Major Hildebrand's group on Mt Broi, which had started somewhat later than the attack against S Osvaldo, was already decided on the 16th. In a brilliantly-led operation, the

184Hoen, Waldstätten-Zipperer and Seifert, "Die Deutschmeister" (Vienna, 1928), p. 693. For gallant conduct in this attack, as well as during an earlier action, Capt. Emil Fey was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order.

Silesians and Landes-Schützen enveloped the enemy, who were worn down by powerful artillery fire, and took the majority of them prisoner. The rest fled to Marter. In GM Kindl's group the bicyclists, supported by half a battalion from IR # 52, had already crossed the Torrente Rosa before dawn and made contact with the Silesians from Bn I/1 on the southern slope of Mt Broi. They took almost an entire company prisoner.

By the evening of the 16th, the HQ of 18 ID could determine from the incoming reports that they had achieved their assigned goals. Only at Votto did the enemy continue to hold out stubbornly through 19 April. While the recovered line of outposts was declared the "main line of resistance" and technically improved, the group on S Osvaldo ridge renewed the attack on the 21st, now supported by two mountain batteries which had been brought up to close range. Despite heavy casualties, Battalions I/63 and III/64 seized the strong point on Peak # 1213 from the enemy. This made the entire network of Italian trenches at Votto untenable. Cold rain and driving snow set in. On all sides the Easter bells were pealing. The success of 18 ID was complete.

The six battalions which had entered the fray on 16 April had lost 279 dead, 1069 wounded and 247 missing. Battalion I/63 had suffered the heaviest losses - 126 dead and 392 wounded. L-Sch Regt # I, which now could finally leave the area, lost 26 dead and 115 wounded. The casualties of most Italian units were also heavy.

Results of the fighting in the Sugana valley

The Italian attacks in the first half of April had made a deeper impression on 11th Army HQ than on the immediately affected garrison of the border sector, and had finally led to the deployment of an entire Division. By a remarkable coincidence, the counterattack by 18 ID caused much greater uneasiness in the higher and highest Italian echelons than among the commanders who were nearest to the scene. The Italian high command telegraphed on 20 April: "The number of casualties to the troops in the Val Sugana on 16 April, which are comparable to those in a complete breakdown, indicate that strong forces had been deployed in the foremost line." This was contrary to the repeated orders of the high command which insisted on accountability.¹⁸⁵ The responsible lower-level commanders were careful to justify their operational methods, and sought in their reports to smooth over the importance of the "minor" setback at S Osvaldo. Nevertheless,

¹⁸⁵Italian Official History, Vol. III, Text, pp. 317 ff.

the main body of 15 ID was now pulled back.

When Aus-Hung. patrols advanced toward Votto on 25 April, they found the trenches abandoned. Here, and in the evacuated positions northwest of Roncegno, 700 rifles plus a lot of ammunition and rations had been left behind, a sign that the enemy's retreat hadn't been completely orderly. It was soon evident that the Italians had constructed a new position on the mountain ridge between Borgo and Torcegno; apparently it stretched in the north to Salubio and in the south to Armenterra. In front of it there was a line of outposts running from the eastern slope of the Collo through S Anna to Roncegno.

Cadorna wasn't satisfied with the reports of 1st Army. On 29 April he came himself to the Sugana valley. He got the impression that the new main line of resistance (Salubio-Borgo-Armenterra) was defective, and emphatically ordered that in the event of a large-scale hostile attack the principal effort should be made rather in the position at Opsedaletto. Nevertheless, he would permit serious resistance to also be offered at Borgo, which for psychological reasons couldn't simply be given up.

The short thrust of 18 ID, which was only supposed to shake up the pesky enemy in the Val Sugana, was regarded by the Italians as the start of the offensive out of south Tyrol (which GdK Dankl had in fact wanted it to be). However, more time would elapse before the offensive finally opened.

h. The period of waiting

1) Causes for postponing the attack

From the point when the start of the offensive was postponed due to the weather and snow conditions, a time of very painful waiting began for the Aus-Hung. commanders. The eternal fight which the spring sun waged against recurring bouts of winter weather continued throughout the anxious days of April 1916. Meanwhile opinions were constantly shifting regarding the prospects of the troops for advancing over the snowfields, whose depth and firmness changed every day.

The generals restlessly shifted their gaze from the snow and weather forecasts to reports and intelligence about the enemy. It was certain that the Italians were increasing their attention on south Tyrol at the start of April. On 31 March a construction foreman of Italian nationality in the Austrian Landsturm service, who'd been employed on the plateaus, went over to the enemy.¹⁸⁶ There was no doubt that he'd given information to the Italians, whose heavy artillery thereafter fired more often and with greater effect against the assembly areas. With displeasure we had to watch every day as the enemy energetically extended their positions on the cliffs, prepared new barriers, and openly received reinforcements. Our artillery didn't leave the Italians in quiet, but the constant sound of blasting powder indicated that they were still able to continue with their work.

All measures were attempted to divert the enemy's attention back to other fronts. New demonstrations and deception maneuvers started on 10 April. Also Battalion I/27 of III Corps was returned to the Isonzo sector. Bombing squadrons were sent to interrupt the reported lively train traffic in Venetia, which indicated that the Italians were moving significant forces toward

¹⁸⁶General Capello described this incident in "Note di Guerra" (Milan, 1921), p. 247 - "This pseudo-engineer, truly an adventurous type...brought with him a detailed sketch and declared himself ready to give us the most exact details about the Austrian preparations, with which he was completely familiar....His moral defects made us distrust him; however, we could see that his exact and concrete information was consistent with data from other sources." Besides this construction foreman, three other traitors went over to the enemy.

south Tyrol. Army Group HQ had the impression, as did the AOK on 21 April, "that the enemy knows in general about the offensive, but isn't completely clear about its direction."

The idea now was to make up for the lost element of surprise by the strength of the offensive. Some of the artillery of 3rd Army was moved forward. More consideration was given to an earlier suggestion that the attack by XX Corps should be supported by artillery loaned from III Corps, which therefore would have to delay the start of its own assault. Unfavorable weather also hampered the activities of the air units. Despite the dangers, however, they continued to fly and brought back considerable information which made it possible to be certain about the position of the enemy defensive positions, and enabled the artillery to select their targets. The flyers also helped the fire directed against the Italian batteries.

Meanwhile attempts and tests were continued to determine the chances of attacking over the snowfields. The fighting in the Val Sugana, on the Dolomite front and at Riva didn't offer any grounds for comparison, since it always involved just limited local goals and mostly took place on the lower slopes of the mountains, which had been longest affected by the sun and therefore were already free of snow. Attempts to move on the plateaus demonstrated that troops could move easily over the snow in some places, but then repeatedly sank up to their hips depending on the temperature and the time of day. North winds set in on 15 April and hardened the snow. Several commanders believed the time had come to attack, but were contradicted by others. There were also differences of opinion among the troops and indeed in the highest HQ. However, the melting commenced again a few days later. Now it would be necessary to wait until the still large and yielding snow cover melted away. Daily observation of the height of the snow led to different analyses and no certain conclusion. 11th Army HQ reported that unless there was another change in the weather they could begin the attack in the first days of May. Based on their own analysis, Army Group HQ had to agree to this latest postponement, although they were aware of all the consequences of delay. The AOK didn't take this well, and noted again: "When deciding when to attack we must recognize that every day of delay is a disadvantage for us and an advantage for our enemies. The general situation also demands an early start, but also that the offensive should be successfully accomplished, since we are staking everything on one card. Based on these considerations, the start of the attack should take place as soon as permitted by the condition of the snow."

Growing impatience of commanders and troops

Day after day the higher HQ sent staff officers to review the incoming snow reports. Also GO Archduke Eugene and FML Krauss personally checked the accuracy of the findings of their subordinates and gave the AOK their impressions. Nevertheless, there was growing impatience. This led to superfluous inquiries and justifications, and even to a crisis of confidence.¹⁸⁷ The time of waiting also wasn't easy for the troops, standing ready for action in valleys blooming with springtime. The period was used for training and maneuvers, which were often broken off in anticipation of an order to attack.

Rain set in around Easter, while fresh snow fell on the mountains. A new and large-scale maneuver at the same elevation as the terrain in front of 11th Army led to the following conclusion on 26 April:

"After the recent thaw and the following storm, the snow cover in general is very soft. The only time in which a man - without carrying a heavy load - can come forward without becoming exhausted is between 3:00 and 6:00 AM. Three hours are needed to cover a stretch of 2000 paces. Individual spurts can't be longer than 25 to 30 paces. While moving close enough to strike the enemy, the troops would in all cases be very tired...and after the assault they would be worn out. A hand-to-hand struggle could easily turn against us...In most cases there could be no question of a pursuit. Moving ammunition up to the firing line could only be accomplished by a great expenditure of strength, and sending the wounded back to the rear would be almost impossible. Even in fast-frozen snow the bearers can't move forward, since they sink to their stomachs in areas where the snow is 50 cm deep."

If the weather continued to be favorable, the snow would melt enough to no longer be a serious obstacle in about fourteen days (that is, by around mid-May).

Once again the HQ of 11th Army had to make a decision. They decided to wait, despite the depressing fact that the moment of surprise was disappearing. Anyway another traitor - this time a

187TRANSLATOR's NOTE - Long after the event, in February 1917 FML Krauss was surprised when Conrad asked him whether there might have been some ulterior motive - other than the weather - behind the long delay. (Krauss, "Ursachen unserer Niederlage", p. 190)

Czech reserve officer - had gone over to the Italians on 24 April. We would have to accept the fact that the enemy was prepared; because of the obstacles presented by the elements we would have to overcome the expected stronger Italian resistance by a greater expenditure of strength.

2) Changes to the plans

The original plan of attack, which relied heavily upon surprising the enemy and therefore upon the quickness of the first success, was reviewed and altered. A new scheme for advancing in echelon was prepared; GM Pichler, 11th Army's Chief of Staff, presented and elaborated it for Army Group HQ which in turn sent it ahead to Teschen. The document explained the rationale for the changes, and continued:

"Of the three principal sectors of the area to be attacked - the Vezzena plateau, Folgaria plateau and the Col Santo plateau with Vallarsa - the enemy has the least concern about the last-named. We wish to exploit this fact and to ensure that we are successful in attacking there, along the Rovereto-Thiene road which is now of enhanced importance. Therefore 11th Army HQ wishes to reinforce VIII Corps, already assigned to the sector, with 48 ID. Then we will have 31 battalions for the area between Coni Zugna and the Terragnolo valley, which is about 12 kilometers wide. To the left, the XX Corps will attack simultaneously with 34 battalions on the 8 kilometer wide Folgaria plateau, as originally planned. III Corps, however, which is deployed farther ahead, will first support the advance of XX Corps by flanking fire from the north with its powerful artillery." Only after the latter command reached Mt Toraro and the Sp. Tonezza would III Corps also attack on the 8 to 10 kilometer wide Vezzena plateau; it would use 28 ID and 22 LW ID (*i.e.* 26 battalions). 11th Army HQ intended to keep 6 ID (12 battalions) under its own control. The course of events would determine whether 18 ID (10 battalions) had to stay in the Val Sugana or could be shifted to the plateaus. Army Group HQ reported that it fully concurred with these plans of 11th Army and added: "As soon as the corps of 11th Army have completed their deployment in the front line, 3rd Army will move forward, with its leading troops at Trent."

Thus the strength of 11th Army seemed to be shifting toward its right wing. GO Conrad nevertheless noted: "I agree with the addition of 48 ID to VIII Corps; I have always reckoned that it will be relatively easier to move forward through Camp grosso." Therefore Lt. Col. Schneller drafted the following answer: "The

AOK doesn't feel obliged to interfere in the disposition of its units which 11th Army HQ has selected to carry out their mission. We note, however, that while the attacks by the reinforced VIII Corps and XX Corps will take place simultaneously, the delay in the offensive by III Corps might not only cause the operation of XX Corps to falter (notwithstanding the effective artillery support), but might reduce the greatness of our overall success. The AOK believes that the surest guarantee of this success is a powerful simultaneous assault with a powerful force, aiming to take all of the enemy's main position at the first onset." To this note GO Conrad, who'd never substantially changed his original concept of 6 February, added the following words: "Essentially a success by the groups on the wings (VIII and especially III Corps) will put the enemy opposite XX Corps in a precarious situation."¹⁸⁸

The movement of 48 ID from the Cavalese area into the Adige valley began on 8 May. Because of the strong enemy troop concentrations in the Val Sugana, Army Group HQ felt obliged to push forward parts of 3rd Army so that they'd be available in an emergency to back up Border Sector 6 (whose line now extended past the Val piana heights). Thus by 9 May the 2 Mtn Bde had reached Cavalese, where they were briefed about the condition of the crossing points through the Fassaner Alps by the departing 48

¹⁸⁸An authoritative source in the military archives indicates that there was another motive behind 11th Army's change in plans in addition to those outlined in the presentation to the AOK. According to this report, another reason why III Corps had to stand in place so that its powerful artillery could support XX Corps was that its own advance depended on a strong thrust forward by the latter command. The right wing of III Corps, the 28 ID, would be exposed to murderous artillery fire on its flank unless the Italian heavy batteries in the areas by Passo della Vena and Mt Campomolon were neutralized. By taking these enemy batteries the XX Corps would directly assist III Corps. This information can't be found in the contemporary records. However, GdI Ernst Horsetzky has thrown light on the deliberations of each day and added substantially to our knowledge of this subject in an article based on the recollections of several high-ranking commanders, "Zum Angriffsplan der öst-ung. 11th Armee im Mai 1916 aus Südtirol" in the February 1934 edition of the *Militärwissenschaftlichen Mitteilungen*.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - This footnote appears on page 725 of Volume Five in the original, since it was prepared after the publication of Volume Four.

ID, whose advanced detachments they had relieved. 8 Mtn Bde moved to the area northwest of Pergine, where they arrived on the 11th; eventually they were to relieve 18 ID in the border sector. Both 2 and 8 Bdes were placed under XVII Corps HQ. This Corps, along with 18 ID and the original garrison of the border sector (181 Inf Bde) came under 3rd Army on 10 May. Thus even before the offensive started the Army Group HQ had taken the first step toward dividing the front, despite the precise orders of the AOK that 3rd Army was to be deployed behind the 11th.

Final selection of the date for the attack

Meanwhile GO Dankl, after a new and thorough review of conditions, had chosen 17 May as the date for the attack. Although this latest delay was unwelcome to Army Group HQ, they derived some comfort from signs that the enemy might soon undertake their own offensive. Such a premature Italian attack "could be an unexpected windfall." The high command was extremely upset about this third postponement. They received the news with mistrust and demanded to know whether Army Group HQ still had "firm confidence" that their mission "could be successfully accomplished with the available units and commanders despite the counter-measures of the enemy." The AOK expected a "frank discussion of whether the difficulties are arising for reasons other than the condition of the snow." Army Group HQ responded brusquely that only the snow conditions were responsible, and repeated that they agreed with the analysis of 11th Army HQ. The AOK wasn't satisfied with this retort. They demanded specific data and declared: "Compelling factors might force us to order the attack to commence before the time chosen by 11th Army HQ." 11th Army should be ready to strike within four days after receiving the order to advance. At the same time the high command ordered a response by wire to the question of whether 11th Army HQ would carry out its plan based on the opinion of the AOK that the attack should be carried out simultaneously along the entire front.

At the start of May, Conrad was visited by the German military plenipotentiary GM Cramon, acting on instructions from GdI Falkenhayn. Cramon asked whether the offensive, which no longer could surprise the enemy and therefore had little prospect of success, should be canceled and some of the units assembled in south Tyrol made available for the German Western front. Conrad refused since the attack couldn't be abandoned after being prepared in such detail; the artillery, in particular, could not

be redeployed.¹⁸⁹

GO Dankl now chose 15 May as the final date for the start of the offensive. However, he stuck to his decision to deliver the attack in echelon, in which he was in full agreement with the opinions of Army Group HQ but opposed to those of the AOK. He believed that flanking fire during an expanded artillery preparation was indispensable, and would be possible only if the assault by VIII and XX Corps preceded that of III Corps. At first the XX Corps would thrust ahead only frontally. A difficult situation might develop if the enemy committed all their reserves against this Corps, but certainly they couldn't do so quickly. If nevertheless this came to pass the following assault by III Corps would be all the easier. GO Conrad finally gave his consent, but unwillingly. Dankl issued the final orders for the offensive on 10 May. At the same time the AOK instructed the 5th and 10th Armies to undertake new demonstrations.

3) Readiness of the Italian defenders

When the Aus-Hung. attack failed to develop in the first weeks of April, and the Italians saw that their thrusts on the Tyrolean front weren't eliciting any evident response, the observers who didn't want to believe in any danger again won the upper hand. The most important of them was General Cadorna. Then the Austrian blow in the Val Sugana shook up the non-believers.

On 18 April the Italian high command demanded that the administrative services accelerate their activity, especially the provision of ammunition, because "recent reports and the fighting now raging in the Val Sugana make it seem not just possible, but indeed probable that there will be large-scale and significant military operations in this valley, on the high plateaus, and in the Val Lagarina."¹⁹⁰ As a result, 1st Army got the modern heavy batteries it wanted, along with many field and mountain guns. In general, the front on the plateaus seemed to have sufficient weapons to stand up to any attack. An enemy attempt to break through would fail against the strong works and positions, which had been completed with perseverance and diligence. The Italians noted that the fortifications of their opponents on the Isonzo were impregnable. Cadorna also referred to the prolonged resistance of the works at Verdun; in a circular he expounded to his subordinates the lessons to be learned from the defense of

189Cramon, "Bundesgenosse", pp. 56 ff.

190Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, pp. 197 and 204

this fortress by the French.¹⁹¹

The portion of the front in the Col Santo area didn't seem so secure; 1st Army HQ intended to strengthen it with a brigade from 9 ID, which was in reserve at Thiene-Schio. The Italian high command didn't want to divide this Division, and instead sent another brigade. G.Lt Brusati then requested that one more division be made available at Vicenza; Cadorna partially met this request by ordering that 27 ID (on the Tagliamento in the strategic reserve) should be held in readiness to be transported. When 44 ID came home from Albania at the end of April, Cadorna sent it to Desenzano on Lake Garda. He made efforts to bring the strategic reserve up to full strength. Finally, at the start of May he ordered several batteries and all available machine gun detachments to join 1st Army. Thanks to these measures, according to General Cadorna, on 15 May the 1st Army's force on the front between Lake Garda and the Brenta (including the Val Sugana) consisted of more than 176 battalions (45 of which were from the militia and 7 from the border guards).¹⁹² Also, there were 18 battalions from 44 ID and from the Sicilia Bde in readiness at Desenzano and Brescia. Furthermore, the high command had available six divisions on the Tagliamento (X and XIV Corps plus 27 and 32 ID, totaling 72 battalions); in an emergency they could be quickly sent to the Tyrol front. As for artillery, in the sector delineated above the 1st Army had 503 light and 348 heavy or very heavy guns.

Despite everything, states Cadorna, "it is completely true that until the battle started I didn't think it was probable that [the enemy planned] a breakthrough attack on a large scale with the eventual goal of cutting off our main army on the Isonzo and in the Cadore."¹⁹³ It seems that this lasting doubt caused a misunderstanding between the Chief of the General Staff and the commander of 1st Army. Sharp differences of opinion had already erupted in mid-April after the setbacks in the Val Sugana. On 8 May G.Lt Conte Pecori-Giraldi took over command of 1st Army. At

191It is noteworthy that a short time earlier the k.u.k. AOK had issued instructions which included lessons to be learned from the breakthrough battles of Gorlice-Tarnow and of Soissons.

192Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, p. 200. These figures are in general the same as the estimates of the k.u.k. AOK in May 1916. However, it should be noted that in the Marshal's book he is answering critics who complained that he supported 1st Army insufficiently and too late. Therefore his account is opaque if not distorted.

193Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, p. 204

the same time the 15 ID of about 24 battalions, hitherto on the right wing of V Corps and which had received yet another brigade at Easter, became XVIII Corps and was placed directly under 1st Army.¹⁹⁴ Also the left wing of V Corps (37 ID) was placed directly under Army HQ.

B. The Eastern front and the Balkans through mid-May 1916

1. Removal of units from the k.u.k. AOK's part of the Eastern front, and construction of positions

After the winter fighting in Bukovina and east Galicia died out, there were months of relative quiet on the eastern front south of the Pripyat. One reason for this pause in the fighting was that the Russians realized after the long and costly New Year's Battle that they had no prospect of success if they continued their efforts. The other was that the end of the Russian assaults was very welcome to the Aus-Hung. high command, because it allowed them to direct their entire undisturbed attention to preparing the offensive against Italy. Moreover, it was expected that the snows would begin to melt in the northeast toward the end of March, which would prevent large scale military movements in the plains; therefore no new Russian offensive could open until later in the spring. Soldiers of the Aus-Hung. northern army could be moved elsewhere as needed.

In his meeting with GdI Falkenhayn on 3 February, GO Conrad had learned that he couldn't count on having German troops take part in the offensive against Italy. Thereafter he intended to take four good divisions from the Aus-Hung. eastern front, along with many smaller units, especially heavy batteries. This loss would partly be made good by 70 Hon ID from Transylvania and by some of the troops in the Balkans. Conrad moreover reckoned that the eastern front was receiving about 100,000 replacements per month; if the fighting was as light as expected, this number would exceed normal losses. On the other hand, it could be expected that the Russians would also be able to fill up their units,

¹⁹⁴TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - As written this passage is somewhat misleading. 15 Italian ID continued to exist, and made up the bulk of the new XVIII Corps (the other components were 13 Militia Bde, 13th Bersaglieri Regt, and two independent battalions). See Italian Official History, Vol. III, Text (Tome 2, pp. 90-91).

indeed on a much larger scale. Thus it was all the more important to strengthen the eastern front by continuing to construct all types of fortifications that would enable us to repulse any Russian thrusts undertaken to relieve the Italians.

At the conference between Conrad and Falkenhayn mentioned above, it was also decided that the German troops of Bothmer's Army would stay in east Galicia because of the possibility of Russian attacks against the southern part of the Aus-Hung. eastern front to relieve either the French or Italians. On the other hand, the fact that large operations in the swamps of Volhynia would be impossible once the thaw started meant that GdI von Gerok's XXIV Res Corps (German 1 and 22 ID) wouldn't be needed there.

Already on 6 February, a week before the German OHL moved from Pless to Mezières, Falkenhayn requested the return of Gerok's Corps. Because of continuing tension in east Galicia and Bukovina, there were no troops available on the eastern front to relieve Gerok, so on the 7th the k.u.k. 53 ID (17 Mtn Bde and 23 Lst Mtn Bde), which was arriving from Serbia, was sent through Kovel to Linsingen's Army Group. The soldiers of this Division had left their mountain equipment, which they wouldn't need in the plains, back in the Balkans; therefore both brigades were renamed (they became 128 and k.u. 127 Lst Inf Bdes). On 3 March the German 1 ID began its trip to the western front; after a new request from Falkenhayn, it was followed in mid-month by 22 ID and the HQ of XXIV Res Corps. GdI Fath's k.u.k. Corps and GdK Freih. von Hauer's Cavalry Corps now came directly under command of Linsingen's Army Group HQ.

In these days the two high commands discussed the possible employment of Turkish troops on the central European fronts. Vice-Generalissimo Enver Pasha had offered the German OHL four divisions, which would be followed later by two more. GO Conrad, who was asked for his opinion on 14 March, felt that the Turkish units would be a very welcome reinforcement for the Bulgarians in case Romania joined the Entente. Therefore they should stay in Thrace. Conrad's reluctance to use Ottoman divisions in central Europe was strengthened a few days later when the German Alpenkorps was ordered to leave Macedonia for the French theater of operations at a time when Sarrail's divisions were starting to shift forward from the entrenched camp of Salonika toward the weakened Bulgarian-German Balkan front.¹⁹⁵ In addition, it was determined that only one Turkish division was actually available,

195Nedev, "Les operations en Macedoine. L'épopée de Doiran 1915-1918" (Sofia, 1927), pp. 43 ff.

and that its equipment was very incomplete.

Movement of Aus-Hung. units from the East to Italy

At the end of February the units and higher HQ of the Aus-Hung. eastern front chosen for the offensive against Italy began to depart. The first was 21 Lst Mtn Bde, taken by trains from 7th Army to (initially) the Isonzo front. On 1 March they were followed by 3 ID, which had been replaced east of Luck by 2 ID, hitherto in reserve. The next unit in line directly to the south, 10 ID, was replaced in the last week of March by 70 Hon ID (which had come from Transylvania through Brody in the second half of February to 4th Army's sector). At the end of March the 10 ID entrained, leaving 19 Inf Bde behind; in south Tyrol it once more became a full division by gaining 21 Inf Bde (which had come from 11 ID of 2nd Army). Another unit which left 2nd Army was 34 ID, which moved on 16 March to the coastal lands behind the Isonzo (rather than immediately to Tyrol). 43 LW ID left the South Army on the 22nd and went directly to south Tyrol. Both divisions had been in reserve in their former Armies, and weren't replaced. Also ordered to the southwest front were the XVII and I Corps HQ plus 12 battalions and 15 batteries drawn from various divisions.

On 8 April the German OHL requested the return of 3 Gd ID and the HQ of Corps Marschall, which were still at the front under South Army. The Guards were relieved by the k.u.k. 32 ID, which had been in reserve. As replacements, the South Army received 38 Hon ID from 7th Army and IX Corps HQ from 4th Army. In turn, the HQ of Corps Szurmay, along with 7 ID, switched from 1st to 4th Army, where it also took over 70 Hon ID. Thus 1st Army retained just 25 ID and 46 LW ID, which were placed under XVIII Corps HQ (transferred from 2nd Army).

Thus from the start of February to the start of April the sector under the Aus-Hung. high command between the Pripyat and Czernowitz received two Landsturm divisions while sending four and a half divisions plus 12 individual infantry battalions and 15 batteries to the southwest front. In addition, three German divisions left in March and April for the western front, without being replaced. Counting the detached battalions and batteries as a full division, the net loss was therefore six and a half divisions. However, overall strength had actually increased because of the ongoing arrival of new artillery and the fact that there were few casualties to offset the incorporation of the March formations. Thus on 1 June there were 60,000 more riflemen and 255 more guns than on 1 February (when the totals were

560,000 riflemen and 2604 guns).

At the end of these major troop movements the Aus-Hung. eastern front had 38 infantry and 12 ½ cavalry divisions (including just one German infantry division). In reserve were the following:

- . 7th Army had 30 ID, 3 CD and one brigade apiece from 5 and 36 ID south of the Dniester, plus 2 CD north of the river.
- . 2nd Army had the main body of 29 ID (in reserve of IV Corps) and 4 CD. (Parts of the latter were on construction projects.)
- . 1st Army had one regiment apiece of 46 LW ID and 25 ID.
- . 4th Army had 11 ID behind its south wing, 13 LW ID behind the north wing, and 10 CD which was far in the rear on construction projects at Cholm and Hrubieszow.¹⁹⁶
- . Linsingen's Army Group HQ had most of 45 LW ID and a Polish brigade stationed behind its center.

According to the very accurate information of our espionage service, the Russians opposed the Aus-Hung. eastern front with 36 to 39 infantry divisions, about 15 cavalry divisions, and 3 opolcheniye brigades. Between the Pripyat and the Gulf of Riga the German eastern front had 48 infantry and 10 ½ cavalry divisions (including 2 Aus-Hung. infantry divisions) against the Russians' 88 infantry divisions, 25 or 26 cavalry divisions, and about 12 opolcheniye brigades. The location of about 14 of the enemy's infantry divisions (including the Guard), 4 rifle brigades and several border watch and opolcheniye units was unknown; some of them were apparently in the Russian interior. In fact the Russian eastern front in May 1916 consisted of 130 infantry divisions (1969 battalions), about 36 cavalry divisions (with 1283 squadrons, including those assigned to Corps HQ), 7449 guns and 7129 machine guns. There were also 7 infantry divisions just being formed. Front-line strength was 1,800,000 riflemen and 142,000 sabers. The opolcheniye, fortress garrisons and replacement troops totaled 3,145,000 men.¹⁹⁷

Besides the unit movements described above, these weeks and months were marked by constant labor to build fortifications. The commanders began to pay great attention to the positions in

196The artillery, foot detachments and machine gun troops of 10 CD were stationed at Luck.

197Klembovsky, Appendices 1 and 2; Zayontschovsky, "A Strategic Study of the World War 1914-1918", Part VI (in Russian; Moscow, 1923), pp. 155 ff.; Parsky, "Archival Material: Numerical Strength, Armament and Ammunition Expenditure of the Allies in 1916" (in Russian in Voyenno Istorichesky Sbornik [Moscow, 1919], 2nd Part).

the rear and to works which lay at important geographical points (such as bridgeheads). Parts of these back-up positions stemmed from earlier eras of military technology and had to be kept in repair. Some of them were renovated by several construction groups formed from civilian workers and prisoners of war. Troops in reserve and military construction detachments did most of the work on the second- and third-line positions; the garrisons of the foremost fortifications were responsible for upkeep of their works. Available resources were insufficient to complete these gigantic projects. Meanwhile the troops in reserve didn't have time to get real rest or much-needed tactical training, especially in how to counterattack. Later this would have very unfortunate consequences.

2. Plans and decisions of the Western powers and the Stavka in the first quarter of 1916

Although the outcome of the New Year's Battle had been very unsatisfactory to Southwest Front, the planners in the Tsar's HQ at Mogilev continued their work. The idea developed by Alexeiev back in October - for a double assault on the Danube Monarchy from the Balkans and east Galicia - had been turned down at the second conference at Chantilly (6-8 December 1915). Now the Russian Chief of Staff decided to seek a decision in the area north of the Pripyat Marshes. This was also the area where the bulk of the Tsar's armies were stationed. There was a possibility that the Germans' objective for 1916 was to complete the defeat of the Russian units which had been inaugurated in the previous year; therefore it seemed advisable to Alexeiev to anticipate any eventual German attack. The Russian offensive should therefore start while the winter frost made the roads and paths, along with the terrain, passable for the troops.

With this decision Alexeiev had hastened to accommodate the planning of the commanders of the two Western powers. On 14 February 1916 these generals, Joffre and Haig, had decided that if there was no earlier German attack, and if the Entente still had the initiative, the French and English would attack on both sides of the Somme on 1 July.¹⁹⁸ The Russian offensive would open two weeks earlier. These dates were set so far in the future because the conferees at Chantilly anticipated that the Russians couldn't undertake a major operation sooner because of the backwardness of their armaments.

198Kuhl, "Weltkrieg", Vol. I, p. 384

However, Alexeiev continued to prepare his winter offensive without troubling about the decisions of this conference. The German assault on Verdun, which opened on 21 February, may have strengthened him in his ideas. He summoned the commanders of the three Fronts, their Chiefs of Staff, and General Plehve (who belonged to the council of state) to a meeting at Mogilev on 27 February.¹⁹⁹ Here he described the current balance of forces. Between the Pripyat and Riga the 900,000 Russian riflemen were opposed by 495,000 Germans, an advantage of 400,000 combatants.²⁰⁰ According to the Russian estimates, their units and the Austro-Hungarians south of the great zone of swamps had roughly equal strength (about half a million riflemen apiece). The urgently necessary replacement of military equipment wouldn't be completed quickly because ice blocked the northern harbors, but Alexeiev planned to still exploit his 400,000 man advantage. The inner wings of the North and West Fronts would break through in the area between Lake Narotch and Vizy through Svenzhany toward Vilkomir.²⁰¹ If this operation was successful, the Southwest Front would then join in with an attack through Luck and Kovel.

Meanwhile there was a lively exchange of views between Mogilev and Chantilly. The General Staffs of the Western Powers believed that attacks by the Central Powers against Italy or in the Balkans were possible; they were also concerned about a new offensive against Russia, especially if Romania and Sweden joined the quadruple alliance. Therefore Joffre and Alexeiev agreed that all armies of the Entente should assault the Central Powers together; the only open question was when this should happen. Joffre wanted to wait until the Russian Army was fully outfitted with military equipment, but this wouldn't occur until the start of July because of the length of the supply line through Archangel. Alexeiev didn't want to wait so long, because he was always worried that the Germans might anticipate him with their own offensive.²⁰² Therefore he still intended to attack before the snow melted.

By now the initial successes won by the Germans in front of Verdun were causing serious concerns in France. This new strategic situation influenced the long-planned third Chantilly

199Zayontschovsky, Part VI, p. 10

200Klembovsky, Part V, Supplement 5

201Oehmichen, "Essai sur la doctrine de guerre des coalitions" (Paris, 1927)

202Valentinov, "The Relations with Our Allies in Military Questions during the War of 1914-1918" (in Russian; Moscow, 1920), Part I, pp. 61 ff.

conference, which opened on 12 March. The French General Staff had prepared a new memorandum which took account of the altered conditions. It included an overall evaluation of all the fronts and the other side's conjectural plans of attack. It was believed that the offensive on Verdun, whose goal couldn't be clearly ascertained, might be just preliminary to a much greater German operation involving several other sectors of the French front. France, however, was strong enough to withstand the attack. As soon as the Germans had been worn down by French resistance, an overall counterattack could be mounted. The expectation that Russia would already be prepared to strike on 1 May was especially advantageous. Therefore the Russians would start their offensive on 1 May, the other allies on the 15th. However, if France couldn't withstand the German storm, according to the decisions reached at Chantilly in December all the Entente armies would immediately open a relief attack.²⁰³

The participants at the third conference generally agreed with the French suggestions, but there was a lively debate about the timing of the offensive. General Zhilinsky, the Russian representative, wanted all the allies to attack at the earliest possible date. Joffre put an end to the dissension when he asserted that he and Alexeiev had agreed that there would be two attacks, one in March and another in May.²⁰⁴ After clarifying the situation in the Balkans, the conference adopted the following decision: "The allies will try to mount a general offensive in the shortest possible time. The exact dates will be determined by the highest-ranking commanders among themselves. The Serbian Army must be quickly moved to Salonika. The allied forces in the Balkans, including the Italians, will continuously threaten the enemy. Operations to be undertaken here will be determined later based on the circumstances."²⁰⁵

The decisions at Chantilly were confirmed at Paris two weeks later (on 27 and 28 March) in a great conference of the Entente army commanders and statesmen. In brief, they agreed on "Unified operations in all theaters of war, unified leadership of the military economy as well as in the political area."²⁰⁶

203Valentinov, "Relations...", p. 62; Oehmichen, "Essai", pp. 45 ff.

204Valentinov, *op. cit.*, p. 70

205*Ibid.*, p. 71

206Italian Official History, Vol. III, Text, p. 261

3. Actions on the Eastern front from the start of February to mid-May 1916

Alexeiev seems to have been determined that the conference would have no deciding influence on Russia's conduct of the war. Already on 13 March, the day after the meeting, he ordered that the offensive which had been decided at Mogilev on 27 February would be opened by the North and West Fronts on 18 March. But on the 15th, much too early by the Russians' calculations, a thaw set in. Although the offensive, which had been prepared in all its details, was based on the ground being frozen, it was decided to carry it out nevertheless.

The Battle of Lake Narotch

The main thrust was delivered against the center and northern wing of the German 10th Army on both sides of Lake Narotch. General Ragosa led the attacking group of about 370 battalions. Simultaneously with this advance by General Evert's West Front, GdI Kuropatkin - commanding the North Front - was to strike a powerful blow from Jakobstadt through Ponievets and diversionary attacks from the lower Dvina toward Bausk.

The principal assault was opposed by just four infantry and one cavalry divisions. Although General Ragosa kept driving his regiments ahead by day and often also by night until 28 March, they were shattered by the steadfast German troops. The offensive broke down in a sea of blood and mud. The "Swamp Battle at Lake Narotch" cost the Russians about 100,000 men. Kuropatkin's North Front did no better in the fighting between Friedrichstadt and Jakobstadt from the 19th to the 27th; then an assault at Dvinsk was in vain. Similarly a Russian surprise attack which had already been carried out at Riga on the 4th gained ground only temporarily.²⁰⁷

Thus the Russian offensive which had been undertaken to help the French ended in a complete misfortune. This didn't keep Alexeiev from developing more plans for an offensive on a grand scale after a brief pause. The Lake Narotch battle had broken down not only because of the weather, but because of unsuitable offensive tactics; therefore the Russian troops were ordered to adopt the theories of the French General Nivelle. On the other side, the German victory at Lake Narotch strengthened the belief of the high commands of the Central Powers in the effectiveness of rigid

207Schwartz, "Der deutsche Landkrieg", Vol. II, pp. 430 ff.;
Kuhl, "Weltkrieg", Vol. I, pp. 425 ff.

defensive tactics, which had also been successful in the New Year's Battle. Later we will further discuss the concept of basing the defense on the retention of the foremost line, as well as the ideas developed by the French.

Activity on the Aus-Hung. front

South of the Pripyat, the fighting was insignificant after the end of the New Year's Battle and until deep into the spring. Most of it occurred in sectors where there was still tension because of earlier actions.

The Russians tried to take the disputed southernmost bastion of 7th Army, the Dolzok Heights (5 km north of Bojan), especially in mid-February and mid-March. Farther north, the wooded heights on the border by Obczyna (2 km east of Dobronoutz) and the bend in the Dniester at Szamuszyn were the locations of heated actions between the lines. Since at all three of these points the positions of the opposing sides were quite close to one another, there were also many mining operations, which turned out successfully for us. Meanwhile the technical troops were building up the fortifications.

Of all the local actions fought by the Aus-Hung. troops in the East at this time, the most glorious was the defense of the fortified bridgehead north of the Dniester at Uscieczko, although the Russians were ultimately victorious. The position was held by dismounted troopers from 6 CD. The Russian XXXIII Corps, made up of Trans-Amur Border Watch units, first tried to storm the small bridgehead at the start of February, and then on an almost daily basis from the start of March. The gallant defenders couldn't have performed more honorably as they contested every foot of ground with the enemy. Finally the defenses were reduced to a pile of rubble by the explosion of a mine and overwhelming artillery fire. The decimated garrison - dismounted DR # 11 plus one company apiece from SB # 8 and 12 and a Landsturm battery - evacuated their untenable posts on 19 March. Some were ferried over to the south bank of the Dniester; the main body under Col. Plankh, the commander of DR # 11, broke through on the north bank to reach 21 LW ID at Zaleszczyki.²⁰⁸

Under South Army, there was fighting in February and March around

208Hoen, "Der Winter 1915/16" [in Schwarte, Vol. V, p. 198]; Feichtmeier, "Nacht-gefechte - Der Ruckzug der Besatzung der Schanze Uscieczko am 19./20. März 1916" [Mil. wiss. Mitt.; Vienna, 1926, pp. 141 ff.]

portions of the front on the east bank of the Strypa at Burkanow and Sokolow, then at Kozlow and especially at Cebrow (on the railroad halfway between Tarnopol and Zborow). Here too mining operations were important. No significant changes in any of the positions resulted.

The fronts of 2nd and especially of 1st Army were protected by the swampy ground in the Ikwa valley; these Armies enjoyed almost complete rest and could work on their positions without disturbance. There was considerable skirmishing, followed by mining operations, only at Sapanow (northwest of Kremieniec), where a road on a causeway crossed the Ikwa swamps and where the Russians held firmly to a small fortified bridgehead on the west bank.

The situation was livelier for 4th Army, especially at Olyka and Karpilowka. At the end of March the continuing tension in front of Olyka forced the k.u.k. AOK to transfer 11 ID (22 Inf Bde plus divisional artillery), which had been in 1st Army's reserve, to join 4th Army in the area southeast of Luck.

In the last days of March the commander of the Russian Southwest Front, GdK Ivanov, lost his position. According to intelligence received at Teschen, this was because he had refused to attack with his force of just 37 divisions in the direction of Lemberg and Czernowitz at the same time as Evert's and Kuropatkin's offensive. There is no confirmation of this in the Russian military literature.²⁰⁹ At any rate, Ivanov was dismissed with every possible honor: he became a member of the council of state and an attendant of the Tsar. His successor was GdK Brussilov, famous to both friends and foes for his energetic leadership of 8th Army. General Kaledin became the new commander of this Army.²¹⁰

The Russians prepare for a new attack

At the same time, Teschen received intelligence of an upcoming Russian offensive in Courland, which would be accompanied by increased pressure on Czernowitz and toward Lemberg. However,

209TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - According to Stone ("Eastern Front", pp. 233-234), Alexeiev never had any use for Ivanov and had decided to remove him after the fiasco of the New Year's Battle. However, it took some time to convince the always wavering Tsar to take this step.

210"Mémoires du General Broussilov: Guerre 1914-1918" (Paris, 1929), p. 177

the AOK also was informed that strong forces had been sent to the Caucasus, where the Russians had been carrying on an offensive against the Turkish eastern front since 14 January; on 15 February they took the fortress of Erzerum and in mid-April the city of Trebizond.²¹¹ The k.u.k. high command moreover learned that the Russians were gradually forming new 13th and 14th Armies in the area Kiev-Tula-Kazan, but the planned deployment of these troops was unknown. While the next Russian objectives were a mystery, many alarming rumors filled the air. And now the level of intensity in the skirmishing on the Eastern front was increasing, partly because of Brussilov's energetic leadership but also because the spring weather was improving the condition of the terrain.

The Russians' increased desire to attack became evident on 13 April at Beremiany (just north of the Dniester), where strong forces captured an advanced position of the k.u.k. 15 ID, occupied by just a company. A counterattack initiated that night didn't break through. Because of the enemy's considerable strength, it seemed that larger actions would develop, so on 16 April the AOK sent 13 LW ID (which was available in reserve of Linsingen's Army Group) on trains to Monasterzyska behind the north wing of 7th Army. GdK Pflanzer-Baltin declined to try to recover the lost advanced post, which to him seemed unimportant and which the Russians had incorporated into their main position. Around Easter, which fell on 23 and 24 April, there was complete quiet along the entire Eastern front. No less than 650 deserters came over to our lines from various Russian divisions, which gave us a welcome opportunity to review the enemy's current order of battle.

Reports now began to circulate regarding a planned Russian offensive against the Galician front in May. On the other hand, 7th Army HQ stated on 23 April that they didn't consider it likely that the enemy would start attacking with just the units currently identified as present. Nevertheless, intelligence continued to arrive, mainly through Bucharest. The Russians now initiated a systematic construction of new parallel trenches, which were linked to the original positions farther to the rear by communication trenches. Our troops tried to interfere with this work, carried out mostly by night, but were unsuccessful. The Russians were working most energetically on these honeycombs of trenches in the northern part of the Bessarabian front, and east of Luck. Therefore these sectors were considered to be the

211Liman von Sanders, "Fünf Jahre Türkei" (Berlin, 1919), pp. 158 ff.

most likely enemy targets.

On 12 May it was learned that XL Russian Corps, which consisted of the especially distinguished 2 and 4 Rifle Divisions, had assembled in a training camp near Rovno and was receiving new equipment. The Tsar intended to visit these troops shortly. Therefore on 13 May the AOK asked 4th and 7th Army headquarters for their assessment of the situation. This was all the more necessary since the offensive in south Tyrol was to begin two days later. The Chief of Staff wanted to know clearly whether and where the Russians might undertake relief attacks and whether the defensive measures of his commanders would be sufficient.

In their reply, 4th Army HQ referred to the continuing increase in the Russians' heavy artillery, especially between Cuman (12 km northeast of Olyka) and Koryto (15 km southwest of Olyka); apparently there were even guns of 18, 28 and 35 cm caliber (although only prisoners' reports indicated the presence of 35 cm pieces). Furthermore they noted that "stubbornly and regardless of losses, the Russians are striving to dig new trenches (including five parallel lines already west of Olyka)." Prisoners talked of an impending offensive. Also noted were the prospects of a gas attack at Cuman and the Tsar's reported visit to Rovno. All of this pointed toward "a large-scale offensive against 4th Army. It isn't immediately imminent, but could take place in the second half of the month. As far as can be determined", the report continued, "the assault will take place on the Karpilowka-Koryto front. Main effort west of Olyka and south of Pelza-Ujezdcy, perhaps with demonstrations against 7 ID and II Corps.... At the start the VIII and XL Corps will deliver the principal thrust side by side, with their divisions deployed in depth. It remains to be seen whether further units will be utilized." In a later chapter we will see to what extent the 4th Army HQ had correctly anticipated the Russians' intentions.

7th Army HQ was of the opinion that an attack against the northern wing of XI Corps between the forest zone (east of Dobronoutz) and the Dniester was "not out of the question." This was based on information from prisoners. Moreover, in this area the sappers were working closer to our lines, the enemy's artillery had been increased by about twelve batteries, and there were troop concentrations east of Dobronoutz. However, GdK Pflanzner-Baltin also reported that he was preparing for the defense by holding strong reserves in readiness.

After these reports the high command had to reckon that in the near future the Russians would attack the northern sector of the

Bessarabian front and make a strong attempt to break through from Olyka toward Luck. As protection against the latter danger, which they considered more serious, on 14 May they ordered 13 LW ID to move from Monasterzyska to 4th Army. Army HQ planned to place this Division behind X Corps, and 11 ID behind Szurmay's Corps. Moreover, GO Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, the commander of 4th Army, was given full authority over 10 CD, which was engaged in construction work.

As of mid-May, the Aus-Hung. Eastern front was strongly fortified. There were 573,300 riflemen (including the foot detachments of the cavalry divisions), 20,000 horsemen (not counting divisional cavalry), 2690 guns and 2258 machine guns. The reserve units were:

- . Four infantry brigades behind the right wing of 7th Army;
- . 38 Hon ID behind South Army;
- . 29 ID and 4 CD behind 2nd Army;
- . two infantry regiments behind 1st Army;
- . 11 ID, 13 LW ID and 10 CD behind 4th Army;
- . the main body of 45 LW ID behind Fath's Corps; and
- . a brigade of the Polish Legion behind Hauer's Cavalry Corps.

In addition, in the training camps behind the Armies there were 56,000 replacement troops who were ready to join their units. The AOK estimated the strength of Brussilov's opposing force as 640,000 foot, 58,000 horse and about 2000 guns. The size of the Russian replacement units behind the front was uncertain, but it was known that the majority of these troops were unarmed because of the shortage of rifles. In any event, the k.u.k. high command believed that their Eastern front was strong enough to withstand a Russian offensive. GM von Stolzmann, the Chief of Staff of Linsingen's Army Group, declared on 27 May during a visit to Teschen that "it was out of the question that the Russians could prevail" by attacking in the Luck area. And it was believed that Pflanzer-Baltin, who had so often displayed his energy, could be trusted to deal with an assault on the Bukovina.

4. Events in the Balkans in spring 1916

The situation in Albania

In the Albanian theater of operations, the situation of XIX Corps hadn't improved since the close of active operations, since the planned construction of a supply line had encountered almost insurmountable difficulties. Building a road for trucks from Kula Lums through Orosi to Alessio-Miloti was impossible, since even the preparation of a simple road for wagons on this 150 km

stretch had only progressed 6 km by the end of April. Under these conditions an advance over the Skumbi was unthinkable for the time being. Therefore the Corps' tasks were restricted to building a main battle position on the Arsen and works at the most important crossing points over the Skumbi. The main body of 14 Mtn Bde could finally push ahead to Elbasan in the second half of April, while a battalion occupied Ljusna. Scouting detachments at Fjeri and Berat kept up communications with the Albanian volunteers, who were solely responsible for security on the Vojusa.

The front was quiet, since Cadorna's latest orders to the Italian Expeditionary Corps were to avoid any fighting over the Vojusa.²¹² The Italians had only an unclear picture of their opponents. Dependent solely on reports from spies,²¹³ they even feared an attack until at the end of April they finally realized that they were opposed by just a thin covering force of Albanian bands.

During this pause in the fighting, the military and political organization of the Albanian territory occupied by the k.u.k. troops was undertaken. On 29 April a state of interior peace was proclaimed throughout the land (the "Besa"), but for its implementation the tribes would have to turn in their weapons. At the same time the male population was asked to volunteer for military service; this was regarded as just the first step to compulsory universal service and the creation of a general militia. Administration and the judicial and financial services were mostly placed in the hands of native authorities under the oversight of the k.u.k. command; the principle was that Albania wasn't to be treated as an occupied enemy land. Since we had come to the country as liberators, we wanted to burden the population as little as possible. However, the situation was quite critical because of the threat of famine in various areas; instead of living off the land, the k.u.k. troops had to help the suffering inhabitants by importing items that were already in short supply in their own homeland. The monetary situation was very difficult. Much time elapsed before the Albanians, who were familiar only with coins, would accept Austrian silver and especially paper money. Many transactions were carried out instead by barter.

In May the retention of the Vojusa line was seriously endangered because the Albanian volunteer units quickly went to ruin after their original commander Ghilardi was replaced by Achmed Bei

212Cadorna, "Altre pagine", p. 172

213Ravenni, p. 1184

Mati. Mutiny and treason led to the imposition of harsh military law measures and to the dissolution of several detachments. Since the logistical situation was improving due to the advancing season, XIX Corps HQ therefore decided to gradually move regular troops forward to the Vojusa. 14 Mtn Bde was selected for this purpose. In the event of an Italian offensive, however, they would pull back to the Skumbi, where other mobile units would join them to carry out prolonged resistance. However, except for 63 ID the only other available unit was 28 Lst Mtn Bde which was just forming in Montenegro²¹⁴; the 24 Lst Mtn Bde had already transferred to the southwestern front in April. Even the retention of the Skumbi line wouldn't be possible until construction of lines of communication leading south from Mati, the always-endangered supply route over the sea wasn't reliable.

²¹⁴The 28 Mtn Bde, commanded by Col. Schutte, had Grenz Jaeger Comps 1 and 4; k.u. Lst Inf Bns V/2, VIII/17, VIII/19, III/20, III/25; $\frac{1}{4}$ of an improvised sqdn; 6 Can Batty/Mtn AR 5, 3 Can Batty/Mtn AR 6.

The diplomatic scene

For the time being, XIX Corps was barely mobile and therefore not in a position to carry out the original mission of the Aus-Hung. troops in the western Balkans, namely to support the flank of an attack by their allies toward Salonika with an offensive of their own. This deficiency was a concern not only to the German high command, but also to the k.u.k. AOK.²¹⁵ From the start, GO Conrad had only wanted to campaign into Albania if the Monarchy would be able to annex at least the territory as far as the Mati. Central and southern Albania would be occupied with the armed assistance of the Bulgarians and Greeks; the former would be promised the coastal area around Durazzo and the latter the Valona area. This solution would have led to a permanent partition of the country, which was opposed by Foreign Minister Burian; he advocated the creation of an independent and ethnically pure Albanian state, and didn't want to lay claim to any part of the Adriatic eastern coast at least until the war was concluded. The high command emphatically objected that the Monarchy, which was engaged in a life-and-death struggle, didn't have enough strength to carry out secondary aims such as maintaining Albanian independence. Nevertheless the Ballhaus-platz adhered to their own political demands. They wanted a combined advance toward Valona with the Bulgarians, to be accompanied by a strictly military agreement between the two high commands. The Greeks were to be kept south of the line of occupation which they themselves had suggested (running between the southern end of Lake Ochrida and the southern tip of the Bay of Valona), and far away from the actual harbor of Valona. Since Burian wanted to save as much territory as possible for an Albanian state, the Danube Monarchy wouldn't enter into binding political agreements with the interested Balkan kingdoms of Bulgaria and Greece. This attitude of the government at Vienna first excluded the Bulgarians from intervening in political discussions about the Adriatic coast, and then caused them to renounce any military activity in the Albanian theater of operations.

Relations between the Aus-Hung. and Bulgarian high commands were also clouded by a tiresome jurisdictional dispute. Bulgaria demanded the basins of the Kosovo polje and the Metoja for itself. GO Conrad however wouldn't agree with their wishes, which to him seemed too far reaching. During a visit to Teschen by Tsar Ferdinand at the start of February, the k.u.k. Chief of Staff disputed Bulgarian claims to Prizren and Pristina, both of

215Falkenhayn, "Der Oberste Heeresleitung 1914-1916 in ihren wichtigsten Entscheidungen" (Berlin, 1929), p. 155

which lay west of the border envisioned by the treaty of September 1915. The resultant dissension lasted for several weeks until it was settled by Falkenhayn's mediation; for the time being the Bulgarians were conceded only the right to occupy Pristina and Prizren, while they evacuated the territory lying west of both towns. The border between the two spheres of influence was delineated at the start of April; it ran through the mountain massifs of the Jastrebac and the Kopaonik, then between Mitrovica and Pristina to the Drini barz, along the Albanian and Montenegrin borders to a point west of Dibra, and from there along the Skumbi to Elbasan.

The situation in Macedonia

By mid-April the Bulgarian troops had evacuated the towns of Djakova, Dibra and Elbasan; this opened a gap of about 100 km between the bend in the Vojusa and Lake Ochrida, which was open to any type of enemy operation. In mid-May there were signs of an impending French offensive in the Vardar valley, and also reports that the Italians would take part in this attack. Therefore GM von Seeckt, the Chief of Staff to GFM Mackensen's Army Group, asked Teschen whether in the event of an Italian thrust from Valona to the east the k.u.k. units in Albania would be able to interfere with an enemy operation directed against the rear of the 1st Bulgarian Army (stationed between Lake Ochrida and Vardar), or could at least block the road from Elbasan to Struga. Presumably the French offensive would be countered by a Bulgarian advance from Monastir toward Vodena. GO Conrad answered that the the Aus-Hung. units couldn't parry an Italian operation from Valona in a generally eastward direction. On the other hand, XIX Corps HQ had been ordered to oppose an Italian advance through Berat-Elbasan-Struga; they would guard this area and in cooperation with Bulgarian troops would also oppose any enemy offensive west of Lake Ochrida.

In reality, at this time the Italian high command had no thoughts of any offensive out of Valona.²¹⁶ The forces there had to restrict their activity to holding onto the immediate area around the harbor, since Cadorna - concerned about an Aus-Hung. offensive out of the Trentino - had ordered on 29 April that 44 ID should be moved to Lake Garda.

On the other hand the French commander-in-chief General Joffre had been seriously considering a major Balkan offensive ever

²¹⁶Cadorna, "Altre pagine", p. 181

since the third conference at Chantilly.²¹⁷ This would be necessary if, as the Entente powers hoped, Romania joined their side in the foreseeable future. The French counted on armed assistance from the Italians and possibly the Greeks, but in any event were certain of the cooperation of the Serbs.

In fact the remnants of the Serbian Army, which had been shipped to Corfu, had been rebuilt in a surprisingly short time into an effective military force. Six infantry and one cavalry divisions, equipped like those of the Western powers and organized in three small "armies"²¹⁸, moved between 18 April and 27 May to the peninsula of Chalcidice, where they were at the disposal of the commander of the Orient Army, General Sarrail. Based on a draft plan prepared by the French high command at the start of May, the General intended to demonstrate against the area west of Doiran with three English divisions, while on the right wing three French divisions with strong flank protection (another French ID plus the Serbian Cavalry Div) thrust toward the Strumica; a French division would attack on both sides of the Vardar and establish contact with the Serbian force of 110,000 men, which would capture the Bitolj basin (Monastir) with their left wing. The offensive, carried out by at least 15 divisions, would continue to the line Dzumaja-Strumica-Stip-Veles.

After the arrival of the Serbs near Salonika the Entente units, which were again methodically pushing ahead toward Greece's northern border since the start of April, had numerical superiority. There were 4 French, 5 English and 6 Serbian infantry divisions plus the Serbian cavalry division. Mackensen's Army Group consisted of 9 Bulgarian infantry and one cavalry division plus a German infantry division.²¹⁹ As previously, the future disposition of the Greek army of 15 divisions, which was assembled to the east and west of Sarrail's force, remained a question mark. At any rate in mid-May the k.u.k. high command had received no sign of an imminent enemy offensive in the Balkans; unconcerned about their southern flank, they could proceed with their attack against Italy.

217French Official History, Vol. VIII, pp. 494 ff.

218The 1st Army had the Morava and Vardar Divisions; 2nd Army had the Timok and Sumadija Divs; 3rd Army had the Dunav and Drina Divs. The Cav Div was independent.

219Three Bulgarian infantry divisions and smaller German units were stationed on the Romanian border.

V. The 1916 Spring Offensive against Italy

A. The Order of Battle

The Armies were under HQ of **Army Group Archduke Eugene** at Bozen with the following organization as of 15 May 1916.

Commander = GO Archduke Eugene
Chief of Staff = FML Alfred Krauss

11th Army

Commander = GO Dankl
Chief of Staff = FML Pichler
Artillery Chief = Col. Franz Elder von Portenschlag

VIII Corps

Commander = FZM von Scheuchenstuel
Chief of Staff = Col. Sündermann
Artillery Chief = Lt Col. Firbas
Strength = 32 bns, 9 SS dets, 4 indep MG dets; 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ sqdns; 58 batties, 1 fort arty comp; 3 tech comps. 33,446 foot, 385 horse; 158 light, 42 heavy and 16 very heavy mobile guns²²⁰; 24 fixed guns

- . 57th ID (FML Heinrich Goiginger) = 9735 foot, 116 horse, 32 guns
 - . 6 Mtn Bde (Col. von Hellebronth) = Bns I/6, III/38, IV/42, IV/50, IV/81; $\frac{1}{4}$ 1 Sqdn/Tyrol LW Uhl Bn; 2 & 3 Can Batties/Mtn AR 4
 - . 9 Mtn Bde (GM Edl. von Hrozny) = Bns IV/12, III/49, III/74, IV/84, IV/87; $\frac{1}{4}$ 1 Sqdn/UR 12; 2 & 6 Can Batties/Mtn AR 2
 - . 57 Arko (Lt Col. Gnigler) = 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 2, 5 Can Batty and 1 & 2 How Batties/Mtn AR 14
 - . 3 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 4; 7 Comp/SB 6
- . 59th ID (GM Kroupa) = 9383 foot, 140 horse, 32 guns
 - . 10 Mtn Bde (Col. von Hranilovic) = Bns I/48, I/62, I/90, II/92, III/BH 1; $\frac{1}{4}$ 6 Sqdn/Hon HR 10; 1 & 2 Can Batties/Mtn AR 6
 - . 18 Mtn Bde (GM Skvor) = Bns III/31, II/60; FJB 3, 15, 26; $\frac{1}{4}$ 2 Sqdn/Tyrol LW Uhl Bn; 4 & 6 Can Batties/Mtn AR 6
 - . 59 Arko (Col. Rotter) = 1 & 2 Can Batties/Mtn AR 16; 1 & 2 How Batties/Mtn AR 5

220"Light" guns were those of less than 10 cm caliber; heavy were of 10 to 20 cm, and very heavy were more than 20 cm caliber.

- . $\frac{3}{4}$ 6 Sqdn/Hon HR 10; 3 Comp/SB 14
- . 48th ID (FML Gabriel) = 11,727 foot, 129 horse, 20 guns
 - . 11 Mtn Bde (GM Lawrowski) = Bns IV/3, I/10, IV/20, I/21, IV/77, III/BH 3; 1 & Can Batties/Mtn AR 9 (Batties temporarily under Sector IV of the Tyrol Land Defense Command)
 - . 12 Mtn Bde (GM Prince Schwarzenberg) = Bns I/3, II/37, II/57, I/93, II/100; 3 & 4 Can Batties/Mtn AR 9 (batties temporarily under Sector IV of Tyrol Land Defense Command)
 - . 48 Arko (Col. Koppensteiner) = 5 & 6 Can Batties and 1 & 2 How Batties/Mtn AR 9
 - . 1 Sqdn/Tyrol LW Uhl Bn; 7 Comp/SB 2
- . 4th Border Sector = 2601 foot
 - . Under Lt Col. Drtina = k.k. Lst Bn IV/1; MG Det V/L-Sch Regt II; k.k. Lst Gen Assistenz Comp; SS Dets Kitzbühel, Reutte I, Brixen; 2 MG dets
 - . Under Lt Col. Lehar = SS Dets Imst, Kufstein, Glurns, Meran I, Gries, Valarsa; 2 MG dets
- . Corps artillery = Two field & three mtn can batties; three 10.4 cm can batties, one 15 cm can batty, two 15 cm how batties (M.99), three 15 cm how batties (M.14), one 24 cm mor batty, five 30.5 cm mor batties. One 38 cm how, one 42 cm how. 2 flak batties. 7 Comp/Fort Arty Bn 4 (with 24 guns). Also, temporarily attached from 3rd Army - FHR 43 (4), FHR 44 (4); Hvy FAR 43 (2); 2 Batty/Heavy FAR 44
- . Also directly under Corps HQ = 3 Comp/SB 5

XX Corps

Commander = FML Archduke Karl Franz Joseph

Chief of Staff = Col. Alfred Freiherr von Waldstätten

Arty Commander = Col. Baumann

Strength = 33 bns, 1 SS det, 3 sqdns, 55 batties, 2 fort arty comps, 3 tech comps. 22,726 foot, 391 horse; 156 light, 54 heavy, 20 very heavy mobile guns; 20 fixed guns

. 3rd ID (FML Edl. von Horsetzky) = 10,639 foot, 241 horse, 58 guns

. 5 Inf Bde (GM Richard Müller) = IR # 59 (5), 21 (3); Ma Bns X/14, X/59

. 15 Inf Bde (GM Phleps) = IR # 14 (5), 50 (4)

. 3 FA Bde (Col. Grandowski) = FKR 3 (4), FHR 3 (4), Hvy FAR 3 (3)

. 1 & 2 Sqdns/LW UR 6; 1 Comp/SB 14

. 8th ID (FML von Fabini) = 12,087 foot, 150 horse, 60 guns

. 58 Mtn Bde (Col. Edl. von Merten) = KJR # 3 (3), 4 (4)

. 180 Inf Bde (FML Edl. von Verdross) = KJR # 1 (4), 2 (3)

. 8 FA Bde (Col. Petersilka) = FKR 8 (4), FHR 8 (4), Hvy FAR 8 (4)

- . 2 Sqdn/Tyrol LW Uhl Bn; 8 Comp/SB 14
- . Corps arty = Twelve mtn can batties, one mtn how batties; one 10.4 cm can batty, one 12 cm can batty, three 15 cm how batties (M.99), one 15 cm how batty (M.14), two 24 cm mor batties, six 30.5 cm mor batties. Also, attached from 3rd Army - 3 & 4 Batties/FHR 34, Hvy FAR 34 (2), 1 Batty/Hvy FAR 44
- . Also under Corps = SS Det Schwaz; 7 Comp/SB 8
- . Garrisons of the works at Sommo, Sebastiano, Serrada = Three dets of L-Sch Regt I; 1 & 2 Comps/Fort Arty Bn 6 (20 guns)

III Corps

Commander = FML Ritter von Krautwald

Chief of Staff = Lt Col. Freih. von Karg

Arty commander = Col. Janecka

Strength = 38 bns, 3 sqdns, 68 batties, 3 fort arty comps, 3 tech comps. 29,066 foot, 321 horse; 198 light, 77 heavy & 26 very heavy mobile guns; 20 fixed guns

- . 6th ID (FML Prince Schönburg) = 8699 foot, 115 horse, 60 guns
 - . 11 Inf Bde (Col. de Brunfaut) = IR # 27 (3)²²¹, BH 2 (3)
 - . 12 Inf Bde (GM Rudolf Müller) = IR # 17 (3); FJB # 7, 9, 22
 - . 6 FA Bde (Col. Rath) = FKR 6 (4), FHR 6 (4), Hvy FAR 6 (4)
 - . 1 Ma Sqdn/DR 5; 5 Comp/SB 8
- . 22nd LW ID (GM Edl. von Kochanowski) = 9413 foot, 105 horse, 56 guns
 - . 43 LW Bde (Col. Ritt. von Ellison) = LW IR # 3 (3), 26 (3)
 - . 18 Inf Bde (Col. Laxa) = IR # 11 (3), 73 (4)
 - . 22 FA Bde (Col. Nobile de Giorgi) = FKR 22 (4), FHR 22 (4), Hvy FAR 22 (2)
 - . Res Sqdn/DR 12; 5 Comp/SB 3
- . 28th ID (FML Schneider Edl. von Manns-Au) = 10,954 foot, 101 horse, 58 guns
 - . 55 Inf Bde (Col. Rada) = IR # 87 (3), 96 (3); FJB # 24
 - . 56 Inf Bde (GM Hugo Schmid) = IR # 47 (4); FJB # 11; IV Bn of LW IR 37
 - . 28 FA Bde (Col. Rohrhofer) = FKR 28 (4), FHR 28 (4), Hvy FAR 28 (3)
 - . Res Sqdn/DR 3; 4 Comp/SB 14
- . Corps arty = Four mtn can batties, one mtn how batty, four 10.4 cm can batties, one 12 cm can batty, one 15 cm can batty, seven 15 cm how batties (M.14), two 15 cm how batties (M.15), two 24 cm mor batties, seven 30.5 cm mor batties; one 35 cm can, one 38 cm how, two 42 cm how. Also, temporarily attached - all eight mtn batties of 18 ID plus Flak Batty # 7

221The total includes Bn I/27, but it didn't actually rejoin the Regt until the end of May.

. Also directly under Corps = 1 Comp/SB 9
 . Garrisons of the works at Vezzena, Verle, Lusern and Gschwend =
 Four dets of L-Sch Regt I; three comps of Fort Arty Bn 6 (20
 guns)

Directly under 11th Army = Major Edl. von Schönner's Bike Bn (at
 Trent; came under Army HQ on 14 May). Col. Myk's Pioneer Group
 (2, 5 & 6 Comps/PB 5; 6 Comp/PB 8; 4 Comp/PB 9; 1 Comp/PB 10; 2 &
 4 Comps/Bridging Bn 1). Flieger Comps # 7, 8, 15, 17, 21, 23,
 24; Balloon Det # 10.

TOTALS for 11th Army = 103 bns, 1 bike bn, 10 SS dets, 4 indep MG
 dets; 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ sqdns; 178 batties, 6 fort arty comps, 17 tech comps, 7
 flieger comps, 1 balloon det. 85,238 foot, 1053 horse, 811 guns

3rd Army

Commander = GO von Kövess

C/Staff = GM Konopicky

XVII Corps

Commander = GdI Kritek

C/Staff = Col. Edl. von Lerch

Strength = 23 $\frac{1}{4}$ bns, 2 vol rifle bns, 8 SS dets, 3 indep MG dets,
 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ sqdns, 27 batties, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ fort arty comps, 4 tech comps; 22,000
 foot, 230 horse; 160 light, 12 heavy, 2 very heavy mobile guns
 and 30 fixed guns

. 18th ID (GM Stracker) = 7768 foot, 130 horse, 0 guns (the
 batteries were all detached to III Corps, above)

. 1 Mtn Bde (Col. Teus) = Bns I/1, IV/4, I/51, I/63, I/102;
 1 & 2 Can Batties/Mtn AR 1

. 13 Mtn Bde (Col. Edl. von Barza) = IR # 22 (3); Bns III/
 64, III/BH 4; 4 Can Batty/Mtn AR 8, 3 Can Batty/Mtn AR 10

. 18 Arko (Col. Secullic) = 2 Can Batty/Mtn AR 12, 1 Can
 Batty and 1 & 2 How Batties/Mtn AR 13

. 1 Sqdn/LW UR 5; 6 Comp/SB 1, 7 Comp/SB 4

. 2 Mtn Bde (Col. Panzenböck) (4921 foot, 46 horse, 8 guns) = Bns
 III/8, II/70, III/76, II/101; BH FJB 8; $\frac{1}{4}$ 1 Sqdn/Dalm. LW Uhl Bn;
 1 & 2 Can Batties/Mtn AR 17

. 8 Mtn Bde (GM Wossala) (4278 foot, 25 horse, 8 guns) = Bns IV/
 24, III/35, III/85, III/58; BH FJB 5; $\frac{1}{4}$ 1 Sqdn/UR 12; 4 Can
 Batty/Mtn AR 11, 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 14; 1 Comp/PB 2

. 181 Inf Bde (GM Kindl) (4125 foot, 30 horse) = Streif Comp 2;
 III Res Bn/37; k.k. Lt Bn 164; $\frac{1}{2}$ k.k. Lst Bn 165; $\frac{1}{2}$ k.k. Lst Bn
 IV/2; Upper Aus Vol Rifle Regt (2); SS Dets Bludenz, Kaltern,
 Landeck, Meran II, Rattenberg, Reutte II, Sterzing, Zillertal;
 three MG dets; $\frac{1}{4}$ 2 Ma Sqdn/LW UR 6; 3 Comp/PB 8

. Corps troops = KJ Streif Comp 1; ½ k.k. Lst Bn 166; 2 and ½ of 2 Res Comps/Fort Arty Bn 1 (30 fixed guns). Temporarily attached were four field how batties from 10 ID and two from 34 ID, eight mtn batties from L-Sch Div, and Flak Batty # 6. Temporarily in the Corps sector was Lt Col. Johann Schmidt's Arty Group HQ [with 3 heavy batteries and 2 other very heavy guns]

I Corps

Commander = GdK Karl Freih. von Kirchbach

C/Staff = Col. Demus

Strength = 39 ½ bns, 4 sqdns, 12 batties, 3 tech comps; 29,810 foot, 691 horse, 71 guns

. 10th ID (FML Edl. von Mecenseffy) = 10,502 foot, 298 horse, 23 guns

. 20 Inf Bde (GM Graf Berchtold) = IR # 18 (3), 98 (3); FJB # 12

. 21 Inf Bde (GM Nowotny) = IR # 15 (4), 55 (4)

. 10 FA Bde (GM Blaha) = FKR 10 (4), FHR 10 (4), Heavy FAR 10 (2) (But latter two units temporarily with XVII Corps)

. 5 & 6 Sqdns/LW UR 2; 8 Comp/SB 4

. 34th ID (FML Rudolf Krauss) = 8876 foot, 177 horse, 24 guns

. 67 Inf Bde (GM von Lauingen) = IR # 29 (3), 101 (4)

. 68 Inf Bde (Col. von Greger) = IR # 33 (3); FJB # 23, 38

. 34 FA Bde (Col. Hönig) = FKR 34 (4), FHR 34 (4), Hvy FAR 34 (2) (But latter two units detached - FHR 34 had 2 batties each with XVII Corps & 11th Army; all of Hvy FAR 34 was under 11th Army)

. 2 Res Sqdn/HR 3; 1 Comp/SB 10

. 43rd LW ID (GM Tunk) = 10,432 foot, 216 horse, 24 guns

. 59 Inf Bde (Col. Kosel) = IR # 24 (2 ½), 41 (4)

. 86 LW Bde (Col. Meisel) = LW IR # 20 (3), 22 (3)

. 43 FA Bde (Col. Michalek) = FKR 43 (4), FHR 43 (4), Hvy FAR 43 (2) (But latter two units detached to 11th Army)

. 6 Sqdn/LW UR 1; 4 Comp/SB 7

XXI Corps

Commander = FML Freiherr von Lütgendorf

C/Staff = Lt Col. Höger

Strength = 24 ¾ bns, 2 sqdns, 4 batties, 2 tech comps. 19,886 foot, 346 horse, 24 guns

. Landes-Schützen Div (GM Englert) = 9502 foot, 177 horse, 0 guns (all batties of the Div temporarily detached to XVII Corps)

. 88 L-Sch Bde (GM von Eckhardt) = L-Sch Regts # I (3), II (4); 2 & 3 Can Batties/Mtn AR 7

. 98 L-Sch Bde (Col. von Sloninka) = L-Sch Regt # III (4 ½); k.k. Lst Bn I; 1 & 2 Can Batties/Mtn AR 26

. L-Sch Arko (Col. Erler) = 4 Can Batty/Mtn AR 7, 1 Can

- Batty/Mtn AR 25, 1 How Batty/Mtn AR 7, 1 How Batty/Mtn AR 26
- . 3 Sqdn/Tyrol LW Uhl Bn; 9 Comp/SB 14
- . 44 LW ID (FML Nemecek) = 10,384 foot, 169 horse, 24 guns
- . 44 LW Bde (Col. Majewski) = [Mtn] LW IR # 4 (3), 27 (3);
one Alpine comp
- . 87 LW Bde (GM Jellenchich) = LW IR # 2 (3), 21 (3)
- . 44 FA Bde (Col. Edl. von Ellenberger) = FKR 44 (4), FHR 44
(4), Hvy FAR 44 (2) (Latter 2 units detached to 11th Army)
- . Res Sqdn/DR 10; 7 Comp/SB 7

TOTALS for 3rd Army = 89 ½ bns, 8 SS dets, 3 indep MG dets, 7 ¾
sqdns, 43 batties, 1 ½ fort arty comps, 9 tech comps. 71,696
foot, 1267 horse, 245 guns

Tyrol Land Defense Command

Commander = GdI Roth

C/Staff = Col. Putz

. Area I [Stilfserjoch], 53 Half Bde (Col. Freih. von Lempruch) (1840 foot, 31 guns) = IV Res Bn/29; SS Dets Prad, Schlanders, Stilfs, Taufers; one MG det; works at Nauders & Gomago (held by 2 Res Comp/Fort Arty Bn 4 and a det of Fort Arty Bn 7 with 31 guns)

. Area II [Tonale] (GM Edl. von Steinhart) (3633 foot, 4 horse, 48 guns) = IV Bn/L-Sch Regt I; a L-Sch Streif Comp; I Res Bn/29, II Res Bn/37; SS Dets Cles, Innsbruck III, Male, Ulten; three MG dets; 1 & 2 Foot Sqdns/Tyrol LW Uhl Bn; 5 Can Batty/Mtn AR 8; the Tonale-Pejo works (manned by 1 & 2 Comps/Fort Arty Bn 7 with 44 guns)

. Area III [South Tyrol] (FML von Koennen-Horak) = 9587 foot, 73 guns

. Pinzolo Sector (Col. Seyfried) = II/KJR 2; one comp of L-Sch Regt II; k.k. Lst Bns 160, 161; ½ k.k. Lst Bn 170; one MG det; 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 8; 10 Comp/SB 14, ½ 3 Comp/PB 3

. Judicarien Sector, 50 Half Bde (Col. Spiegel) = KJ Streif Comps 1, 5; k.k. Lst Bn 163; ½ k.k. Lst Bn 170; SS Dets, Bezau, Klausen, local SS²²²; three MG dets; Lardaro Works (manned by 3 & 4 Comps/Fort Arty Bn 7 with 39 guns)

. Riva Sector (FML Schiesser) = KJ Streif Comp 4; I Bn/LW IR 36; III Res Bn/29, I & V Res Bns/37; k.k. Lst Bns 172, 173, 174; SS Dets Bozen, Lana, Sarntal; local SS; ten MG dets; ½ 1 Can Batty/FKR 8, 4 Can Batty/Mtn AR 12, 1 How Batty/Mtn AR 9; ½ Flak Batty 3; ¼ 6 Comp/SB 6; ½ 3 Comp/PB 3; in the various fortifications around Riva were - 1 & 3 Res Comps of Fort Arty Bn 1; 2 & 3 Comps and 3 & 4 Res Comps of Fort Arty Bn 4; they had 77 guns

. (The remaining portions of Area III had been taken over by Archduke Eugene's Army Group)

. Area IV, or 90th ID (FML Edl. von Scholz) = 9587 foot, 73 guns

. 55 Mtn Bde (GM Spielvogel) = Res Bns II/29, IV/37; ½ k.k. Lst Bn 166; SS Dets Auer, Feldkirch, Rankweil; local SS; five MG dets; 7 Comp/SB 14; Fort Paneveggio (manned by 1 Comp/Fort Arty Bn 1 plus an additional det from that Bn and a det from Fort Arty Bn 5, with 25 guns)

. 179 Inf Bde (GM Edl. von Schiessler) = k.k. Lst Bns 38, 39, 159, 160, "Urban"; SS Dets Dornbirn, Nauders, Kastelruth, Welschnofen; local SS. 8 Batty/FKR 3, 6 Can Batt/Mtn AR 7, 1 & 3 Can Batties/Mtn AR 9 [from 48 ID], ½ 2 How Batty/Mtn AR 8, 2 How Batty/Mtn AR 9 [from 48 ID]. Fort Moena (manned by several dets from Fort Arty Bns 1, 2 & 4;

²²²The term "local SS" means Stand-Schützen detachments from the areas adjoining the border sectors in question.

with 26 guns)

- . Area V, or Combined ID Pustertal (Ludwig Goiginger) = 25,615 foot, 77 horse, 174 guns
 - . 96 Inf Bde (Col Vonbank) = I/KJR 2, III/KJR 3; KJ Streif Comp 6; V/BH 1 [formed 13 May from Fort Bn 5], V/BH 2 [formed 13 May from Fort Bn 6], BH FJB 3, II/LW IR 5, V/LW IR 37; three Alpine dets; k.k. Lst Bns III, 165, 167, 168; SS Dets Bregenz, Enneberg, Gröden, Lienz, Passeier; nineteen MG dets. $\frac{1}{4}$ 5 Sqdn/DR 6. 7 Batty/FKR 7, 4 Batty/FKR 8, $\frac{1}{2}$ 5 Batty/FHR 8, 3 Can Batty/Mtn AR 14, 1 & $\frac{1}{2}$ 2 How Batties/Mtn AR 8; 30.5 cm Mor Batty 12. 1 & 2 Comps/SB 4, 6 Comp/SB 6, 2 Comp/SB 14. Forts Buchenstein & Tre Sassi (manned by 4 Comp/Fort Arty Bn 1 with 58 guns)
 - . 56 Mtn Bde (GM Eccher ab Echo) = I & II Bns/104 [formed from convalescents], II & III/LW IR 36, $\frac{1}{2}$ IV/L-Sch III, I/Hon IR 311 [formed from convalescents]; three Alpine dets; k.k. Lst Bns II, 29, 162, 171, IV/2; SS Dets Innsbruck I and II, Sillian, Silz, Welsberg; one MG det. 8 Batty/FKR 16, 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 12, 2 & 4 Can Batties/Mtn AR 14. Forts Plätzwiese, Landro & Sexten (manned by 3 Comp, 2 & 3 March Comps and one combined comp from Fort Arty Bn 1; 1 & 3 Comps/Fort Arty Bn 4; a detachment of Fort Arty Bn 6; there were 69 guns)

TOTALS for the Tyrol Land Defense HQ = 47 $\frac{1}{4}$ bns (of which 30 were Lst, Res or March bns), 31 SS Dets, 41 indep MG dets, 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ batties, 24 fort arty comps, 7 tech comps. 61,309 foot (including 8026 Stand-Schützen who weren't counted in totals of individual units), 107 horse and 462 guns²²³

Italian units opposite Eugene's Army Group (under their 1st Army)²²⁴

- . 37th ID (directly under 1st Army) - Bdes Mantova [113 & 114], Taro [207, 208]; Alpini Regt # 6 (Bns Verona, M Baldo, V Adige, V Toce; also Bersag Bn # 42 and Finance Bn # 16). FAR # 42; Arty "Assed" Raggrup # 2 [Groups 114, 115, 117 & 118]. In rear was 8 Militia Bde [Militia IR # 21 & 24; indep Mil Bn # 28]. (Div was reinforced by 24 May by Bdes Sicilia & Padova)

- . V Corps

- . Group Sbarramento-Agno Posina - Bde Roma [79 & 80]; 12th

223The majority of the fixed guns included in the total were obsolescent models of various calibers; most were old field cannon.

224TRANSLATOR's NOTE - This information is derived from various parts of Volume III (Text) of the Italian Official History.

- Territorial Militia Bde [Militia IR 8 & 44]; FAR # 5; Fort Arty Groups # 101, 102, 103, 104
- . 34th ID - Bdes Salerno [89 & 90], Ivrea [161 & 162], Lambro [205 & 206]. FAR # 41, Arty "Assed" Raggrup # 4 [Groups # 151 to 157 plus Trench Mortar Group # 14]. In rear was 18 Militia Bde [Militia IR 20, 45 and 46]; indep Finance Bn # 1.
 - . 35th ID - Bdes Cagliari [63 & 64], Ancona [69 & 70]. Mtn Arty Group "Vicenza" # 7; Arty "Assed" Raggrup # 3 [Groups 139 to 143]. In rear were Militia IR # 33, Finance Bns # 5 and 9
 - . XVIII Corps (only these parts of the Corps were engaged...)
 - . 15th ID - Bdes Venezia [83 & 84], Siena [31 & 32], Ionio [221 & 222]; Ragni's Alpini Group (Bns Intra, Feltre, M Rosa, V Cismon, V Brenta); Finance Bn # 7. FAR # 19
 - . Indep Bersag Regt # 13 (Bns 59, 60, 62); indep Bersag Bn # 41
 - . Behind 15 ID, and under XVIII Corps, were 13 Militia Bde [Militia IR 13 & 25] and Alp Bn M Pavione

Reserves

- . 9th ID - Bdes Novara [153 & 154], Bisagno [209 & 210]; 5 Arty Regt (Div also commanded Bde Roma, detached to V Corps, above)
- . 10th ID - Temporarily had just Bde Siena [31 & 32]; no arty
- . Alpini Group "E" - Had ten bns: Cividale, M Clapier, M Matajur, M Mercantour, V Natisone, Exilles, M Scullo, M Levanna, Aosta, M Cervino
- . 44th ID - Ordered to this sector, but on 15 May was just leaving Albania
- . Indep Inf Bde Sicilia [61 & 62] - Reinforced 37 ID
- . The following indep Bns arrived between 20 & 30 May - Bersag Cycle Bns # 2, 6, 7, 9, 12; Alp Bns V Maira, Monviso, M Argentera, Morbegno

B. The Battle of Folgaria and Lavarone

1. Breakthrough attack by the k.u.k. 11th Army, 15-19 May

More than three months had gone by since the k.u.k. high command issued the first orders for the offensive, and almost five weeks had passed since 10 April, when the main body of Archduke

Eugene's Army Group was ready to strike in south Tyrol.²²⁵ During the time of waiting the well-informed enemy was energetically preparing their defense; in response there was a gradual but unmistakable alteration in the organization of the attack.

The plan of attack of the high command, described at the time as "a well-concentrated...thrust over the Folgaria-Lavarone plateau to Thiene and Bassano," envisioned delivery of one mighty blow. The concept was now truncated. The final implementation orders of 11th Army HQ, approved by Army Group HQ and eventually also by GO Conrad, instructed only XX and VIII Corps to attack initially, with the latter a substantial distance farther back on the right. III Corps, on the other hand, would at first just provide strong artillery support to XX Corps, without advancing itself. XVII Corps would tie down enemy units in the Sugana valley.

VIII Corps was reinforced by 48 ID shortly before the battle started. The Division would not only secure the western flank of 11th Army, but also should thrust vigorously toward Schio-Recoaro. This intention was fully described in orders issued by 11th Army HQ several days after the operation began. On the opposite flank, the high command had originally instructed that a strong reserve of two divisions should be deployed around Pergine, apparently so they could later reinforce III Corps on the plateaus; this plan was curtailed after 18 ID became engaged in the Sugana valley. 8 Mtn Bde was the only unit stationed at Pergine in May. It backed up 18 ID, and could relieve the Division if needed.

The gradual alteration of the overall plan of attack hadn't led to any changes in the tactical dispositions of VIII or XX Corps. It was obvious that in the very broken mountain terrain, success depended above all on the skill of the commanders of small units acting independently. To effectively coordinate these small battle groups with the powerful but slow-moving heavy artillery, the attack was conceived as a series of individual actions. Far more than in conventional battles, these actions in the mountains centered on the possession of significant strong points in the enemy's positions which couldn't be bypassed. Thus the entire operation was divided into local assaults which lasted for just a day or even for hours. The danger of such a rather systematic approach was inflexibility; however, it seemed to be the best method of ensuring that the activity of the two principal arms was coordinated so that the enemy's well-organized mountain

225Ratzenhofer, "Militärische Bahnauswertung im 1. Halbjahr 1916" (Mil. wiss. Mitt., Vienna, 1933 Edition, Issue 4)

fortifications could be overcome. XX Corps in particular would break through in a series of methodical assaults against the isolated mountain summits which formed the bastions of the Italian positions.

The sharply delineated plateau over which XX Corps would advance consisted in the sector of 8 ID of two heights which would have to be attacked. One, which included Mt²²⁶ Maronia, marked the western edge of the plateau and was thinly wooded; the other, which ran through the Pioverna to Costa d'Agra, was bare of trees. Here the artillery had an ideal field of fire. The area to be attacked by 3 ID, however, was covered by forests; it consisted of rows of ridges with prominent summits. The artillery of III Corps would be able to help here with flanking fire. After considering several possibilities, XX Corps HQ had decided to have the center of the Corps make the first attack against the heights of Costa d'Agra and Mt Coston. Simultaneously the left wing would take the Soglio d'Aspio. The right wing would stay in place.

The terrain to be assaulted by VIII Corps presented considerably greater difficulties. From the start the fighting would consist of a number of actions isolated from each other. 59 ID would initially have a steep climb from its position to drive away the enemy entrenched on the northern slope along the line Noriglio-Piazza. To continue, the Division then would have to cross the deep valley of the Terragnolobach and emerge to strike with the right wing against the Italians on the plateau of Moscheri. The left wing, on the other hand, would initially advance only slowly, in cooperation with XX Corps; this wing would be the pivot, so to speak, of the entire offensive by VIII Corps. To conquer the Col santo, the 59 ID would have to overcome a difference in elevation of about 1800 meters. 57 ID meanwhile would make the difficult climb from Rovereto up the Zugna Torta, and then drive forward on the narrow ridge to Coni Zugna. The Vallarsa divided the inner wings of the two Divisions. Later the furrow in the terrain which ended at Bocaldo would mark the border.

226Mt. ("Monte") = mountain; C. or Cm. ("cima"), Sp. ("Spitz") and Col = summit or peak; C. followed by the name of a building = "casa" (house); Cn. ("corno") = horn; Pta. ("porta") = a narrow mountain crossing-point; Mga. ("malga") and Cra. ("casara") = chalet and hamlet; Trt. ("torrento") = a wild brook.

a. The first two days of battle - 15 and 16 May

At 6:00 AM on 15 May the battle started in good weather with clear visibility. The guns fired again and again, sending projectiles over our own lines and high into the air toward their targets. Soon the explosions of the bombs and shells were even louder than the deafening roar of the discharges. The observers expectantly noted how each round of shots drew closer to the obviously visible targets. After all the guns found their range, a destructive fire ensued around 9:00 AM. A hurricane enveloped the mountains. The barrels of the guns were hot. Hundreds of rounds filled the air and fell hissing to the ground, where they burst with thunderous explosions over the anxious enemy. Rocks were reduced to rubble. Fire and smoke rose in the air, along with twisted metal, stone blocks, ruined trees and fragments of human casualties.

An impressive scene unfolded before the eyes of the infantry as they waited to attack. The young men who had just replenished the ranks of the experienced regiments in the last few months stood in astonishment.²²⁷ The war-hardened veterans of XX Corps may have remembered the breakthrough at Gorlice-Tarnow that had taken place a year before, while those of VIII Corps relived the storm of Belgrade and those of III Corps the hell they had more recently endured at Doberdo.

15 May

The 176 light, 54 heavy and 20 very heavy guns of XX Corps were firing on the 6 km wide sector to be attacked; they were joined by 73 light, 33 heavy and 13 very heavy guns of the neighboring III Corps.

Around 10:00 AM the advanced guards were already moving through the gaps in the barbed wire which sappers had opened the night before. Groups of Italians came out to meet them with raised hands, pale and disconcerted; they knew that it was too late to withdraw from their forward trenches to the main position on the Costa d'Agra and the Coston, which was now under a rain of iron. These heights which lay before the center of XX Corps were the goal of the initial assault. The main body of the troops moved forward confidently around noon - KJR # 3 from 8 ID deployed closely next to the Upper Austrians of IR # 14 from 3 ID; the

²²⁷Eyewitnesses reported that in many places the men climbed onto the breastworks regardless of danger to witness the impressive spectacle.

Salzburg IR # 59 was farther to the left. By 3:00 PM the infantry of 3 ID were nearing the Soglio d'Aspio and Mt Coston, while the Kaiser Jaeger Regiment approached the Costa d'Agra. The rolling barrage of the artillery preceded them and crushed the enemy. The Italian batteries, on the other hand, fired infrequently and much too high. In vain the commander of 35 Italian ID exhorted the troops on Mt Coston to hold out at any cost. Reserves which were hurried to the scene broke apart and pulled back. Only at a few points did we find a few stout-hearted detachments which still had the courage to offer resistance despite all the torture they'd endured. Also several batteries deployed in caverns continued to fire.

The unstoppable attackers moved ahead. Toward 5:00 PM the Kaiser Jaeger entered the completely shattered trenches on the Costa d'Agra and overwhelmed the Italians from the Ancona Brigade who were still holding out. When evening fell, IR # 14 also reached its objective, Mt Coston. Almost an entire battalion of the Cagliari Brigade surrendered to the onrushing Upper Austrians after a brief struggle. Orders for the defense of the plateaus were found on a colonel taken prisoner here. They confirmed that the blow from XX Corps had broken into the first line of the principal Italian position. Only the Soglio d'Aspio was still holding out against the left wing of 3 ID. However, IR # 59 had advanced almost to the Osteria Fiorentini, threatening to cut this mountain off from the south. The II Battalion of the Transylvania IR # 50 had advanced in the Astico valley toward Scalzeri, which was also reached by scouting detachments of III Corps.²²⁸

In the evening Archduke Karl Franz Joseph, who'd observed these events from the slope of Mt Cornetto along with his Chief of Staff Col. Alfred Freih. von Waldstätten, determined with satisfaction that the success of this first day of the battle had cost only minor casualties. This was primarily due to the accurate artillery fire of XX Corps, directed by Colonel Baumann, with powerful help from the guns of III Corps.

On the next day FML Edl. von Horsetzky's 3 ID would hold onto the Costa d'Agra and Mt Coston while re-grouping for an attack on the

228Details about the intense fighting by IR # 14 and 59 are provided with vivid detail in the regimental histories of these units. ("IR 14 - Ein Buch der Erinnerung an grosse Zeiten 1914-1918" [Linz, 1919; pp. 73 ff] and Hoen's "Geschichte des IR 59" [pp. 417 ff].)

Coston d'Arsiero and the occupation of the Baiti Monari plateau.²²⁹ 8 ID, on the other hand, would immediately carry out its planned assault on Mt Maronia and thus advance as far as possible toward a line running from Mt Maggio to the pre-war border. This task was assigned to FML Edl. von Verdross' 180 Inf Bde, which would simultaneously be supported on the flank by the intervention of 59 ID from VIII Corps.

The start of the battle also went according to expectations for VIII Corps. The main weight of the initial offensive was placed on the Corps' right wing just south of Rovereto. Already in the morning the 6 Mtn Bde of FML Heinrich Goiginger's 57 ID was carrying out the first thrust against the northern slopes of the Zugna Torta. In their opening assault they threw battalions of the Italian 37 ID out of the advanced positions. In sharp fighting that lasted until evening, they finally stormed the Castello Dante and, in the night, Heights # 751 north of Albaredo. Meanwhile the III Bn of BH IR # 3, which had been detached from 48 ID to serve as the kernel of a group composed otherwise of Standschützen and led by Lt Col. Lehar, advanced in the Adige valley down to Lizanella. The Landsturm troops of VIII Corps stationed on the other side of the Adige just held themselves in readiness, as ordered.

The task of GM Kroupa's 59 ID was to advance on a broad front and to drive the enemy from the Noriglio-Piazza mountain complex, but they didn't completely achieve their goals. After the failure of an attempt in the morning to seize the bridge at S Colombano by surprise, the assault of 18 Mtn Bde had to be preceded by methodical artillery fire. In the afternoon the stubborn enemy was finally driven back from the northern bank of the Terragnolo. At Potrich and Piazza the 10 Mtn Bde still encountered tough resistance from Alpini and from parts of the Roma Brigade on 16 May. Nevertheless Archduke Eugene, who had followed the fighting since early morning from the heights at Castellano (near the observation point of the Corps commander FZM Scheuchenstuel) was now already paying tribute to the costly exertions of the troops.

16 May

The soldiers of VIII Corps continued the offensive on 16 May with equal determination. Once again they received accurate support from the divisional artillery groups of Col. Rotter and Lt Col. Gnigler, as well as from the heavy artillery of Lt Col. Firbas' group. The Corps had at its disposal over 158 light, 42 heavy

229A "Baito" (plural "Baiti") was a small mountain chateau.

and 16 very heavy guns. Under 57 ID, the right wing of 6 Mtn Bde was made up of Battalions I/6 and IV/50, which were joined by the III Battalion of BH IR # 3; in the early hours of the afternoon they stormed the deeply entrenched strong point on the Costa Violina. The center group (Battalions III/38 and IV/42) climbed up the ridge toward the Zugna Torta through "a labyrinth of granite blocks, ravines and crevices under intense enemy fire"; after taking several Italian trenches in hard fighting, they nearly reached the summit. Meanwhile half of Battalion IV/81 occupied the town of Albaredo.

Under 59 ID the 18 Mtn Bde crossed the Terragnolobach at S Colombano and at S Nicolo. They threw the enemy out of several advanced positions next to Moscheri, and in the evening they were in front of Spino and Pozza; FJB # 15 was near Plache. Once more the Italians offered determined resistance to 10 Mtn Bde. Nevertheless they were defeated, and by evening held onto just the southern part of Piazza. This was a doomed outpost, since by this time the right wing of XX Corps had already gained considerable ground past Mt Maronia and was preparing to strike the defenders of Piazza from the rear.

The weight of massed artillery fire was also fully effective for XX Corps on the 16th. Under this destructive bombardment all the attempts of the Italians to counterattack or simply to retain the parts of their first main line still in their hands in the evening of the 15th were unsuccessful. When the Kaiser Jaeger of the 2nd Regiment approached Mt Maronia the remnants of the decimated garrison surrendered. KJR # 1 of 180 Inf Bde, which advanced through the basin toward Mga Piovernetta, also had an easy time with the shaken enemy, who fell back to their second line. In the evening the KJR # 2 was nearly under Mt Maggio and their objective, the nearby ridge on the border; they had lost more than 50 men during the day, but on the other hand had taken 1200 prisoners. The planned assault on Mt Maggio had to be postponed until the next day. The Corps' center (KJR # 3 and IR # 14) stayed in place as ordered. Meanwhile GM Richard Müller's Group (5 Inf Bde) on the left wing completed the work they hadn't finished the day before. IR "Rainer" # 59 forced the defenders of the Soglio d'Aspio mountain to give up. The fortifications at Osteria Fiorentini were also taken as ordered by FML Horsetzky. Although the enemy had sent reserves here the evening before, they had to evacuate the position, in part because of an unsuccessful counterattack.

Prospects at the end of 16 May

Observers of the Italians' activities reported that in the afternoon they were sending fresh units to occupy the second line, which included the strong bastions of Mt Maggio, C di Campoluzzo and Coston d'Arsiero. We learned later that the strong columns of troops which were observed marching late in the evening through the Passo della Vena and in the C Valbona area belonged to the approaching 9 ID, which had been stationed in 1st Army's reserves around Thiene. In the evening of 16 May the HQ of XX Corps ordered:

"3 ID will make an envelopment attack on the Coston d'Arsiero, supported on the flank by Janecka's artillery group, while Lt Col. Hanzu's heavy artillery group fires frontally. The goal is to reach a line running from the Coston d'Arsiero through the Baiti delle Fratte to the eastern slope of the Baiti Monari plateau. 8 ID will make an envelopment attack on the C. di Campoluzzo, supported on the flank by the heavy artillery of VIII Corps, while Lt Col. Wach's heavy artillery group fires frontally. The goal is to reach a line running from the ridge of the C. di Campoluzzo to Mt Gusella. The border ridge at Mt Maggio is to be secured. A detachment will advance through C. Malingo toward the Borcola."

At the same time FML Archduke Karl Franz Joseph requested very powerful artillery support from VIII Corps, especially from their heavy howitzers; he also asked 11th Army HQ to send a brigade or, preferably, a division to the Folgaria area. This seemed premature to GO Dankl. His reply stated: "XX Corps has two regiments that still haven't been engaged; a third - IR # 50 - has scarcely fought; the other regiments, thanks to the careful dispositions of Corps HQ and the exemplary cooperation with our well-handled artillery, haven't suffered any noteworthy casualties. Thus the combat strength of the Corps is undiminished and for the time being it requires no reinforcement."²³⁰

In the event, VIII Corps HQ already felt compelled on the evening

²³⁰In these two days the following were the losses of XX Corps - IR # 4 about 80 men, IR # 50 just 5; IR # 59, whose attack was the most difficult, lost 310. IR # 21 had yet to be engaged. As for 8 ID, its KJR # 4 was still in reserve; KJR # 3 had lost about 100 men, while each regiment of 180 Inf Bde had lost 50. VIII Corps reported the following casualties: 6 Mtn Bde - 23 dead, 611 wounded; 10 Mtn Bde - 100 dead, 346 wounded; 18 Mtn Bde - a total of 110 men dead and wounded.

of the 16th to deploy 9 Mtn Bde. It would advance on the right wing of 18 Mtn Bde through Vanza toward Pozzacchio and Mt Spil, "as soon as it has enough room to develop the attack." At the same time 6 Mtn Bde was to be reinforced by two battalions from 48 ID, in preparation for that Division's eventual assumption of the task of guarding the flank. It was clear that the advance of 57 ID (with 6 Mtn Bde on the right and 9 Mtn Bde on the left) along the road running deep in the Vallarsa would be extraordinarily difficult. The goal of 18 Mtn Bde on the right wing of 59 ID was Mt Pazul. The main body of 48 ID was still in reserve, with 12 Mtn Bde at Volano and two battalions of 11 Bde at Castellano.

b. Seeking a decision - 17 to 19 May

The bitter fighting increased in intensity on the 17th, reached its peak on the 18th, and then ended suddenly with the complete defeat of the enemy. Because of the broken terrain, the battle played itself out as a series of individual actions.

XX Corps: 17-18 May

XX Corps found themselves in the middle of an artfully contrived zone of fortifications, in which any movement led into a bewildering net of defensive and communications trenches. Leading the troops in action was extremely difficult. 180 Inf Bde opened its first attack against Mt Maggio and the ridge on the border. Here battalions of the Sesia Brigade came up to reinforce the retreating soldiers of 35 ID, and offered determined resistance to the attacking KJR # 2. Finally, after several destructive bombardments, the Tyroleans finally stormed Mt Maggio around 4:00 PM on the 17th. Fighting around the other summits of the border ridge continued into the night, waged by both sides with stubbornness and without regard for casualties. Nevertheless, on the 18th FML Verdross could announce that the goal was reached.

The fighting on the Corps' left wing was similarly difficult. Here GM Richard Müller led six battalions of IR # 59 and 50 to create space for IR # 14, which was to deliver GM Phleps' main assault against the Coston d'Arsiero. To avoid a frontal assault on the mountain, which rises 200 meters over the Lanze valley, the troops regrouped so that they could envelop the strongly occupied trenches. This, however, took time. Therefore the artillery (principally the groups of Lt Col. Hanzu from 3 ID and

of Col. Rath from III Corps), which opened an effective bombardment of the Coston d'Arsiero as scheduled, had to be asked several times to stop firing until a later hour.²³¹ Meanwhile GM Müller's battalions stormed ahead, took the positions near Baito Casalena, encountered strong resistance, repulsed counterattacks, broke through a second enemy line and in the evening reached the line Mga. Frattte d'Arsiero-Baiti delle Fratte-Bosco Scuro. Several companies of the 59th "Rainer" wheeled to the south toward the Coston d'Arsiero and thanks to superior combat leadership held in check a much larger enemy force until the afternoon when the 14th "Hessen" arrived on the scene. However, the Italians fought stubbornly, and next morning were still in possession of the principal works on the summit of the mountain.

On the 18th the Italians tried for the last time to avoid defeat by launching a general attack. Plucky battalions of the Novara Brigade advanced against Müller's group as well as against IR # 14; however, under the barrage fire they were soon halted and lost heart. Around 2:00 PM the Upper Austrians stormed the hotly contested trenches on the summit of the Coston d'Arsiero and took the badly shaken Italians prisoner. Once more some Alpini hastened to the scene and wanted to recover this important bastion. They were forced to turn back. Meanwhile the heavy batteries of Lt Col. Wach's group were softening up the enemy positions in front of KJR # 3. Now the Kaiser Jaeger stormed ahead in a rapid assault; they first took Heights # 1804 and then, after repelling a counterattack, the C. di Campoluzzo.²³²

231This development caused Corps HQ to comment: "It is impossible to provide sufficient ammunition every day for an effective bombardment lasting several hours, such as was required today to support the attacking group of 3 ID. If we use up as much ammunition in the next few days as we have today, we will soon have to halt the offensive!" In the first three days of fighting the daily expenditure of rounds per each type of gun averaged out as follows:

7.5 cm mtn cannon - 94	8 cm field cannon - 110	10 cm mtn howitzers - 89
10 cm field howitzers - 89	10.4 cm cannon - 70	12 cm cannon - 73
15 cm heavy howitzers - 65	15 cm auto howitzers - 64	24 cm mortar - 24
38 cm howitzers - 4	42 cm howitzers - 23	

The one 35 cm cannon fired just 18 rounds.

232Schemfil, "Das k.u.k. 3. Regiment der Tiroler Kaiser Jaeger im Weltkrieg 1914-1918" (Bregenz, 1926), pp. 352 ff.

Thus in the afternoon of the 18th the enemy was hurled out of their entire second line in front of XX Corps, even though the defense by the reserves of 35 ID already on the scene had been reinforced by the main body of 9 ID. From now on the Italians' fighting spirit ebbed. After a short fight, the garrison of Mt Gusella surrendered to the Kaiser Jaeger of the 1st Regiment, who also advanced a good deal forward into the Campoluzzo valley before the arrival of night also ended the actions here.

VIII Corps: 17-18 May

18 May also witnessed the hoped-for decisive turn of events for VIII Corps. Until then the Italians were still defending themselves with all their strength. On the 17th their artillery, deployed between Brentonico and over the Adige valley, fired heavily against the Costa Violina and the ridge leading to the Zugna Torta. 6 Mtn Bde waited for the enemy, who were going over to the counterattack. A brilliant thrust by the German Bohemian Battalion IV/42, supported by mountain batteries, drove them back.²³³ The Italians advanced again in the evening and the night, but were always driven away. The mountain batteries fought very well in these actions. As day broke, our attacking artillery resumed its destructive work and finally drove the enemy to retreat after suffering heavy losses. The Adige valley group captured the so-called "Avalanche Position" south of the Mori railroad station.²³⁴ 6 Mtn Bde took possession of the trenches on the Zugna Torta and pressed forward on the ever-narrowing Zugna ridge.

Also on May 17, at first the 18 Mtn Bde held themselves in readiness to attack toward Bocaldo, while awaiting the arrival of 9 Mtn Bde, whose main body deployed near Spino in the afternoon to thrust toward Vanza. Meanwhile the Italians, despite the heavy artillery fire which continued to pound them, mounted a counterattack; it broke apart. When darkness fell they repeated their attack, especially against 18 Mtn Bde. After bitter hand to hand fighting the enemy were repulsed. By morning the 18 Bde had lost 51 dead and 230 wounded.

²³³On this occasion 1st Lt Hermann Kirchner of Battalion IV/42 was especially distinguished, for which he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order. See "Der Heimat Söhne im Weltkrieg - Der 42.er" (issues for December 1932 and for 1933).

²³⁴The Adige valley group was now led by GM Edler von Luxardo, who'd recently been named commander of 11 Mtn Bde. The group contained 3 battalions from this Brigade, plus Stand-Schützen.

Around noon on 18 May the decisive struggle began. The Hungarian Battalion II/60 captured Pozza. Although the enemy had stood under a rain of iron for many hours, at the start they still offered stubborn resistance. Suddenly, however, they collapsed. VIII Corps HQ reported around 5:00 PM: "After powerful concentrated artillery fire, and thanks to especially brilliant leadership, 9 and 18 Mtn Bdes have stormed the strong point on Heights # 856, then taken Bocaldo and Giacera. FJB # 15 surrounded a much larger enemy detachment at Plache and took them prisoner. The enemy is in full retreat after suffering heavy casualties."

It may be that the parts of the Roma Brigade stationed in this area were also compelled to quickly evacuate the battlefield because by this time the 10 Mtn Bde had already driven far ahead in the Terragnolo valley and were threatening the massif of the Col santo from the east. After the heavy fighting of the first two days the 10 Bde had taken Piazza. Their commander, Col. von Hranilovic, reported: "Despite careful artillery preparation, the combat around the villages in the Terragnolo valley was very difficult. In the houses and caves each objective had to be taken with hand grenades." On the 17th the gallant battalions had already begun the pursuit. In the evening Battalion I/48 climbed the Costabella, where it drove away some Italian rear guards. In new fighting at Mga. Sarta on the 18th, the Bn took about 400 prisoners, mostly soldiers of the territorial militia. During the day, other battalions and companies of 10 Mtn Bde climbed the eastern and northern edges of the mountain complex by Mga. Pezzi and by Costoncino, while advanced elements of 18 Mtn Bde reached Mt Pazul and pursuing detachments of 9 Mtn Bde took Heights # 1364 northeast of Pozzacchio and the town itself.

There was a possibility that the enemy units on the Col santo could be encircled. Therefore in the evening of the 18th the HQ of VIII Corps ordered 12 Mtn Bde, which was part of 48 ID and in reserve at Volano, to join GM Kroupa's 59 ID. Kroupa was given the assignment of taking the Borcola Pass, thrusting toward Mt Pasubio, and cutting off the retreat of the Italians stationed on the Col santo. 18 Mtn Bde, on the other hand, passed under the command of FML Goiginger's 57 ID, which was instructed "to win as much ground as possible toward the Coni Zugna" but "to advance in the Vallarsa only as far as you can without making a major attack." The commander of 48 ID, FML Gabriel, took over control of the entire right wing of the Corps on both sides of the Adige up to the area near the Zugna Torta. This last arrangement was part of a re-grouping of the units which had already been

initiated by Army Group HQ on 17 May and was being carried out by 11th Army HQ.

19 May - VIII and XX Corps

On 19 May the VIII Corps took possession of Col santo earlier than expected; its capture was considered one of the most difficult assignments of this Corps. The chief pillar of the second fortified line between the Vallarsa and the upper Terragnolo valley, its garrison consisted of several militia battalions. "When these troops saw their comrades of the infantry in the Vallarsa and the Terragnolo valley withdrawing after more than three days of frightful battle, they must have had the impression that they were abandoned and encircled. When some enemy patrols arrived, panic broke out among the artillerists with the batteries at Mga Corona, and quickly spread into the ranks of the militia."²³⁵ Thus when companies of 10 Mtn Bde from Costoncino again advanced at noon on the 19th, they could occupy the Col santo after firing a few shots from their rifles. In a separate operation, other battle groups of this Brigade climbed Heights # 1025 southeast of the Col santo. After a short fight, the leading troops from 18 Mtn Bde advanced at Pascolo Stè toward Mt Testo, which was also the goal of two battalions of 9 Mtn Bde (VI/12 and IV/87) who'd crossed the trenches on Mt Spil without fighting. When these battalions deployed to attack Mt Testo, which lay like a watch tower over the winding road out of the Vallarsa through the Val dei Foxi to Col santo, the enemy also evacuated this position. Through the loss of Mt Testo, which shortly before had been occupied by battalions from the Volturmo Brigade, the Italians defending the fortifications at Valmorbia and Mattassone were now threatened in the rear; they withdrew during the night.²³⁶

Meanwhile artillery was pounding the trenches at Point # 1515 on the Zugna ridge, which was stormed by 6 Mtn Bde in the late evening. The situation on the far right wing of VIII Corps was unchanged on the 19th. On the left wing the capture of the Borcola Pass was in full swing. Believing that the C. Malingo south of Mt Maggio was already in the hands of the Kaiser Jaeger, GM Kroupa intended to have Battalion I/93 from 12 Mtn Bde (which had now been attached to his command) advance from Serrada

²³⁵Schiarini, "L'offensiva austriaca nel Trentino" (Rome, 1929), p. 39

²³⁶Near these villages were some modern, but incomplete, Austrian fortified works which the Italians had found useful and had reconstructed.

through the sector of 8 ID; by thrusting through C. Malingo it would hit the flank of the enemy on the Borcola Pass and make it easier for Battalion II/92 of 10 Mtn Bde to attack.²³⁷ The main body of 12 Mtn Bde advanced behind Battalion II/92. When it was learned during the day that the C. Malingo was still occupied by the enemy, the attack was postponed until the 20th. Then, however, it succeeded without serious casualties thanks to careful artillery preparation and the developing encirclement. The triumph of VIII Corps could also be measured by the number of prisoners and booty taken by the evening of the 19th. The Corps reported the capture of 83 officers and 5955 men, 46 guns and 34 machine guns.

19 May was also a day of joyous victory for XX Corps. As ordered, since the previous evening the troops were prepared for the next assault against the powerful positions crowned by Mt Toraro, Mt Campomolon and Mt Malignone. The new day was awaited with anticipation. Then in the first light of morning thick clouds of smoke were spotted in the air over Mt Campomolon, and the dull roar of great explosions was heard. Patrols moved forward to this position, which was considerably higher than any of the works taken so far. Around 10:00 AM small yellow flags appeared on the heights; this was a sign that the artillery wasn't to fire. Soon whole battalions advanced, and at noon the Passo della Vena was also occupied. About three Italian battalions were supposed to re-occupy the positions at this pass and on Mt Campomolon which had been abandoned by their comrades during the night, but didn't arrive in time. They were thrown back. In the afternoon Mt Toraro and the Sp. Tonezza were also occupied. Thus the breakthrough by XX Corps was complete. Many abandoned and in some cases destroyed guns were found in the conquered works. Counting these pieces, XX Corps had taken 27 heavy and 34 light guns - along with 33 machine guns - since 15 May. The number of prisoners was 164 officers and 6637 men.

237"Der Heimat Söhne im Weltkrieg - Der 92er" (June 1926 edition)

2. New organization of Archduke Eugene's Army Group

On 17 May the Army Group HQ had initiated an important reorganization. They placed the new XXI Corps under GO Dankl's 11th Army, but took away III Corps on his left flank; on 20 May the latter would be placed under 3rd Army HQ. Archduke Eugene justified this decision to the high command as follows:

"In the opinion of 11th Army HQ, in the near future it will be necessary to deploy another division (besides 48 ID) on the right wing. Reason: during the next advance ever larger parts of VIII Corps will have to be used to cover the flank. Provision of fresh units for this wing is essential so that in prolonged combat...in difficult terrain the individual battle groups can get some temporary rest while the offensive remains in motion. A full-strength mountain division is desired for this task. 11th Army HQ only has 6 ID available as a reserve that might fulfill this need, but we don't want to break up their order of battle; so we are placing all of XXI Corps under 11th Army. Today [18 May] they are reaching Aldeno, Matarello and Trent. This measure makes it desirable to alter the current organization of the Army Group with one Army deployed behind the other, and which would eventually lead to 3rd Army being absorbed by the 11th. By placing both Armies in line next to each other we will ensure that the tactical and logistical chains of command will remain in place for the rest of the operation. The Astico valley will serve as the new border between the Armies. When this is complete, 11th Army west of the Astico will consist of VIII Corps (including 48 ID), XX and XXI Corps. 3rd Army east of the Astico will have III Corps (including 6 ID), XVII Corps (holding the Valsugana sector as previously) and I Corps. Army Group HQ will still control the latter HQ. 3rd Army HQ will reach Trent on 19 May. We will ensure that this HQ is familiar with the sector of III Corps, that the two large artillery groups on either side of the Astico work together, and that the start of III Corps' offensive correctly reflects the tactical situation, despite its imminent reassignment from one Army to the other."²³⁸

²³⁸Several writers have expressed opinions regarding this reorganization of the Army Group, such as FML Pichler, who at the time was Chief of Staff to 11th Army ("Der Krieg in Tirol 1915/1916" p. 117). He states that when the front was divided "leadership of the foremost corps on the plateaus and their

The k.u.k. high command didn't quarrel with this organization. In their response on the 19th they only remarked that the Army Group could guarantee that the operation unfolded as envisioned in the "first directives" from Teschen mainly by ensuring that the two large artillery groups worked together and that I Corps was held back as a reserve. They also expressed the hope that they could provide yet one more division to further strengthen the "decisive thrust" of the Army Group.

The reason for the new organization wasn't the course of the initial fighting. The decision was influenced more by older intentions that had been discussed prior to 15 May. The most important was the much-repeated desire to enable the Army Group's right wing to advance with as much strength as possible.

Plans of 11th Army HQ for continuing the offensive

On 18 May, shortly after XXI Corps joined 11th Army, the Army HQ removed 44 LW ID from the Corps to serve as a reserve. The 48 ID would replace it within XXI Corps, but only after the Coni Zugna had been conquered. At that time the border between VIII Corps (57 and 59 ID) and XXI Corps (48 ID and L-Sch Div) would run through the Trt. Leno di Vallarsa and the Val di Frenche, and thence along a line to Mt Bafelant.

On the next day (19 May), HQ of 11th Army issued general orders, including to XX Corps, that after reaching the line Cm. Posta-Piano della Fugazza-Borcola Pass-Mt Maggio-Tonezza plateau the units should prepare to assault the third fortified zone. Based on these orders, which were issued without reference to the actual situation on the 19th, it can now be inferred that from the very beginning the plan was to carry out the operation in two phases. In the first phase, Army HQ intended that their left wing (III Corps, which initially was under their control) would stand in place, the center (XX Corps) would break through to the line Tonezza-Mt Majo and then halt, and the right wing (reinforced VIII Corps) would advance through the Borcola Pass and the Piano della Fugazza. By simultaneously moving along the long Zugna ridge to Cm. Levante and Cm. Posta, the wide-ranging right wing would also provide continuous protection on the flank. In the second phase, Army HQ (now without III Corps) wanted to

cooperation was placed under three HQ." Thus unified control over the fighting on both sides of the Astico valley, which would be difficult in any event, became an even greater problem.

bring the heavy artillery forward and then attack the third Italian fortified zone: Mt Civillina-Mt Enna-Mt Novegno-Mt Cimone-Casa Ratti. A map which accompanied the orders on the 19th showed the line which was to be reached and hastily fortified in the first phase, along with the proposed positions of the heavy artillery. The latter would move up to form two groups on the Piano dell Fugazza, one in front of the Borcola Pass, and two more in the area of Mt Torrararo and the Sp. Tonezza. The necessary repairs to the roads should be carried out very energetically. While the artillery approached, the time should be used by the infantry to slowly work their way up to the enemy positions.

The substance of this plan for continuing the offensive was reported to Army Group HQ. When the written report arrived at Bozen on 19 May, it already appeared that the Army's strong right wing was still a long way from their objectives, while the center had taken most of theirs and the left wing was starting to move earlier than anticipated. Thus, contrary to the original concept of 11th Army HQ, events were causing the attacking front to pivot. From this point forward, the situation at the front forced the higher leadership to adapt and to make new decisions. And, since the front had been divided, this was primarily the task of Army Group HQ.

Therefore the Army Group responded to GO Dankl that the plan he'd presented "had been overtaken by the events of the last 24 hours." Visible signs that the enemy was collapsing made it seem possible that their power of resistance was badly shaken. Implementation of the planned artillery deployment was dependent upon the condition of the road over the Piano della Fugazza and upon gaining enough ground in this sector so that two strong groups of guns could be stationed east of the pass. Army Group HQ, however, advised that "in the current situation, when there are favorable opportunities to gain quick and perhaps easy successes, an advance that is too systematic might be just as damaging as a careless rush forward." These words of encouragement (somewhat dampened by the final clause) were followed by an order that the next task of XX Corps was to take possession of the Tonezza plateau; from here they would support the advance of III Corps up to and beyond the Assa ravine with flanking fire. The instructions went on: "From this same area it may already be possible to also capture the fortifications west of Arsiero and on Mt Novegno. By advancing further the right wing of XX Corps can substantially help the offensive of VIII Corps over the Borcola Pass. After this pass is taken, another heavy artillery group can be put in place to bombard

Arsiero and Mt Novegno, and also to neutralize Mt Enna."

Therefore Army Group HQ did feel obliged by the events of the last 24 hour to act quickly. Like 11th Army HQ, however, they thought that any powerful assault against the fortified Agno-Posina front must be accompanied by a re-deployment of the heavy artillery. The only possibility for reducing the duration of this lengthy process was that XX Corps could break through on its own initiative, with some support from either side "while the Cm. Posta and the Leogra valley were still in the hands of the enemy." In their reply on 20 May, HQ of 11th Army noted "that possession of the Tonezza plateau was naturally made the first operational goal before the battle started", and that from the beginning XX Corps had been ordered "to support VIII Corps by advancing over Mt Maggio toward the Borcola Pass." They went on to state that "everything has transpired in accordance with the intentions of Army Group HQ" and that the proposed artillery deployment wasn't the result of a rigid plan that must be carried out under any circumstances before we could attack the enemy's third line. Army HQ would "determine the time of attack and issue orders accordingly."

The Army Group Chief of Staff wrote on this report, "Answer unnecessary, since the [11th] Army HQ themselves understand that they will not be implementing the plan."²³⁹ The Army Group was now paying greater attention to 3rd Army.

3. The diversionary maneuver of XVII Corps

At the moment when 11th Army started its offensive, XVII Corps in the Sugana valley was the only part of 3rd Army in contact with the enemy. North of the Brenta, 18 ID held the positions on the Collo Ridge with five battalions of 13 Mtn Bde, the Glockenturm farmstead with three battalions of 1 Mtn Bde, and the mountain slopes west of Roncegno with the Upper Austrian Volunteers. 181 Inf Bde was spread out from Marter through the Brenta valley, then up to Mt Carbonile and (on the right wing) opposite the Sella; the line ended at the Vezzena plateau. The Bde consisted of two Landsturm battalions, plus Infantry Battalions I/51 and I/102 from 18 ID and Battalion IV/24 from 8 Mtn Bde, which

²³⁹TRANSLATOR's NOTE - This passage is very obscure. It's unclear which "plan" Krauss is referring to here. In context the most likely explanation is that he meant the contingency whereby XX Corps would advance on its own initiative without waiting for the heavy artillery support.

arrived at Pergine on 11 May. 2 Mtn Bde was at Cavalese in the Fassa valley, and had moved one battalion with its batteries ahead into the Cadin valley.

The 2 and 8 Mtn Bdes had been sent into this area by Army Group HQ in the second week of May because it had been learned that the enemy opposite XVII Corps was being reinforced. We didn't know that the Italians only wanted to use their well-built positions on the Armenterra Ridge, at Roncegno, on Mt Collo and on the Salubio as a line of "first resistance", and that their main force of infantry and artillery had been pulled back to the main position east of Borgo. This was the deployment which Cadorna had ordered on 29 April.

On 11 May the XVII Corps had been instructed to pin down the enemy units in the Sugana valley during the attack of 11th Army. A local thrust from Mt Collo was designed to achieve this objective; if it succeeded in winning the enemy's first position, there would be no pursuit. At the same time the 181 Inf Bde, chiefly with artillery fire, would simulate an assault against the Sella. However, if the bombardment gave the infantry a chance to move forward without heavy fighting they should seize the opportunity.

At noon on 15 May the batteries of XVII Corps and those of Lt Col. Johann Schmidt's artillery group opened fire. Until evening the guns thundered with varying intensity. Then two battalions of 13 Mtn Bde advanced from Mt Collo and the spur extending to the south. In the darkness of night the attackers became disorganized in the confusing barricades and under the blazing fire of the Italians, who stood their ground. Only in one place was part of the trench captured, but it was soon lost. By dawn the two attacking battalions had returned to their starting points, having lost about 400 men; it was later determined that half of them had been taken prisoner.²⁴⁰

The course of the operation against the Sella was completely different. Here, where no serious attack had been intended, the infantry groups thrust forward from the start on their own initiative. On the morning of the 16th Colonel Zechbauer, who temporarily commanded 181 Inf Bde in place of the ill GM Kindl, reported that not only had his right wing advanced as far as

240TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - The actual casualties were 56 dead, 339 wounded, and 276 "missing." See Artl, "Südtirol Offensive", p. 112 (footnote). Artl also notes that the commander of 13 Mtn Bde was relieved because of this fiasco.

Heights # 1691, but that Battalion IV/24, climbing up from Silvestro, had unexpectedly taken part of the Armenterra Ridge. With unusual persistence, on the 16th and 17th the surprised Italians launched continuous counterattacks against this gallant Galician battalion (to which two companies had been attached from IV Bn/k.k. Lst IR 2) in an attempt to neutralize the envelopment. But they were unsuccessful. Boldly and skillfully the Austrians pushed ahead toward the Sasso alto. Acting on orders from Corps HQ, all of 181 Inf Bde joined the attack on the 18th, with another attached battalion from 8 Mtn Bde. The enemy battalions from the Siena Brigade, under pressure from three sides, attempted in the evening and night to gain ground with several counterattacks against the Armenterra group. Finally they gave up the struggle and evacuated the battlefield. Next morning our troops saw the signs of retreat that they had so often witnessed in Poland and Galicia as flames sprang up behind the enemy; on the road east of Borgo there was a "real mass migration of men and vehicles." Then everyone pushed forward in pursuit. Colonel Zechbauer, who now had a third battalion with him from 8 Mtn Bde, put all his troops in motion. Detachments of 1 Mtn Bde occupied Roncegno, but the enemy still was in place in front of 13 Mtn Bde. Corps HQ were not idle; they ordered the commander of 8 Mtn Bde (GM Wossala) to move ahead with the remaining two battalions of his Brigade, to follow Col. Zechbauer's group, and then to take it over. Thus in the evening of the 19th the entire 8 Mtn Bde was deployed in the Sugana valley. Soon thereafter new orders arrived from 3rd Army HQ; if the enemy continued to fall back, the pursuit should be carried out solely by 18 ID and 181 Inf Bde. The 8 and 2 Mtn Bdes were "to be held ready for eventual employment in another sector" - 8 Mtn Bde was to be stationed at Levico or just east of the town, and 2 Mtn Bde at Pergine.

The small operation on the Sella had thus led to an unhoped-for and very noteworthy success. However, it wasn't known whether it had succeeded in deceiving the enemy. At any rate, occupation of the Sella and of the Maggio valley presented an opportunity to launch further small-scale operations against the northern flank of the Italians who were now being attacked on the plateau by III Corps.

4. Counter-measures of the Italian commanders

The apprehension of the Italian commanders, which had arisen in April because of the k.u.k. 18 ID's thrust in the Val Sugana, had subsided after a while because their opponents hadn't continued

the attack. On the other hand, the Italians still considered it probable that an Austrian offensive would eventually take place. Their high command remained in doubt, however, about where the main assault would come. In any case it seemed that the defensive measures already undertaken on the front in south Tyrol would be sufficient. Supported by the progressively improved fortifications and the reinforcements already committed, 1st Army should be able to sustain their resistance at least until further new units could be brought up. Because of this conviction, Cadorna had left his strategic reserves in the area east of the Tagliamento and once again reserved to himself authority over 27 ID at Codroipo, 44 ID at Desenzano and the Sicilia Brigade at Brescia.

1st Army HQ, on the other hand, believed it was possible to infer from the April fighting in the Sugana valley that the greatest danger lay in this direction. As a consequence, they deployed half of 10 ID, from their Army reserves, at Primolano. Therefore in the sector between Lake Garda and the Cismon River on 15 May there was a preponderance of force in the Val Sugana area, where in reality no serious attack occurred. From Lake Garda to the Vallarsa the 37 ID was stationed with 18 battalions, in the Col Santo area the "Agno-Posina Group" with 9 battalions, opposite the k.u.k. XX Corps the 35 ID with 15 battalions, and in front of the k.u.k. III Corps the 34 ID with 20 battalions. Meanwhile in the Sugana valley and the adjacent area to the north the XVIII Corps HQ had 37 battalions available. 28 battalions stood in readiness in the Army's reserve - 9 ID in the Schio-Thiene area, an Alpini group of 10 battalions and 6 mountain batteries west of Bassano, and the Volturno Brigade of 10 ID at Bassano.

The reaction after 15 May

Upon receiving the first alarming reports, General Cadorna came to Thiene on 16 May. The commander of 1st Army, G.Lt Pecori-Giraldi, still believed that the main thrust was yet to be delivered in the Val Sugana; he allowed himself to be deceived by the feint attack by XVII Corps and sent the Volturno Brigade to Primolano. Immediately afterwards he was forced to send the main body of 9 ID to support 35 ID. Several battalions hurried into the Vallarsa, yet arrived too late to prevent the defeat of the Roma Brigade. On the 18th, when 1st Army HQ learned of the loss of the Col Santo, they had no more than about 6 Alpini battalions in reserve. Probably recognizing their earlier error, they called the Volturno Brigade back from Primolano and moved it by truck to the Piano della Fugazza pass. The Brigade arrived just in time to immediately occupy Mt Pasubio, which already had

seemed to be lost. On the 19th the Army HQ threw their last reserves (the Alpini battalions) against the k.u.k. XX Corps. At this time the Sicilia Brigade and parts of 44 ID arrived by rail at Ala, and the main body of 27 ID at Vicenza. The high command had already made these units available on the 16th. Soon afterwards Cadorna ordered the entire strategic reserve (XIV and X Corps) from the Tagliamento to 1st Army. Yet all these forces were too late.

With alarm the Italians witnessed the collapse of the final major barrier, Mt Campomolon-Mt Toraro. Any resistance against the weight of the overpowering artillery seemed to be in vain. "It now was possible for our opponents, whose guns overall were superior in number and effectiveness, to turn them against the defenses of the Asiago plateau; therefore we had to fear that this position would also soon be lost."²⁴¹ Cadorna hastened back to Udine and summoned the commanders of 2nd and 3rd Armies to a meeting. He told them that they must reckon with a possible Austrian invasion of the plains around Vicenza. Therefore all necessary preparations should be made for a retreat from the Isonzo. For now, an army would have to be brought together with great speed in the area where the passes through the Lessina Alps descended onto the plains. Cadorna calculated that the Austrians could enter the flat lands with six or eight divisions. Therefore the new 5th Army would need at least ten divisions; it would deploy so as to be able to move quickly and easily in any direction. On 21 May the high command ordered that the assembly area would be a triangle between Vicenza, Padua and Citadella, and that four bridges should be constructed over the lower Brenta. The deployment would be covered by a cavalry division on the line Bassano-Breganze.

Marshal Cadorna himself has addressed the question of why the high command assembled 5th Army far back in the plains, instead of sending units to support 1st Army on the plateaus.²⁴² Above all he wished to refute the theory that his intention was to allow the Austrians to descend unhindered into the plains so that he could strike them there. This theory is incorrect. His reasoning took different lines. 5th Army wouldn't be ready until 5 June. If Cadorna had thrown its individual components into the battle as each one arrived, it was not impossible that they would've suffered a new defeat in the mountains because of the superiority of the strong Austrian artillery. This, in turn, might have led to a complete catastrophe. There was no need to

²⁴¹Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, p. 215

²⁴²Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, pp. 219 ff.

stake everything on one card. 1st Army should have strength enough to hold the plateaus. If, however, they were defeated there would be no alternative to having all the armies stationed in eastern Venetia retreat - at first to the Piave, and then at least as far as the Bacchiglione. Since such a retreat would last for 10 to 12 days, 5th Army would need to hold off the attackers for this length of time. This was also the reason why the orders for creating the Army were accompanied by those for the construction of new defensive positions on several lines along the edges of the mountains as well as farther back in the plains. The measures undertaken included fortification of the city of Treviso.

To help create 5th Army, on 23 May the 43 ID was called back from Albania and troops also came home from Libya.²⁴³ These precautions increased the anxiety on the home front. The Minister President sent a wire to General Cadorna to ask him to attend a cabinet meeting along with the four Army commanders and G.Lt Porro. Cadorna, however, refused to go along with this demand.

Meanwhile, since 19 May the XIV Corps was hastening by foot, by truck and by rail toward the west. Their goal was the Sieben Gemeinde plateau, where G.Lt Lequio (hitherto commander of the Carnic Group) had taken over various units on 21 May and established a unified command structure for the area. Also marching toward the threatened front were the Etna Brigade from the Carinthian sector, five bicycle battalions from 3rd Army, and several Alpini battalions from various sectors.

In their hour of need, the Italian high command also sought help from abroad. Not much was expected from the Western powers, since they had no way to directly operate against Austria-Hungary. Moreover the French Army was still engaged in the attrition battle at Verdun, which tied down all their available forces. Therefore the Italians turned toward Russia. Beginning on 19 May they made several requests for a relief offensive.²⁴⁴ As will be explained later in more detail, this caused the Stavka to hasten preparations for the attack which had been envisioned at the third Chantilly conference. The Chief of Staff, General

243TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - The original actually reads "...and a division came home from Libya." However, the Italians never had a divisional HQ to control the forces in Libya; actually, on 8 June they created the new 48th ID using infantry which had been brought back from the Libyan garrison.

244Klembovsky, p. 31

Alexeiev, also decided to open the offensive by the Russian Southwest Front at the start of June.²⁴⁵ Until then the Italians would have to get by with their own resources.

5. Breakthrough attack by III Corps

a. Destruction of the Italian 34th Division

Shortly after noon on 19 May, III Corps HQ received an order from 11th Army HQ to initiate all preparations for carrying out the offensive on 21 May. Until then the Corps would continue to provide artillery support for XX Corps. At almost the same hour the III Corps intercepted a telephone conversation that involved an Italian captain on the Hocheck; it included the following sentence: "New deployment in the Arsiero-Posina area. A re-deployment in the Val Torra will be carried out at the same time. Be careful to take everything with you, because we won't be here this evening!" This indicated only that the Laserna plateau would be evacuated. However, the progress of XVII Corps in the Sella as well as an erroneous report from a pilot that the enemy artillery was no longer stationed on the Porta di Manazzo made it seem likely that the enemy intended to withdraw from the entire sector of III Corps.

After hastily getting approval from 11th Army HQ, FML Krautwald immediately notified his troops. The Corps' artillery commander, Col. Janecka, had already ordered that a destructive bombardment should be unleashed.²⁴⁶ At this moment most of the battalions were stationed as ordered some distance behind the front, out of range of the Italians. Because of enemy fire, especially from the artillery which was still quite active until noon, it was necessary to use caution in moving the infantry up to their starting points. Corps HQ ordered:

"As instructed by 28 ID, Col. Kliemann will open his attack toward the line Principi-Hocheck by 7:00 PM at the latest with FJB # 7, Battalion I/47, and with the rest of the 47th as they come up. At the same time the Division will send detachments ahead on the entire front. If they find the positions just weakly held or determine during the night

245Zayontschovsky, p. 16

246In recognition of his activity as an artillery commander in this battle as well as the Xth Isonzo Battle in 1917, Colonel Joseph Janecka won the Knight's Cross of the Maria Theresia Military Order.

that the enemy is pulling back, the offensive will be carried out immediately with the units already on hand [four battalions of 22 LW ID and five of 28 ID]. Otherwise the divisions should be ready to attack by 6:00 AM on 20 May, while the artillery opens fire at 5:00 AM. The Levespitze should be taken by surprise."

Soon afterwards it was definitely determined that the Costesin positions as well as those on the Marcai Ridge as far as the Levespitze were still occupied in force. Whenever our troops attempted to move closer during the evening and night, the enemy showed that they weren't willing to give up their trenches. Here it must come down to fighting. The positions on the Luserna plateau, on the other hand, had been evacuated. At 3:00 PM patrols from IR # 47 had already entered the trenches and taken prisoners as well as a machine gun. Effective artillery fire made the Italians retreat quickly, covered by rear guards.

Around 8:00 PM Col. Kliemann received the order that he shouldn't wait for all his group to arrive, but should immediately start the attack with the units presently available - Battalion I/47 and FJB # 7. Soon afterwards a jaeger detachment reached the Hocheck Heights. During the night the entire Luserna plateau was occupied without any fighting worth mentioning.²⁴⁷ The ravine of the Val Torra blocked any further advance toward the east. Therefore the enemy hadn't found it necessary to occupy the edge of the steep slope on the other side. With the Torra ravine on the south flank and the precipitous slope down to the Sugana valley in the north, the defensive front of the reinforced 34 Italian ID was just 5 km long; it could neither be outflanked nor left behind. The first task of III Corps was to break through this front. If they succeeded, they would be confronted by a goal that was perhaps even more difficult - to overcome the natural barrier which lay between the armored works at Verena and Campolongo while simultaneously taking the jagged Kempel Ridge.

The initial deployment

The Corps was ready to carry out its first assignment early on the 20th. 22 LW ID was in charge of the sector between the slopes leading down to the Sugana valley and a line 500 paces south of Vezzena-Mga. Erate-Mga. Lungolaita. It included the Val d'Assa road. The troops had been emphatically instructed to move quickly beyond the main positions of Marcai and Costesin after they were taken, so as to neutralize the strong enemy artillery

247Vogelsang, pp. 403 ff.

fire which was expected from this line. Their goal was the sector Cost'alta-Costa Ridge-Mga. Campo Rosato-Bosco di Poselaro. After the first goal was achieved, the field artillery brigades were to be returned to the direct command of their divisions, each of which would then also receive three mountain batteries.

With full confidence FML Krautwald and his Chief of Staff, Lt. Col. Freih. von Karg, watched over the well-prepared action from Mt Rover.

In clear weather the entire artillery punctually resumed with greater strength the destructive fire they had started the day before. The guns of XX Corps couldn't participate, because it had proven impossible to bring the long-range pieces ahead through the captured enemy trenches. However, Lt Col. Schmidt's artillery group in XVII Corps' sector played a part. There was a total of 218 light, 87 heavy and 28 very heavy guns, which sent a rain of iron onto the Italian positions. The infantry was supposed to attack at 6:00 AM, but there were delays.

The Italians were prepared for the assault. Their artillery, which had been again augmented in the last few days, laid down barrage fire in front of their strong positions and barbed wire barricades. Well-hidden batteries in the woods at Bosco di Poselaro and on the Mga. Campo Rosato, which even our diligent air units hadn't been able to spot, were especially effective with their flanking fire. Also the guns at Porta di Manazzo, which supposedly had already been knocked out, once again raised their voices.

The entire attack sector of 22 LW ID was visible from the work at Verle, where the commander GM Edl. von Kochanowski stood in the midst of his troops. It stretched from the Levespitze (1857 meters) on the left to Vezzena (1400 meters) on the right. On the left wing the terrain, which everywhere ascended as we approached the enemy, presented just as many difficulties to our frontal assault as it did on the right (southern) wing; however, an initial success here could be more easily exploited. Therefore the 22nd Division made its main effort toward the left.

Since the Italians had given up their positions west of the Val Torra the evening before, the front to be assaulted by 28 ID was considerably narrowed. Thus the barrier of the Costesin was all the more important; it blocked the narrow bridge of land that connected the Vezzena plateau to the ultimate object of 28 ID, the broad ridge between Mt Verena and the Cima di Campolongo. FML Schneider Edl. von Manns-Au had recognized this factor from

the start, and here he deployed his main force - Col. Rada's 55 Inf Bde - with IR # 96 on the left and IR # 87 on the right. There was no alternative to mounting a frontal assault which would break through by brute force.

And so the regiments of the "Iron Corps" in the first line opened the bloody battle in a determined phalanx.

20 May

The first success was won by LW IR "Graz" # 3 on the left wing of 22 LW ID. In the first hours of the day, before the start of the general assault, its III Battalion captured the Levespitze; they took several dozen Alpini prisoners, and also captured two very dangerous guns which had been stationed in caverns.

Soon thereafter the Styrian Landwehr, with two battalions of the Eger IR # 73 on their right wing, captured the upper Marcai position.²⁴⁸ Here the Italians were already fleeing. However, they soon rallied and counterattacked from the upper Costa Ridge. The whole area was constantly under heavy fire from the artillery of both sides, under which the Landwehr on the Levespitze also suffered severely. Col. Ritter von Ellison's 43 LW Bde sought by pressing from the north to help the very difficult attack of 18 Inf Bde against the central Marcai position. Col. Freih. von Albori had taken over command of the latter Brigade. Here the ancient Bohemian IR # 11 stormed the trenches at Point # 1548, but were held up in front of a clump of woods where many machine guns were stationed. The artillery once more had to hammer the woods before the 11th could prevail in the afternoon. This was a significant success. However it couldn't be exploited on this day, because the accompanying flank attack by Ellison's group wasn't completely effective due to counterattacks and heavy fire from the Costa Ridge. Also the 73rd was only able to seize two Italian strong points by the cabins on the upper Marcai.

Under 28 ID, the Croats of IR # 96 disregarded heavy casualties and in their first onslaught took the concrete advanced works on Heights # 1506 southeast of the Vezzena farmstead. Two guns, many prisoners, and several machine guns fell into their hands. The south Styrian IR # 87 had a difficult time advancing through the enemy's barbed wire and trenches. Here also a well-defended clump of woods, this time on the Costesin Ridge, played an

248A description of some of the heavy fighting by IR # 73 appears in "Der Heimat Söhne im Weltkrieg: Der Egerländer" (November edition, 1931)

important role. The Regiment, especially the III Battalion, suffered heavy casualties in vain. Finally, after renewed artillery preparation, the garrison of the woods was overcome around 5:00 PM. However, the main works on the Costesin still held out; they were a true fortress, flanked by many batteries stationed in the Bosco di Poselaro. Col. Rada, the commander of 55 Inf Bde, reported that any further advance by day would be an unjustifiable operation. Therefore he deployed the Brigade's reserves in the evening and then called on the entire Brigade for a new effort. The arrival of fog covered the operation. As night fell over the battlefield, the Costesin barrier still hadn't been taken. It also was unknown whether the enemy still was holding the lower Marcai Ridge in front of 22 LW ID. Here the fighting had been hotly contested throughout the day, and reserves had been constantly committed.

After noon a large force of enemy infantry had been spotted moving quickly on the Campo Mandriolo. The cause remained unclear. Later it was learned that a temporary detachment of gallant Tyrolean Land-Schützen, acting on orders from 11th Army HQ, had climbed a path they'd recently discovered on the northern slope of the Cost'alta and had also appeared suddenly at the Porta di Manazzo. This caused panic among the frightened Italians. In the evening our detachment returned to the Sugana valley.²⁴⁹

The opinion of Corps HQ on the day's fighting, based on their own observation and reports from the divisional commanders, was reflected in their orders for the following day. "As soon as the Costesin and Marcai positions have been taken, they should be prepared for defense. The only immediate further advance will be undertaken by 22 LW ID along the edge of the plateau. However, scouting should be carried out simultaneously. If the enemy doesn't hold onto their positions on the Costesin Ridge and at Bosco di Poselaro, the objectives given for the 20th will be the same for May 21st."

249Pichler, p. 119. At the time 181 Inf Bde reported that they captured four heavy guns in the operation, but this was incorrect. See also Capello, p. 258. He described this event on 20 May along with thrusts by Austrian detachments at Porta Portule, the Cima Dodici and the Cima Dieci three and four days later. He remarked: "The Austrians let several bold patrols advance; they appeared in our rear through the Porta Manazzo. The impact on our troops was very great. They believed they'd been cut off from their line of retreat. They withdrew hastily and naturally fell into disorder."

In this order, FML Krautwald also passed along to the brave troops some words of recognition from the popular Archduke Eugene, who'd been present in the Corps' sector during the fighting.

The divisional commanders had already deployed their reserves. In 22 LW ID, two battalions of LW IR # 26 were placed under Col. Ellison, and the parts of IR # 73 that had yet to see action were placed under Col. Albori. In 28 ID, the FJB # 11 went to the right wing of Col. Rada's group and the independent IV Bn of LW IR # 37 to the center of the Division. On the other hand, the commander of IR # 47 (Col. Kliemann), who during the day had supported Col. Rada's group with machine guns and mountain batteries but otherwise had found little to do, sent back one and a half battalions of his Regiment to the Corps' reserves. Otherwise Corps HQ only had FJB # 22 at its disposal; therefore they asked 3rd Army HQ for the leading regiment (# 17) of 6 ID, which during the day had come up on the Fricca road to Casara. The regiment was attached to Corps HQ.

The Italians also brought new units onto the battlefield. Pilots reported the approach of in infantry and columns of trucks from Asiago, and captured officers spoke of the arrival of two brigades. At this point over 2000 prisoners had been taken; they belonged to the Salerno, Ivrea and Lambro Brigades, and to one Alpini and one financial watch battalion.

21 May

In the unquiet night the enemy made an unsuccessful attempt to recover the Levespitze. As day dawned, we recognized that new fighting lay ahead. 28 ID was the first to attack. To increase the pressure, the entire artillery of the Corps began by placing the Costesin works under massive fire; two battalions of IR # 87 plus FJB # 24 and some companies from FJB # 11 lay in wait in front of this position. Around 9:00 AM they sprang forward, with Battalion III/87 in the van, and broke into the midst of the surprised Italians. After a wild melee, great numbers of the enemy laid down their arms to avoid further slaughter. Among this enormous mass of prisoners were many who belonged to the newly arrived Alessandria Brigade (from 30 ID). The troops who fled mingled with strong Italian reserves who were coming up to the Costesin Ridge from the ravine at the border. Our artillery hammered this crowd with frightful effect. All who were able to do so saved themselves by entering the woods, but they left behind a large field of corpses. Meanwhile the enemy artillery

was laying down heavy fire upon the positions they had lost, so that parts of IR # 96 on the left wing of the attacking group, who had entered the trenches on the northern end of the Costesin Ridge, pulled back except for some patrols. FML Schneider-Manns-Au believed that by having 28 ID attack in the morning hours he had prevented very strong counterattacks which the Italians had been planning. Now it seemed possible that the enemy would also evacuate the Bosco di Poselaro. Strong scouting detachments would ascertain if this were the case.

22 LW ID attacked toward noon, after repelling a counterattack on their left wing. Here also the artillery decimated the enemy, who lost their composure because of the loss of a blockhouse armed with guns at Marcai di sotto and also because of the impact of the defeat on the Costesin Ridge. A last powerful storm of fire around 2:00 PM drove them to retreat. The trenches were quickly overrun, one after the other; many discouraged Italians surrendered. Soon afterwards some of the Landwehr climbed the northern part of the Costa Ridge, which lay behind the main enemy position and apparently had been fortified as a second line; it was no longer occupied by the enemy. A detachment ascended the Cost'alta Peak (2050 meters high).

In the evening, enemy units were still holding out at the Porta di Manazzo and on the road in front of the middle of III Corps. Strong advanced guards from 28 ID entered the Bosco di Poselaro. The rest of the Division spent the night in the captured positions; the troops of the various regiments, who'd become intermingled in the fighting, rejoined their proper units. Since the Sardinian Grenadier Brigade was supposedly approaching, and since airmen reported the presence of strong columns on the Asiago-Osteria del Ghertele road in the afternoon, it seemed likely that the enemy would once more try to retrieve their fortune on 22 May. This factor, and the need of the troops for rest after two days of combat, were the reasons why III Corps HQ ordered that on the 22nd only strong scouting detachments would be sent ahead. Otherwise the line already reached would be held.

22 May

The night passed in complete quiet. The next day it was soon apparent that the victory had been complete. The scouting detachments from 28 ID pushed ahead, and didn't encounter any resistance. Among a great deal of destroyed military equipment they found a large number of abandoned guns. FML Schneider-Manns-au didn't wait any longer. In the afternoon he alerted several battalions and sent them toward the second enemy

position, while regrouping the artillery. Observers spotted several of our soldiers on the top of the armored work on Mt Verena. Although it seemed incredible, in fact this modern work (which had been heavily damaged by bombs and shells) had been abandoned by the enemy. The fortifications on Mt Campolongo and all those in between had also been given up, and were occupied by our advanced patrols.

The Italians had attempted too much with their admittedly very stubborn and gallant defense of the Marcai-Costesin position. They had made an inflexible decision to hold onto this first line, which was also the most strongly fortified, regardless of cost; the result was a complete collapse. The troops were in no condition to even occupy the second line between Verena and Campolongo. The decimated Italian brigades fled through the area without halting. The commander of XIV Corps (28 and 30 ID), G.Lt Coardi di Carpenetto, had taken over direction of the battle; by the evening of 22 May he had no alternative to ordering that the defense should center on the third position. It ran from Mt Kempel through Camporovere to Punta Corbin. Although only a few points on this line were fortified, it was of great natural strength. Where the left wing of the position stretched to the Punta Corbin, it was covered by the deep Assa ravine which lay in front of the line. The right, anchored on Mt Kempel, consisted of a mountain wall between Cima Portule and Mt Meata; at the foot of this wall, a thousand meters lower than the summit, lay the only good road toward Asiago.

b. Capture of Kempel Ridge

As long as the enemy held onto Kempel Ridge, it was impossible to advance in the Assa valley. Therefore, in the first orders issued by 11th Army HQ in March special measures had been envisioned for taking the ridge.

A quick victory

This task was now assigned to 22 LW ID. The Division moved forward just a little on the 22nd, but nevertheless its left wing gained a very important success. Already in the early morning of this day the III Battalion of LW IR # 26 advanced along the ridge on the border as well as on the Campo Manderiolo; west of the Porta di Manazzo they encountered several Italian companies. These units had been quickly sent to the area on 20 May because of the menace caused by the detachment of Landes-Schützen who'd

climbed from the Sella to the Cost'alta; their mission was to protect the northern flank of 34 ID and the large force of artillery stationed in the sector. Now they defended themselves stubbornly for several hours against envelopment by the advancing Landwehr battalions, which were eventually supported by a mountain cannon battery. Finally the much-reduced Italian companies withdrew south over the mountains. The guns, which had already been abandoned by their crews before the fighting, were left in place.²⁵⁰

Although in size this fight seemed insignificant compared to the bloody battle of the preceding days, nevertheless it turned out to have extraordinary importance. The Italians who'd been driven from the Porta di Manazzo (per prisoners, they were two battalions from the Lambro Brigade) now gave up all hope and retreated along the service road into the Assa valley. Here in late evening they received orders to occupy the key points of the third line, Mt Kempel and the Bocchetta di Portule. At the same hour Col. Ellison, whose battalions had pushed past the Porta di Manazzo, was also sending his high mountain detachment toward Mt Kempel. Since the Italian companies had farther to march, when they climbed forward next morning they saw that their opponents had already reached the heights.²⁵¹

The high mountain detachment of 43 LW Inf Bde, followed immediately by a company from LW IR # 26, had come to Mt Kempel around 10:00 AM; covered by fog, they took the militia garrison by surprise. The latter maintained a hopeless resistance for some time, but took to flight after losing their camp at the Cra. Trentin. The troops from the Lambro and Alessandria Brigades, whose arrival was described above, wanted to recapture the heights but were already very tired; they were defeated and then overcome by the confusion that had already engulfed the militia. Meanwhile the entire II Battalion of LW IR # 26 had arrived and built upon the success, while I Battalion of LW IR # 3, which had been sent by Col. Ellison, had to prepare a very uncomfortable camp next to the snowfields of Mt Kempel as darkness fell. Following instructions from Corps HQ, in the afternoon Col. Ellison had let the other two battalions of LW IR # 26, led by

250Counting the abandoned batteries taken here, by 23 May the entire III Corps had won the following booty: 25 very heavy, 33 heavy and about 20 light guns, plus 28 machine guns. 210 officers and 9400 men were taken prisoner. The Corps' own losses were 21 officers and 329 men dead, 48 officers and 1706 men wounded.

251Schiarini, p. 60

the regimental commander Lt Col. Passy, climb forward toward the Bocchetta di Portule (1949 meters). This gap was the only point through which a path led to the stony waste beyond the ridge. Night had fallen before Lt Col. Passy reached the small but very strong fortification from which four 23 cm cannon had demonstrated during the day that they could fire effectively into the upper Assa valley.

Thus on 23 May the northern pillar of the Italian third position, which Cadorna called the strongest bulwark of the defenses on the plateaus, had already fallen. In the morning of the 24th, after a brief fight, the Bocchetta di Portule was also opened and penetrated by Lt Col. Passy's Landwehr. The favorable course of this operation couldn't be fully determined during the 23rd because fog hampered visibility and because it took so long to transmit news in the mountains. Therefore the remaining two battalions of the Landwehr brigade stayed on Mt Paradiso while both regiments of 18 Inf Bde were held in readiness in the Cra. Larici-Mga. Pusterle-Baitle area. Battalion III/73 of 18 Inf Bde had moved south in the Assa valley to Bridge # 981; they determined that the enemy still occupied Mt Meata, the fortifications of the Cra. Meata and of Mt Interotto, and their blocking positions in the Assa valley, where they had blown up the road. With great difficulty, some of the artillery of 22 Division took up new positions closer to Kempel Ridge.

Under 28 ID, Col. Kliemann's group (two battalions of IR # 47, FJB # 7, 1 Can Batty/Mtn AR 1) reached Castelletto as ordered without meeting resistance worth mentioning; GM Hugo Schmid with the rest of 56 Inf Bde reached the northern edge of the lower course of the Assa ravine where it runs from west to east between Albaredo and Roana. 55 Inf Bde advanced along the road to the Cra. di Campovecchio, where they spent the night. The divisional artillery took up positions between Mt Verena and Mt Erio. The sector in which III Corps was attacking had greatly expanded, more quickly than had been anticipated. From the left wing at Mt Kempel it extended around 20 km through Roana to the Astico valley. The capture of Kempel Ridge, however, had brought the Corps a significant step nearer its goal - Asiago.

Planning the next move

In the afternoon of 22 May, 3rd Army HQ had already made capture of the Asiago area the next assignment of III Corps and placed 6 ID under the Corps. Use of the Division, however, was subject to the approval of Army HQ, which also wanted to be told the intended plan of attack. FML Krautwald responded on the same

day: "For the next action, I plan to first occupy the Mt Kempel-Mt Meata ridge with LW IR # 26 while 22 LW ID occupies the plain by Cra. Meta. Then this bridgehead position will be enlarged to Heights # 1451, Mt Dorole and Mt Zebio; the force guarding the left wing will accordingly be pushed forward to the line Cm. Dodici-Mt Zingarella-Mt Zebio." The Corps commander wanted to move 6 ID and a brigade of 28 ID into "the sector thus occupied and secured", while the northern edge of the lower Val d'Assa was held by the second brigade of 28 ID. This group of forces would carry out the attack east of the Assa valley toward Asiago. FML Krautwald further remarked, "the line between the steep edge of the Val Sugana to Mt Zebio is 8 km long and therefore requires more troops than the three battalions of LW IR # 26. Since the troops of the Corps have very little mountain equipment, it will be very difficult to supply large units in such an impassable area. Therefore I wish you to consider whether occupation of this line should be entrusted to a mountain brigade."

Without taking a position on this report, during May 23 the HQ of 3rd Army forwarded instructions which they had received from Army Group HQ, stating that it was "of the greatest importance that III Corps determine as soon as possible whether we should count on serious resistance south of the Assa valley (on the line Punta Corbin-Asiago)." FML Krautwald was also informed of a report from 11th Army that XX Corps had been ordered to advance through Pedescala to try to secure the Cm. Arde-Punta Corbin area; this would help III Corps cross the Va d'Assa from the vicinity of Castelletto. III Corps responded that the enemy was certainly occupying the line Mt Rasta-Camporovere-Canove-Stella and working feverishly on their positions between the barrier in the Val d'Assa and Mt Interotto. They had blown up the bridge at Roana as well as parts of the road north of Rotzo. Following the suggestion of his superiors, in the evening of the 23rd FML Krautwald instructed 22 LW ID to take possession of the Mt Meata-Cra. Meata area and to make sure that Kempel Ridge was secure. He allowed 28 ID, on the other hand, to make their own decisions, while noting that it was very important to break into the new enemy position before the Italians had time to strengthen it with troops, artillery and technical improvements. Implementation of the operation was dependent upon the support of the heavy artillery, and would have to be left to the initiative of the divisional commanders. In any event, it wouldn't start until the situation on Mt Kempel, the Bocchetta di Portule and the Cra. Meata was clarified. Advanced troops from 28 ID were seeking a crossing point on the edge of the Assa Ravine.

New successes east of the Assa Ravine

The most serious obstacle to continuing the offensive was that most of the Corps' artillery and all of the supply services of 28 ID would have to use the short stretch of recently-repaired road between Vezzena and Osteria del Termine and the steep route which ran south from the latter point. Despite all efforts, as of 24 May it had been impossible to bring a sufficient number of batteries forward to deploy in the sector Mt Verena-Cm. Civello-Mt Erio. A Bersaglieri battalion came up during the day through the Val d'Assa to Roana, but was cut up by FJB # 11 and driven back. This may have warned 28 ID to expect further small-scale operations from the direction of Asiago. 18 Inf Bde of 22 LW ID, which had been given Mt Meata and the Cra. Meata as objectives, waited in vain for the artillery; from the Osteria del Gherte, where they were assembled, they would have to climb a steep, forested mountain through which there was no path. On the other hand, 43 LW Inf Bde made noticeable progress on 24 May thanks to the successes they'd won the day before. In astonishingly quick time the 3rd Cannon Battery of Mtn AR 9 and the 4th of Mtn AR 4 advanced from the Cra. Lenzola to the Bocchetta. Then Col. Ellison with the Brigade's reserves (I and III Battalions of LW IR # 3) climbed the path, which led in some area through slush and melting snow. Lt Col. Schneeweiss' group (II/LW IR # 3 and I/LW IR # 26) pushed so far to the east that they occupied Cm. di Campoverde (2127 m) and Mt Pallone (2159 m). Here they fought parts of the Lombardia Brigade (from the Italian 28 ID) and threw them back on the 25th.

Three detachments operating out of the Sugana valley once again had a great impact on the enemy. They assembled on 23 May in the Mga. Lanzolla, and on the 24th they suddenly appeared on the border ridge at the Porta Portule and on the Cm. Dodici. Two companies from Battalion I/85 climbed the Cm. Dieci and Cm. Maora on the 25th. The Italians became confused and fled, losing their link to the Sugana valley. On the 24th, Lt Col. Passy led Battalions III/LW IR 26 and I/LW IR 3 against the Aja dell'Orsara and the Mga. Pusterle; II Battalion of LW IR 26, maintaining the connection to Lt Col. Schneeweiss's group, climbed Mt Colombarone. About three Italian battalions, the remnants of the Alessandria Brigade, were stationed on Mt Cucco, reinforced by Alpini who apparently had been sent here to recover the Bocchetta. In the evening they made a half-hearted advance toward the Mga. Portule, but were driven back due in no small measure to active intervention by the two mountain batteries mentioned above.

To assist the attack of 18 Inf Bde, now to be carried out on 25

May, GM Kochanowski sent Col. Ellison another battalion; it would be used to increase his success by taking Mt Meata on the northern flank. This unit, the II Battalion of the Bohemian IR # 11, left Baitle late in the evening; during a stormy night they climbed the Bocchetta through the Köbele ravine, an almost unbelievable achievement. Despite their exhaustion, they then advanced in friendly rivalry with two Landwehr battalions against Mt Cucco (1826 m), from which the Italians had been planning to launch a potentially dangerous assault on the Mga. Portule at dawn. After a sharp action in which over 500 Italians were taken prisoner, Col. Heinrich Tenner, who led the group, reached Mt Cucco and the ridges extending south of the Cm. dell'Arsenale. Farther north Lt Col. Passy pushed ahead with two and a half Landwehr battalions. Another detachment of Ellison's troops advanced according to plan over the Aja dell'Orsara toward Mt Meata. Meanwhile, IR # 73 had been held in readiness north of the Gips brook on the Assa valley road. When day broke, they climbed the steep and trackless slope to the Cra. Meata and the mountain ridge of the same name; the artillery, which was finally present in sufficient quantity, held down and damaged the enemy. Several hours later Col. Trampus, the regimental commander, reported that the entire position had been captured; 1800 prisoners had also been taken, along with four guns and three machine guns.²⁵²

In the evening of the 25th GM Kochanowski justifiably expressed his wonderment at the achievements of his troops. In particular the Styrians of the Landwehr Brigade, still advancing after their difficult and bloody breakthrough battle, had completed an achievement without parallel; admirably exploiting their fortunate lunge to Mt Kempel, they had driven through the narrow gate at Portule, captured the next mountain ridge (Cm. dell'Arsenale) while also helping 18 Inf Bde to win Mt Meata. They had overcome all difficulties imposed by the difficult mountain terrain.

Thus the position at the edge of the heights, of great importance for the Italian defense of the Asiago basin, had been lost. The troops of the Italian 28 ID (Lombardia Brigade) who'd been brought up in haste to recover the high ground arrived too late; the same fate befell some Bersaglieri, who lost their way in the broken, stony terrain.

FML Krautwald reported in the evening of the 25th that he would

252"Der Heimat Söhne im Weltkrieg - Der Egerländer" (January, February and March issues of 1932).

have to interrupt the offensive of 22 LW ID on the 26th due to the great exhaustion of the troops; after re-grouping, the assault would resume on the 28th. The position of the k.u.k. 28 ID north of the lower Assa Ravine was unaltered. Scouts had determined that the enemy was defending a line south of the Ravine from Punta Corbin through Conca and Cavrari to Canove, and then to Camporovere; however, it seemed to be lightly garrisoned. If possible, the k.u.k. 28 ID planned to gain the southern slope of the Ravine at Roana on the 26th. Meanwhile the three battalions from 2 Mtn Bde (II/70, III/76, and BH FJB 8) had climbed to Porta di Manazzo in the evening of the 25th. On the 26th they were supposed to move through the Bocchetta di Portule to the left wing of 22 LW ID. It was proving very difficult to get 6 ID, which III Corps HQ wished to deploy on the left, through the fully packed road. 12 Inf Bde of this Division would take the way south of Vezzena through the C. Le Mandrielle to Osteria del Ghertele on the 26th.

c. Developments in the Sugana valley, 20-26 May

North of III Corps, the advance of XVII Corps after 20 May was also greater than had been anticipated. Without having suffered a serious defeat, the Italians in the Sugana valley pulled back from sector to sector. Since neither HQ of 3rd Army nor of XVII Corps intended to make a major advance in this valley, the battalions of GM Wossala's group followed the enemy only step-by-step. On the 21st they occupied the summit of the Armenterra Ridge. On the same day the enemy also evacuated their positions opposite 18 ID north of the Brenta. Roncegno was occupied. It seemed that the Italians would resume their resistance in the positions they had been preparing for months on the line Salubio-S Pietro-Borgo-S Giorgio. However, on the 22nd pursuing Aus-Hung. detachments entered Borgo. On the next day, after crossing the Maso brook at several points, our troops reached the towns of Agnedo and Strigno; that night some patrols even reached the area of Ospedaletto. A battle group, consisting of Battalions II/101 and III/8 (from 2 Mtn Bde) plus several Tyrolean raiding detachments, thrust over the Cadinjoch into the Clamento valley; other patrols from 90 ID climbed from the Fassaner Alps into the upper Maso valley.

These developments in the Sugana valley led Army Group HQ in the evening of the 23rd to order GO Kövess: "One division will be sufficient for the advance through the Val Sugana, where it is desirable that we can soon win the area around Pieve Tesino; from there mobile heavy batteries can bombard the group of works at Primolano." 3rd Army HQ passed this assignment on to GdI Kritek. To carry it out he would use 18 ID and 181 Inf Bde; after the Civaron was captured, 8 Mtn Bde would pull back into reserve. Three battalions from 2 Mtn Bde were already marching from Cavalese to Pergine, where they arrived on the 24th; they would move over Mt Rover to join III Corps on the 25th.

On the 24th, the 18 ID pushed enemy units back at the foot of the mountains east of Agnedo and Spera. The Upper Austrian Volunteer Rifles had a sharp fight with Alpini and Finance troops at Spera; at one point the Italians utilized an illegal ruse when they waved white flags and then fired on the Rifles, causing substantial casualties. However, the enemy were finally driven back. 1 Mtn Bde fought a lively action on the 25th with enemy groups who had thrust out of their fortifications at Agnedo. Therefore it was clear that the Italians had halted their retreat

and intended to offer resistance in the position of Ospedaletto.²⁵³

Meanwhile on the 24th, GM Wossala had assembled three battalions and a mountain battery on the line stretching from Olle south to the rocky ridge of the Cm. Dieci, plus two battalions northeast of Olle. He had entrusted the operation against the Civaron to Col. Zechbauer. The troops could only approach the enemy slowly on the steep, forested mountain slopes. The attackers were within rifle range of the Italians in the night of 24-25 May. In the first hours of the new day they recognized that the enemy had pulled back to a second and higher position crowned by the summit of the Civaron. Once more the infantry toiled ahead while the artillery pinned down the enemy. When the assault began on the afternoon of the 25th, the Italians offered desperate resistance. In a brilliantly-led operation Battalion III/35 reached the enemy rear and on the morning of the 26th the Civaron was conquered. Four heavy and two light guns fell into the hands of the brave Bohemian Battalion. The Italians had suffered substantial casualties, including several hundred prisoners.

The quickly-changing situation of the last few days caused Army Group HQ to have new ideas. They wired GO Kövess that now "the advance of some troops in the Cimon Rava and Cm. d'Asta area is of little importance." Also winning the Castel Tesino sector wasn't as important as the possibility that the assault on the fortified area from Primolano to Asiago could be carried out as soon as possible. "If we lessen our pressure in the Sugana valley it will even have an advantage, since our offensive on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau against the Brenta valley will make it difficult for the Italians to retreat out of the Sugana valley." Therefore it was ordered that the two battalions of 2 Mtn Bde still fighting in the Calamento valley (III/8 and II/101) should be sent to the Sieben Gemeinde plateau, along with 8 Mtn Bde. After these orders were transmitted through Army HQ, the XVII Corps pulled 8 Mtn Bde back into the upper Sella and canceled the recent plans of 18 ID for an attack north of the Brenta. In future the activity of XVII Corps would be restricted to pinning down the enemy with fire fights and minor operations.

6. Frictions delay 11th Army

²⁵³As noted earlier, the Opsedaletto position had been favored by Cadorna.

a. Re-grouping on the Army's right wing, 20-25 May

In the morning report of 21 May, the HQ of 11th Army could report as follows about the events on their right wing: "With wondrous persistence the 57 and 59 ID have pushed the enemy back somewhat and with great keenness have carried out individual actions which inflicted heavy casualties upon them." Even more than at the start of the battle, the offensive of VIII Corps had developed into a series of individual fights. In the Adige valley parts of 11 Mtn Bde had taken the town of Marco and worked their way onto the western slopes of the Zugna Torta. On the Zugna Ridge, 6 Mtn Bde stormed the strong point at Heights # 1515 in the late evening of the 20th, while they reached the towns of Mattassone, Valmorbia and Anghebeni in the Vallarsa. On the mountain complex of the Col santo detachments of 9, 18 and 10 Mtn Bdes had reached the line Mga. Cosmagon-Mga. Buse, on their way toward the Pasubio. 12 Mtn Bde had captured the Borcola Pass and the adjacent heights.

A fateful delay

This good progress caused expectations that the Pasubio would soon be taken. However, unfortunate developments in adjusting the chain of command prevented us from occupying this important bastion while the time was ripe. Army HQ had ordered on 18 May that immediately after the capture of the Coni Zugna the 48 ID should come under the command of XXI Corps. Furthermore, on the Zugna Ridge the 6 Mtn Bde of 57 ID would be relieved by 12 Mtn Bde of 48 ID. Meanwhile, however, VIII Corps had sent 12 Mtn Bde to Borcola Pass and placed it under 59 ID on 18 May. To restore 12th Bde to 48 ID, Army HQ ordered on the 20th, when the Borcola Pass was captured, that it should be sent back to Rovereto. Corps HQ carried out this order without reflecting that it could have used the unit to maintain its left wing on the Borcola Pass per the instructions of 11th Army HQ on 19 May. Instead the Corps planned to relieve 12 Mtn Bde with 18 Mtn Bde. The latter had climbed the Col santo and together with the main body of 10 Mtn Bde and two battalions from 9 Bde it was thrusting toward the Pasubio. The withdrawal of 18 Mtn Bde, which GM Skvor assembled by the shelter on Col santo, interrupted the progress of the operation. Moreover the Bde's troops, who had just finished climbing the heights, now had to descend 1300 meters through Mga. Sarta into the Terragnolo valley at Zoreri, and then once more march up the mountain road to the Borcola Pass. This exhausting movement delayed the planned reliefs. Valuable time was lost during this re-grouping.

Furthermore, Army HQ on the 20th had ordered FML Freih. von Lütgendorf, commanding XXI Corps, to have the L-Sch Div advance as far into the Vallarsa through Zoreri as permitted by the course of the fighting on the Coni Zugna. 48 ID would come under XXI Corps already on the 22nd, but 6 Mtn Bde on the Zugna would remain under VIII Corps.

FML Lütgendorf intended that after marching in the night of 19-20 May the first Landes-Schützen would reach Foppiano in the following night. However, due to a mix-up in transmitting the orders the Division didn't arrive in Rovereto until early on the 21st. Due to a new misunderstanding, during the day they sent one brigade along the winding road through Albaredo behind 6 Mtn Bde, where it came under enemy artillery fire. The second brigade didn't set out until evening, when its leading troops reached Mattassone. While these developments and delays were crossing up the plans of XXI Corps HQ, the VIII Corps was finding it difficult to deploy the bulk of their artillery in new positions.

The advance is stalled

On the 21st the commander of 6 Mtn Bde, Col. von Hellebronth, reported that the enemy was stationed 1 km north of the Coni Zugna in a new and well-built strong point, on top of a vertical wall of granite many meters tall. A frontal assault was impossible, and envelopment was precluded by the steepness of the mountain slopes. HQ of 57 ID therefore wished to take a detour through the Vallarsa. A battalion of 6 Mtn Bde would try to climb through S Anna toward the Buole Pass in case detachments of the L-Sch Div were unable to carry out this maneuver. FML Goiginger's intentions were revealed by VIII Corps HQ to XXI Corps, which in turn now ordered the L-Sch Div to attack from Mattassone at 4:00 AM on 22 May regardless of the course of the fighting around the Coni Zugna. The Landes-Schützen were to secure the Camposilvano area, from where they should be ready to attack the Campogrosso Pass. A column on the heights, led by the commander of 98 L-Sch Bde (Col. Sloninka) would advance on the ridge running from C. di Mezzana through C. Levante to C. Posta as soon as the summit of the Coni Zugna was captured. Col. Sloninka would first "take the ridge south of the Coni Zugna up to about Salvata (Point # 1707); thus he could quickly seize the Coni Zugna in the enemy's rear or at least paralyze the Italians' lines of communication."

As the Landes-Schützen advanced toward Camposilvano, the leading

unit (L-Sch Regt II) reached the town of Bruni in the evening of the 22nd; they drove several enemy companies from Heights # 820. However, the Regiment was halted in front of a strongly-built position at Zendri. During the 23rd, one L-Sch battalion climbed toward the Buole Pass, but couldn't conquer the steep slope. Also unsuccessful was the group led by Col. Sloninka, which was opposed by battalions of the Sicilia Brigade which had arrived by train at Ala on the 19th and which the Italians had sent to reinforce the garrison on the chain of hills. Because of these reinforcements and because the artillery support was insufficient, the planned attack toward Zendri by a group led by GM von Eckhardt (commanding 88 L-Sch Bde) had to be postponed. On the 24th it became clear that the L-Sch Div wouldn't be able to break out of the *cul de sac* it had entered until they had taken the mountain wall from Coni Zugna to C. di Mezzana to the west. Their main body turned toward this obstacle, while the group in the valley in front of Zendri took up the task of guarding the flank. However, the attack on the 25th was insufficiently prepared and degenerated into a series of isolated actions on the rugged and forest-covered mountain slopes. Despite heroic deeds by the individual battle groups, the attackers didn't reach their goals. The gallant Landes-Schützen suffered considerable casualties. Also the 48 ID, which since 22 May had been placed under XXI Corps, couldn't advance. On 25 May the 48th prepared to go over to the defensive, since spies reported that the Italians had thrown strong forces into the Adige valley and were planning a major counterattack. In reality they had only moved several battalions from the western bank of the Adige to the eastern bank. 6 Mtn Bde on the Zugna Ridge attacked in the afternoon of the 25th. The assault detachments suffered heavy losses and returned to their starting points.

The three brigades which VIII Corps had deployed between the Leno di Vallarsa and the Posina valley also made little progress. Battalions III/49 and IV/84, which made up the Vallarsa group of 9 Mtn Bde, came near to Chiesa on the 24th, and one company climbed the summit of Point # 1807. On the other side, the Verona Brigade of 44 ID had occupied the Mt Dietro il gasta ridge and the town of Chiesa on the 22nd. An attack was started against the Pasubio on the 23rd but was called off because rain made it difficult for the artillery to operate and because snow which still lay in the basins formed an insuperable barrier to the infantry. To simplify the chain of command, on the 25th FZM Scheuchenstuel ordered that GM Edler von Hrozny, the commander of 9 Mtn Bde, should take over all units in front of the Pasubio without regard to whether they belonged to 57 or 59 ID. As soon as the condition of the snow permitted, Hrozny was supposed to

resume the offensive. 18 Mtn Bde had come up against very difficult terrain when they tried to advance from the Borcola Pass. Their first objective was to push over the Costa di Borcola, then through Griso; if they could find a way to climb the rocky eastern slopes of the Pasubio they could strike the defenders of this mountain in the flank and rear. Because of the new dispositions of Corps HQ, on the 25th the Brigade moved in the upper Posina valley to Lissa and Bettale, where they prepared to attack Heights # 1131 and Colle di Xomo, which were the two peaks detached from the Pasubio on its eastern side.

b. Activities of XX Corps, 20-26 May

Late in the evening of 19 May, the XX Corps ordered the divisions to close ranks in the areas they occupied. Then the forward troops of 8 ID should reach Mt Majo, the steep slopes west and north of Laghi, the C. dei Laghi and Mt Seluggio; those of 3 ID should reach the group of houses at C. Boscati and Campana on the Tonezza plateau. A line running through these locations was to be hastily fortified. It would serve as the "main line of resistance" to cover the deployment of the heavy artillery. Meanwhile the path for pack-animals between Osteria Fiorenti and Passo della Vena as well as the destroyed road in the Campoluzzo valley were to be made usable.

Movement of the Corps' advance guards

In this order, FML Archduke Karl Franz Joseph was passing on all the instructions which he'd received from 11th Army early on 19 May. Meanwhile Army Group HQ was drawing conclusions from the events of the preceding twenty four hours; in the evening of 19 May they wired 11th Army HQ:

"The visible reduction of systematic resistance opposite XX Corps, that perhaps soon will appear in other sectors of the enemy's battle lines, offers an opportunity to inflict heavy damage on the enemy with well-led pursuing detachments. Even small groups led with the right mixture of boldness and foresight can advance quickly by the shortest route in the valleys. For example they might reach the Asiago area in the immediate future or appear in the rear of the Borcola Pass; just their presence can confuse the enemy and damage their plans for resistance. Army Group HQ awaits clear-sighted exploitation of this and similar situations and trusts in the enterprising spirit of our brave troops."

Scouts from 8 ID thrust ahead out of the latest position to be occupied, and toward the enemy. The HQ of 1st Italian Army had thrown a group of several Alpini battalions against XX Corps. Together with the remnants of 34 and 9 ID they formed a shield which extended from the C. dei Laghi over the southern slope of Mt Toraro to the sources of the Rio Freddo. On the 20th FML Fabini was already preparing to mop up this area. Although the artillery couldn't operate on this day because fog covered the enemy, Kaiser Jaeger from the 1st and 3rd Regiments struck the enemy in the evening and drove them into the valley, in some places after bitter hand-to-hand combat.²⁵⁴ Then during the next two days the Austrians occupied Mt Majo and the town of Laghi, where large magazines were burning, as well as Mt Seluggio and Mt Tormeno. Also the heights directly north of Posina and Fusine were found "free of the enemy" on the 22nd, and occupied on the following day.

Meanwhile under 3 ID half a battalion moved forward in stages to Tonezza; they scouted toward Mt Cimone, because it was believed that strong fortifications probably existed in this area as part of a complex which included the works already identified at Punta Corbin, Casa Ratti, Cornolo and Mt Aralta. FML Horsetzky ordered at noon on the 22nd that the plateau south of Tonezza should be occupied by two battalions. Because of enemy artillery fire from the Punta Corbin, this wouldn't happen until after darkness fell. Then, at 3:00 PM a patrol reported that they had reached Mt Cimone and seen that Arsiero appeared to be deserted. This gladly-received but almost unbelievable report was hastily wired to Army Group HQ. The news, plus the favorable development of the general situation, especially of III Corps, caused Army Group to "emphatically allude" to their orders of the 19th "regarding use of pursuit detachments everywhere." Once again they stressed: "Although a systematic advance may be necessary to deploy and attack with large corps, such a method is unsuitable to the activity of pursuing detachments." It was still unclear where the enemy would offer new resistance in front of XX Corps. The fact that patrols had reached Barcarola and Mt Cimone without fighting made "it seem doubtful that the permanent works of Punta Corbin, Casa Ratti and Cornolo are still occupied." This must be determined as quickly as possible "to give the Army commander timely information to prepare further plans." Army Group HQ hoped "that this new appeal to the initiative of the detachments sent ahead of our front will quickly lead to energetic exploitation of a very favorable situation."

254Schemfil, "Das k.u.k. 3. Regiment der Tiroler Kaiserjäger im Weltkrieg 1914-1918" (Bregenz, 1926), pp. 362 ff.

11 Army HQ brought this exhortation to the attention of the Corps' commander late in the evening of the 22nd and at the same time ordered that Mt Cimone should be occupied by at least one battalion and if possible also with a mountain battery. XX Corps moreover should seek to move through Pedescala to secure the area Cm. Arde-Punta Corbin; this would make it easier for III Corps to cross the Val d'Assa from the vicinity of Castelletto. Also they could support the advance of VIII Corps toward Posina by taking Bettale.

Arsiero is the next objective

Early on 23 May, FML Archduke Karl Franz Joseph himself came to the Passo della Vena. Shortly after his arrival to meet with GM Richard Müller, the latter learned that the first battalion to advance (III/14) had collided with a strong enemy force just in front of the line between Points # 1068 and 1136. This contradicted the report from the patrol on Mt Cimone that the Italians had abandoned the area. Shrapnel and shells exploded over the Tonezza plateau; they came from enemy batteries stationed on the opposite side of the Astico valley. In his report to Army HQ, the Corps commander expressed his opinion that Italian units had probably arrived by rail at Arsiero on the 22nd and during the course of the evening driven our patrol back from Mt Cimone before occupying the line mentioned above.²⁵⁵ Now there was no alternative to making an attack with substantial artillery support. XX Corps intended to carry it out on the 24th. GO Dankl not only concurred with this plan, but stated that the attack "should be continued with powerful force toward Arsiero." Already on the morning of the 23rd he had ordered that the heights directly north of Posina, Fusine and Castana should be taken from the enemy and strongly occupied, and that reconnaissance should be carried out vigorously on the Priafora Ridge. In the afternoon he added instructions that the scouts should move forward as far as possible toward Mt Aralta.

Thus GO Dankl had issued a series of instructions which reinforced the orders of the 19th and urged XX Corps to advance. Because of the heavy defeat which the Italians had suffered at the hands of III Corps, Army Group HQ was demanding that 11th

255In a study submitted to the military archives, GdI Horsetzky opines that the patrol in question didn't actually reach Mt Cimone, but rather a height west of Barcarola; then they mistook the town of Barcola for Arsiero. Thus their report was erroneous.

Army "should without delay advance with its left wing in the indicated direction, principally toward Thiene, in order to reach the outlets from the mountains as soon as possible." The arrival of all of the heavy artillery shouldn't be awaited, because it wasn't certain that so many batteries would be needed to carry out the mission. Several heavy batteries were to be quickly moved ahead into the Astico valley; from there they could fire toward Punta Corbin and Casa Ratti if necessary. Actually these batteries were stationed near Arsiero so they could strike Cornolo and Mt Rione from behind. At the same time XX Corps was moving its infantry toward the works on the latter point. The enemy's stubborn resistance on the Coni Zugna and the Pasubio shouldn't hold up XX Corps.

In a report to Bozen in the evening of the 23rd, 11th Army HQ referred to the dispositions they had already initiated; once again they stated that they had "absolutely no intention of waiting for all the artillery." They themselves recognized the importance of advancing quickly; they wanted Army Group HQ to know, however, that there were no fully operational lines of communication running southeast from the plateau of Folgaria, and that they were working day and night with all their strength to restore these roads as well as to bring the artillery forward. 11th Army HQ had already ordered on the 20th that heavy mortars should be sent into the Astico valley, but the thorough destruction of the bridges at Lastebasse and Posta had prevented this until the 23rd. "Despite maximum pressure by Army HQ and despite our emphasis on the importance of the most rapid advance possible", however, they couldn't "be responsible for committing the infantry without substantial support from the batteries which we are moving forward with great exertion."

HQ of 3 ID had entrusted the conquest of Mt Cimone to GM Richard Müller. Three battalions apiece from IR # 14 and # 50 were at his disposal. Reconnaissance of the enemy position in the thick forest lasted longer than was expected. Fog further hampered visibility, so that the numerous batteries weren't fully effective until the 24th. The operation was postponed until the 25th. Preparations left nothing to be desired, but the approach march wasn't easy. "Through bushes and thickets we came up to a position which had been constructed as high as a garden wall out of sandbags and stones; it was protected from a direct assault by a thick zone of barbed wire."²⁵⁶ The combat was man-to-man. In the evening both of the Alpini battalions who'd gallantly defended the mountain were overcome. Five guns, four machine

256"IR # 14, Ein Buch der Erinnerungen", p. 230

guns and several hundred prisoners fell into the hands of the victors. However, the way into the valley was still not open. Small enemy groups were holding out on Mt Caviojo, so there was fighting around this height on the next day. Patrols finally reached Arsiero on the 27th.

With these actions the offensive out of south Tyrol, after a short pause enforced by bad weather, entered a second phase. Meanwhile we will provide an account of events which were taking place on the Isonzo, in Carinthia, and on the stationary parts of the front in Tyrol.

7. Events on the southwest front - away from 3rd and 11th Armies - from 15 May to 10 June

At the time when the k.u.k. units in south Tyrol were attacking, a minimum number of troops were left on what had hitherto been the primary front on the Isonzo, as well as in the mountains along the border of Carinthia. They were supposed to tie down the opposing enemy forces, whose strength was practically undiminished. Deceptive measures of various types had been envisioned.

On the Isonzo

In mid-May the organization of the 5th k.u.k. Army was:

- . XV Corps (Sector I) - 50 ID (15 & 3 Mtn Bdes), 1 ID (22 Lst Mtn & 7 Mtn Bdes)
- . XVI Corps (Sector II) - 62 ID (205 & 209 Lst Inf Bdes), 58 ID (21 Lst Inf, 4 Mtn & 5 Mtn Bdes)
- . VII Corps (Sector III) - 20 Hon ID (81 & 39 Bdes), 17 ID (33 & 34 Bdes), 106 Lst ID (110, 111 & 187 Lst Inf Bdes); 24 Lst Mtn Bde
- . Sector IV (four coast defense detachments plus Trieste garrison)
- . 9 ID (17 & 60 Bdes) in Army reserve

On 14 May there was an artillery bombardment along the entire front; it was to be followed in the next night by infantry thrusts in various sectors. At daybreak the major railroad installations in Venetia and all of the known Italian command centers were assaulted by strong air forces. Meanwhile the artillery carried out a powerful bombardment by several batteries. It was hoped that these measures, along with developing combat activity in certain sectors, would make it

believable that a serious attack was starting on the Isonzo.

Meanwhile in the first weeks of May the Italians had been tenaciously building positions near our front using all means of "siege warfare"; these would be jumping-off points for a planned general offensive against 5th Army.²⁵⁷ On the Karst plateau in particular this led to prolonged fighting around the position which the k.u.k. 17 ID had just captured by exploding mines south of San Martino. Night after night the enemy tried with stubborn thrusts to recover the part of our battle positions that had been moved forward into the area where craters had been left by the mines. To finally settle the situation in this sector the divisional commander FML Edl. von Gelb proposed to occupy the source of the continuing threats, the Italian trenches lying on both sides of the crater position. The operation would be carried out as part of the planned series of diversionary measures.

On the extreme southern wing of the k.u.k. VII Corps there were also favorable conditions for a meaningful advance as part of the operations to pin down enemy units. For a long time a plan existed for moving forward the southern wing of 5th Army, which was bent back sharply from Mt Cosich (Height # 113) through Heights # 121 toward San Giovanni and Duino when the opportunity arose. Now it seemed that his plan could be implemented and a shorter line established from Mt Cosich through the La Rocca Heights (north of Monfalcone) and the Adria Works to Porto Rosega.

The Aus-Hung. artillery opened fire between the Krn and the sea on 14 May. After a brief bombardment of the target area and the simultaneous explosion of some mines that had been dug under the enemy position, at 9:00 PM troops from 17 ID stormed the Italian trenches next to the original crater along a front of 300 meters. They repulsed counterattacks which were immediately launched by various regiments. The attackers took prisoners from the 21 and 22 Italian ID.

Around the same hour, a night-time surprise raid was supposed to capture the Adria Works on the southern wing of VII Corps (in the sector of 106 Lst ID). The operation was delayed, however, by the late arrival of naval air planes who were supposed to cooperate, and couldn't break through. Nevertheless, the attacking troops from 187 Lst Inf Bde did take and hold an

257Italian Official History, Vol. III, Text, pp. 215 ff.

advanced enemy position directly in front of the installation.²⁵⁸

Late in the afternoon of 15 May, a powerful attack was launched from the trenches on Heights # 121 by the steady soldiers of the Eger Lst IR 6 plus parts of k.k. Lst Inf Bn 152, supported by the artillery which was as usual well handled. Their objective was the Italian positions on the La Rocca Ridge north of Monfalcone. After a short but bitter melee they threw the enemy out of the first line and captured more than 160 men from three cavalry regiments. The attack was led by the commander of 111 Lst Inf Bde, Col. Göttlicher; he intended to exploit his success on the next day by taking the second Italian line. However, his plan failed because of the exhaustion of the troops (who were mostly older men), the ineffectiveness of a large number of guns which had been damaged in the last few days, and the substantial casualties which the 106 Lst ID had already suffered.²⁵⁹ The Italians immediately reinforced their weakened position at Monfalcone with several Bersaglieri battalions, although their attempts to recover the lost parts of the position were at first unsuccessful.

A smaller operation was initiated at the same time by troops of 20 Hon ID on the northern slope of Mt S Michele; it didn't break through. On the other hand, on the same day (the 15th) the 17 ID without difficulty defeated several Italian counterattacks on the positions which we had won west of S Martino.

In conjunction with the diversionary thrusts on the Karst front in the night of 15-16 May, which in general were very effective, strong squadrons of our naval and Army planes bombed the most important military equipment works and railroad junctions in Venetia. After several air battles they achieved considerable success at many points.

On the upper Isonzo, the Italian sap positions were penetrated on 14 May at Tolmein and on the 15th along the entire front of 50 ID between Krn and the Isonzo; the storm troops destroyed installations and returned to their own lines with prisoners. Farther south, half a battalion of 1 ID struck two strong points of the 7 and 13 Italian ID on the eastern slope of Kolovrat Ridge

258The units were Inf Bn I/27, which had come temporarily from Tyrol to the Isonzo as a deception measure, and the k.k. Lst Inf Bn 30.

259The 10 battalions engaged in the fighting, in which 106 Lst ID had been reinforced by 187 Lst Inf Bde, had a total loss of 1300 men on 14 and 15 May.

by surprise and destroyed them. The deception measures of XVI Corps were restricted to smaller patrol actions. Here, however, the 21 Lst Inf Bde was able to break into the Italian trenches south of Mt Sabotino in the evening of 15 May despite the watchfulness of the enemy and their powerful counter-measures.

Thus the operations of 5th Army on the Isonzo to confuse and tie down the enemy came to an end.²⁶⁰

Other sectors of the front

As on the Isonzo, there were diversionary thrusts, increased artillery activity, and attempts to deceive the enemy along the Carinthian front. Rain and thick fog delayed the opening; finally some lively artillery actions and skirmishes began at noon on the 15th. They never developed into major operations.

While the attention of both sides was tensely focused in the following weeks on the fighting between the Adige and Brenta, the extremely weak k.u.k. armies on the Isonzo and on the Carinthian border awaited the outcome as they had been instructed. Fighting didn't flare up again until the second week of June.

Deception measures were also undertaken in the defensive sectors of Tyrol after 15 May. Here the main objective was to conceal the direction and extension of the main assault from the enemy.

In the Riva sector there were violent fire fights and small-scale infantry thrusts. Many storm troops attacked out of the Fassaner Alps and harassed the enemy so effectively that Italian reinforcements had to be brought up.

By a strange twist of fate, at the very moment when the defenders of the Dolomites were increasing their artillery activity, the Italians were prepared to renew the assaults they had broken off at the end of April. Their objective was Mt Sief, west of the

²⁶⁰TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - Although the original text doesn't analyze the impact of these measures on the Italians, it is clear from material in Beilage 17 that the operation certainly didn't "tie down" enemy units. After 16 May the Italians pulled the following units from the Isonzo front: 4, 13, 23, 25, 29 and 33 ID, plus the 2 Cav Div and one brigade apiece from 12 and 24 ID. This is no reflection on the greatly-outnumbered troops of the k.u.k. 5th Army, but the numerical disparity simply made it unlikely that the Italians could feel seriously threatened by any attacks that were made.

Col di Lana. The gallant garrison was made up (alternately) of the Tyrol Lst Inf Bn 165 and the Bosniaks of V Battalion/BH IR 2; they held on even though extremely heavy artillery fire damaged the defensive installations. The Italians renewed their attacks day after day until they took the strong point on the mountain ridge on the 21st. This small success was purchased with heavy casualties.

The strong point had already fulfilled its mission; meanwhile the Austrians had completed a position on Mt Sief in which they were able to repulse all the enemy assaults in the days which followed. The Italians concentrated their superior artillery against the positions from the Col di Rode to the Settsass and repeated these attacks without regard to the heavy casualties they were suffering. The fighting reached its high point on the 27th. On this day an entire regiment advanced against the position on the slope of Mt Sief and broke into the defenders' trenches; however, after a furious melee they were thrown back. A simultaneous attack against the Col di Rode and the Sief Ridge collapsed under barrage fire. From this time forward the enemy turned their attention to other parts of the Dolomite front.²⁶¹

On Tyrol's western front there were only some small actions in the upper Val Genova, which led to a minor adjustment in the positions which had been occupied in April. Some minor fighting also flared up in the Ortler area. Because of the offensive from south Tyrol the Italians pulled several Alpini battalions away from the western Tyrolean front, which thereafter again became quiet.

C. The Battle of Asiago and Arsiero, 27 May-16 June

1. Prospects for the continued offensive

When Army Group HQ divided the attacking forces on 17 May, they designated the Astico as the dividing line between the two armies. To carry out the task of thrusting to Thiene-Bassano, they ordered 11th Army "to advance on Thiene" and simultaneously to secure the Army Group's right flank, while 3rd Army started by having III Corps take the Asiago area.

On the 19th, GO Dankl reported to Archduke Eugene on how he intended to carry out his assignment. It so happened that his

²⁶¹Pengov, pp. 450 ff.

report arrived at Bozen at the time when the enemy in front of XX Corps was collapsing. Under the impression of this event, Army Group HQ found Dankl's plan too "systematic", but didn't suggest any basic alteration. In the evening of the 22nd, while 3rd Army was making rapid progress and news arrived that the left wing of 11th Army had occupied Barcarola in the Astico valley and Mt Cimone without fighting, Army Group HQ told both Army commanders that they should carry out vigorous reconnaissance to lay the groundwork for their next operations. Above all, they should determine whether the works of Casa Ratti and Punta Corbin, which lay in front of the inner wings of our Armies, were still occupied by the enemy. HQ of 3rd Army HQ was supposed to clarify whether the Asiago area could be secured without a major fight, and then to move I Corps forward over the Lavarone plateau; thus two divisions would be able to advance as the Army's right wing column in the Astico valley.

On the 23rd, Army Group HQ wired the high command that the successes of the last few days and the enemy's heavy casualties were cause for hope that the attackers would be able to thrust into the plains with the units already available. However, they asked that the additional division they had been promised should be sent as soon as possible, and that yet another one should follow. Thereupon the high command ordered 9 ID to be sent from the Isonzo to Tyrol.

The further objectives of Army Group HQ

In the evening of the 23rd, Army Group HQ issued general guidelines for continuing the offensive. They ordered 3rd Army to win the Asiago area and then to carry on the attack up to the line Bassano-Breganze; the task of 11th Army, as hitherto, was to "thrust to Thiene." The new border between the two Armies was a line which started at the bridge over the Astico at Pedesala, ran through Campiello to Mt Faraoro, and then to Calvene and on to the bridge over the Astico west of Breganze. By this very significant alteration of the border, Army Group HQ hoped to hold together the inner wings of the Armies. They went on to order 3rd Army HQ to send a group, well-equipped with heavy artillery, northeast from Asiago. This group, along with the units in the Sugana valley, was to capture the fortifications by Primolano, thereby opening the road and railway through the Brenta valley to Bassano.

The change in the border between the two Army sectors was disadvantageous to 11th Army, especially since on the 23rd its left wing had apparently collided with a strong enemy force still

stationed north of Mt Cimone and the position which blocked the valley at Casa Ratti; this was contrary to the reports of the day before. If this opposition could be overcome and Mt Cimone secured, there would remain the very difficult task of climbing out of the Astico valley (approximately in the area of Barcarola) up the rocky Punta Corbin, which was almost 800 meters steep and now lay in the territory of 11th Army. At this time the Army's main strength was stationed on its right wing, where the L-Sch Div had advanced into the Vallarsa. If the operation of XXI Corps didn't progress as quickly as Army HQ expected, there was still a good chance that VIII Corps would soon take the Pasubio. From this position they could advance southeast over Mt Alba, assisting the right wing of XX Corps and making it easier for the latter corps to extend its line as required by the new Army borders established by Army Group HQ. Therefore Army HQ didn't think it was necessary on the 23rd to alter the goals which they had already assigned their corps. Even in the next two days, when it became questionable whether the Army's right wing could move forward and a change in the direction of the main assault became an issue, HQ didn't make a decision. Indeed, in the night of 24-25 May they even moved their reserve, 44 LW ID, to Rovereto-Volano, which indicated that it would be employed on the right wing.

The high command asked Army Group HQ about their intentions. Because of the rapid progress of III Corps, the latter HQ now envisioned using a powerful wedge, just as the AOK had recommended at one time. Army Group saw with impatience that their repeated suggestions to unleash pursuit detachments didn't have the hoped-for effect. Therefore in an order on 25 May they reminded both Army commanders and - for greater impact - also all the Corps commanders about the tasks which Group HQ had already assigned. They attached an appeal: "We want to and must advance into the plains by taking the outlets from the mountains in the direction of Thiene and Bassano without losing time." HQ further declared that the strong forces deployed on the right wing of 11th Army were sufficient to cover the Army Group's flank, even if these forces could only gain ground slowly in the direction of their objective (the line Coni Zugna-Cm. Posta-Mt Civillina). On the other hand, however, they demanded that "the left wing - XX Corps and the strongest possible part of VIII Corps - should continue the offensive in the general direction of Thiene without waiting for all the heavy artillery." This entailed "an advance on the shortest route through the Astico valley and over the heights along its western side in cooperation with 3rd Army, so that the outlet from the valley at Piovene can be secured as soon as possible."

This order didn't address reinforcing the inner wings of the Armies. Yet it seems that FML Krauss, who personally brought the instructions to Trent, suggested to 11th Army HQ that 44 LW ID transfer to the Army's left wing. Also he let them know that in the next few days the 9 ID would arrive by train and would be placed under their command.²⁶² In the conversation which followed, doubts regarding the method of attack against the mountain complex Punta Corbin-Mt Cengio-Mt Barco were not dispelled. Although Army Group HQ was also of the opinion that these heights could be more easily taken from the east (that is by 3rd Army) than by the left wing of 11th Army in the Astico valley, the Army border remained the same even though it ran through the middle of the mountains.

Plans of 11th Army

HQ of 11th Army had been given a most difficult assignment. They didn't share the outlook of Army Group HQ, which apparently had in mind (although this was never clearly expressed) a thrust through the Astico valley. They also didn't share the opinion that the heights on both sides of the Astico, which barred the exit into the plains, could be easily conquered. 11th Army was compelled to ask whether the time had come when it would be necessary to secure the major road from Rovereto to Schio. The actions of XXI Corps around the Coni Zugna-C. di Mezzana ridge had stalled, although VIII Corps still seemed to be advancing around the Pasubio. The reports in the evening of the 25th made it possible to expect success shortly.

After the Pasubio and the heights north of Arsiero were taken, GO Dankl planned to have XX Corps along with VIII Corps attack the fortified areas Mt Priafora-Cornolo-Mt Novegno. If, however, the capture of the Pasubio and of Mt Forni Alti were delayed he intended to reinforce XX Corps with parts of the VIIIth and to send them solely against the Mt Priafora fortified area.

Early on the 26th, GO Dankl learned that the attack against Mt Pasubio had to be postponed, but that Mt Cimone had been

262As FML von Schenck's 9 ID arrived from the Isonzo, it detrained at Matarello and Calliano between 27 and 31 May. The order of battle was - 17 Inf Bde (Col. Steinsberg) with IR 91 (3), 102 (3); 60 Inf Bde (GM Ritt. von Gruber) with IR 30 (3), 80 (3); cavalry - Res Sqdn/UR 12; 9 FA Bde (Col. Edl. von Filz) with FKR 9 (4), FHR 9 (4), Hvy FAR 9 (2); 5 Comp/SB 2. There were 9494 infantry, 100 cavalry, 52 guns.

conquered. XX Corps HQ reported their opinion that by taking Mt Cimone they had broken through the Italians' main line of resistance. The Corps commander "allows himself to venture the question of whether this situation shouldn't be exploited with a further thrust by 11th Army in the general direction of Thiene." He envisioned an operation involving "an advance from Arsiero toward the ridge of heights from P. Campodello to Mt Summano, thus taking the Priafora ridge from the rear (*i.e.* from the east), and a simultaneous, powerful attack toward the southeast." For this purpose XX Corps would need at least a third division and substantially stronger artillery. Obviously this plan couldn't be carried out until the western part of the Asiago plateau was taken by 3rd Army. It was of the greatest importance that 34 ID in the Astico valley should secure the Cm. Arde-Punta Corbin area.

Under pressure from Army Group, 11th Army HQ had meanwhile made the difficult decision to continue the assault without having first secured the most important pillar of the entire front, the Pasubio. In the evening Dankl ordered 44 LW ID to march through Calliano to Folgaria, and placed it under XX Corps. Furthermore he determined that the further advance of this Corps would take place in the general direction of Thiene, between the Army border recently established by Army Group HQ and the line Mt Maggio-east edge of Posina-Mt Spin-S. Catarina. The first assignment of XX Corps was to fully cooperate with the right wing of 3rd Army and to help the latter's advance through Val d'Assa with flanking artillery fire. Then "after the most thorough artillery preparation" they were to occupy the ridge between Mt Cogolo and Mt Summano. The VIII Corps, in coordination with XX Corps, would attack Mt Alba with a strong left wing, hold its positions opposite the Pasubio, and advance gradually in the Vallarsa toward the Piano della Fugazza. The assignment of XXI Corps was unchanged; they were to relieve 6 Mtn Bde and transfer it to VIII Corps. All these provisions were brought to the attention of Army Group HQ.

Plans of 3rd Army

When GO Kövess was asked about his plans, he had already reported in the afternoon of the 25th. III Corps HQ intended to thrust on the 27th with 22 LW ID and half of 28 ID generally southeast in the Asiago area. Thus 22 LW ID was to capture the Mt Dorole heights on the 26th while sending security detachments forward into the area of the Cra. Zingarella and Mt Fiara. 6 ID would advance on the 26th in the area Osteria del Termine-Osteria del Ghertele. It was desirable that parts of I Corps would already

occupy the heights by the Punta Corbin on the 27th. Therefore Army HQ requested that the leading troops of 34 ID should reach Lastebasse during the night of 25-26 May.

Army Group HQ agreed to this deployment of 34 ID. On the 26th they reported the latest dispositions, along with the prospects for both Armies, to the high command. The staff at Teschen received this report with satisfaction. However, they noted that they were getting the impression that the major attacks on the right wing of 11th Army apparently lacked substantial artillery support under a unified command, and were drawing in ever more units which thus weren't available to carry out 11th Army's principal task - the thrust to Thiene. Army Group HQ responded on 27 May that in the past few days they had repeatedly reminded 11th Army HQ to carry out "the main offensive in the direction of Thiene." The presently divergent direction of the attacks by XXI and VIII Corps was caused by an attempt to secure a favorable line (Coni Zugna-Cm. Posta-Recoaro) to defend the flank toward the south; afterwards XXI Corps by itself would be able to provide protection to the Army Group's flank. The reason why XXI and VIII Corps were fighting with less artillery support than in the first days of the operation was that it was difficult to bring the heavy batteries forward. Moreover, hazy and unfavorable weather now dominated their battlefield in the high elevations. However, it wasn't true that the artillery lacked unified direction for these actions.

In this response the Army Group HQ also addressed the situation of 3rd Army, opposite which the enemy was assembling a strong force in the Asiago-Gallio-Mt Interotto area. III Corps would carry out its attack on Asiago with a strong left wing between the Assa valley and the Val di Nos; for this purpose 6 ID was deployed on the left. Security toward the east would be provided by 2 Mtn Bde, while 8 Mtn Bde also moved to this area. Army Group HQ declared that they attached decisive importance to the fighting around Asiago. Therefore on the 27th they had placed all of I Corps at the disposal of 3rd Army, so that after the capture of Asiago a powerful advance could reach the line Bassano-Breganze. It was hoped that these units would be sufficient to force their way out of the mountains, but they weren't strong enough to carry on the operation in the plains. Because of the Italian Army's overall numerical superiority over the Southwest Front, they always could find substantial new forces to throw against Archduke Eugene's Army Group. Therefore it would be very helpful if measures were taken to provide more units for future operations. Group HQ suggested that perhaps further troops could be taken from 5th Army for this purpose.

On 21 May the high command had given Army Group HQ two fully-trained March battalions, made up of ten March companies which 48 ID had left in Carinthia. Moreover, the k.u. Lst Inf Bns II/30, III/30 and IV/23 had been brought from Herzegovina to Tyrol, where they could relieve first-line troops to join the offensive; the commanding general in BHD had also been instructed to hold 28 Lst Mtn Bde in readiness to move. This Brigade was expected to begin arriving in Tyrol on 6 June, and would be used for the same purpose as the above-mentioned battalions.²⁶³

Responding to a question from Teschen regarding the availability of units from his 5th Army, GdI Boroevic stated that only 61 ID could be given up without seriously endangering the Isonzo front; on 1 June this Division was therefore ordered to move to Tyrol. On the same day (1 June) the high command let Archduke Eugene know that in addition to 61 ID - whose arrival in Tyrol would be complete on 15 June - he perhaps would receive a high-quality division from the Russian theater of operations. GO Conrad wanted to take a division from the k.u.k. XII Corps (serving under Prince Leopold's Army Group) with the agreement of the German OHL. On 28 May, however, GdI Falkenhayn turned down this request, so Conrad contemplated selecting one of the Aus-Hung. divisions under his own command on the Northeast front.

2. The capture of Asiago, 26-29 May

The 22 LW ID was given a rest break on 26 May. On this day the 2 Mtn Bde, which reached the Bocchetta di Portule with three battalions at noon, was to relieve the Landwehr on the Division's north wing between Cm. Dodici and Cn. di Campo verde. Parts of the Lombardia Brigade plus Bersaglieri made an attempt to recover Mt Cucco. They were repulsed by Lt Col. Tenner's group (II Bn/IR 11). 18 Inf Bde scouted ahead with strong detachments. At daybreak a bold half battalion of IR # 73 struck the enemy on Mt Mosciach, overran them, and captured 100 men along with six guns.²⁶⁴ During the course of the day the brave Egerländer recognized that they were opposed by more than two battalions, with whom they became engaged in a grim struggle; eventually our

263At this time Col. Schutte's 28 Lst Mtn Bde contained k.u. Lst Inf Bns V/2, VIII/17, VIII/19, III/20 and III/25 plus 6 Can Batty/Mtn AR 5 and 3 Can Batty/Mtn AR 6.

264For this brilliant feat of arms the leader of the half battalion, 1st Lt Miezius Skulski of IR # 73, was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order.

half battalion was reinforced by two more companies. The Italians launched counterattacks to recover the guns, but they were thrown back in hand-to-hand fighting. The Egerländer also pounded them with shrapnel from their own captured cannon.²⁶⁵ Another scouting company nearly reached Heights # 1451 northwest of Mt Interrotto, but discovered that the mountain ridge was strongly occupied by the enemy. The scouts also failed to break through past Mt Zebio and Mt Zingarella (northeast of Mt Mosciach). Thus in the evening of the 26th it was determined that the Italians wished to renew their resistance on the eastern edge of the Val di Galmarara.

The enemy units identified opposite III Corps were the four beaten brigades of 34 ID, the Lombardia and Catanzaro Brigades, the 5th Bersaglieri Regiment and three bicycle battalions. Prisoners also claimed that the Granatieri di Sardegna and Etna Brigades were present, and that strong forces which had come from the Isonzo were stationed in the area of Mt Mosciach and Mt Interrotto. The situations on the extreme northern wing of the Corps and in front of 28 ID (south of the lower Assa valley) were uncertain.

The plan to attack Asiago

FML Krautwald intended to carry out the attack toward Asiago on 28 May. For this purpose GM Kochanowski's 22 LW ID deployed as follows on the 27th - 12 Inf Bde (which was attached) in the Assa valley-Mt Mosciach area, 18 Inf Bde south of Mt Zebio and 43 LW Bde in the Cra. Zingarella-Mt Zingarella area on the left (in echelon farther back). The sector north of 43 LW Bde, as far as the Cm. Dodici, was secured by 2 Mtn Bde. Control of the Corps' left wing (including 2 Mtn Bde) was given to FML Fürst Schönburg, the commander of 6 ID; he was ordered to move 11 Inf Bde to the Bocchetta di Portule on the 27th and to the Cn. di Camp verde area on the 28th. The 28 ID was instructed to carry out an attack in the general direction Roana-Canove in cooperation with 22 LW ID. This attack was to be supported by diversionary thrusts from the area west of Roana, and would follow the offensive by 22 LW ID. One regiment of 28 ID was placed in the Corps' reserves. The main body of the artillery was to deploy on the Verena plateau, and many mountain batteries were attached to the individual brigades. In his report to Army HQ, the commander of III Corps included the following statement: "If 22 LW ID is able to reach the line Mt Zingarella-Mt Zebio-Point 1651 on the

265"Der Heimat Söhne im Weltkrieg - Der Egerländer", June 1927 edition

27th, they will attack between the Val d'Assa and the Val di Nos on the 28th with 12 and 18 Inf Bdes in the front line, and 43 LW Bde behind the left wing. 11 Inf Bde and 2 Mtn Bde will advance to the east, with the southern wing along the line Mt Zebio-Mt Baldo-Mt Meletta." FML Krautwald reckoned further that the two battalions of 2 Mtn Bde that were still coming up, along with 8 Mtn Bde, would reach the Vezzena plateau on the 28th. Then they would be placed under HQ of 6 ID.

GM Kochanowski believed that to carry out his assignment it would be necessary above all to secure the road in the Galmarara valley by driving the enemy from the heights on the edge of the valley. 12 Inf Bde moved forward from the C. Le Mandrielle through the Osteria del Ghertele to Bridge # 981 in the Assa valley, and prepared to attack as ordered. 18 Inf Bde was still assembled forward in the Val di Portule. Thick fog and rain hindered the preparations of the infantry and the activity of the artillery. The results of the reconnaissance were scanty. Reports indicated that the enemy had evacuated Mt Dorole and the ridge running southwest of this mountain, but it was believed that the heights east of the Galmarara valley were still occupied. A detailed report from 22 LW ID reinforced at Corps HQ the opinion that the enemy had assembled strong forces north of Asiago, and that serious fighting might develop on the northern wing of 22 LW ID and also for 2 Mtn Bde. Therefore at noon on the 27th the Corps HQ stated it was desirable to ensure that the northern wing was fully secure before initiating the turning movement toward Asiago and Gallio. For this reason, and because the thorough artillery preparation by the main attacking group couldn't be accomplished on the 28th, the operation against Asiago shouldn't start until the 29th.

This postponement of the start of the attack was ordered on the 27th; it was approved by Army HQ, which in turn informed Army Group. The latter HQ said they could take into allowance the later starting time for the operation in the Val di Galmarara as long as it would ensure that the troops would be able to strike a powerful blow with strong artillery support; if possible the units should push through to Asiago with one bound. The high command fully accepted these assertions.

An unexpected success

Then the morning report on the 28th caused surprise. In the evening of the 27th, the 12 Inf Bde had already taken Mt Dorole, the entire wooded ridge running from there to Mt Interrotto, and the position blocking the road in the Val d'Assa. Now they were

advancing toward the town of Camporovere and Mt Katze. The enemy had also pulled back in front of 18 Inf Bde and Schönburg's group. The troops on the northern wing were pushing farther east on a broad front. It was expected that the enemy would again be encountered in a new line near the positions they had evacuated.

Corps HQ received a second gratifying surprise in the afternoon of the 28th - parts of 28 ID had crossed the Assa ravine at Canove. Patrols from 56 Inf Bde had still been unable to get through the valley in the preceding night, but in the morning the enemy was gone. Quickly seizing the opportunity, FJB # 11 immediately pushed through the ravine; GM Hugo Schmid, who was informed of the events in the Mt Interrotto area, didn't hesitate to exploit this success. He let his entire Brigade follow the Jaeger. In the evening they stood in a shallow arc around Canove, with a company in Asiago. Meanwhile Col. Kliemann, who was stationed with two battalions from IR # 47 and with FJB # 24 on the west wing of III Corps, had been trying unsuccessfully to advance from the area of Castelletto and Pedescala to capture the southern edge of the Val d'Assa. Two companies of picked men had been sent on the 27th to climb the Cm. Arde, but were forced to turn back just in front of their goal because the enemy was posted atop a perpendicular rock wall that couldn't be surmounted. The success of 56 Inf Bde at Canove inspired Col. Kliemann to try anew. Since he couldn't reach the Punta Corbin by a route over the Cm. Arde, in the evening of the 28th he moved up the valley from Pedescala and then on the foot paths through Mosca and Panega. After a difficult climb in the night, his battalions fell upon the enemy on the edge of the heights early on the 29th. After a powerful artillery bombardment, which at first was hindered by fog, the gallant detachment captured the entry point to the plateau in a number of small-scale actions; on the plateau they soon took a strong point north of Conca.²⁶⁶ Now FJB # 24 turned to the west; around 5:00 PM they pushed past the Cm. Arde and into the well-constructed but scarcely-defended armored work at Punta Corbin.

At first there was no clear explanation for the relatively easy occupation of the southern side of the Assa Ravine. To the Army Group's Chief of Staff it seemed possible that the enemy had systematically withdrawn their forces from Asiago "to let our troops advance hastily, and then to launch a counterattack at a time when our troops [still lacked] support from the heavy artillery, which would be held up by the Assa Ravine." Army Group HQ believed on 29 May that it was its duty to warn about

266Vogelsang, p. 418

this possibility; they advised FML Krautwald "neither to thrust ahead carelessly nor to miss favorable opportunities for gaining ground." Reconnaissance by rapid detachments should be carried out as far forward as possible. The divisional cavalry could also be used for this purpose. Meanwhile preparation of crossing points for guns over the Assa Ravine at Canove should be given priority. Army Group HQ also believed that the time had come to prepare to bring together a large force of cavalry.²⁶⁷ The high command, however, had to turn down this request since "it was unfortunately not possible" to carry it out.

The retreat of the Italians had been ordered by General Lequin, probably on 26 May.²⁶⁸ After the severe defeat suffered by 34 ID at Vezzena, the quick loss of the high mountain massif Cm. Dodici-Mt Kempel-Mt Meata had depressed the Italian commanders. The brigades of XIV Corps reached the Sieben Gemeinde plateau too late. The Alessandria Brigade was caught up in the retreat of 34 ID. Four more brigades, brought up hastily on foot or in trucks, were instructed to first deploy on the southern edge of the Asiago basin. Thus the Etna Brigade took up a position on the line Stoccardo-Bertigo and the Granatieri Brigade in the Punta Corbin-Cesuna area. Between these two units the Lombardia and Catanzaro Brigades were to be stationed. However, the "Lombardia" was immediately sent through Asiago in an attempt to recover the Bocchetta di Portule. When this attack failed, the "Catanzaro" was also sent hesitantly forward to help out. Thus on 26 May both of these brigades, mixed in with the remnants of 34 ID and some Alpini and Bersaglieri, were approximately on the line Mt Interrotto-Mt Mosciach-Mt Zebio-Mt Zingarella. The decision to evacuate this line was precipitated in large measure by the minor action on Mt Mosciach. Thus the gap between the brigades which had stayed behind ("Granatieri di Sardegna" and "Etna") was again closed. At this time there remained in the area north of the Asiagobasin as far as the Sugana valley only some Alpini and Bersaglieri battalions plus parts of Brigade Lombardia; they were supposed to make a new stand in a position on the edge of the heights west of the Val di Campo Mulo and in the area of Marcesina.²⁶⁹

267The composition of the proposed cavalry force, as suggested by Army Group HQ, is noteworthy. It would have been a brigade of about 8 squadrons with as many machine guns as possible plus several horse batteries and abundant technical support.

268Per Cadorna ("La guerra", Vol. I, p. 233) the retreat took place on 27 May.

269Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, p. 233

3. 11th Army continues to attack, 26 May-7 June

a. The fighting by Arsiero

After the capture of Mt Cimone, XX Corps HQ had assigned 3 ID the task of taking the works Casa Ratti and Cornolo in the valley. 8 ID would prepare to attack toward Mt Aralta. Already on the 26th the Casa Ratti work fell unexpectedly into the hands of dashing patrols from 3 ID. By a gallant effort a sapper officer prevented the enemy from blowing up the guns as they had intended. Apparently the garrison had abandoned the work shortly before. In the afternoon it was noticed that the enemy was destroying the bridges at Arsiero. Smoke from explosions billowed out of the Cornolo work. The Italians seemed to have abandoned the Arsiero area and occupied a position at Seghe, on the other side of the Astico. However, when scouting detachments descended Mt Cimone toward Arsiero they still encountered enemy resistance. Italian batteries fired from Mt Cengio as well as from a southerly direction against the steep slopes of Mt Cimone. At this time XX Corps HQ received the order in which 11th Army HQ switched the main effort for the continuing operation to the eastern wing.

Pouring rain limited activity on the 27th. Corps HQ at this time recognized clearly that the Punta Corbin-Mt Cengio heights would have to be secure before they could continue the offensive through Arsiero. They held six heavy and five very heavy batteries ready to support the attack which 3rd Army was opening on its right wing. Only after the heights in question had been captured would it be possible to bring a strong group of heavy artillery forward into the woods around Mt Cimone in order to neutralize the fortifications on Mt Priafora and on the Mt Novegno plateau.

Meanwhile a stalemate had developed on the western wing of 11th Army on 26 May. 12 Mtn Bde came to the Zugna Ridge on the 27th with three battalions; that night they relieved 6 Mtn Bde, which assembled in Rovereto and later moved to join 59 ID at the Borcola Pass. Thus the units of XXI and VIII Corps were again restored to their proper organization. XXI Corps postponed the attack they'd originally scheduled for the 28th. 57 ID held positions opposite the Pasubio and at Chiesa in the Vallarsa with 9 and 10 Mtn Bdes. While awaiting the arrival of 6 Mtn Bde, the 59 ID instructed 18 Mtn Bde "to gain as much ground as possible

toward Mga. Xomo, thus cutting off the retreat of the enemy group on the Pasubio or at least threatening their lines of communication." On the 28th, in a driving rain the 18 Bde managed to capture the important Chapel Heights (Point 953) and Summit # 1131. This was a very heavy loss for the Italians.²⁷⁰ Next day they mounted several strong counter-attacks; in fighting which lasted until evening they were repulsed by GM Skvor's gallant battalions.²⁷¹ However, this made it seem advisable for us to await the arrival of 6 Mtn Bde.

GO Dankl reported on the 27th that the reinforced left wing couldn't start to attack until 30 May because first the heights east of the Astico valley would have to be taken. He asked the Army Group to have 3rd Army speedily carry out their operation toward the Cm. Arde, because otherwise the left wing of 11th Army around Mt Cimone would be hampered by Italian artillery firing from the vicinity of Punta Corbin. 3rd Army HQ intended to cross the lower Assa Ravine after the capture of Asiago, that is on 30 or 31 May. Although Army Group HQ would have been glad to see this timetable accelerated, they still agreed with GO Kövess' opinion that a premature, isolated advance by Col. Kliemann's group toward the Cm. Arde had no prospect of success; they so informed 11th Army. GO Dankl therefore reckoned that his left wing couldn't resume their operation earlier than 30 May.

The surprising change in the situation on the 28th, caused by the enemy's retreat from the edge of the Assa Ravine and the crossing of the Ravine by 28 ID at Canove, apparently led Army Group HQ to once more believe that the Italians were withdrawing along the entire front and also evacuating the important mountain complex which lies between the Astico, the Assa and the Val Canaglia. The left wing of 11th Army on Mt Cimone, still held in check by fire from enemy batteries to the east, didn't share this opinion. On the 29th GO Dankl felt obliged to postpone the attack by his left wing because "the heights just east of the Astico valley still weren't in the possession of 3rd Army", which was the pre-condition for the intended assault by the reinforced XX Corps. He reported this to Army Group HQ. The latter bluntly replied that coordination of the inner wings of the two Armies was the task of the Army Group, and that postponing the offensive required their permission. "The heights just east of the Astico

270Baj Macario, "La 'Strafe Expedition'" in "Rivista Militare Italiana" (Rome, August 1930 issue), p. 1303.

271Battalions II/60 (Hungarian) and II/92 (Bohemian) were especially distinguished in these actions. See "Der Heimat Söhne im Weltrkiege - Der 92er" (1927 issue).

valley, from which the enemy has been hindering the advance of the Army's left wing for several days, have already been assigned to 11th Army's sector since 23 May." And early on 30 May Archduke Eugene's Chief of Staff sent a short, laconic wire to 11th Army HQ: "Punta Corbin is taken. Move XX Corps ahead. 3rd Army has been ordered to thrust toward Mt Cengio." Several hours later, Army Group HQ finally issued "Guidelines for the Cooperation of the Armies' Wings." The right wing of 3rd Army should "take Mt Cengio and Mt Barco without consideration of the Army boundaries established on 23 May, and immediately send detachments to Cogolo (5 km southeast of Arsiero), in the rear of the enemy who are still roughly on the line Seghe-S. Zeno." Without waiting for the fall of Mt Cengio, XX Corps was to cross the Posina at Arsiero and to have its left wing push against the enemy position on the Astico with simultaneous attacks toward Mt Cogolo and Mt Summano. Then, after the fall of Mt Cengio, they could advance into the Astico valley and stay on the Italians' heels. Only after this order was issued did the staff in Bozen learn that the enemy held a strong position along a line north of Mt Cengio and Mt Barco.

b. Conquest of Mt Priafora and the fighting by Posina

In XX Corps' sector on the 28th, the abandoned work at Cornolo was occupied first by sappers, then by Kaiser Jaeger. On the next day 8 ID carried out the attack toward Mt Aralta as planned. In a well-conducted operation, FML Verdross led a battle group, consisting of KJR # 1 plus two battalions from KJR # 4 and three mountain batteries, from the mountain cone of Posina in an envelopment movement toward the south and southwest. Fog delayed the advance, but also made it easier to approach the enemy. The troops were able to cross the deep and wild brook undetected, and then waited for the scheduled artillery bombardment.

Around noon the II Battalion of KJR # 1 advanced directly toward Mt Aralta on a broad front and surprised the Italians in their well-built positions. After a short defense, the enemy were overwhelmed. After a brief pause, the Kaiser Jaeger pushed further ahead in the thick forest that covered the steep ridge leading to Mt Priafora. Meanwhile the III Battalion captured two strong points southeast of Bagattini and came forward to Buni. The assault of the battalions of KJR # 4 upon the trenches south of Cornolo was more difficult, because they were hard hit by flanking fire. Nevertheless, they took the enemy's strong points, and I Battalion/KJR # 4 linked up with II Battalion/KJR

1 at Fontana.

The Kaiser Jaeger, who captured 900 prisoners and three heavy guns, had won a greater success than had been anticipated. It had seemed from the first reports that the attack by KJR # 1 was faltering, and therefore Corps HQ had placed KJR # 3 (which had been in their reserves) at the disposal of 8 ID, and ordered 3 ID to send a battalion to Peralta. Meanwhile the situation was clarified; based on a suggestion from HQ of 8 ID, Archduke Karl Franz Josef ordered the offensive to continue on 30 May with the capture of Mt Priafora. FML Fabini, glad to have the concurrence of the Corps commander, immediately issued directives for the assault, which was to have powerful artillery support.²⁷²

However, before all the preparations were complete there was an unexpected development in the morning of the 30th. A scouting detachment from II Battalion/KJR # 1, that had spent the night at Fontana, enveloped Mt Priafora from the west; the Italian sentries on the mountain peak, taken by surprise from behind, fled. The rest of the Battalion, which still hadn't received an order to attack, followed the detachment on their own initiative; before the enemy realized what was happening, the historic mountain, which rises 1300 meters over the Posina valley, was in the hands of the Kaiser Jaeger. An Italian battalion which had pitched camp near Mt Giove collapsed after hearing the first rifle fire from the brilliantly-led scouting detachment. Soon, however, the enemy recovered their composure and sought to recapture the summit with repeated assaults, supported by thick artillery fire. However, the Kaiser Jaeger of the 1st Regiment could no longer be driven from Mt Priafora, even though conditions were hellish due to the uninterrupted bombardment of the enemy guns.

Meanwhile on the western wing of 8 ID, the KJR # 2 was sent toward Mt Spin and stormed a trench at Ressi on the 29th. They couldn't advance any further on the 30th. They were supposed to operate in conjunction with 59 ID, which attacked on the 30th according to plan toward the area Colle del Xomo-Mt Alba; 18 Mtn Bde was deployed next to 6 Mtn Bde. Here the enemy's resistance was very energetic. Battalions from four brigades came to the battlefield and struck the soldiers of 59 ID with strong counter-thrusts, backed up by powerful artillery. As we learned later from a captured order, the Italians wanted to recover Chapel Heights # 953 at any price. They finally gave up this attempt

272Fabini, "Mt Priafora" (in Mil. wiss. Mitt., November-December issue of 1931).

after heavy, bloody fighting.

c. The last attack on the Buole Pass

While 57 ID had to wait, because the troops couldn't move through the accursed masses of snow - as tall as a man - in front of the Pasubio, GM Englert's L-Sch Div renewed their attack against the Buole Pass and the Cm. di Mezzana on 30 May. At this point neither his Division nor 48 ID had been able to make any noteworthy progress. If the prepared attack on 30 May didn't break through, 11th Army HQ intended to give XXI Corps a purely defensive role; then the three battalions of 9 Mtn Bde which had stayed in the Vallarsa at Chiesa would be relieved by the Landes-Schützen and would be sent to reinforce the left wing of VIII Corps.

After several hours of artillery fire, which however involved just 81 guns, the Landes-Schützen climbed up the steep mountain slopes; split up into small groups so that they could approach the enemy, they struck against the strong positions. The bloody and bitter fighting raged for hour after hour. The Taro and Sicilia Brigades fought heroically. "The Austrians repeated their stubborn and gallant assaults. Anyone who saw them climb forward, driven back, and then rallied for a new attempt had to pay tribute to their courage."²⁷³ However, in the evening GM Englert had to report that the offensive hadn't gained the hoped-for success. The Landes-Schützen had lost 15 officers and 614 men, about 13% of their strength. The high command demanded immediate information, which GO Dankl should obtain "on the spot" regarding the situation of XXI Corps; he also was to report on whether these continuing attacks "in which hitherto excellent troops have become exhausted" still might have some chance of success. 11th Army HQ thereupon decided to suspend operations on the Army's right wing, as they had already been planning.

XXI Corps was ordered to hold onto the ground recently gained, and to relieve the three battalions of 9 Mtn Bde. Moreover, 48 ID was to be gradually pulled out of the fighting and assembled in the Rovereto-Piazza area as the Army's reserve. The Division was to be replaced by its two combined March battalions (which had already arrived), and by three Hungarian Landsturm battalions; eventually 28 Lst Mtn Bde, which was already detraining at Calliano, would also arrive. FML Edl. von Guseck was named commander of the sector Loppio-Mori-Marco-Zugna Torta.

²⁷³Schiarini, p. 81

The first contingent of 48 ID (three battalions) moved back to the Borcola Pass.

This major re-deployment of the infantry, which also involved some changes to the artillery, demonstrated the determination of 11th Army HQ to devote all their strength to breaking through in the center. However, the re-grouping would require many days. Meanwhile GO Dankl let the leading brigade of 9 ID move to the Serrada area; by 7 June the whole Division was supposed to be at Folgaria and San Sebastiano.

d. Actions around Mt Cengio

After XX Corps had learned that their eastern boundary was shifted, they had already sent Battalion X/59 to S. Pietro in the Astico valley on the 25th. The Battalion was supposed to march toward the Punta Corbin but, just like Col. Kliemann's group, they discovered that it wasn't possible to climb to the Cm. Arde. Therefore they joined Kliemann's troops on the 29th and with them reached the Mosca plateau. Since two detachments from 34 ID also joined Col. Kliemann, and they were followed by the east Hungarian IR # 101, the forces on the right wing of 3rd Army were substantially strengthened. GM von Lauingen, the commander of 67 Inf Bde, took over the sector between the Punta Corbin and Cavrari on the 30th. In sometimes heavy fighting which lasted throughout the day, IR # 101 - effectively supported by artillery - captured several strong points in the area Panega-Conca. Battalion IV/47, on the adjacent flank of 28 ID, drove into Cavrari. The neighboring 56 Inf Bde extended its sector somewhat to the southeast, while keeping its left wing firmly anchored at Asiago. Therefore on the 30th most of the right wing of 3rd Army had come up to a strong enemy position on the northern slopes of the major heights - Mt Kaberlaba, Mt Lemerle, Belmonte and Mt Barco. Parts of this line had been prepared in advance, others had been hastily constructed; its left wing was based on Mt Cengio.

The task of 34 ID was to attack as prescribed by the latest guidelines of Army Group HQ. Division HQ sent IR # 29 to GM Lauingen, and on the 31st also let 68 Inf Bde cross over the Assa Ravine. In the early evening, GM Lauingen's troops repulsed heavy counter-attacks from the area northwest of Mt Barco. The enemy was obviously receiving reinforcements. Besides the Sardinian Grenadiers and the regiments of the Catanzaro Brigade, battalions from the Pescara Brigade also entered the fighting in

this sector. In the afternoon of the 31st, the artillery of III Corps and some of the guns of XX Corps hammered the area of the Belmonte and Mt Barco. The enemy line southwest of Fondi was broken through around 4:00 PM; IR # 101, well supported by Battalion IV/47 of 28 ID, stormed the northern slope of the Belmonte, while Col. Kliemann's battalions took an outlying summit northwest of Mt Barco. However, it proved impossible to reach the summits of either the Belmonte or Mt Barco before darkness fell.

On the western wing the troops of Battalion X/59 (from Salzburg and the Inn-viertel) had a difficult fight.²⁷⁴ In the morning they were able to drive advanced enemy groups from the edge of the heights south of the Val di Sila; however, Col. Baumann's artillery group wasn't able to operate in their area until the afternoon, so they couldn't open the assault on Mt Cengio before darkness began to fall. Even the climb along the rocky approaches to the mountain was tiresome. Around 7:00 PM the first summit of the broken Cengio plateau was taken. After a powerful new artillery bombardment the next summit was stormed, by which time it was 9:00 PM and almost completely dark. The battle broke down into individual actions, and visibility was reduced to nothing. The Italian grenadiers defended themselves desperately; one counterattack followed another. However, the "Rainer" couldn't be driven from the heights they had conquered. They believed they were on the highest point of Mt Cengio. Only later did they learn that a nearby point still held by the enemy was the actual Cengio summit.

Thus the fighting on this day led to considerable progress on the entire plateau. The attackers had taken more than 1400 prisoners. However, the enemy were still offering stubborn resistance and were hanging onto the heights west of the Val Canaglia.

e. The breakthrough attempt in the Astico valley

In its order issued on 30 May, Army Group HQ had finally laid aside the long-standing hesitation about continuing the offensive through Arsiero. Late in the evening, after receiving the order through 11th Army HQ, XX Corps gave their divisions the following assignments:

. 3 ID should cross the Posina and if possible advance toward Mt Summano and Mt Rozzo Covole.

²⁷⁴Hoen, "IR 59 im Weltkrieg", p. 461

. 44 LW ID should advance in cooperation with 3 ID, particularly toward the Seghe-S. Zeno position; after the fall of Mt Cengio they would also thrust toward Cogolo in the Astico valley.
. 8 ID would hold Mt Priafora, cover the western flank of 3 ID, and throw back the enemy between Ressi and Fusine.
Each attack was to be preceded by thorough artillery preparation.

In the night of 30-31 May, when the instructions of the division commanders reached the troops, the battalions of 44 LW ID were deployed in deep columns, marching on the road in the Astico valley with the leading men at Forni. The artillery of this Division was still back in VIII Corps sector, where it had been stationed since the start of the offensive. The main body of 3 ID was on the plateau between Mt Cimone and Tonezza; however, in the morning of the 30th FML Horsetzky, as ordered by Corps HQ, had sent the remaining battalions of IR # 21 to join the battalion which had already come to the Peralto area. When the troops of 3 ID climbed down Mt Cimone to reach the Posina valley, they encountered heavy artillery fire from the enemy. Only IR # 21, parts of which were already south of the Posina, reached the area around the C. Baldino, where they had to deploy toward the southeast instead of toward the south. IR # 50, which was supposed to reach the area northeast of Lago, couldn't cross the Posina due to the Italian barrage. Also, IR # 14 had to stay at Peralta. Our artillery was unable to neutralize the enemy batteries. Under these circumstances, 3 ID had to wait until darkness fell to carry out its deployment.

The advance of 44 LW ID was just as difficult. The enemy stood north of the confluence of the Posina and the Astico in a strong bridgehead; this position continued to the northeast, with numerous small strong points, onto the steep slopes of the Cengio plateau. Many guns were stationed in the ravines, where it was difficult for XX Corps' artillery to hit them. Therefore GM Jellenchich's 87 LW Inf Bde west of the river was only able to get near Arsiero with LW IR # 21 and the 3 ID's Battalion II/50.²⁷⁵ Under Col. Majewski's 44 LW Inf Bde, the main body of Mtn LW IR # 4 worked its way up to the main enemy position at Raboleo, while parts of the Regiment were pinned down by an Italian advanced strong point on the slopes.

For 1 June, HQ of 3 ID told GM Richard Müller to send IR # 21 and 14 with a strong right wing in the direction of the Colletto Pic.; the left wing would attack toward Mt Summano. GM Phleps

275Sichelstiel, "Das k.k. Schützen Regiment St Pölten # 21, seine Friedens- und Kriegs-jahre" (Vienna, 1930), p. 144

would advance with IR # 50 on both sides of the Arsiero-Velo d'Astico road, capture the latter town, and then occupy Heights # 392. Implementation of these orders didn't go smoothly. The enterprising enemy, who'd launched a powerful thrust against IR # 21 during the night, maintained a heavy crossfire from numerous batteries and machine guns on the heights against the Austrian infantry as they moved forward in a narrow area. Thus the regiments suffered substantial casualties before they came within striking distance of the Italians, who'd been stationed since the evening before in a well-prepared position on the slopes of Mt Rozzo Covole, at Onaro, and west of Velo d'Astico.

The attack of 44 LW ID in the afternoon of 1 June also turned out to be difficult. Its 87 LW Bde, next to 3 ID, assaulted the strong points on the northern bank of the Posina while 44 LW Bde moved against Raboleo. West of the Astico, the north bank of the Posina was secured in the evening; east of the Astico, however, the position was unchanged. The Carinthian mountain Landwehr of 44 LW Bde were able to storm the Raboleo strong point with a battalion and also advanced into the steep slopes farther northeast. Then, however, they were stopped cold by flanking fire from the emplacements there and from Seghe.

XX Corps HQ saw that their left wing in the Astico valley was advancing, but only with increasing difficulty; in the evening of 1 June they decided not to seek to break through in the valley. Rather XX Corps would attack the enemy on the one hand by an operation directed from the Mt Cengio area against their eastern flank, and on the other by an operation of the inner wings of 3 and 8 ID against the ridge on both sides of Mt Rozzo Covole.

Meanwhile Col. Merten (commander of 58 Mtn Bde) took over the Mt Priafora sector. After some units were relieved, he had available three battalions from KJR # 4 and one from KJR # 1, plus a battalion from IR # 14 of the adjacent 3 ID. However, only a narrow ridge ran between Mt Priafora and his group's objective, Mt Giove; at best just two companies could be deployed here. The attack on the 2nd was delayed several times because cloud cover made artillery support difficult. One hill was taken by evening, but the enemy's very heavy flanking fire caused substantial casualties. Some ground was gained again on 3 June, but Mt Giove remained in Italian hands. On the next day, rain and fog delayed the artillery bombardment. The attacking troops could only move forward slowly. An evening assault failed. Col. Merten recognized that further attacks would be fruitless, and led his troops back to the points where they had started on 1 June.

3 ID and 44 LW ID weren't able to make any significant progress in the Astico valley. Troops of both divisions suffered heavy losses under strong enemy flanking fire, which couldn't be suppressed.

Meanwhile, on the inner wings of XX and VIII Corps some battalions from 18 and 6 Mtn Bdes, deployed next to the Kaiser Jaeger of 180 Inf Bde, mounted a new thrust; on 1 and 2 June they captured three Italian strong points on the northern slope of the Colle del Xomo-Mt Alba ridge. For the time being, however, the intended assault against the main enemy position on the ridge had to be postponed, since the Italians were present in strength and therefore extensive artillery preparation would be needed.

Since the fighting to date on the wings of XX Corps hadn't made much progress, it was decided to attack in the center, where 8 ID would advance against the Novegno plateau. They would be preceded by a systematic bombardment. The plan was to achieve artillery superiority by building three large groups of guns - one each in the Laghi basin, at Castana and at Arsiero. The artillery groups would be placed under a unified command, and one after another would pound the selected objectives: Mt Giove, Mt Vaccarezze, Mt Rione and Mt Cogolo. Considerable time would be needed to carry out the necessary deployment, since the roads in the area were still in very poor condition.

The proposed artillery force would be enormous; 100 guns, half of them of heavy caliber, would be engaged in a sector 1 km wide. The bombardment, as well as the infantry attack (to be led again by Col. Merten) would be carefully planned. The assault was to be renewed on 7 June, but difficulties in deploying the artillery caused it to be postponed until 12 June.²⁷⁶

4. 3rd Army spreads out on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau, 29 May-8 June

The energetic reconnaissance by III Corps had already indicated on 29 May that the enemy was holding the positions which we'd identified on the edge of the woods south of the Asiago basin. These positions couldn't be assaulted blindly. Corps HQ would first have to build up their strength in the Asiago basin, above all by bringing up artillery; to do so required restoring the road in the Assa valley (destroyed by the enemy) and building a

²⁷⁶Fabini, "Mt Priafora"

bridge over the Assa ravine at Roana. Therefore HQ ordered 28 ID to stay in place on the line between the Val Ghelpach and Asiago. The reinforced 22 LW ID would spread out toward the southeast, while 6 ID gradually gained ground toward the east.

Pushing back weak rear guards, 12 Inf Bde on the southern wing of 22 LW ID reached the line Asiago-Gallio on the 29th. Farther north, 18 Inf Bde observed that enemy troops were on Mt Longara and Mt Baldo, while 43 LW Bde was assembling in the Cra. Zebio area. Under FML Schönburg's command, 11 Inf Bde reached the heights of Mt Cimon and Mt Fiara, which the enemy occupied; the three battalions of 2 Mtn Bde to the north drove back Italian rear guards.

The Italians intended to keep open the road from the Sugana valley to the Asiago basin by holding the heights west of the Val di Campo Mulo, but their plan quickly unraveled. With elan the IV Battalion of the Graz IR 27 stormed Mt Cimon, I Battalion of the Pisek IR 11 took Mt Baldo, and parts of the Eger IR 73 seized the adjacent heights farther south. Several Alpini battalions offered desperate resistance, but in the evening of the 30th they were driven into the valley of Campo Mulo.

The area north of Mt Fiara, which had been conquered by parts of BH IR # 2, was defended up to the border crest by a Bersaglieri regiment; apparently they overestimated the strength of their opponents, and probably also were nervous after the defeat of the Alpini on their southern flank. When 2 Mtn Bde approached, after a short fight the Bersaglieri pulled back from Mt Magari and from the Mga. Mandrielle. Meanwhile 6 ID HQ received the encouraging report that 8 Mtn Bde was coming up and had reached the Mga. Portule.

While 22 LW ID on the line Asiago-Gallio-Mt Baldo prepared and deployed for the continuing offensive toward the southeast, detachments of 6 ID crossed the upper Camp Mulo valley and soon determined that enemy forces were prepared to defend the Mt Meletta massif. These lofty and barren heights were the next objective of 6 ID, and particularly of Col. de Brunfaut's 11 Brigade. During 2 June the IR # 27, advancing on the southern wing of this Brigade, observed the extraordinary natural barriers which barred the way to the well-constructed Italian position. The planned assault had to be postponed until sufficient artillery had been brought up. On this day, as ordered, the BH IR # 2 and 2 Mtn Bde stayed on the line they had reached (Mga. Campo Cavallo-Mt Asteate). Since the enemy were now rapidly becoming stronger in the sector around the Mga. Marcesina and at

Mt Forcellona, the attackers waited for the approach of 8 Mtn Bde and the two remaining battalions of 2 Mtn Bde. Then 8 Mtn Bde relieved BH IR # 2 in the sector on both sides of the Mga. Campo Cavallo.

On 31 May the Corps HQ made known its intentions for continuing the offensive toward the southeast. Assuming that Mt Meletta was conquered on 2 June, the 22 LW ID (with three brigades) would advance on 3 June between the line Mt Zomo-Col d'Astiago and a line running from the northeast edge of Asiago through Turico to Mt Bertiaga. 28 ID would attack west of 22 LW ID as far as a border which extended from the mouth of the Val Ghelpach through Mt Lemerle to Mt Mazze. Furthermore, it was intended that the operation would open in the morning with 28 ID's attack against the advanced enemy position Pennar-Poeslen. About six hours later the 22 LW ID would strike the positions at Stella, on Mt Sisemol, and at Stenfle. The attacks had to be staggered thus because there wasn't sufficient artillery to support a simultaneous offensive. After 6 ID conquered Mt Meletta, its mission would be to clear the enemy out of the Foza area.

Because of delays to 6 ID, the attacks of 22 LW ID and the main body of 28 ID also had to be postponed to a later date. Meanwhile the stretch of destroyed road near the barricade in the Val d'Assa was restored on 1 June, and the carriage road between Roana and Canove had been made passable for light carts. The artillery could move ahead. The right wing of 28 ID in the meantime supported the ongoing actions of the I Corps' 34 ID.

FML Rudolf Krauss, commanding 34th Division, had been given the task of clearing all the Italians out of the high ground in front of his lines on 1 June. The attack started in the afternoon; although 67 Inf Bde was once again well supported by artillery, the enemy's stubborn resistance could be overcome only at Mt Barco. Because the troops were completely exhausted, they couldn't take Mt Panoccio. In the night of 1-2 June, Col. Kliemann's group was pulled out of this action and restored to 28 ID. The 34 ID stretched out - with 67 Inf Bde on the right and 68 Inf Bde on the left - in the sector between Mt Barco and the Ghelpach valley.

Once again on 2 June no progress could be achieved on Mt Panoccio. On the day before the attackers had taken more than 700 Italian prisoners, but the defenders had apparently received reinforcements and continued to bring up fresh forces. Pilots reported that infantry were moving from Vicenza toward Schio, from Thiene toward Piovene and from Bassano into the Feltre

valley. A captured order of the Sardegna Brigade indicated that the enemy attached great importance to the area Fondi-Cavrari-Cesuna and intended to hold on there regardless of circumstances, even if their front in the Astico valley was broken. This intention was confirmed by the observed concentration of troops in the Val di Canaglia, with an estimated strength of four regiments. In fact, on 30 May Cadorna had removed his 32 ID from the assembling 5th Army and sent it to defend the heights around Mt Cengio. Regiments from this Division continued to attack toward Mt Barco in the evening, and also in the night of 2-3 June; they also were trying to recover Mt Cengio. They were repulsed in both areas.

It was necessary to take precautions against the possibility of larger-scale enemy counterattacks. HQ of 34 ID placed under GM Lauingen two battalions of IR # 101 which hitherto had been in the Division's reserve; 3rd Army HQ also moved their reserves closer to the area. 43 LW ID, four battalions of which were already stationed on the northern edge of the Assa ravine under Col. Skvara, was ordered to the Campolongo plateau. It was intended to move 10 ID into the Astico valley in the near future; this was possible because a new unit, 61 ID, had already been promised to Army Group HQ.

a. The thrust toward the Val Canaglia

On 1 June the 44 LW ID had been ordered by HQ of XX Corps to reinforce Battalion X/59, holding Mt Cengio, with two more battalions. This force was "to push strongly against the Italians' line of retreat in the Astico valley, while guarding toward the east and being careful in the downward climb to watch for terrain which doesn't appear on the map." After enemy resistance in the Astico valley increased during the 2nd, while the situation on Mt Cengio remained the same, Army Group HQ returned in the night of 2-3 June to the idea of launching a widely-encompassing thrust from these heights toward Casale and Cogole. They intended to reinforce the group on the plateau, and above all counted on cooperation from 3rd Army's artillery. HQ of 34 ID, however, had to report that for the immediate future they couldn't support the planned operation with either their own artillery or that of Janecka's artillery group. Thus the only reinforcement which the group on the heights received were the two battalions (II & III/LW IR 27) which HQ of 44 LW ID sent on the night of the 2nd.

Meanwhile the battalions which had already arrived at the scene (I/LW IR 4 and I/LW IR 27, both under Lt Col Alpi) had climbed from the Val di Sila to the highlands; the former was placed behind Bn X/59, the latter farther northeast next to a battalion from IR # 29; they were prepared to attack. The operation had to be postponed until the 3rd to give Col. Baumann's artillery group time to prepare.

This was the day when III Corps had also planned to start their offensive out of the Asiago basin, but this again had to be postponed. Only the right wing of 28 ID would join the attack by 34 ID; the latter, together with the battalions from 44 LW ID placed under its command, was to push the enemy from the heights that surrounded the Canaglia valley on the west and north.

The large-scale operation at first went well for 34 ID. Several companies took the village of Cesuna by surprise in the night. Good visibility in the morning made powerful artillery cooperation possible. Soon after 10:00 AM the FJB # 23 and 28 stormed a strong point southeast of Fondi; early in the afternoon the 68 Inf Bde had already taken Mt del Busibollo. Shortly before, 67 Inf Bde had thrust over the summit of the Belmonte onto its southeastern slope. In the afternoon the right-wing brigade of 28 ID (to which 34 ID was supposed to attach two battalions from IR # 33) advanced toward Mt Lemerle. However, the battalions of the 33rd, after fighting south of Cesuna, had already entered the forested area on the southwestern slope of Mt Lemerle. Before they received the order for the planned assault, they suffered a setback and withdrew toward Cesuna. Finally even Mt Busibollo, where the troops suffered under flanking fire from Mt Lemerle, had to be evacuated. The men fell back to the heights south of Fondi.

While nothing had changed in the Mt Barco area, Lt Col. Alpi's group had achieved important successes in hard fighting. Their first objective was Heights # 1363 east of Mt Cengio. Its capture would be followed by occupation of the true summit of Mt Cengio, which now was known to have been left still in the enemy's hands on the 31st, by Battalion X/59 on the right wing.

The artillery started to fire around 11:00 AM; here and there groups of the enemy surrendered. Then around 12:30 PM the I Battalion of LW IR # 27, although it had been sent against Point # 1363, apparently lost its way and arrived by surprise among the fortifications dug in caverns around the highest point of Mt Cengio; at the same time the Bn X/59 and the Carinthian mountain Landwehr stormed forward. More than 1400 prisoners, many machine

guns, and two long-barreled guns fell into the hands of the victors. After the battalions, which had become somewhat intermingled, were brought back into order, in another bound they stormed east along the ridge and onto Heights # 1363. However, here they discovered that the enemy's main position was actually on the next series of heights, from which the Salzburg troops came under heavy pressure. A bitter and indecisive action raged back and forth for hours.²⁷⁷

Then in the evening the battalions which 44 LW ID had sent as further reinforcements (II and III of Mountain LW IR "Laibach" # 27) won the decision. The brigade commander, Col. Majewski, had already arrived north of Mt Cengio with them in the afternoon and chose the right moment - toward 6:00 PM - to thrust against the southern slope of Mt Barco. Thus the heights from Mt Cengio to Mt Barco were finally taken.²⁷⁸ Besides 300 men killed, the enemy lost 2000 taken prisoner. In the evening fresh soldiers from the 32 Italian ID came up as reinforcements in the Canaglia valley, but were engulfed in the defeat and fled to Mt Pau.²⁷⁹

However, under the circumstances the exhausted attackers didn't recognize the extent of their own success. In fact, the inner wings of III and I Corps hadn't been able to force their way into the forested zone. Even in the Mt Cengio area, where the victory seemed to be decisive, several enemy detachments were still holding onto the eastern slopes of this mountain and of Mt Barco, as well as the summit of Mt Panoccio. These Italians would have to be thrown back before the operation could continue out of the Cesuna area.

GO Kövess therefore ordered I Corps "to fully clear the enemy" off the mountains west of the Val Canaglia "so that they cannot counterattack from this high ground." However, during the 4th the last Italian detachments pulled back over the Canaglia valley on their own initiative. Reacting quickly, IR # 29 occupied the summit of Mt Panoccio nit the afternoon; detachments of IR # 101 from the Belmonte had already reached the road leading into the valley. Therefore the attack was unnecessary.

b. The capture of Mt Meletta

Under 6 ID, the 8 Mtn Bde had been inserted at the correct time

²⁷⁷Hoen, "IR 59 im Weltkrieg", p. 467

²⁷⁸Alpi, "Vor 10 Jahren" (in Kärntner Tagblatt, Klagenfurt, 1926 - Series 123).

²⁷⁹Baj Macario, p. 1308

between 2 Mtn Bde and 11 Inf Bde. Already in the evening of 2 June we had learned from intercepted messages that the Italians intended to attack the northern wing of III Corps with strong forces from the Mga. Marcesina area. A preliminary thrust early on 3 June initiated the operation, which obviously had been planned on a large scale. The fighting continued with great bitterness throughout the day and into the night, but brought the Italians just one temporary success, which was soon canceled by the gallant soldiers of 8 Mtn Bde; overall casualties on both sides were high. The Italians resumed their thrusts west of the Mga. Marcesina in the following days, but were always thrown back. The southern wing of 2 Mtn Bde was also obliged to repel enemy assaults. Meanwhile Col. Brunfaut's 11 Inf Bde was left undisturbed, and it prepared to attack toward the Mt Meletta-Mt Castelgomberto mountain complex. The success of this enterprise hinged on bringing up several heavy mortars and the necessary ammunition. The strain on the road in the Val d'Assa caused delays, so that the offensive - originally scheduled for 4 June - had to be postponed for a day.

A reconnaissance which was meanwhile carried out made clear all of the difficulties presented by the terrain. FML Schönburg felt obliged to make a special report that he hadn't seen such adverse conditions for an attack during the course of the entire campaign. Indeed it seemed doubtful whether it would be possible to climb the barren mountains which rose around 350 meters over the Val Miela, because of the enemy who were lurking in hidden positions. With tense anticipation Division HQ watched on 5 June as troops of 11 Inf Bde - three battalions from IR # 27 and one from BH IR # 2 - ascended the bands of rock, while the batteries of 6 FA Bde plus three 30.5 cm mortars pinned down the enemy. The assault moved forward only slowly and in the evening came to a halt under the fire of the defending Italian artillery. One battalion of IR # 27 suffered such heavy casualties that it had to be pulled back in the night. In its place, two battalions of BH IR # 2 were deployed the next day, and on the 7th the assault was resumed.²⁸⁰ Deployed in depth, and inspired with an iron determination to take their goal regardless of the circumstances, the Bosniaks worked their way forward with a battalion of IR # 27 on their left wing. Then our artillery had to cease fire because the arrival of thick fog made observation impossible. Evening had come. Finally some short gusts of wind rent the gloomy

280Duic, "Der Kampf um den Monte Meletta" (Kriegs-Kameradschaft des "Eisernen Korps"), Graz, 1927-28; issues 6 and 7.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - See also Schachinger, "Die Bosniaken kommen!" (Graz, 1989), pp. 106-122.

curtain; the batteries again opened fire, and around 8:00 PM bugles sounded the charge. By 8:45 PM Mt Meletta was conquered. In vain the Alpini sought to recover the lost position. Night brought the heroic struggle to an end. 11 Inf Bde had suffered heavy losses.²⁸¹ On the next day a battalion of IR # 27, in a well-led envelopment maneuver, overcame brief enemy resistance and took Mt Castelgomberto.

Because of the very heavy casualties, no thought was given to an immediate continuation of the planned assault in the direction of Foza. It seemed more than ever necessary to reinforce 11 Inf Bde. Counterattacks were expected since the enemy's strength was increasing greatly; it was known that the Italian XX Corps had arrived. FML Krautwald placed one and a half battalions from 43 LW ID at the disposal of 6 ID.

c. The fighting in the Asiago basin

Meanwhile differences of opinion arose regarding the conduct of operations between Asiago and the Astico valley. III Corps HQ concurred with the belief of 28 ID HQ that the key to 3rd Army's further advance was to always maintain pressure on the right wing. Thus it was above all necessary to secure Mt Pau, which rose to the east of the Canaglia valley; this would make the rest of the enemy front untenable. I Corps HQ, on the other hand, felt that an attack out of the deep Canaglia valley would be difficult and costly, and that continuing pressure from the Cesuna-Asiago area would be necessary. The latter opinion was apparently more in tune with that of Army HQ, which had already been expounded on 3 June and was reiterated on the 5th in an expanded form as part of a general order - the next task was to move the main front forward, beginning on the right wing, to the line Mt Busibollo-Mt Lemerle-Mt Kaberlaba-Mt Sisemol. If conditions were favorable, it could be extended as far as Mt Sprung and Mt di Val Bella. Thus "at first more room to maneuver would be achieved"; it was intended that later the right wing would take the line Mt Pau-Mt Toerle.

On this basis the I and III Corps HQ made all their preparations

281The BH IR # 2 alone lost 5 officers and 186 men killed, 19 officers and 690 men wounded. However, Italian casualties were also great. Per Tosti, "La Guerra Italo-Austriaca 1915-1918" (Milan, 1927), p. 153, the four Alpini battalions which had stubbornly defended Mt Meletta lost 196 dead and over 1000 wounded and prisoners between 5 and 8 June 1916.

for the offensive, which would open on 6 June with the capture of Mt Lemerle. The border between 34 and 28 ID, which would be involved in the assault, ran right through this important height. Army HQ wanted the border to unite rather than separate the two divisions, and intended their headquarters to fully cooperate. The I Corps, however, was given overall command of this decisive sector; they preferred rather to place the right wing regiment of 28 ID under the HQ of 34 ID. Army HQ only agreed in part to this request; they did move the border of 34 ID about two kilometers to the northeast, so that the Division would clearly be in charge of the attack on Mt Lemerle. However, the Army did not place the troops in this area under 34 ID.

I Corps would thus have to carry on with their own units already at the front, which anyway had already been substantially reinforced. Besides Col. Majewski's group, expanded to eight battalions by the attachment of LW IR "Linz" # 2, since 3 June the 34 ID had been in charge of LW IR "Stanislau" # 20 (which had been moved forward from 43 LW ID).²⁸² In the night of 5-6 June the 20th Landwehr was placed in the front, relieving the men of 28 ID.

The attack was to start at 3:00 PM on 6 June after careful preparation by Col. Janecka's artillery group as well as all the guns of 34 and 28 ID. Col. Greger's group, which now consisted of eight battalions and two mountain cannon batteries, was deployed on both sides of Cesuna; their mission was to open the battle by taking Mt Lemerle with their left wing. Behind them stood ready IR # 101 (in the Division's reserve) and LW IR # 22 (in the Corps' reserve). After sufficient progress had been made, the three battalions of GM Lauingen's group, stationed on the southeast slope of the Belmonte, would join the attack. Col. Majewski's group of 44 LW ID would hold onto the heights west of the Canaglia valley while thrusting toward the south. 28 ID was ordered to join the attack of 34 ID, beginning on the right wing, and to occupy the area on both sides of Mt Kaberlaba.

Italian resistance stiffens south of Asiago

The course of the actions which developed in the afternoon didn't meet expectations. LW IR # 20, supported by parts of IR # 101, was able to overcome three enemy positions on the northern slope of Mt Lemerle in hard fighting; already the Italians - apparently under pressure from this event - had abandoned Mt del Busibollo,

282Kameradschafts-Bund ehemaliger Zweier-Schützen, "Die Zweier-Schützen im Weltkrieg 1914-1918" (Linz, 1931), pp. 126 ff.

which was immediately occupied by Jaeger Battalions 23 and 28. However, the enemy's main position lying just below the crest of Mt Lemerle couldn't be taken by LW IR # 20, which was weakened by casualties and exhausted. The artillery bombardment didn't have a decisive effect on the positions hidden in the woods. Also the simultaneous attacks by the right wing of 28 ID, despite stubborn efforts by the distinguished IR # 87, hadn't achieved any significant success.

22 LW ID, whose assault was dependent on the progress of both its neighbors (28 ID on the right and 6 ID on the left), wasn't able to advance much beyond the area reached on 5 June. Enemy resistance was noticeably increasing. Opposite 34 ID, which at the end of May had only been dealing with one Italian brigade, parts of ten brigades had been identified. In the afternoon of the 6th it was noted that reinforcements were coming up southeast of Asiago by truck. Therefore the next task for 34 ID was to hold the ground it had taken, while 28 ID continued to attack on the 7th to gain the space which the Army needed for its freedom to maneuver. Poor visibility made it impossible to start this operation before late afternoon, which was not unwelcome to 28 ID HQ. They still believed, as they had repeatedly stated, that a frontal assault in the 10 km wide forested zone would cost heavy casualties and couldn't lead to a major success; they felt justified by the events on the 6th. FML Schneider-Manns-Au still felt that a direct assault on Mt Pau seemed promising and asked his Corps commander to share this opinion with Army HQ.

However, when visibility improved in the afternoon the attack had to proceed. After effective artillery fire, in a short time a group of three battalions in the center of the Division's front (IV/37, II/47 and FJB 24) took several strong points and climbed the northwest slope of Mt Kaberlaba.²⁸³ Only the summit of the mountain, as had been the case at Mt Lemerle the day before, remained in the enemy's hands.

It seemed to Division HQ that this was enough ground gained for now, especially since Army HQ intended that the next attack would be directed on Mt Pau. However, the latter HQ still wanted III Corps to first be in possession of the line Lemerle-Kaberlaba-Sisemol. Therefore 28 ID would have to thrust southeast on the 8th, at least with their left wing through Pennar, to make it easier for 22 LW ID to assault Mt Sisemol. This task was assigned to one battalion of IR # 47 and to FJB # 11; they were able to work their way up to the forested area and to enter parts

283Vogelsang, pp. 442 ff.

of it; then, however, they were unable to break through despite repeated attacks, always preceded by artillery fire. Again it was demonstrated that in the forest the artillery couldn't achieve the desired effectiveness, which caused the oncoming infantry to unexpectedly collide with an unshaken enemy in hidden positions. In the afternoon there was a critical hour for parts of 55 Inf Bde on the slopes of Kaberlaba, when the enemy launched a strong counterattack; however, the Italians were repulsed. 22 LW ID also attacked on the 8th; they had moved their left wing, in conjunction with 6 ID, east to the Miela ravine; now they struck the enemy trenches on Mt Sisemol and at Stenfle. 18 Inf Bde stormed the heights at Stenfle, but came to a halt in front of the main Italian position Xaibena-Mt di Val Bella. Lt Col. Köbe's group, consisting of the three Feld Jaeger Battalions of 12 Inf Bde, conquered Mt Sisemol in a sharp assault, taking over 1000 prisoners. IR # 17 of this Brigade came nearly to Bertigo and at Pennar reached out toward FJB # 11 of 28 ID.

Nevertheless the actions of the last few days had proven that only a portion of the enemy front could be assaulted at one time, due to the necessity of concentrating strong artillery fire at one point. Therefore the assaults were suspended for the time being. The gaze of the Army commander was turning to the western wing, where the forested zone that would have to be traversed was the narrowest.

On this wing the troops of Col. Majewski's group on the northwestern slopes of the Val Canaglia were enjoying a well-earned rest. Only on Mt Lemerle was the enemy still trying to throw back the battalions of 34 ID, which were so dangerously close to the Italian position. While the fighting surged back and forth, the Division was preparing to bring all of the Lemerle heights into their possession by a *coup de main*. In the night of 9-10 June, mountain cannon, trench mortars and infantry guns were deployed along and just behind the fighting line. After a 45 minute barrage that had an effective psychological impact, early on the 10th parts of LW IR # 20 stormed the enemy position and pushed over the heights onto the southern slope; they were joined by companies from the Bekescsaba IR # 101. In just a half hour the hotly-contested Mt Lemerle was in the hands of the attackers. A dangerous Italian counterattack in the morning was repulsed by the intervention of the 101st.

5. The end of the offensive (10 to 16 June)

a. The goals are limited

In the days when both armies of Archduke Eugene's group were trying to breach the last mountain wall which barred their entry into the plains of upper Italy, in the area south of the Pripjat the Russians opened the relief offensive which the Italians had so urgently requested. As will shortly be related, by 6 June they had already gained a surprisingly large amount of ground and forced the k.u.k. high command to deal with the difficult question of sending reinforcements to this theater of the war. In the first step, Archduke Eugene was informed on 6 June that the Army Group wouldn't be receiving a division from the northeast as a reinforcement, as had been intended. The offensive would have to be kept in motion by incorporating the 130 March companies that were available.

On this occasion the Chief of the General Staff noted that he had a "satisfactory impression of the economical and composed direction of the fighting during the great offensive"; however, he believed that in some places "especially under 11th Army, costly local attacks had been initiated without sufficient preparation, apparently upon the initiative of the individual commanders." Based on the short daily reports, it wasn't possible for anyone to fully understand the enormous obstacles to carrying out combat in the rugged mountains.

On 6 June the 11th Army had postponed the start of their attack - initially to the 9th - because the artillery wasn't ready yet to provide the necessary support. The high command was informed about this, as well as about the course of the fighting by 3rd Army. Despite the situation in the Russian theater of war, which was becoming more critical by the hour, the AOK told Archduke Eugene that it wasn't important whether the decisive breakthrough of the Army Group's center into the plains took place a few days earlier or later. It only mattered that the operation was thoroughly prepared and then carried out systematically and with great strength. However, they expected the Army Group commander to ensure that both Armies concentrated their strength, especially the artillery, on the inner wings. All actions other than the major assaults - pointless operations, "repeated infantry attacks against intact positions, patrol actions" and so on - were to be ruthlessly suppressed. In such cases the Army

Group HQ was to intervene "with the strictest measures." They were also to report "how many batteries of each caliber were preparing for the combined offensive decreed in this order, and the forces which were to carry it out."

This directive was received at Bozen with some resentment. Archduke Eugene immediately replied that in his opinion it wasn't necessary to halt the attack by 3rd Army on the Asiago plateau, which had already started, so that it could be later resumed simultaneously with the offensive by 11th Army. The great distance between the sectors where the two forces were attacking (the former Army was on the Novegno plateau, the latter by Asiago) meant that it was of little importance that the assaults be carried out at the same time. In fact, if 3rd Army gained some ground before the 11th started, they would be better able to support the advance of the 11th.

In the morning of 8 June, this response was supplemented when the Army Group's Chief of Staff FML Krauss had the Chief of his Operations Section, Col. Freih. von Salis-Samaden, telephone the high command. Salis-Samaden asserted that Army Group HQ saw no reason to intervene against over-hasty measures to ensure that preparations were thorough. Measures were already in place to organize the resources of each Army. However, at the moment it would be impossible to concentrate all of the artillery activity of the Army Group. This would require a very tedious re-grouping and take many days. Army Group HQ would only adopt such an extreme measure if it was certain that neither of the Armies was making any progress. At present there was no need for this idea. Moreover, the HQ at Bozen didn't think it was desirable to completely forego operations other than the major assault. If the corps on the wings, which now were tying down strong Italian forces, became entirely inactive the enemy would be encouraged to concentrate against the center. Lt. Col. Schneller, speaking for the Chief of the General Staff in this conversation, replied that he could tell that "in the current serious overall situation, which requires complete composure", the Army Group HQ was in firm control of the situation in the southwest and would proceed without excessive haste. The high command was convinced that the unfavorable turn of events in the northeast would spur the commanders and troops in the southwest to increased activity. They "intentionally were withholding details of the situation in the Russian theater of operations" so that they wouldn't reduce the impetus of the Tyrol offensive. To this noteworthy statement, Lt Col. Schneller added his personal conviction that the upcoming events on the Italian front would be of extraordinary importance for the reputation of the k.u.k. Army

and for the immediate political situation.

Conrad decides to limit the offensive

However, because of the situation on the Russian front GO Conrad in the afternoon of 8 June ordered that 61 ID, which had already arrived in Tyrol, was to be sent to the northeast. At the same time he instructed 5th and 10th Armies to bring their units as quickly as possible to full strength by incorporating replacement troops. It was no longer possible to keep events in Volhynia and east Galicia from having an impact in the southwest. The high command still hoped they could avoid further weakening Archduke Eugene's Army Group. Thus on 9 June they restricted measures to the preparation of small reserve groups on all fronts, including the Archduke's. But in the evening of 10 June Conrad felt obliged, in cooperation with the German OHL and under pressure from them, to further reinforce the northeastern front. He ordered 48 ID assemble by the railroad so that they could follow 61 ID by train; further instructions would be given for the sending of heavy artillery. Along with this important order Conrad now let Archduke Eugene know that in the present general situation "restricting the goals of our offensive against Italy can hardly be avoided." The outcome of the latest attack would determine "on what line the area we have occupied will be defended on a permanent basis...For this purpose it is desirable that the Army Group's center should occupy the heights on both sides of the Astico valley, which dominate the exit into the plains."

Thus on 10 June the intervention of the Russians and its catastrophic results already forced the k.u.k. high command, despite all their efforts, to completely renounce the grand objectives of the offensive against Italy. The attacks of the next few days were carried out in the shadow of this change. They were merely the last dying waves of an already dammed flood.

b. The last attack of 11th Army

Army Group HQ didn't consider it either desirable or necessary to react to the restriction of the offensive's goals by altering the orders which had been given to the Armies placed under their command. Indeed, they hoped that the attacks they were initiating could still achieve new successes despite the reduction in their forces, and that the offensive could proceed, although more slowly.

However, the assault by XX Corps, which had been postponed several times and finally initiated on 12 June, already caused serious disappointment. 8 ID had been able during the night to prepare for their advance against Mt Giove without being disturbed. The artillery began their destructive work at daybreak. However, rows of clouds descended from the overcast sky and soon hindered visibility. Fear of endangering our own troops made it impossible to adjust the trajectory of fire. This of course hindered the effectiveness of the guns, so that when the Kaiser Jaeger of 4th Regiment began to attack they were struck by furious fire from the intact enemy. All attempts by this gallant Regiment were in vain. On the 13th the Italians once more stubbornly defended their naturally strong position, which was studded with machine guns; the attackers finally had to break off their operation. The 4th Regiment had suffered such heavy casualties that it had to be relieved by its sister unit in 58 Mtn Bde, the KJR # 3. Brigade commander Col. Merten reported in the evening, with the agreement of the leader of the attacking group (Major Freih. von Pereira), that even if fresh units were committed a renewal of the assault in this area would be pointless. The attackers could reach Mt Giove only by crossing a narrow ridge, on which just three lines of skirmishers at most could deploy. Moreover, Mt Giove was the strongest part of the enemy position. Farther west the terrain was somewhat less difficult, but any movement there was impossible because of flanking fire from Mt Vaccarezze. Farther east the steep slope couldn't be climbed. KJR # 4 had tried to take Mt Giove three times, and each time had to be pulled back after heavy losses. Although the attacking infantry had believed that the artillery fire was well-directed and heavy enough, it had been ineffective against the enemy, who were dug in among the rocks. Divisional HQ found it "very deplorable that the full difficulty of the terrain" hadn't been noticed and reported until after the assault was shattered. Nevertheless, the operation to conquer Mt Giove had to proceed, because if this position wasn't taken it wouldn't be advisable to attack toward Mt Vaccarezze. Plans were under consideration for a surprise operation at night.

XX Corps HQ also saw no alternative to repeating the attack on Mt Giove, after renewed and systematic reconnaissance which went into every detail, and further preparation. This attack was necessary, regardless of casualties, because the terrain made it impossible for the Corps to advance in other parts of its sector (between Mt Spin and Mt Rozzo Covole). 11th Army HQ concurred with these views, and at the same time proposed a renewed attack by VIII Corps against Mt Alba in a report on the entire situation

which they submitted to Army Group. They declared that although an operation to occupy the Pasubio would be very desirable, it was precluded by the numerous basins in front of the enemy position, which were still full of soft masses of snow.

GO Dankl stated that "because of the necessary preparations, neither VII nor XX Corps [could] attack on the 15th." Therefore, "in the interest of the overall situation, and to achieve success in at least one place" he offered to support the offensive of 3rd Army with all the guns of Col. Baumann's artillery group.

The proposal was agreeable to Army Group HQ, which immediately issued the necessary orders to provide the extra artillery support to 3rd Army. They forwarded all the recent reports and opinions to the high command, to whom they expressed their full confidence that the next attack would succeed, and that the campaign would continue to proceed thereafter. It was true that the difficult mountain fighting was proceeding slowly, and that the weather often was hampering the artillery for days at a time; however, they hoped that "the attempt by I Corps to break through will bring the entire offensive again into rapid flow." Therefore the Archduke urgently recommended that "the attack now in progress should be allowed to proceed according to plan, especially since both in 11th Army's area and where 3rd Army faces to the south the current course of the front line runs through terrain which isn't suitable for defensive fighting."

This somewhat lengthy collection of reports arrived at Teschen at a time when the dangerous situation on the Russian front was deteriorating. The confidence of Archduke Eugene's HQ could therefore have been treated as a beam of light. However, the indisputable facts that the offensive of 11th Army had been unsuccessful, and that there was little prospect that it would be renewed in the near future, increased the AOK's depression and led them to take a decision that reflected their doubts. At this critical point, the high command immediately sent a wire to Bozen in the afternoon of the 14th. They concurred with continuing the offensive by the right wing of 3rd Army, but commented on the fact that "11th Army isn't attacking for now." The latter Army "after the initial successes has allowed the attacks to proceed one after the other, beginning on the right wing, upon the initiative of the local commanders and without themselves organizing a powerful effort." All these thrusts, including the latest effort on the Army's left wing, had failed despite the commitment of first-rate units. This type of leadership was no longer acceptable. The AOK would "soon make changes in the personnel." The opinion of the high command gave Army Group HQ

an opportunity to direct a sharp attack against the commander of 11th Army. This angered GO Dankl, who asked to be relieved. On 17 June GO Rohr, hitherto the commander of 10th Army, took over 11th Army HQ with Col. Soos as his Chief of Staff.

c. The last actions of 3rd Army

The attack which 3rd Army had prepared for 15 June didn't develop as expected. I Corps had used the short time available to prepare for the operation as well as possible. Most of the artillery was placed in new groups south of the Assa ravine. 43 LW ID was deployed in the front between 34 and 28 ID, in the still hotly-contested sector around Mt Lemerle. But all measures bore the mark of imposed haste. GdK Karl von Kirchbach's plan of attack called for 34 ID to thrust in the center of his Corps' front, where the forested zone was narrowest. Then the left wing of Col. Majewski's group, acting in close cooperation with 34 ID, would attack Mt Pau while 43 LW ID gained ground in the direction of Mt Magnaboschi. In similar fashion, III Corps HQ ordered 28 ID and 22 LW ID that as Ist Corps continued to attack they were to roll up the position Boscon-Kaberlaba from the right wing, while the left wing moved toward Bertigo.

In general, then, the troops were now prepared for a thrust toward the south:

- . The first and principal attack on Mt Carriola was assigned to the reinforced 68 Inf Bde of 34 ID (on Mt del Busibollo and south of Cesuna);

- . On their right was 44 LW Bde of 44 LW ID on the southeastern slope of the Belmonte, as far as Mt Cengio; and

- . On their left was 86 LW Bde of 43 LW ID on Mt Lemerle.

Fourteen battalions were stationed in reserve between Fondi and Canove. In the afternoon of the 14th, moreover, fourteen batteries from XX Corps were assigned to cooperate from the area west of the Astico valley.

In the night of 14-15 June it seemed that the operation would have to be postponed. 3rd Army HQ had received intelligence that the enemy planned to attack the northern wing of III Corps in the early morning hours. However, as daylight broke, the Italians remained inactive. Therefore the plan could take its course, after a delay of just a quarter hour.

However, the fighting on 15 June took place under an unlucky star. Although the artillery, starting at 7:00 AM, kept the

heights south of Cesuna engulfed in a cloud of smoke and fumes for an hour, the advance of 68 Inf Bde soon came to a halt. The enemy had managed to prepare for resistance before the attackers could traverse the hundred paces which lay between the opposing positions. During the morning detachments of the Arad IR # 33 still managed to enter the enemy lines on the left wing, but they were hit by flanking fire from the east and south and had to pull back.

Under these circumstances, it was of little assistance that around this time parts of Col. Majewski's group had already crossed the Canaglia valley and were preparing to climb Mt Pau, or that parts of 43 LW ID had gained some ground on the southern slope of Mt Lemerle. At the latter point there was heavy fighting also in the afternoon, involving Italian counterattacks; the mountain summit finally remained in the enemy's hands. A second assault by 34 ID around noon once more couldn't break through. Corps HQ ordered that a third attempt should be made after renewed artillery preparation. But now because of the necessary re-deployment of the attacking troops, particularly of IR # 101, the possibility of a successful strike during this day disappeared; it was postponed until the following day. Col. Majewski's group had to withdraw during the night to their starting position on the western slope of the Canaglia valley so that they could restore their alignment with 34 ID.

On the 16th, fighting at first flared out on Mt Lemerle. The Kolomea IR # 24 entered the fray; parts of the Regiment had just managed to capture the mountain summit when powerful Italian attacks began. In bitter and changeable fighting the battalions of 43 LW ID held off the enemy. The casualties mounted quickly on both sides; thus in a short time LW IR # 22 lost 700 men.

The main attack by 34 ID resulted, after futile efforts in the morning, in at least a partial success on the left wing late in the afternoon. 68 Inf Bde stormed the foremost enemy position and occupied the height lying immediately past it.

There were no changes along the other parts of the front this day. Col. Majewski's group southwest of Mt de. Busibollo, though prepared to attack, waited throughout the day for 34 ID to advance; 28 ID also didn't attack. The troops of 34 ID had been adversely affected by the two days of fighting; it was necessary to give them time to re-order and re-deploy their units.

Causes of the setback

Thus the hopes of Army Group HQ for rapid success hadn't been fulfilled. There were many reasons. Already on the 14th, GO Kövess (who didn't know yet that the goals of the offensive had been restricted), had prepared a summary of the situation. He had opined that the forces at his disposal were hardly sufficient to carry out his Army's objectives - to advance with the main body to the line Bassano-Breganze while securing his extended left flank. 3rd Army was opposed by at least six enemy divisions in the area between the Astico valley and the Frenzela ravine, by more than four divisions from the Frenzela ravine north to the Val Sugana, and by two more in the latter valley. The troops of XVII Corps and of the northern wing of III Corps were pinned down because it was known that their opponents were going to attack; those on the southern edge of the Asiago basin were too weak, especially in artillery, to carry out a simultaneous assault all along the main front. Therefore a breakthrough "now and probably in the future can only be carried out in one portion of this front." Moreover, the Army commander expressed his belief that it was possible but not likely that the thrust of I Corps could also shake up the Italian front opposite III Corps, which wasn't itself directly threatened. Too much shouldn't be expected. The prospects for the latest assault weren't as bright as they had been for the first thrust by III Corps on 20 May. At that time the front was shorter, the enemy situation better known, and the entire enemy position could be simultaneously hammered by the artillery.

In fact, the last assault did fail because the artillery wasn't fully effective. The breakthrough attempt in its entirety couldn't be compared with that of 20 May. The enemy positions, which mostly lay on forest-covered high ground, could hardly be spotted. Each granite block was a small Italian fortress. The course of the fighting couldn't even be followed by the artillery observers who served with the advancing infantry. Thus accompanying fire couldn't be coordinated. Only a fraction of the once-abundant ammunition, much of which was expended in the first days of the offensive, was still available. Also the infantry of I Corps lacked the striking power of the personnel of III Corps (who were recruited in the Alpine lands)²⁸⁴. Nevertheless, the Army was still confident that the offensive could be resumed, and was making fresh preparations.

284TRANSLATOR's NOTE - Actually, just 20 of the 36 infantry battalions in III Corps as of the start of the offensive were "recruited in the Alpine lands"; the rest were from Bohemia, Hungary, Croatia and Bosnia.

d. The order to go over to the defensive

Archduke Eugene was determined to once more seek to break through at Asiago. He ordered that the Astico valley group of 44 LW ID should be placed at the disposal of 3rd Army for use on the plateau. Furthermore, 11th Army had transferred about ten heavy batteries plus 9 ID to 3rd Army (although the artillery of the latter division had already left the theater by rail along with 48 ID). Counting 10 ID (whose 20 Inf Bde was stationed in two groups north of Asiago and whose 21 Bde marched ahead from Vezzena to Roana on 16 June), 3rd Army could count on receiving a sufficient number of fresh troops in the next few days.

On 16 June the Army Group Chief of Staff visited I Corps to determine the prospects for and course of the attack. Meanwhile at noon the HQ of 11th Army reported that the Chief of Staff of XX Corps had himself evaluated the conditions around Mt Priafora and agreed with Colonel-Brigadier Merten that a renewed assault on Mt Giove could be successful. The operation could begin in about three days, after numerous machine guns and special equipment were brought up. Army Group HQ left open the question of whether the attack would take place, but preparations were put in motion.

Thus on the 16th there was still confidence in the successful conclusion of the operation in 3rd as well as 11th Army, despite the already restricted resources. Then at 6:30 PM there arrived in Bozen an order from the high command that two more divisions were to be given up, and that the rest should go over to the defensive.

Thus the large-scale offensive against Italy came to a premature end. The retreat to a shorter defensive line was initiated. Without exaggeration GO Archduke Eugene announced to the victorious troops:

"In a few weeks you have taken a series of strong positions which had been under construction for months, including some mighty armored works which supported them, and driven deep into enemy territory. More than 47,000 prisoners (including 1000 officers), 318 guns, 191 machine guns and a rich booty of military equipment bear witness to your victories!

You've been preparing, after a brief pause, to strike a new blow that would destroy the last enemy positions in the mountains and fully open the way into the plains. With a heavy heart, I must

halt you.

The many troops whom the enemy has brought in great haste from various places to oppose you haven't stopped your victorious course. More serious considerations have forced us to this sacrifice, so that other parts of the border of our great fatherland can be better protected."

6. Review of the spring offensive of 1916 against Italy

The plans

In the peacetime mobilization plans which the General Staff developed for War Scenario "I" (Italy), an offensive was envisioned from two fronts - the Isonzo and the south Tyrol bastion.²⁸⁵ The attack by both groups would be simultaneous. If one of the pincers didn't manage to break through, it would at least pin down enemy forces and make the task of the other army easier. The most effective direction for the operation was undoubtedly from south Tyrol. It led into the enemy rear and would be all the more dangerous to the Italians if they deployed their major force farther east, toward the Isonzo. However, because of the location of the railroads and the narrowness of the area where troops could deploy in Tyrol, during peacetime it was intended that our own main body would deploy on the Isonzo. Nevertheless, the mobilization plan developed in winter 1908-09 included the assembly of an army of nine first-line divisions in south Tyrol.²⁸⁶

During the war, the first plan for an offensive against Italy was developed in June 1915, three weeks after our former ally entered the fray. However, the situation differed from that before the war in more than one detail. An enormous part of the Aus-Hung. forces would be tied down in Russia for the foreseeable future. Thus Austria-Hungary's freedom to maneuver was diminished, which allowed the Italian Army to deploy on the eastern border of Venetia rather than on the Tagliamento, and to immediately thrust toward Laibach. Influenced by these circumstances, the officer who drafted the 1915 plans, Lt Col. Schneller, decided that the offensive against Italy - which he urgently recommended for month after month - could be launched only from south Tyrol. Because of our shortage of troops, and also because the vulnerability of

285Glaise-Horstenau, "Franz Josephs Weggefährte" (a biography of Beck, Vienna, 1930), pp. 392 ff. Conrad, Vol. I, pp. 416 ff.

286Conrad, Vol. I, p. 417

the Italians' flank had been increased by their deployment on the Isonzo, this seemed to be the optimum solution even if our German ally sent troops to help out, which from the beginning was doubtful. As indicated by a marginal note, Conrad approved of this concept for only the first of the two reasons stated:²⁸⁷

"Also during the World War, I held fast to the notion that any action against Italy should be carried out in its entirety, *i.e.* simultaneously from Tyrol and from the Isonzo, to the extent that was permitted by the general situation....I am convinced that full implementation of the pre-war plan for the deployment against Italy, with the cooperation of strong German forces, would have led to a decisive success and possibly to a favorable conclusion of the World War in favor of the Central Powers."

Whether or not Conrad requested the help of German troops for an offensive against Italy on two fronts at his meetings with Falkenhayn toward the end of 1915 is not known. It appears rather than by this time the k.u.k. Chief of Staff had already determined to carry out the thrust solely from south Tyrol, and that he was seeking only to secure some German units for this sector. However, he couldn't win Falkenhayn over to his idea. Thus the offensive took place without the presence of Reich-German units.²⁸⁸

The actual outcome of the operation indicates that an assault on two fronts would have been preferable. This was proven in a report which General Staff Lt Col. Schneller prepared for Conrad three months after the 1916 offensive against Italy was broken off. Here he noted that the decisive thrust in any attack in Italy would still have to be mounted from south Tyrol, but that this didn't preclude simultaneously maintaining "strong pressure" on the Isonzo front "to force the enemy to divide their army and to keep them from hurling strong forces against the Tyrol front while still holding onto the Isonzo, as they did this spring."

Although this observation is surely correct, it doesn't simply follow that if the offensive in May 1916 had been carried out in this fashion it would have certainly achieved the expected success (at the minimum, the evacuation of the Isonzo front by the Italians).

The deployment

²⁸⁷Conrad, Vol. I, p. 418

²⁸⁸See also Krauss, "Ursachen", p. 184, where he decidedly advocates an attack on two fronts. Also Cramon, "Bundesgenossen", p. 55.

Preparing the units for the offensive was somewhat difficult, with one army deployed behind another. This deployment was caused not only by the north-south direction of the Adige valley, which served as the staging area, but also by the deliberate intent of the planners to give a certain direction to the upcoming operation. The leading force - 11th Army - was provided with nine divisions and strong artillery; they would break through, with their main body kept closely together, over the Folgaria-Lavarone plateau to the foot of the mountains between Thiene and Bassano. 3rd Army would march behind the 11th, and preferably not deploy at the front until the edge of the heights had been reached. Apparently it wasn't envisioned that the entire 3rd Army would enter the battle at this point with its original organization. More likely the HQ would have taken over a portion of the now wider front, depending on the situation at that moment. In any event, the deployment of one army behind the other was supposed to ensure that the first breakthrough would be coordinated by one HQ along the entire front, while the units to the rear were kept together so that they wouldn't be employed until after the breakthrough occurred.

For Army Group HQ, whose Chief of Staff declared the deployment "a serious operational error"²⁸⁹, the disadvantage of this scheme was that their role would be more or less superfluous until the second echelon intervened. Army Group always wanted the two Armies and their HQ to deploy next to each other from the start of the operation; they justified their argument by the necessity for including the Sugana valley in the offensive. This was also consistent with the opinions of 11th Army HQ. The high command, however, refused to alter their scheme. They emphatically repeated that in the first and decisive thrust all the troops should be deployed in depth and massed together while they attacked - under the command of 11th Army - without swerving to the right or the left.

The missions of the individual corps

The order of battle which GO Dankl prepared to carry out these orders was designed to address all issues that could bear on the mission's success. However, the unusually heavy snowfall in March made it impossible to open the attack on 10 April as planned. In the days and weeks of restless waiting that followed, it was noted with concern that the watchful enemy had already smelt a rat and were bringing up reinforcements.

289Krauss, "Ursachen", p. 191

In mid-April, pressure from the Italians in the Sugana valley made it necessary to commit the 18 ID. Although this Division was thereby lost for the main attack, ultimately the resultant concentration of the enemy in the Sugana valley was sufficient compensation. A development which had a much more unfavorable influence on the further decisions of the Aus-Hung. leadership was the impression given by various measures of the Italians that they were already turning their attention to the sector where XX Corps was supposed to attack. In the event, this impression turned out to be incorrect, but it caused concern that the Corps commanded by the Archduke-Successor was to be deprived of any conspicuous success. It led 11th Army HQ to postpone the attack of III Corps until several days after that of XX Corps, so that the artillery of the former command would make it possible for its right-hand neighbor to strike. The high command didn't agree with this plan to split up the attacking phalanx. Twice they turned down the idea, but finally gave in when Army Group HQ supported the assertions of GO Dankl. It is true that the intervention of III Corps' artillery in the fighting of XX Corps made it easier for the latter to carry out their first assignment.²⁹⁰

The situation wasn't improved when 48 ID, hitherto held in readiness behind the Army's left wing, was moved to VIII Corps on the right wing because it was believed that here the enemy had taken the fewest counter-measures and that therefore it would be possible to achieve a quick success. It's noteworthy that on this occasion GO Conrad stated that he had "always [counted] on advancing with relative ease over the Piano della Fugazza", and that he believed that a success by the groups on the wings (VIII and especially III Corps) was the surest means to bring the enemy opposite XX Corps "into a difficult situation." These words indicate that in his heart the Chief of Staff still preferred an envelopment maneuver to a frontal breakthrough. Perhaps they also show that he shared the concerns about the Successor's Corps which were mentioned above.

The role of III Corps had already been decided. However, Conrad's remark strengthened GO Dankl in his conviction that the main effort should be made on his Army's right wing; this force was to keep pace with XX Corps in a wide-ranging envelopment movement. Army Group HQ agreed. They placed under 11th Army the XXI Corps from 3rd Army, and also took this opportunity to

290See Dankl, "Zur Offensive aus Tirol" (Mil. wiss. Mitt., Vienna, 1933 edition), p. 516.

implement their long-cherished intention of deploying the Armies next to each other; III Corps was separated from 11th Army and assigned, along with the troops defending the Sugana valley, to GO Kövess. While these measures were carried out, the battle was already raging. Nevertheless, III Corps was able to carry out its attack according to plan after the five days' delay prescribed by GO Dankl; while overseeing this Corps, GO Kövess conducted his first operation efficiently.

The attack proceeds systematically

The fundamental plan of 11th Army was substantially altered by the able Italian defense. While the artillery had been able almost without exception to fire from one point before and during the infantry assaults on the first and second and defensive zones, new preparations were needed for the assault against the third line, which ran from Mt Civillina (west of Schio) through Arsiero and Asiago to Mt Kempel. Time was lost while the masses of guns switched their positions. A *coup de main* had been planned in advance only against the northernmost bastion of this third line on Mt Kempel, and it succeeded. Otherwise the offensive was developing systematically in two sharply-divided phases.

Some advanced plan was certainly warranted because of the enemy fortifications; even before the war the 30.5 cm mortars, which were to become so famous, were developed to suppress these works. However, tactics were also influenced by the lessons of the war itself; in 1914 attacks were launched in which preparations were almost scornfully rejected, but attitudes changed during joint campaigns with our methodical German allies. The pendulum had now swung completely in the opposite direction. It is questionable if this was a favorable development, at least when we were opposed by Italians who were particularly susceptible to sudden panic.

Army Group HQ themselves had serious reservations about 11th Army's cautious advance after the impressive initial successes. They urged a quicker pace, but restricted themselves to suggestions and didn't give specific orders. In retrospective, especially after studying the breakthrough at Caporetto in October 1917, it seems that the key to the situation was the Astico valley below Arsiero. If III Corps had attacked simultaneously with XX Corps, it is possible that they could have exploited the confusion among the enemy, as later happened at Caporetto, and thrust past Mt Cimone and the town of Arsiero in one bound. Such a thrust, even if it had been envisioned by Army

HQ, was impossible because III Corps had been held back. However, there was still an opportunity after the Italian defenses collapsed in front of the "Iron Corps", and the enemy fell back in confusion to the southern side of the lower Val d'Assa; it wasn't exploited because in their desire to keep the main effort directed toward the center the generals didn't recognize the significance of III Corps' advance. The troops' will to attack and willingness to accept casualties never faltered.

Reluctance of the commanders to accept casualties

One important reason why the generals were relatively cautious was an order issued by Army Group HQ at the start of April, in which they enjoined every commander to give great importance to carrying out his assignment with the smallest amount of bloodshed. Although the thought expressed in this order was certainly correct, when it was constantly repeated it inevitably hindered the lower-ranking leaders. This was certainly true in the Corps led by the Archduke-Successor, who in the goodness of his heart made avoidance of unnecessary casualties the most important factor in his considerations. It must be conceded that the offensive led to astonishingly little sacrifice of life. Out of the approximately 220,000 men who made up the forces in Tyrol (3rd and 11th Armies plus the Land Defense Command), between 15 May and 15 June about 5000 were killed and 23,000 wounded. 14,000 became ill, and 2000 were taken prisoner. The percentage of fatal casualties was 2.3% of the available strength.

This effort to achieve success with minimum casualties was certainly praiseworthy. However, it played an important negative part when 28 ID delayed crossing the lower Assa ravine, when 3 ID halted in front of Mt Cimone after the position had been more or less abandoned by the enemy in their initial confusion, and when there was no timely and energetic thrust against Mt Pasubio. Each time we postponed an infantry attack to await the arrival of as much heavy artillery as possible we gave the enemy time to prepare for new resistance.

Moreover, the fact that the troops engaged around Mt Cengio and especially the Kaiser Jaeger in the Mt Priafora sector still suffered heavy losses in fighting that at least in part was pointless is one of the cruel ironies of fate.

How the offensive slowed and stopped

Despite the many postponements, the Italian generals were still

taken by surprise by the initial onslaught of XX Corps. Possibly the blow delivered by III Corps caused the enemy even greater alarm. During these exciting hours and days, Cadorna made many preparations for abandoning the Isonzo front. As he later stated in his memoirs, he definitely intended to evacuate the Isonzo at the moment when his opponents reached the heights at the edge of the plains.²⁹¹ If the attackers had been able to maintain constant pressure on the line Arsiero-Asiago, perhaps the enemy commander would have lost his great composure earlier. Around the end of May Cadorna believed that the most serious part of the crisis had been overcome. A report arrived on 1 June that the call for help from the Tsar wouldn't been in vain, and this also helped to raise the Italians' wavering courage. Thanks to the arrival of reinforcements, they were firmly holding their third position.

The intervention of the Russians at Luck and in east Galicia brought about a decisive change. It remains an open question whether the Aus-Hung. offensive had already passed its peak before the crisis developed in the northeast and independently of the new development. In any case, now it was clear that the operation would have to be halted sooner or later, and any further progress made by 11th and 3rd Armies toward the south could no longer be justified. It is even questionable whether the capture of the last heights at this point would have still forced the enemy to give up their positions on the Isonzo. Discussions by Cadorna about a possible battle of maneuver in the plains indicate he wouldn't have pulled back. The new Aus-Hung. position was unfavorably sited for defense, required a large garrison, and was difficult to supply. Its retention could be justified only if the offensive was soon to be renewed. These considerations would make it necessary after the cancellation of the offensive to surrender some points which had been captured in heavy fighting and to pull the Armies back behind the Posina and the lower Assa, where their lines would be better-sited tactically and - above all - could be held by smaller forces.

Reactions to the end of the offensive

The troops carried out their latest orders with clenched teeth and barely suppressed rage. At the end of the second year of the war they had embarked on this campaign, which was made extraordinarily difficult by the terrain and climate, with a noble spirit and had achieved as much as was possible. Sons of all the nations of the great Empire had taken part in the proud

291Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, p. 230

successes. In the lead were the German Austrians of the Alpine lands, supported as always in the fighting and suffering by the German Bohemians.

For the monarchical institution the campaign was especially significant because the heir of the 86-year-old Emperor for the first time led a large command against the enemy. Many objections were raised loudly against his assignment, not least because his own heir (Archduke Otto) was just four years old. Although Archduke Franz Joseph's Corps command strengthened the monarchical principle, it also had certain disadvantages which have already been noted above. The Archduke strove zealously to carry out all the duties of his post. He played a major role in the deliberations of the leadership and often ignored the dangers of the battle as he was in the midst of events. He cared without wavering for the welfare of the troops and won their hearts during the offensive with his freshness and good nature. In the rest of his short and painful life the memory of "Vielgereuth-Lafraun" [Folgaria-Lavarone] shone more brightly than that of any other happy event (which anyway were rather few). In January 1917, when the young Emperor visited the battlefield - again covered in snow - for the first time after his accession, the newly-promoted Field Marshal Archduke Eugene asked him in the name of the Army to assume the Great Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order, of which he had become Grand Master, in remembrance of the Arsiero-Asiago campaign. The Emperor gladly complied.²⁹²

292TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - For a more critical analysis of Archduke Charles' role in the campaign, see Krauss, "Ursachen", pp. 194-95. Krauss' summary of the reasons for the failure of the offensive (pp. 192-93) are similar to those in the official history, but he lays particular emphasis on the failure to attack on the Isonzo as well as from Tyrol. He also dwells on a point only briefly referred to above, namely the fact that Conrad wished to secure the high ground rather than thrust through the valleys. Krauss made the same point in 1917 when he argued with Reich-German officers during the planning for the Caporetto battle. "Krauss...put the weight on a breakthrough in the valleys, feeling that progress would be faster and hostile troops on the heights could be dealt with at leisure." (Cyril Falls, "Caporetto" [Philadelphia, 1966], p. 24. Falls believed that the course of the fall 1917 fighting demonstrated that Krauss' concept was correct.)

VI. The Russian Offensive of Summer 1916

A. Preparations of Friend and Foe

1. Developing plans of the Russian high command

The Russian attacks in March resulted in a severe defeat, and therefore didn't change the situation in favor of the Tsar's Army. Alexeiev remained zealous, however, in his determination to attack again and thus if possible to anticipate the German offensive which he feared. The melting snow made it impossible to carry out large-scale military operations, so there was time to replenish the ranks of the Western and Northern Fronts, to bring up more artillery, and to assemble ammunition.

Planning during April

Meanwhile the Stavka at Mogilev was planning an attack which, as prescribed by the Chantilly agreements, would occur prior to the Franco-English offensive on the Somme. To discuss the plan, Alexeiev scheduled a meeting at the Tsar's HQ for 14 April; he summoned the three front commanders (Kuropatkin, Evert and Brussilov) and their chiefs of staff, as well as the War Minister (Gen. Shuvaiev), the General Artillery Inspector (Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovich) and the generals serving as advisors to the Tsar (Plehve and Ivanov).

Using a carefully prepared memorandum, Alexeiev covered the general situation, particularly on the Russian front.²⁹³ He analyzed relative strengths as part of his consideration of defensive possibilities; by his reckoning the Tsar's Army at this time had an advantage of 671,00 bayonets, which would increase to 877,000 during the spring. To the Chief of the Stavka, the Southwestern Front seemed menaced, because here the Russians were only slightly more numerous than their opponents and even relatively small enemy reinforcements could substantially tilt the scales against them. In the area north of the large zone of swamps, where the bulk of the Russian Army and its equipment were

²⁹³Baluiev, "The 8th Army in the Breakthrough at Luck" (in Russian; Moscow, 1924), pp. 185 ff. Diakov, "Wie es im Sommer 1916 zur Brussilow-Offensive kam" (Mil. wiss. Mitt., Vienna, 1932), pp. 665 ff.

stationed, Alexeiev believed that he could check eventual German thrusts toward Riga, Dvinsk or Minsk. He would respond to any such maneuver with a counterattack; for this purpose he would have sufficient reserves available by the start of May, and would place them where they could quickly intervene.

Then Alexeiev discussed his plan for an attack. After the units were grouped, he felt that only north of the Polesie would it be possible to mount the main assault without large troop movements. Here, based on the lessons of the March battles, swamps and woods should be avoided. Alexeiev wanted to make the main effort with the inner wings of the Western and Northwestern Fronts in the direction of Vilna. He intended the West Front to attack with a 6:1 superiority from the Minsk-Molodechno area toward Oszmyana, while Northwest Front thrust west over the line Vidzy-Dvinsk with 5:1 superiority. Thus Alexeiev hoped to carry out a double attack with 695,000 men against 125,000 Germans. Several days before the main attack, four corps would thrust from Riga toward Mitau, an area which he considered to be of special sensitivity to the Germans. Southwest Front would attack from the area around Rovno through Luck toward Kovel only if successes were being achieved in the northern sector. The Guard troops would assemble south of Dvinsk at the disposal of the Stavka.

Evert and Kuropatkin stated that they were less confident about the prospects of the success of the proposed offensive. It seemed to them that the heavy artillery wasn't strong enough to suppress the well-built German positions, and that there wasn't enough ammunition available. They feared that they would suffer a setback like that in March, and wouldn't change their minds when they were reminded that they had more light artillery ammunition than they needed.

Now GdK Brussilov took the floor; he had already been planning an offensive when he was still commander of 8th Army, and continued to do so when he began to lead the Southwest Front. He declared that despite all the difficulties (lack of heavy artillery, ammunition and airplanes) he was firmly convinced that he could attack on his Front in order to draw enemy units in his direction. Brussilov continued, "I therefore strongly request permission to attack on my Front at the same time as my neighbors. Even if I don't achieve success, I will not only tie down enemy units; I will draw some of the enemy reserves toward my Front and therefore considerably help Evert and Kuropatkin to carry out their assignments."²⁹⁴ When Alexeiev objected that he

²⁹⁴Brussilov, pp. 186 ff.

couldn't send either troops or equipment to the Southwest Front, Brussilov responded that he had never sought any help; he was satisfied with what he had. He wasn't promising any specific success. However, his troops agreed with him that they had to attack for the sake of the overall situation, in order to ease the burden of their brothers in arms and to enable them to break through the enemy front.

This manly speech had a visible effect on the other participants in the conference. Kuropatkin and Evert now modified their position; they stated that they would attack, although they couldn't guarantee success. During the rest of the conference, the plan for an offensive was finally ratified; on 23 April it was sent to the Tsar, and on the next day it was published in the form of an order to the Front commanders. The West Front would deliver the main blow from the Molodechno area through Oszmyana toward Vilna. The other two Fronts would carry out supporting attacks. The North Front would advance either from the Illuxt-Lake Driszyat sector toward Novo Alexandrovsk or from Vidzy toward Uzhany. The Southwest Front would pin down the enemy along its entire sector, making their main effort with 8th Army toward Luck. The Stavka would issue the timetable for the offensive later, so that it could be coordinated with the military operations of the Western Powers. It was difficult to foresee when the general offensive of the Entente would begin, since shortly before the Mogilev Conference news arrived from France that the Western Powers couldn't strike before the start of July due to the enormous consumption of military equipment in the fighting around Verdun.²⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the Stavka ordered that the technical and logistical preparations should be completed by mid-May. Also by this time the troops should be moved closer to the enemy's lines wherever this was possible. The date for the start of the offensive would be announced seven to ten days in advance. Fresh troops would arrive in the involved sectors shortly beforehand. The Stavka also advised that diversionary operations would be advisable in areas such as by Riga, by Pinsk, and at the mouth of the Strypa.²⁹⁶

Modifications to the plans during May

Before agreements were in place between Russia and the Western Powers regarding the exact timing of the general offensive, cries for help from Rome caused the Stavka to make a quicker decision.

295Baluiev, p. 189

296Klembovsky, p. 111 (Supplement # 3)

Already on 12 May, when the Italian Minister President learned of threatening preparations to attack by the Austrians in south Tyrol, he turned to Petersburg to remind the Russians about the offensive which he believed they were already considering for the end of May. However, on the 17th Marchese Carlotti, the Italian ambassador to the court of the Tsar, reported that according to his information the Russian offensive couldn't be expected prior to the second half of June.

Meanwhile on 15 May Archduke Eugene's Army Group unleashed its offensive on the Lavarone-Folgaria plateau, and in a short time won such success that the high command and government in Italy feared the worst. Italian diplomacy now opened feverish activity in Peterburg to convince Russia to quickly strike Austria-Hungary. Steps were also taken in Paris and London to bring pressure on the Russian high command from the Western powers.

On 19 May the Italian plenipotentiary at the Stavka, GM Conte Ruggeri, was instructed to convey to Alexeiev the request for quick assistance. Alexeiev was sympathetic, but he made a relief offensive contingent upon:

- . The consent of the Tsar, who at the time was visiting troops in southern Russia²⁹⁷; and
- . An already overdue report from Brussilov, who felt it would first be necessary to regroup his units and bring up supplies since he had originally planned to start his offensive at a later date.

Meanwhile the Italian emergency worsened; in his distress, Cadorna on 23 May sent his call for help directly to the Stavka through the Russian military attaché in Rome (Col. Enkel) and through GM Ruggeri.²⁹⁸ Alexeiev had a low opinion of the Italian Army.²⁹⁹ However, he believed it was still numerically strong enough to hastily assemble a large enough force to check the Austrian thrust. In the meantime he was requesting the commander of Southwest Front to submit daily reports on when his force would be ready to attack.³⁰⁰ Brussilov was aiming for 1 June. However, since GdI Evert's West Front wouldn't be ready until 14 June, Alexeiev scheduled the offensive of Southwest Front to start on 4 June. A factor which made it necessary for the

297There were two corps totaling 60,000 men stationed in southern Besarabia; they included a division made up of Aus-Hung. prisoners of Slavic nationality.

298Klembovsky, p. 31

299Lemke, p. 348

300Brussilov, p. 203

commands to strike on different dates was the insufficient artillery ammunition, especially for heavy caliber guns, which precluded a simultaneous offensive by all three Fronts.

The Tsar approved this plan on 26 May.³⁰¹ On the 31st Alexeiev issued orders for the offensive by telegram. He instructed Brussilov's force, reinforced by V Siberian Corps from the Northern Front, to mount "an auxiliary thrust, but in strength" against the Aus-Hung. Army.³⁰² This seemed urgently necessary because "the continuous transfer of Aus-Hung. troops to the Italian front and the difficult situation of the Italian Army should be addressed by Southwest Front's decisive attack against the now weakened Austrian front." The offensive would start on 4 June. If it succeeded, IV Cavalry Corps would exploit the victory by breaking through to Kovel; 3 Cauc Coss Div was assigned to this Corps from the Western Front.

According to the original plan, West Front would strike the main blow, beginning on 10 or 11 June. They received IX Corps from the units at the disposal of the Stavka. Diversionary assaults at Pinsk and Baranowicze would precede the principal attack toward Vilna.

Northern Front was ordered to cover the lines of communication to Petersburg and Polotsk as well as the right flank of Western Front. This would permit the Guards, who were stationed east of Lake Narotch, to move as soon as possible to the point where Evert's forces would make their main effort. Demonstrations, especially near Riga, would divert the Germans' attention from the Vilna area.

In reviewing the development of Alexeiev's plans for an offensive in the first half of 1916, it is evident that while the basic concept was a thrust north of the Polesie, the point selected for the main effort gradually slid to the south. Finally the decisive thrust was to be delivered from Molodechno toward Vilna. Thus no decisive assignments were given to the Northern Front, whose commander Kuropatkin once more - as formerly in the Russo-Japanese War - didn't display the least bit of initiative.³⁰³ On the other hand the Southwest Front, which during the March offensive had stayed strictly on the defensive, now gained in importance because of Brussilov's thirst for action and the cries for help from Italy. Despite some inner reservations, Alexeiev

301Zayontschovsky, p. 16

302Klembovsky, Supplement # 5; Zayontschovsky, p. 20

303Brussilov, p. 188

was meeting Cadorna's wishes. Because of this concession to the Italians, the intended "auxiliary thrust" by Southwest Front would precede West Front's main offensive by a week. Finally, this would lead to Southwest Front bearing the main burden of the operation, totally contrary to Alexeiev's original intention.

2. Preparations of Brussilov

The concept

Shortly after the Mogilev conference, Brussilov summoned his four Army commanders to Voloczysk on 18 April so that he could issue them orders for the upcoming offensive. He started by stating that he was unalterably determined to have his Armies attack at the end of May. He planned to have them all simultaneously hit the wide front between the Styr and the Pruth. The generals - especially the experienced commander of 7th Army GdI Shcherbatchev - doubted that this would succeed and raised objections. Brussilov brushed them aside with the observation that since the necessarily extensive preparations for the offensive couldn't be concealed from their opponents, at least an assault along a broad front would conceal the direction of the main effort. Also this was the only means by which the enemy could be really pinned down and prevented from shifting their reserves. This concept would be taken so far as to have each corps assemble strong forces in at least one part of its front to fix the Austrians' attention with suitable activity.³⁰⁴ Brussilov intended to make the main effort toward Luck with 8th Army, to which he would send his reserves.

However, all the generals (particularly the unenthusiastic commander of 8th Army, GdK Kaledin) still refused because they feared defeat.³⁰⁵

Now Brussilov became insistent. He referred to the enormous importance of the overall offensive, in which the role of Southwest Front was to support Evert's armies. According to the strict orders of the Stavka, the general direction of his advance would have to be toward the line Luck-Kovel-Brest Litovsk in 8th Army's area. Naturally this Army would have to bear the main burden of the operation because it was the closest to the West Front. Success at Luck could also force the enemy at Pinsk to

304Brussilov, p. 192

305TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - According to Stone (p. 227), "Only perhaps Sakharov of 11th Army had much sympathy with what Brussilov was attempting."

retreat. In this difficult fighting, 8th Army would be supported by a strong cavalry force thrusting along the Sarny-Kovel railroad; this might also make it possible to catch the enemy at Luck in a pincer movement. Furthermore, Brussilov noted that he was aware of the situation of 8th Army, which he had recently commanded. The first preparations for the assault had already been undertaken there. If Kaledin didn't want to assume the responsibility, he would either have to be relieved from his post or the main assault assigned to another Army.

Now the Army commanders became more confident, and Kaledin gave assurances that he would do everything necessary to carry out his assignment with success. Brussilov ordered preparations to begin on 10 May so that the offensive could start seven days later.

With special devotion Brussilov himself took part in the work of preparing for the attack. Based on the earlier actions in the East and on the fighting around Verdun, many Russian commanders had already initiated programs of military instruction. Brussilov went still further and demanded that drills to prepare for the assault should be carried out if possible near the actual terrain, so that nothing should be left to chance.

The fronts chosen for breakthrough attempts should be 15 to 20 versts wide; only in exceptional cases would they be as narrow as 10 versts or as wide as 30. This reflected an order from the Stavka that a group carrying out an offensive shouldn't be stronger than five corps. There would be 3 ½ men per each pace along the front to be attacked, which would make it possible to strike in four waves (not counting reserves which would be brought up later). To make success more likely, the jumping-off points were to be situated no more than 200 to 400 paces from the enemy. At these points the infantry were gradually building strong and deep entrenchments, called "*places d'armes*" by French General Nivelle. For a regiment, each such installation would have to consist of several parallel trenches with connecting lines and covered an area 1000 paces wide and 300 deep.

So that the artillery could prepare the way for the foot soldiers, Brussilov demanded that they should destroy the enemy positions and barriers with accurate fire, then accompany the infantry and do everything possible to remain in contact with them. "The key to victory", wrote Brussilov in his orders, "lies not in a hurricane of fire but in well controlled bombardment with specific goals." He laid equal stress on careful reconnaissance of the enemy. In fact the attacking Russian troops were very well informed regarding the first Austrian

battle line, but much less knowledgeable about the rear positions.

In summary, it can be said that the Russian Southwest Front was better prepared to carry out its assignment than any portion of the Russian forces had ever been. Brussilov noted this fact, not without self-satisfaction, in his memoirs.³⁰⁶ However, the same testimony is given by objective observers.³⁰⁷

The deployment

Already on 25 May, six days before the Stavka's orders for the summer offensive appeared, Brussilov released his instructions for the attack.³⁰⁸

8th Army was to break through on the line Dubiszczce-Koryto in the direction Rovno-Luck with four corps (XXXIX, XL, VIII and XXII). By Brussilov's calculation, here 148 Russian battalions would strike 53 Aus-Hung. Since 8th Army was assigned the decisive role, Brussilov sent them all extra troops at his disposal - 4 Finn Rif Div, 12 CD and twenty four heavy guns from 7th Army. Per the Stavka's order of 31 May, a mounted group would also thrust forward along the Sarny-Kovel railroad, sowing confusion in the enemy's rear. This would be carried out by Gen. von Gillenschmidt's IV Cav Corps, 84 squadrons strong (2 Comb Coss Div, 7 CD, 3 Cauc Coss Div and half of 16 CD); XLVI Corps (77 and 100 ID) would open the way through the enemy positions for the horsemen.³⁰⁹ Since the addition of IV Cav Corps would have made 8th Army's line too long, XVII Corps was reassigned to 11th Army.

Gen. Sakharov's 11th Army was supposed to tie down enemy units by sending a corps along the Tarnopol-Lemberg railroad and highway; a smaller group would attack at Sapanow. On the Lemberg road 32 battalions and 100 guns would face - by Russian estimates - 15 Aus-Hung. battalions.

7th Army was instructed to thrust with one and a half corps over the lower Strypa; for this purpose they concentrated 32 battalions and 107 guns against Jazlowiec, where they believed their opponents had just 5 battalions and 23 cannon.

306Brussilov, p. 220

307Knox, "With the Russian Army 1914-1917" (New York, 1921), Vol. II, p. 437

308Zayontschovsky, pp.22 ff. Klembovsky, p. 36

309Baluiev, p. 41

GdI Letschitzky's 9th Army was to break through in the sector Mitkeu (on the Dniester)-Dobronoutz with two corps (64 battalions). It was believed that 9th Army had about 54,000 more infantry and 7,000 more cavalry than Pflanzler-Baltin.

As strategic reserves, Brussilov kept back at his disposal the 2 Finn Rif Div and 126 ID in 8th Army's sector, plus half of 12 ID south of Chotin. Behind each Army he had also stationed large numbers of trained replacement troops, but many of them didn't have rifles.

With 580,000 infantry and 58,000 cavalry Brussilov had around 100,000 more troops than the Aus-Hung. eastern front. Also, by concentrating his forces in the intended break-through areas, in most places the attackers would enjoy numerical superiority at the beginning. Nine of the eighteen corps would take part directly in the attacks, with the goal of destroying their opponents' means of resistance. However, there was no strategic goal.

This also seems to have been evident to Alexeiev, who couldn't embrace Brussilov's tactic of attacking at several points. Several times, and finally in the night of 3 June, on the eve of the great battle, he phoned the Commander of the Southwest Front and asked him to postpone the operation so that the units could be re-grouped to create a powerful spearhead that would attack in one direction. This was also the explicit desire of the Tsar. Yet Brussilov, mindful of the fruitless offensives of Evert and Kuropatkin - and also of the Germans in front of Verdun - was sticking to his opinion.³¹⁰ Now Alexeiev asked Brussilov to reconsider. The Tsar was already sleeping, and it wasn't permissible to wake him. Brussilov, however, demanded an immediate decision. This led Alexeiev to end the conversation with the words: "God be with you. Act according to your own judgment. I will report our conversation to the Tsar in the morning."³¹¹

Nothing could sway Brussilov from his course. Thus events unfolded in the way he had prescribed.

3. Defensive measures on the Aus-Hung. eastern front from mid-May to 3 June 1916

310Baluiev, p. 23

311Brussilov, pp. 204 ff.

During the May days when the Aus-Hung. troops in south Tyrol were making their victorious way over mountain peaks and through deep valleys in generally successful fighting, activity further intensified on the Russian front south of the Pripyat, which had already become livelier as the weather improved.

The k.u.k. 7th Army

In Pflanzler-Baltin's Army, this increased activity was noticed by:

- . the southern wing of XI Corps stationed on the Dolzok Heights (Papp's Brigade and half of 5 ID),
- . the parts of Benigni's Group which faced east and covered the sector between the large forested zone and the Dniester (3 CD and 42 Hon ID), and
- . 15 ID of XIII Corps stationed on the northern bank of the Dniester.

In the other defensive sectors the skirmishing remained at its usual level.

On the Dolzok and south of the bend in the Dniester at Samuszyn, both sides continued to carry out mine warfare with more energy than success. Night after night the enemy brought their trenches closer to the above-mentioned sector of Group Benigni. Despite all counter-measures, on 23 May the Russian *places d'armes* in front of 3 CD were already just 20 to 40 paces away from our barriers. The Russians were nearly as close to 42 Hon ID.

Around the middle of the month, Pflanzler-Baltin's HQ at Kolomea was aware that behind the enemy's Bessarabian front - held by III Cav Corps and XI Corps - the XII Corps and two more cavalry divisions were stationed. New Russian troops began to enter the front opposite 3 CD and 42 Hon ID from 20 May, while aerial scouts reported that the camps at Chotin and farther south had disappeared.

This obvious threat to the eastern wing of Benigni's Group forced 7th Army HQ to take wide-ranging precautionary measures.

Although 13 LW ID was leaving Monasterzyska by train (to join 4th Army), and although the II Russian Corps was concentrating in front of k.u.k. 15 ID, Pflanzler-Baltin shifted half of 30 ID (which hitherto had stood on both sides of the Dniester behind the inner wings of Group Hadfy and XIII Corps) to a point behind Benigni's front. Thus 30 ID was united. Moreover the 79 Hon Inf Bde of 40 Hon ID moved from the center of XI Corps toward the north and entered the first line between 3 CD and 42 Hon ID.

Army HQ honored a request by GM Jesser, commanding the 30 ID in reserve, that he be given control of part of the front; on 29 May he was placed over 79 Hon Inf Bde, which was reinforced by FJB # 13 of his 30 ID.³¹² The main body of 30 ID (16 Inf Bde and HQ of 215 Inf Bde with IR # 97) was stationed at Jurkoutz, while LW

312Max Pitreich, "Okna", p. 11

IR # 5 was behind 51 Hon ID in the Army's reserve. On the 24th, the 72 Inf Bde of 36 ID was also brought to this area, moving from Sadagora to Czernawka and Kociuba. Lt Col. Scholtz, who'd been watching the Romanian border with several Landsturm battalions, was sent to 5 ID with two of his battalions, leaving the border defenses south of Mamornita in the hands of the local gendarmerie. Finally, Col. Kranz's combined cavalry brigade, organized as four dismounted squadrons, was attached to 24 ID.

Besides these troop movements, which were obviously intended to build up the forces directly behind the Bessarabian front as much as possible, Army HQ concentrated a group of trucks at Zastawna and railroad trains on the tracks between Czernowitz and Horodenka. This would expedite movement of the reserves. Mining and trench mortar detachments were sent to the front, along with machine gun replacement platoons; infantry guns were mounted in the defenses. Batteries were rearmed with new pieces; those which already had four such guns now got two more. Requests for further arms, particularly long-range naval guns, were sent to Teschen. The network of defenses was expanded by the construction of positions in the rear; a new line was being built 100 meters behind Benign's foremost trenches. The Army's reserve troops were engaged in this work. In the last days of May, however, they were also ordered to be ready to deal with possible enemy incursions and were trained to counterattack.

Although continuing bad weather and many rain storms delayed the work, the commander of 7th Army, always active and prudent, believed with some justification that he had taken all possible measures against the imminent assault. By the start of June, as fighting intensified at the critical points and casualties became substantially higher, 7th Army HQ was certain that the main attack would soon be directed against the eastern wing of Group Benigni.

South, 2nd and 1st Armies

The second half of May and the first days of June passed more quietly for the center of the Aus-Hung. Eastern front than they did in Bukovina. In South Army, Hofmann's Corps reported that the Russians were working their way closer to our lines, and on the northern wing of IX Corps there was still continuous lively action at Cebrow. Agents also reported that the Russians intended to attack west of Tarnopol.³¹³ However, South Army didn't get the impression that an offensive was imminent. In

313Ronge, pp. 225 ff.

Böhm-Ermolli's Army Group there were trench mortar actions and night-time skirmishes at Dworec (southwest of Kremieniec) and at Sapanow; in both places the Russians were still standing on the western bank of the Ikwa. In general there was no change to the enemy's dispositions. Only on 27 May was it observed that about one division was moving from Zalescy south toward Aleksiniec Str. Thus the sectors of VII and VI Russian Corps were being narrowed, which might signify a threat to the k.u.k. IV Corps by Aleksiniec Nw.

4th Army

The situation of 4th Army was considerably more tense. On 18 May the 2 ID and 70 Hon ID reported systematic bombardment by Russian artillery; the latter Division had also taken prisoner a group of Russian officers on a scouting mission. The firing continued day and night and further reduced the short rest period of the garrison of the trenches, already under strain from watchfulness and from nightly construction work on the trenches. Night after night the Russians were digging forward. During the day their fire against the closest field guns was particularly heavy; enemy observers in tethered balloons peered curiously at the positions of our batteries and the camps of our reserves, while directing the fire of the heavy guns.

Now the heavy artillery of 4th Army was hastily reinforced. Seven 15 cm howitzer batteries and one 15 cm cannon battery were brought up just in time, some from the interior and some from other Armies.

Interception of enemy communications brought important news. It was learned that - contrary to earlier reports - HQ of VIII Corps rather than XL Corps had arrived at Satiyev on 27 May, and that the latter staff had moved from there to Derewiane. Prisoners stated that 4 Rifle Div had been relieved by 15 ID on the 28th. The Russian 14 ID had left Rovno on the 26th, marching only at night, and reached the front at Dolgoszeja. A new division seemed to have arrived in the woods east of Olyka. All this information made the picture of the Russian deployment for the offensive rather clear. XL Russian Corps stood ready to thrust against 2 ID while VIII Corps hit 70 Hon ID. North of the intended breakthrough point, we knew that the main body of XXXIX Corps was stationed opposite 37 Hon ID, while a division from XXXII Corps was south of VIII Corps, opposite the k.u.k. 7 ID. Behind the main attacking group the 4 Finn Rif Div had been identified, as were two newly-arrived opolcheniye brigades at Rovno. 7 CD was known to be north of Rovno, and 12 CD south of

that fortress. The Aus-Hung. staffs were also aware that XVII Corps had been reassigned to 11th Army, so that the area commanded by General Kaledin's 8th Army would be narrower during the assault.

This lurking danger forced the Aus-Hung. commanders to adopt counter-measures. The high command believed that the mainly Ruthenian personnel of the regiments in the front line opposite Olyka (IR # 89 and 90 of 4 Inf Bde) didn't have the necessary will to resist. Therefore on 25 May the 4 Inf Bde of 2 ID changed places with 19 Inf Bde of 11 ID. From that point the 11 ID consisted of 4 and 22 Inf Bdes.

However, the result of this new organization was that 19 Inf Bde (IR # 82 and FJB # 29), which had been in reserve for months and had been trained to counterattack, now was at the front and 4 Inf Bde, which would be less capable of quick intervention, was in reserve.³¹⁴ The change would have considerable disadvantages.

To provide a reserve south of the future battlefield, on the 30th the high command ordered that 25 ID should be pulled out of the Ikwa front, which would be difficult for the Russians to attack, and assembled on both sides of the Styr at Michailowka. This change affected all of Böhm-Ermolli's Army Group. 46 LW ID took over the sector of 25 ID; LW IR # 31, hitherto held in reserve on the south wing of 1st Army, was returned to the 46th. The new Army Group reserve was IR # 42 (of Kosak's Group), which was placed at the point where Kosak's lines met those of XVIII Corps. As a replacement, FML Kosak received the dismounted troops of 4 CD, who hitherto had been directly at the disposal of GdK Böhm-Ermolli.

4th Army HQ, which on 15 May had already sent the artillery of the two reserve divisions (11 and 13) to the threatened front-line divisions (70 and 2), on 2 June assigned 4 Inf Bde to Corps Szurmay and 25 LW Inf Bde to X Corps. This measure was designed to counteract the Russian incursions against the lines of 70 Hon and 2 ID, which were each defending a line about 12,000 paces long. The HQ and other parts of 13 LW and 11 ID were stationed at Chorlupy and east of Ostrozec as the Army's reserve. The parts of 10 CD hitherto at Luck (foot and machine gun detachments plus artillery) were moved behind II Corps on the 27th; measures were taken so that the Division's mounted regiments, still west of Vladimir-Volynsky, could be hastily brought up. Army HQ

314Heller, "Olyka-Luck" (in the Austrian Wehrzeitung, Issues 28 and 29 of 1926)

moreover directed their attention toward the positions in the rear, especially at the Luck bridgehead and then at the crossing-points on the Styr.

However, 4th Army HQ didn't express any concerns about the first or second lines of the Corps that were most endangered (Martiny's and Szurmay's). 37 Hon ID had indeed created an outstanding position, even though much of their northern wing lay in forests and though the swamps along the Putilowka lay along their southern wing. Their installations were situated so that the troops would have maximum visibility, were well-maintained, and kept in almost as good order as if the men were in barracks.³¹⁵ The position of 2 ID bulged forward somewhat; it suffered because of the unfavorable site of the lines, which could no longer be corrected when the fighting was imminent. Also the light, sandy soil didn't permit the construction of firm trenches. In particular, the foxholes here weren't sturdy enough. Wood had to be brought from a considerable distance, so not much was available to reinforce the dug-outs. When IR # 82 from 19 Inf Bde entered the first line at the end of May, the troops found much to criticize in the position which they took over from IR # 89 and 90.³¹⁶ The real cause of their dissatisfaction, however, could well have been that the Magyars of the 82nd resented being placed in a dangerous position because the Ruthenes were unreliable.³¹⁷

Most of the trenches and foxholes under Corps Szurmay (70 Hon and 7 ID) were in good condition. 7 ID had an additional advantage, since a line of ponds lay in front of a good portion of its front.

Preparedness of the defenders

All officers of the General Staff and of the technical services who visited the defensive installations had reported favorably about the situation. Also GO Linsingen, who inspected the trenches of the divisions in question during May, found nothing to criticize. Thus from the standpoint of the high command everything seemed to have been done to repulse the anticipated assault toward Luck.

315Based on the unpublished manuscript "Olyka-Luck" of FML Kralowetz, who at that time was X Corps' Chief of Staff.

316"The History of the k.u.k. Szekel Infantry Regiment No. 82, 1883-1918" (in Magyar; Budapest, 1931), pp. 123 ff.

317Heller, "Olyka-Luck"

The troops even seemed to wish the Russians would attack, because the time of waiting was very jarring to their nerves. The daily trench fighting was a heavy enough burden, and it caused the higher commanders even greater anxiety than the troops. The garrisons of the various sectors were blamed for the fact that the Russians were inching forward, but they weren't given the necessary means to prevent it. Because of the great expenditure of ammunition in south Tyrol, it had to be used sparingly in the East. Night-time raids which were undertaken to destroy the Russian trenches proved to be unproductive and costly.

The period of purely stationary warfare saw tedious bureaucratic chores proliferate. The time of the staffs would have been better utilized for the tactical training of the troops in preparation for the impending defensive fighting. There is no doubt that the men were digging too much and drilling too little.

What oppressed the troops most, however, was the fact that they weren't clear how the upcoming fight would develop due to the Russians' new tactic of first approaching our lines. Also it cannot be denied that because of the pause in the fighting since autumn 1915 many regiments had partly lost their belief that it would again be necessary to endure a long major battle. In an earlier section we have noted how units had been allowed to become tactically clumsy during months of service in the trenches, in which the garrisons of the long, thinly-held lines only seldom were relieved. What has been stated here about 4th Army is substantially also true for the other armies.

The expansion of the Russian trenches, which already in several places had reached our barriers, now caused justifiable concern in some quarters that oblique aimed barrage fire, upon which the entire defensive scheme was based, might no longer be able to quickly and effectively strike the enemy attackers as they crossed no man's land - which was becoming narrower every day. It was also questionable whether the defenders would have enough time to come out of their foxholes and man the breast works. Now there was a loud clamor from the troops, for example in 70 Hon ID, that advanced positions should be built so that the enemy wouldn't be able to reach the main defenses so quickly. This, however, would have entailed pulling back all the military equipment from the first line to the rear, and abandoning all the artillery-proof foxholes dug into the trenches or the adjacent earth. Also it would have been difficult to fire out of the second line because of the maze of trenches and especially because of the walls of earth which had been raised directly behind the first line. Thus a series of objections was raised

against the suggestions for a last-minute change in tactics. Archduke Joseph Ferdinand's staff considered plans to win forward positions by throwing the Russians back to the eastern bank of the Putilowka River, but didn't adopt them because they would have required a great expenditure of ammunition. Before a decision could be made about improving the positions, the Russian storm broke loose on 4 June, the 60th birthday of FM Archduke Frederick.

4. The orders of battle on 4 June 1916

A. The Aus-Hung. and German units fighting on the Eastern front under the AOK

7th Army

Commander = GO Freih. von Pflanzer-Baltin

Chief of Staff = Col. Ritter von Zeynek

IX Corps

Commander = GdK Edl. von Korda

Chief of Staff = Col. Edl. von Trauttweiler

Strength = 47 bns, 3 sqdns, 32 batties, 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ tech comps, 1 flieger comp; 46,860 foot, 364 horse, 181 guns; 82 trench mortars, 13 flame throwers

. Col. Kranz's Cav Bde = k.k. Lst Bns 25, 63; 1 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 3; 1500 foot, 164 horse (rest of cavalry with 24th ID, below)

. Lt Col. Papp's Bde = k.k. Lst Gendarme Regt (4); k.u. Lst IR 5 (4); one volunteer bn. 3 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 5, a gendarmerie sqdn.

Col. Cziharz's Arty Sector Command [1 Batty/FKR 5, 4/Hon FKR 1; 2, 4 & 5/Res FKR I; 2/FHR 5; 9/FHR 35; 4/Hon FHR 40; 3/Hvy FAR 5; Hvy How Batty 45]. 2 Comp/SB 11, 2/SB 13. 8900 foot, 200 horse, 50 guns; 27 trench mortars, 13 flame throwers

. 5th ID (FML Edl. von Habermann) = 8600 foot, 24 guns, 15 t.m.

. 10 Inf Bde (GM Adalbert von Kalternborn) = IR 1 (4), 13 (4)

. 5 FA Bde (Col. Ritt. von Senkowski) = 2 & 3 Batties/FKR 5; 1 Res FKR I; Hvy FAR 5 (2)

. $\frac{1}{4}$ 2 Comp/SB 2, 4/SB 11

. 40th Hon ID (GM Edl. von Nagy) = 12,300 foot, 28 guns, 28 t.m.

. 80 Hon Inf Bde (GM Haber) = HIR 6 (3), 19 (3)

. 202 Hon Inf Bde (Col. von Savoly) = Hon IR 306 (4), 307 (4)

. 40 FA Bde (Col. Freih. von Wolf-Schneider) = Hon FKR 1 (3), 3 Batty/Res FKR I, 3/Hon FHR 40

. $\frac{1}{2}$ 2 Comp/SB 2, $\frac{1}{4}$ 1/SB 12

. 24th ID (GM Urbarz) = 14,960 foot, 64 guns, 12 t.m.

. 47 Inf Bde (Col. Edl. von Stransky) = IR 10 (3), 45 (3)

. 48 Inf Bde (Col. Korzer) = IR 9 (4), 77 (3)

. Foot Cav Det (Col. Götz; from Cav Bde Kranz and combined divisional cav) = 1 & 2 Sqdns and 1 Foot Sqdn/DR 14, 5 & 6 Sqdns/HR 8, 3 & 4/LW UR 3, 1 & 2/LW UR 4

. 24 FA Bde (Col. Augste) = FKR 24 (4), FHR 24 (4), 3 & 4 Batties/FHR 5, 1/Hvy FAR 24

. Corps reserve = Lt Col. Scholtz's Group [23 & 24 k.k. Lst Inf Bns]; 1600 foot

. Corps troops = ½ 30.5 cm Mor Batty 8; four 8 cm cannon, eight 9 cm cannon; 1 flak zug; Flieger Comp 1. 15 guns

Group (Corps) Benigni

Commander = FZM Ritter von Benigni

Chief of Staff = Lt Col. Max Freih. von Pitreich

Strength = 47 $\frac{3}{4}$ bns, 53 $\frac{1}{4}$ sqdns, 4 batties, 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ tech comps, 1 flieger comp. 49,800 foot, 6218 horse, 23 guns; 90 t.m., 13 f.t.. 3rd CD (FML Ritt. von Brudermann) = 4400 foot, 2000 horse, 64 guns

. 10 Cav Bde (Col. Ritt. von Szivo) = DR 3 (4), UR 7 (4); Cav Rifle Bn I/3

. 17 Cav Bde (Col Edl. von Kirsch) = HR 1 (4), UR 4 (4); Cav Rifle Bns II & III/3

. Russ' Det = An inf det, a cav platoon, a mtn cannon batty

. FKR 30 (4); 5 Batty/FKR 5, 3/Horse Arty Bn 2, 5/FHR 15; I Bn/Hon FHR 40 (2); 2 & 3 Batties/Hvy FAR 24, 1/Hvy FAR 40; one 9 cm cannon

. $\frac{1}{2}$ 2 Comp/PB 3. 30th ID (GM Jesser) = 6390 foot. 79 Hon Inf Bde (Col. Rubint; from 40 Hon ID) = Hon IR 29 (3), 30 (3); FJB 13³¹⁸. 42nd Hon ID (FML Snjaric) = 17,160 foot, 188 horse, 76 guns; 35 t.m., 2 f.t.

. 83 Hon Inf Bde (GM Bekic) = Hon IR 25 (4), 26 (4)

. 84 Hon Inf Bde (GM von Petkovic) = Hon IR 27 (4), 28 (4)

. Div cav = 3, 4 & 5 Sqdns/Hon HR 10

. 42 FA Bde (Col. Scholz) = Hon FKR 6 (4), Hon FHR 42 (4); 1 Batty/FHR 5, 2/FHR 21, 2 & 3/Hvy FAR 36; Hvy FAR 42 (2); six 9 cm cannon

. 5 Comp/SB 4, $\frac{1}{2}$ 2/PB 3, 3/PB 7, $\frac{1}{4}$ 4/PB 15. 8th CD (GM Freih. von Schnehen) = 2700 foot, 1670 horse, 15 guns, 13 t.m., 8 f.t.

. 13 Cav Bde (GM von Fluck) = DR 7 (4), UR 8 (4); Cav Rifle Bns I & II/8

. 15 Cav Bde (Col. Edl. von Dokonal) = DR 2 (4), UR 11 (4); $\frac{1}{2}$ Cav Rif Bn III/8. Horse Arty Bn 3 (3); three 9 cm cannon. $\frac{3}{4}$ 4 Comp/SB 12. 5th Hon CD (FML Freih. von Apor) = 1950 foot, 2200 horse, 16 guns, 9 t.m.

. 19 Hon Cav Bde (GM von Jony) = Hon HR 1 (4), 8 (4); Hon Cav Rifle Bn I/5

. 23 Hon Cav Bde (Col. Graf Lubienki) = Hon HR 6 (4), 7 (4); Hon Cav Rifle Bn II/5; 1 Sqdn/Hon Cav Rifle Bn III/5

. 4 Batty/FKR 5, 1 & 2/Horse Arty Bn 2; two 9 cm cannon

. 51st Hon ID (GM Foglar) = 17,200 foot, 160 horse, 59 guns, 15 t.m., 3 f.t.

318The FJB 13 was the only organic part of 30 ID under Div HQ at this moment.

- . 200 Hon Inf Bde (GM von Latzin) = Hon IR 301 (3), 302 (3)
- . 201 Hon Inf Bde (GM von Benke) = Hon IR 300 (3), 305 (3); k.u. Lst IR 20 (4)
- . 1 & 2 Sqdns/Hon HR 4. $\frac{3}{4}$ 4 Comp/PB 15
- . 51 FA Bde (Col. Stráner) = Hon FKR 2 (4), Hon FHR 51 (4); 1 Batty/Hvy Hon FAR 51; 15 cm Mor Batty 5; three 9 cm cannon
- . Directly under Group = $\frac{1}{2}$ 30.5 cm Mor Batty 8; one flak zug; $\frac{1}{4}$ 6 Comp/SB 3, $\frac{1}{4}$ 4/SB 12; Flieger Comp 13. 3 guns, 18 t.m.

Group (Corps) Hadfy

Commander = FML von Hadfy

Chief of Staff = Lt Col. Stromfeld

Strength = 18 bns, 24 sqdns, 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ batties, 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ tech comps, 1 flieger comp. 19,010 foot, 2019 horse, 114 guns, 38 t.m., 4 f.t.
 . 21st LW ID (GM Podhajsky) = 13,100 foot, 319 horse, 27 guns, 28 t.m.

- . 41 LW Bde (Col. Schwanda) = LW IR 6 (3), 7 (3)
- . 42 LW Bde (Col. Edl. von Grossmann) = LW IR 8 (3), 28 (3)
- . Divisional cav (from 30 ID) = 3 & 4 Sqdns/LW UR 1
- . 21 FA Bde (Col. Leonhardt) = FKR 21 (4), FHR 21 (3); 6 Batty/FHR 29; Hvy FAR 21 (2); nine 9 cm cannon
- . 3 Comp/SB 13, $\frac{3}{4}$ 1/SB 12; Dobay's Inf Pioneer Comp
- . 6th CD (GM Edl. von Schwer) = 5910 foot, 1700 horse, 65 guns; 8 t.m., 2 f.t.
- . 5 Cav Bde (GM Kopecek) = DR 6 (4), 8 (4); 1 & 3 Sqdns/DR 5; 3, 4, 5 & 6 Sqdns/LW UR 6
- . 14 Cav Bde (GM Edl. von Rettich) = DR 11 (4), HR 11 (4); Cav Rifle Bns I, II & III/6; k.k. Lst Bn 17; k.u. Lst Bns VI/3, VIII/30
- . 30 FA Bde (Col. Graf Szeptycki; from 30 ID) = Horse Arty Bns 6 (3), 8 (4); FHR 30 (4), Hvy FAR 30 (2); five 9 cm cannon
- . Directly under Group = One flak zug; $\frac{1}{4}$ 9 Comp/SB 9, $\frac{1}{4}$ 8/SB 12, 2/PB 9; Flieger Comp 29. 2 guns, 2 t.m., 2 f.t.

XIII Corps

Commander = GdI Freih. von Rhemen

Chief of Staff = Col. Csoban

Strength = 27 bns, 20 sqdns, 28 batties, 2 tech comps, 1 flieger comp. 30,300 foot, 2364 horse, 144 guns, 38 t.m., 2 f.t.

- . 15th ID (GM Ritt. von Weiss-Tihanyi) = 15,700 foot, 217 horse, 64 guns; 22 t.m., 2 f.t.
- . 29 Inf Bde (Col. Pammer) = IR 65 (4), 66 (4); attached from 39th Hon ID was IV Bn/HIR 11
- . 30 Inf Bde (GM Leide) = IR 60 (5) only
- . 5 & 6 Sqdns/HR 15; 5 Comp/SB 11
- . 15 FA Bde (Col. Primavesi) = FKR 15 (4), FHR 15 (4), Hvy

- FAR 15 (3); six 9 cm cannon
- . 2nd CD (GM Freih. von Abele) = 3100 foot, 1900 horse, 14 guns
 - . 3 Cav Bde (Col. Freih. von Spiegelfeld) = HR 6 (4), 16 (4); Cav Rifle Bn I/2
 - . 16 Cav Bde (Col. Edl. von Karapancza) = HR 3 (4), UR 5 (4); Cav Rifle Bns II & III/2
 - . Horse Arty Bn 2 (3); two 9 cm cannon
- . 36th ID (Col. Edl. von Löw, temporarily) = 8000 foot, 247 horse, 60 guns, 11 t.m.
 - . 13 Inf Bde (Col. Edl. von Löw) = IR 5 (3; from 15th ID), 78 (4)
 - . 1 & 2 Sqdns/Hon HR 10. $\frac{3}{4}$ 2 Comp/PB 7
 - . 36 FA Bde (Col. Freih. von Bibra) = FKR 36 (4), FHR 36 (6), 1 Batty/Hvy FAR 36; 12 cm Can Batty 28; four 9 cm cannon
- . Corps troops = IR 52 (3; from 36 ID); two flak züge; $\frac{1}{4}$ 2 Comp/PB 7; Flieger Comp 11. 3500 foot, 4 guns

VI Corps

Commander = GdI von Arz

Chief of Staff = Col. Joseph Huber

Strength = 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ bns, 4 sqdns, 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ batties, 3 tech comps, 1 flieger comp. 31,100 foot, 334 horse, 127 guns; 33 t.m., 5 f.t.

- . 12th ID (FML Edl. von Hinke) = 16,300 foot, 150 horse, 69 guns, 12 t.m.
 - . 23 Inf Bde (GM Ritt. von Metz) = IR 56 (4 $\frac{3}{4}$), 100 (4)
 - . 24 Inf Bde (Col. Johann Schubert) = IR 3 (3), 20 (3), 57 (3)
 - . 3 & 4 Sqdns/LW UR 4. 5 Comp/SB 1
 - . 12 FA Bde (Col. Andersch) = FKR 12 (5), FHR 12 (4), Hvy FAR 12 (3); five 9 cm cannon
- . 39th Hon ID (GM Blasius von Dáni) = 14,800 foot, 184 horse, 56 guns, 16 t.m.
 - . 77 Hon Bde (Col. Lengerer) = Hon IR 9 (3), 11 (3 $\frac{3}{4}$)
 - . 78 Hon Bde (Col. Daubner) = Hon IR 10 (4), 16 (3)
 - . 1 & 2 Sqdns/HR 15. 3 Comp/SB 5; Hon Sapper Det 39
 - . 39 FA Bde (Col. Riedl) = Hon FKR 3 (4), Hon FHR 39 (4); 1 Batty; Hon Hvy FAR 39; four 9 cm cannon
- . Corps troops = One flak zug; Flieger Comp 18. 2 guns

7th Army Reserves = 25 bns; 30,980 foot

- . 9 Inf Bde (Col. Trimmel; from 5 ID) = IR 54 (3), 93 (3)
- . 72 Inf Bde (Col. Budiner; from 36 ID) = IR 16 (4), 53 (3)
- . 16 Inf Bde (Col. Freih. von Testa; from 30 ID) = FJB 1, 14, 16, 18 and 27
- . 215 Inf Bde (Col. von Berzeviczy; from 30 ID) = IR 97 (4); LW IR 5 (3)

TOTALS for 7th Army = 196 $\frac{1}{4}$ bns, 104 $\frac{1}{4}$ sqdns, 141 batties, 19
tech comps, 5 flieger comps. 208,050 foot, 11,299 horse, 799
guns, 281 trench mortars, 37 flamethrowers

German South Army

Commander = Bavarian GdI Graf von Bothmer

Chief of Staff = Bavarian Lt Col. Ritter von Hemmer

Aus-Hung. Corps Hofmann

Commander = FML Hofmann

Chief of Staff = Col. Pawlowsky

Strength = 34 bns, 6 sqdns, 26 ½ batties, 5 tech comps, 1 flieger comp. 32,460 foot, 610 horse, 162 guns, 52 t.m., 8 f.t.

. 54th ID (FML Daniel) = 15,260 foot, 230 horse, 68 guns; 32 t.m., 4 f.t.

. 131 Inf Bde (GM Blum) = FJB 32; LW IR 19 (3), Hon IR 309 (4)

. 132 Inf Bde (Col. Edl. von Bolzano) = IR 81 (3), 88 (4 ¼)

. 2 & 4 Sqdns/DR 5. 1 Comp/SB 5, 2/PB 4

. 54 FA Bde (Col. Kubesch) = 7 Batty/FKR 28; Res FKR 54 (4), Res FHR 54 (4); 10.4 cm Can Batty 12, Hvy How Batty 51, Experimental Can Batty # 1; fourteen 8 cm cannon

. 55th ID (GM Ritt. von Unschuld) = 17,200 foot, 170 horse, 71 guns, 20 t.m., 4 f.t.

. 129 Inf Bde (Col. Baukovac) = LW IR 35 (3 ¾), Hon IR 310 (4 ½)

. 130 Inf Bde (Col. von Stanoilovic) = IR 103 (4 ¼), Hon IR 308 (4 ¼); Ukrainian Volunteer Rifle Regt (2)

. 5 & 6 Sqdns/DR 5. 7 Comp/SB 11, 3/SB 12

. 55 FA Bde (Col. Hubitscha) = 7 Batty/FKR 16; Res FKR 55 (4), Res FHR 55 (4); 12 cm Can Batty 21; 1 Batty/Res Hvy FAR 55; Hvy How Batty 53; eight 8 cm cannon, eight 9 cm cannon

. 48th German Res ID (G.Lt von Oppeln-Bronikowski) = 13 bns, 1 sqdn, 14 batties, 3 tech comps, 1 t.m. comp, 1 sapper det. 11,300 foot, 100 horse, 74 guns, 10 t.m.

. 95 Res Bde (von Puttkamer) = Res IR 221 (3), 222 (3)

. 96 Res Bde (Grall) = Res IR 223 (3), 224 (3)

. Res Jaeger Bn 20; 48 Res Cav Sqdn; Res FAR 48 and some additional batties

. Corps troops = Two combined sqdns; two flak züge; k.k. Lst Sapper Det 1/2; Flieger Comp 9. German - 1 ¾ batties, five 5.7 cm cannon. 210 horse, 23 guns

Aus-Hung. IX Corps

Commander = FML Kralicek

Chief of Staff = Col. von Krammer

Strength = 34 bns, 3 sqdns, 43 batties, 9 tech comps, 2 flieger comps; 35,230 foot, 290 horse, 253 guns, 69 t.m., 4 f.t.

. 19th ID (FML Böltz) = 15,700 foot, 190 horse, 111 guns, 25 t.m., 3 f.t.

. 37 Inf Bde (Col. Augustin) = IR 35 (3), 75 (4)

- . 38 Inf Bde (GM Steiger) = BH IR 1 (3); FJB 5, 6; LW IR 29 (3)
- . 4 & 6 Sqdns/DR 14
- . 19 FA Bde (Col. Regnier) = FKR 19 (5); 6 Batty/FKR 33; FHR 19 (4); 2 Batty/Hon FHR 38; Hvy FAR 19 (3); one flak zug; ten 8 cm cannon; 5 German batties
- . 6 Comp/SB 9, 2/SB 10; k.k. Lst Sapper Det 1/1; one k.u.k. miner comp
- . 32nd ID (GM Ritt. von Willerding) = 14,000 foot, 100 horse, 120 guns, 36 t.m., 1 f.t.
 - . 63 Inf Bde (GM Edl. von Obauer) = IR 23 (4), 70 (3)
 - . 64 Inf Bde (GM Grallert) = IR 6 (3), 86 (3)
 - . 5 Sqdn/LW UR 1
 - . 32 FA Bde (GM Kreycy) = FKR 32 (4); 6 Batty/FKR 15; FHR 32 (4); 1 Batty/Hon FHR 38; Hvy FAR 32 (3); Hvy How Batty 28; 1 Batty/Hvy FAR 38; four 9 cm cannon; German - 5 batties plus fourteen 5.7 cm cannon
 - . 6 Comp/SB 2; 1/PB 7; one k.u.k. and one German miner comp
- . 76 Hon Inf Bde (Col. Karleusa; from 38 Hon ID) = Hon IR 23 (3), 24 (3); II Bn/Hon FHR 38 (2). 5530 foot, 12 guns, 8 t.m.
- . Corps troops = k.k. Lst Sapper Dets 2/2, 4/2; Flieger Comp 25; 1 ½ German batties and 1 German flieger det. 10 guns

South Army Reserves

- . 38th Hon ID (FML von Csanady) = 5470 foot, 200 horse, 25 guns
 - . 75 Hon Bde (Col. Gombos) = Hon IR 21 (3), 22 (3)
 - . 1 & 2 Sqdns/HR 2; Hon Sapper Det 38
 - . 38 FA Bde (GM Werz) = Hon FKR 5 (4) only
- . Three German batties, one German flieger det. 10 guns

TOTALS for German South Army = 87 bns, 12 sqdns, 90 ½ batties, 19 tech comps, 1 t.m. comp, 4 flieger comps (or dets). 84,460 foot, 1200 horse, 523 guns, 131 t.m., 12 f.t.

Böhm-Ermolli's Army Group (over 2nd and 1st Armies)

Commander = GO von Böhm-Ermolli

Chief of Staff = GM Dr. Bardolff

2nd Army

Commander = GO von Böhm-Ermolli

Chief of Staff = GM Dr. Bardolff

IV Corps

Commander = GdI Schmidt von Georgenegg

Chief of Staff = Col. Edl. von Merizzi

Strength = 30 bns, 5 sqdns, 25 ½ batties, 3 tech comps, 1 flieger comp; 29,460 foot, 520 horse, 152 guns, 31 t.m., 14 fl.5.

- . 14th ID (FML von Csicseric) = 14,900 foot, 320 horse, 82 guns, 13 t.m., 14 f.t.
 - . 27 Inf Bde (GM Horvath) = IR 71 (5 ½), 72 (4)
 - . 28 Inf Bde (Col. Alfred von Zeidler) = IR 48 (4), 76 (4)
 - . 1 & 2 Sqdns/HR 5 (from 38 Hon ID); Res Sqdn/HR 11
 - . 14 FA Bde (Col. von Ripper) = FKR 14 (5), FHR 14 (4), I Bn/FHR 31 (2); 3 Batty/Hvy FAR 14, 1/Hvy FAR 33; five 8 cm and five 9 cm cannon
 - . 2 Comp/SB 9, 3/PB 9
- . 33rd ID (FML Hordt) = 12,560 foot, 200 horse, 68 guns, 18 t.m.
 - . 65 Inf Bde (Col. Friedrich Edl. von Tomanek) = IR 19 (4), 26 (4 ½)
 - . 66 Inf Bde (GM Brauner) = IR 83 (4) only
 - . 3 & 4 Sqdns/HR 5 (constructing field works)
 - . 33 FA Bde (Col. Kaufmann) = FKR 33 (5), FHR 33 (4); 1 Batty/Hvy FAR 14, 3/Hvy FAR 31, 2/Hvy FAR 33; six 8 cm and two 9 cm cannon
 - . 3 Comp/SB 4
- . Corps troops = One flak zug; Flieger Comp 3. 2 guns

V Corps

Commander = FML Goglia

Chief of Staff = Col. Freih. von Carinell

Strength = 13 ½ bns, 1 sqdn, 8 batties, 1 tech comp; 13,600 foot, 80 horse, 49 guns; 14 t.m., 8 f.t.

- . 31st ID (GM Lieb) = 13,600 foot, 49 guns, 14 t.m., 8 f.t.
 - . 61 Inf Bde (Col. Trajan Bacsila) = IR 32 (4 ¾), 69 (4)
 - . 62 Inf Bde (Col. Heisegg) = IR 44 (4 ¾) only
 - . 31 FA Bde (Col. Schirza) = FKR 31 (5), II Bn/FHR 31 (2); 2 Batty/Hvy FAR 31; three 8 cm and two 9 cm cannon
 - . 4 Comp/PB 3
- . Corps troops = 3 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 8 (building field works)

Group Kosak

Commander = FML Kosak

Chief of Staff = Major Ritt. von Förster-Streffleur

Strength = 26 bns, 22 sqdns, 22 ½ batties, 3 tech comps, 1 flieger comp; 21,200 foot, 2510 horse, 107 guns; 32 t.m., 8 f.t.

- . 27th ID (FML Kosak) = 13,000 foot, 200 horse, 58 guns, 16 t.m., 6 f.t.
 - . 53 Inf Bde (Col. Lederer) = IR 25 (4 ½), 34 (4)
 - . 54 Inf Bde (Col. von Watterich) = IR 67 (5), 85 (4)
 - . 3 & 4 Sqdns/HR 15 (building field works)
 - . 27 FA Bde (Col. Steinhauser) = FKR 27 (4), FHR 27 (4), Hvy FAR 27 (2); 1 Batty/Hvy FAR 31; seven 8 cm cannon
 - . 6 Comp/SB 8
- . 4th CD (FML Ostermuth) = 5200 foot, 47 guns, 16 t.m., 2 f.t.

- . 18 Cav Bde (GM Leiter) = Cav Rifle Bns I & II/4; BH IR 3 (3 ½ bns; from 31 ID)
- . 29 FA Bde (GM Soppe) = FKR 29 (4); Horse Arty Bn 4 (4); Hvy FAR 29 (2); Hvy How Batty 39; one flak zug; three 8 cm and two 9 cm cannon
- . 4 Comp/SB 3, 3/PB 10
- . Directly under Group Kosak = IR 42 (3; from 29 ID), 2 Res Sqdn/HR 2; one flak zug; Flieger Comp 14; 3000 foot, 110 horse, 2 guns

Army (or Army Group) Reserves

- . 29 ID (FML Schön) = 14,800 foot
 - . 57 Inf Bde (Col. Barwik) = IR 12 (3; from 33 ID), 92 (3 ¾)
 - . 58 Inf Bde (GM Langendorf) = IR 74 (4), 94 (4 ½)
- . 21 Cav Bde (GM Graf Marenzi) = 2200 horse (from 4 CD, constructing field works) = DR 9 (4), 15 (4); UR 1 (4), 13 (4); 4 & 5 Sqdns/HR 12; 2 Sqdn/LW UR 1

TOTALS for 2nd Army = 84 ¾ bns, 28 sqdns, 56 batties, 7 tech comps, 2 flieger comps; 79,060 foot, 3110 horse, 308 guns, 77 t.m., 30 f.t.

1st Army (also part of Böhm-Ermolli's Army Group)

Commander = GO von Puhallo

Chief of Staff = GM Sallagar

XVIII Corps

Commander = FML Czibulka

Chief of Staff = Col. Larisch

Strength = 18 ½ bns, 31 sqdns, 19 batties, 3 tech comps, 1 flieger comp; 18,000 foot, 3700 horse, 101 guns, 20 t.m.

. k.k. 1st Lst Inf Bde (FML Bandian) (7000 foot, 31 guns) = k.k. Lst IR 1 (4), 22 (3 ½). I Bn/Res FKR 1 (2), I Bn/Res FHR 1 (2), 4 Batty/Hvy FAR 25; 15 cm Mor Batty 12; three 8 cm and two 9 cm cannon

. 7th CD (FML Ritt. von Micewski) = 11,000 foot, 3700 horse, 70 guns, 20 t.m.

. GM von Le Gay's Group = LW IR 16 (4; from 46 LW ID), k.k. Lst IR 1 (4; from 1 Lst Inf Bde)

. Col. von Benesi's Cav Bde = 5 Sqdn/DR 14; HR 8 (4); 3 & 4 Sqdns/LW UR 2

. k.u. 1 Lst Huss Bde (Col. Csecsi-Nagy) = k.u. Lst HR 1 (4), 2 (4); k.u. Cav Rifle Bn 12

. 11 Cav Bde (GM Edl. von Mold) = DR 10 (4), UR 2 (4); Cav Rifle Bns I & II/7

. 20 Cav Bde (Col. Ritt. von Lemaic) = DR 12 (4), UR 3 (4)

. 1 Res FA Bde (GM Hess) = Horse Arty Bn 7 (4), II Bn/Res FKR 1 (2), FHR 29 (4); 3 Batty Res FHR 1, 3/Hvy FAR 25, 1/

- Res FAR 1; five 8 cm and three 9 cm cannon
- . 4 Comp/SB 4, 5/SB 6, 1/SB 8
- . Corps troops = Flieger Comp 22

Directly under 1st Army HQ...

- . 46th LW ID (GM von Urbarski) (in line under Army HQ) = 24,500 foot, 90 horse, 131 guns, 4 t.m., 6 f.t.
- . 91 LW Bde (GM Frauenberger) = LW IR 15 (6), 32 (5 ½)
- . 92 LW Bde (GM Haas) = FJB 25 (from 46 LW ID); LW IR 13 (5 ½), 31 (4); k.k. Lst IR 13 (3)
- . 5 & 6 Sqdns/LW UR 4. 3 Comp/SB 1
- . 46 FA Bde (Col. Exner) = FKR 46 (4), FHR 46 (4); 1 & 2 Batties/Hvy FAR 25, 1/Hvy FAR 46; two flak züge; five 8 cm and three 9 cm cannon
- . 25 FA Bde (Col. Edl. von Filz; from 25 ID) = FKR 25 (4), FHR 25 (4); six 8 cm and five 9 cm cannon
- . 25th ID (GM von Boog) (in Army's reserve) = 14,900 foot, 230 horse
- . 49 Inf Bde (GM Edl. von Severus) = IR 84 (5 ½ bns, of which 3 bns were in the Army Group's reserve); FJB 31
- . 50 Inf Bde (GM von Stöhr) = IR 4 (5); FJB 10, 17
- . 3 & 4 Sqdns/LW UR 5. 4 Comp/PB 4
- . Army troops = 5 Comp/PB 4. Flieger Comp 5

TOTALS for 1st Army = 57 bns, 35 sqdns, 39 batties, 6 tech comps, 2 flieger comps; 57,400 foot, 4020 horse, 232 guns, 24 t.m., 6 f.t.

TOTALS for Böhm-Ermolli's Army Group = 140 ¾ bns, 63 sqdns, 95 batties, 13 tech comp, 4 flieger comps; 136,460 foot, 7130 horse, 504 guns, 101 t.m., 36 f.t.

Linsingen's Army Group (over 4th Army and independent corps)

Commander = Prussian GdI (with the rank of a GO) von Linsingen
 Chief of Staff = Prussian GM von Stolzmann

4th Army

Commander = GO Archduke Joseph Ferdinand
 Chief of Staff = GM Berndt

Corps Szurmay

Commander = FML Szurmay

Chief of Staff = Lt Col. Röder

Strength = 27 ¼ bns, 4 sqdns, 41 batties, 5 tech comps; 31,900 foot, 250 horse, 214 guns, 64 t.m., 20 f.t.

. 7th ID (GM von Felix) = 17,600 foot, 100 horse, 67 guns, 42 t.m., 10 f.t.

- . 14 Inf Bde (GM Baumgartner) = IR 38 (4), 68 (4 ¾); FJB 21

- . 71 Inf Bde (GM Plivelic) = IR 37 (3), 79 (5)
- . Lst Huss Bn 10 (2). 1 & 5 Comps/SB 13
- . 7 FA Bde (Col. Scheucher) = FKR 7 (4), 9 Batty/FKR 16, FHR 7 (4), Hvy FAR 7 (3); Hvy How Batty 61; nine 8 cm cannon
- . 70th Hon ID (GM Goldbach) = 14,300 foot, 150 horse, 59 guns, 22 t.m., 10 f.t.
- . 207 Hon Inf Bde (Col. Andreas Berger) = Hon IR 312 (3), 313 (3)
- . 208 Hon Inf Bde (Co. von Csicsery) = Hon IR 314 (3 ½), 315 (3)
- . Hon Huss Bn 70 (2)
- . 70 FA Bde (Col. Skotak) = 5 Batty/FKR 10; Res Hon FKR 70 (4); 6 Batty/FHR 16; Res Hon FHR 70 (4); one 8 cm cannon
- . 4 Comp/SB 9, 4/PB 4; k.u. Lst Sapper Det 3/IV
- . 11 FA Bde (Col. Steinhardt) (attached from 11 ID and not counted in total for 70 Hon ID; had 60 guns) = FKR 11 (5), FHR 11 (4), Hvy FAR 11 (2)
- . Corps troops = Res FHR X (4); 10.4 cm Cannon Batty 10; Hvy How Batties 2, 5. 28 guns

X Corps

Commander = GdI Martiny

Chief of Staff = GM von Kralowetz

Strength = 25 ¾ bns, 4 sqdns, 38 batties, 4 tech comps; 27,620 foot, 285 horse, 206 guns, 50 t.m., 5 f.t.

- . 2nd ID (FML Edl. von Sellner) = 13,600 foot, 126 horse, 65 guns, 24 t.m., 5 f.t.
- . 3 Inf Bde (GM Klein) = IR 40 (5); FJB 4
- . 19 Inf Bde (GM von Iwanski) = IR 82 (5); FJB 29; Tyrol Jaeger Comp 5/N³¹⁹
- . 5 & 6 Sqdns/LW UR 3. 4 Comp/SB 10, 6/SB 11
- . 2 FA Bde (Col. Edl. von Rosenzweig) = FKR 2 (4), FHR 2 (4), Hvy FAR 2 (3); Hvy How Batty 47; four 8 cm and one 9 cm cannon
- . 13 FA Bde (Col. Schulhof; attached from 13 LW ID and not counted in total for 2 ID; had 52 guns) = FKR 13 (4), FHR 13 (4); 1 Batty/Hvy FAR 13
- . 37th Hon ID (GM Tabajdi) = 14,560 foot, 159 horse, 65 guns, 26 t.m.
- . 73 Hon Bde (Col. Lähne) = Hon IR 13 (4), 18 (3); Tyrol Jaeger Comps 1/N, 2/N
- . 74 Hon Bde (Col. Pogany) = Hon IR 14 (3), 15 (3)
- . 5 & 6 Sqdns/HR 5. 4 Comp/SB 5
- . 37 FA Bde (Col. Seh) = Hon FKR 4 (4), Hon FHR 37 (4), Hvy

³¹⁹The "Tyrol Jaeger Comps" were formed from Tyrol Kaiser Jaeger of Italian nationality.

Hon FAR 37 (2); six 8 cm and three 9 cm cannon
 . Corps troops = Res FKR X (4), 15 cm Can Batties 1, 5; Hvy How
 Batty 40. 1 Comp/PB 9. 24 guns

II Corps

Commander = FML Kaiser

Chief of Staff = Col. Purtscher

Strength = 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ bns, 4 sqdns, 25 batties, 4 tech comps; 26,180
 foot, 312 horse, 140 guns, 45 t.m., 1 f.t.

. 41st Hon ID (GM Schamschula) = 12,580 foot, 105 horse, 68 guns,
 20 t.m., 1 f.t.

. 40 Hon Bde (Col. Freih. von Benz-Albkron) = Hon IR 31 (4),
 32 (3); Tyrol Jaeger Comp 3/N

. 82 Hon Bde (GM von Molnar) = Hon IR 12 (4), 20 (3)

. 5 & 6 Sqdns/Hon HR 4. 1 Comp/SB 11, 2/PB 10

. 41 FA Bde (Col. Capp) = Hon FKR 7 (4), Hon FHR 41 (4), Hvy
 Hon FAR 41 (3); Hvy How Batty 44; six 8 cm cannon

. 4th ID (GM Reymann) = 13,600 foot, 207 horse, 72 guns, 25 t.m.

. 7 Inf Bde (Col. Ritt. von Steinitz) = IR 99 (4 $\frac{1}{2}$); LW IR
 30 (3); Tyrol Jaeger Comp 7/N

. 8 Inf Bde (GM Ritt. von Jemrich) = IR 8 (3 $\frac{3}{4}$), 49 (3)

. 1 & 2 Sqdns/LW UR 5. 1 Comp/SB 2, 5/PB 9

. 4 FA Bde (GM Machaczek) = FKR 4 (4), 7 Batty/FKR 14; FHR 4
 (4), 6 Batty/FHR 15; Hvy FAR 4 (3); four 8 cm and two 9 cm
 cannon

Army Reserves

. 11th ID (GM Grubic) = 15,300 foot, 90 horse

. 4 Inf Bde (GM Prusenowsky) = IR 89 (4 $\frac{1}{2}$), 90 (3)

. 22 Inf Bde (Col. Gustav Fischer) = IR 58 (3), 95 (4 $\frac{3}{4}$)

. 1 Sqdn/LW UR 1

. 13th LW ID (FML von Szekely) = 13,900 foot, 190 horse

. 25 LW Bde (Col. Wurja) = LW IR 1 (3), 24 (3)

. 26 LW Bde (Col. Ritt. von Zygadlowicz) = LW IR 14 (3), 25
 (3)

. 5 & 6 Sqdns/LW UR 5

. 10th CD (GM Viktor von Bauer) = 1040 foot, 1800 horse, 12 guns

. 4 Cav Bde (Col. Markowitz; building field works) = HR 10
 (4), 13 (4)

. 8 Cav Bde (GM von Mouillard; building field works) = HR 9
 (4), UR 12 (4)

. Cav Rifle Bn 10; Horse Arty Bn 10 (3)

. Directly under Army HQ = 7 Sqdn/HR 2, $\frac{1}{2}$ 2 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 7;
 two flak züge; k.k. Lst Sapper Dets 5/2 and 1 and 2/3; 1 Comp/PB
 8; Bridging Comp 3/1; Flieger Comps 10, 20. 150 horse, 4 guns

TOTALS for 4th Army = 110 bns, 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ sqdns, 108 batties, 18 tech

comps, 2 flieger comps; 115,940 foot, 3077 horse, 576 guns, 159 t.m., 26 f.t.

Units directly under Linsingen's Army Group HQ

Corps Fath

Commander = GdI Fath

Chief of Staff = Col. Ludvig

Strength = 29 bns, 3 ½ sqdns, 33 ½ batties, 5 tech comps; 30, 460 foot, 318 horse, 208 guns, 48 t.m., 6 f.t.

. 90 LW Bde (GM Karl Schwarz; from 45 LW ID) (3540 foot, 42 guns, 7 t.m.) = LW IR 17 (3); 5 Comp/SB 14, k.u. Lst Sapper Det 2/IV; also under Bde HQ was Col. Wolff's 45 FA Bde [FKR 45 (4), I Bn/FHR 45 (2), 1 Batty/Hvy FAR 45; two 8 cm cannon]

. 26th LW ID (FML Lischka) = 11,540 foot, 200 horse, 59 guns, 20 t.m., 3 f.t.

. 51 LW Bde (GM Pfeffer) = LW IR 11 (3), 12 (3)

. 52 LW Bde (Col. Johann von Richter) = LW IR 9 (3), 10 (3)

. 1 & 2 Sqdns/LW UR 2. 5 Comp/SB 9

. 26 FA Bde (Col. Reichenauer) = FKR 26 (3), 5 Batty/FKR 27; FHR 26 (3), II Bn/FHR 45 (2); 1 Batty/Hvy FAR 26, Hvy How Batty 46; seven 8 cm cannon

. 53rd ID (GM von Pongracz) = 12,000 foot, 118 horse, 105 guns, 21 t.m., 3 f.t.

. k.u. 127 Lst Bde (GM Tanarky) = k.u. Lst IR 6 (3), 19 (3)

. 128 Lst Bde (Col. Karpellus) = k.k. Lst Bns 44, 76; k.u. Lst IR 3 (3)

. 1 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 5; ½ 2 Sqdn/Lst Huss Bn 4

. 53 FA Bde (Col. Adler) = Res FKR 53 (4), Res FHR 53 (3), 4 Batty/FHR 26, Hvy How Batty 20; two 9 cm cannon; German - six batteries, fifteen revolver cannon

. March Comp/SB 13

. Corps reserve = LW IR 34 (3). 3380 foot (from 45 LW ID)

. Corps troops = One flak zug; 2 Comp/SB 1. 2 guns

Cav Corps Hauer

Commander = GdK Freih. von Hauer

Chief of Staff = Lt Col. Ritt. Fischer von Ledenice

Strength = 26 bns, 58 sqdns, 17 batties, 3 tech comps; 11,600 foot, 6500 horse, 85 guns; 37 t.m., 10 f.t.

. Polish Legion (Division) (GM von Puchalski) = 4100 foot, 500 horse, 32 guns, 8 t.m.

. 1st Brigade = IR 1 (3), 2 (3)

. 3rd Brigade = IR 5 (3), 6 (3)

. UR 1 (4), 2 (4). Artillery (6 batteries)

. 11th Hon CD (GM Czito) = 1800 foot, 2100 horse, 19 guns, 11 t.m., 3 f.t.

- . 22 Hon Cav Bde (Col. von Zech) = Hon HR 2 (4), 3 (4)
- . 24 Hon Cav Bde (Col. Hegedüs) = Hon HR 5 (4), 9 (4); 3 & 4 Sqdns/Hon HR 4; Hon Cav Rif Bns I, II & III/11
- . Hon Horse Arty Bn 1 (3); 5 Batty/Hon FKR; three 8 cm cannon
- . 1st CD (GM Chevalier de Ruiz) = 1300 foot, 1900 horse, 19 guns, 11 t.m., 4 f.t.
 - . 6 Cav Bde (Col. von Pongracz) = HR 7 (4), 14 (4)
 - . 7 Cav Bde (Col. Edl. von Pollet) = HR 4 (4), 12 (4)
 - . Cav Rifle Bns I & II/1; four independent rifle sqdns
 - . Horse Arty Bn 1 (4); three 8 cm cannon
- . 9th CD (FML Freih. von Leonhardi) = 2400 foot, 2000 horse, 15 guns, 7 t.m., 4 f.t.
 - . 1 Cav Bde (Col. von Weisz) = DR 4 (4), 13 (4)
 - . 9 Cav Bde (GM Freih. von Sessler) = DR 1 (4), UR 6 (4)
 - . Cav Rifle Bns I & II/9
 - . Horse Arty Bn 9 (3), three 8 cm cannon
- . Corps reserve = 2 Polish Legion Bde (Col. Küttner; 2000 foot) [Had IR 3 [3], 4 [3]]
- . Corps troops = 3 Comp/SB 9

German Group Gronau (reinforced XLI Reserve Corps)

Commander = Prussian GdA von Gronau

Chief of Staff = Prussian Major Bronsart von Schellendorff

Strength = 29 bns, 52 sqdns, 37 batties, 8 tech comps, 2 t.m. comps, 1 flieger det. 28,600 foot, 5420 horse³²⁰, 128 guns, 20 t.m.

. 82nd Reserve ID (GM Freih. von Spesshardt) = 10,800 foot, 320 horse, 48 guns, 10 t.m. 9 bns (Res IR 270, 271 & 272), 2 sqdns, 12 batties (Res FAR 69 & 70), 1 tech comp, 1 t.m. comp

. 5th CD (GM von Hofacker) = 800 foot, 2400 horse, 12 guns. Had 9 Cav Bde [DR 4 (4), UR 10 (4), 11 Cav Bde [CR 1 (4), DR 8 (4)], 12 Cav Bde [HR 4 (4), 6 [4]]; an unidentified inf (jaeger?) bn; Horse Arty Bn/FAR 5 (3); one tech comp

. Guard CD (G.Lt von Storch) = 2400 horse, 12 guns. Had 1 Gd Bde [Gd du Corps (4), Gd CR (4)], 2 Gd Bde [Gd UR 1 (4), 3 (4)], 3 Gd Bde [Gd DR 1 (4), 2 (4)]; Horse Arty Bn/Gd FAR (3); one tech comp

. 81st Reserve ID (G.Lt von Larisch) = 10,000 foot, 300 horse, 48 guns, 10 t.m. 9 bns (Res IR 267, 268, 269), 2 sqdns, 12 batties (Res FAR 67 & 68), 2 tech comps, 1 t.m. comp

. Directly under the Group (7000 foot, 28 guns) = LW IR 39 (3 - attached to 81st Res ID), 102 (3); Bavarian Landsturm IR 1 (4); 7 batties, 3 tech comps, 1 flieger det

Army Group Linsingen's reserve

. 45th LW ID (FML Smekal) = 5360 foot, 240 horse

. 89 LW Bde (Col. Wokoun) = LW IR 18 (3), 33 (3)

. 1 & 2 Sqdns/LW UR 3

TOTALS of the units directly under Army Group Linsingen = 90 bns, 115 ½ sqdns, 87 ½ batties, 13 tech comps, 2 t.m. comp, 2 flieger dets.; 76,020 foot, 12,478 horse, 421 guns, 105 t.m., 16 f.t.

TOTALS of Army Group Linsingen = 200 bns, 148 sqdns, 195 ½ batties, 31 tech comps, 2 t.m. comps, 4 flieger comps or dets; 191,960 foot, 15,555 horse, 997 guns, 264 t.m., 42 f.t.

TOTALS for the allied units under the AOK in the Russian theater of operations = 625 bns, 327 ¼ sqdns, 522 batties, 82 tech comps, 2 t.m. comps, 17 flieger comps or dets; 620,930 foot, 35,184 horse, 2859 guns, 777 t.m., 107 f.t.

B. Austro-Hungarians under Woyrsch's German Army

XII Corps

Commander = GdI Ritter von Henriquez

³²⁰The figures showing the strength of Gronau's foot and horse are estimates.

Chief of Staff = Col. Freih. Zeidler-Daublebsky von Sterneck
 Strength = 33 ½ bns, 4 sqdns, 24 batties, 4 tech comps; 33,100
 foot, 542 horse, 140 guns, 8 t.m.

. 16th ID (FML von Schariczzer) = 16,700 foot, 268 horse, 70 guns,
 4 t.m.

. 31 Inf Bde (GM von Szende) = IR 2 (4), Reserve IR 2 (4)

. 32 Inf Bde (Gm von Koschatzky) = IR 31 (4 ½), 64 (5)

. 3 & 4 Sqdns/HR 2; 5 Comp/SB 12, 2/PB 2

. 16 FA Bde (FML von Dobler) = FKR 16 (5), FHR 16 (4); 1
 Batty/Hvy FAR 16, 1 & 3/Hvy FAR 35; six 8 cm cannon

. 35th ID (FML von Podhoranszky) = 16,400 foot, 274 horse, 70
 guns, 4 t.m.

. 69 Inf Bde (GM von Baitz) = IR 62 (3), 63 (4)

. 70 Inf Bde (Col. Funk) = IR 51 (4), k.k. Lst IR 51 (3),
 k.u. Lst IR 34 (2)

. 5 & 6 Sqdns/HR 2

. 35 FA Bde (GM Gröschl) = FKR 35 (6), FHR 35 (4), 2 Batty/
 Hvy FAR 16; two flak züge

C. The Russian Southwest Front

Commander = GdK Brussilov

Chief of Staff = G.Lt Klembovsky

8th Army (GdK Kaledin) (13 infantry, 7 cavalry divs)

. IV Cav Corps

. 7 CD - 7 Kinburn DR, 7 Olviopol UR, 7 Belarus HR, 11 Don
 Coss Regt; 7 Horse Arty Bn

. 16 CD - 17 Chernigov HR, 18 Nezhin HR, 17 New Archangel
 UR, 18 Novomirgorod UR; artillery unknown

. 2 Comb Coss Div - 16 & 17 Don Regts; 1 Kuban Regt, 1 Volga
 Regt; Orenburg Horse Arty Bn

. 3 Cauc Coss Div - 1 Ekaterinodar Coss Regt, Ossetia Horse
 Regt, 1 Kizlyar-Greben Coss Regt, 1 Dagestan Horse Regt; 3
 Cauc Coss Arty Bn

. XLVI Corps

. 77 ID - 305 Laishev, 306 Mokshan, 307 Spassk & 308
 Cheboksary IR; 77 Arty Bde

. 100 ID - 397 Zaporozhe, 398 Nizhne Dnieprevsk, 399
 Nikopol, 400 Khortilsk IR; 100 Arty Bde

. V Cav Corps

. 11 CD - 11 Riga DR, 11 Chuguiev UR, 11 Izyum HR, 12 Don
 Coss Regt; 11 Horse Arty Bn

. Orenburg Coss Div - Units unknown

. XXX Corps

. 71 ID - 281 New Moscow, 282 Alexandria, 283 Pavlograd, 284
 Vengrov IR; 71 Arty Bde

. 80 ID - 317 Drissa, 318 Chernoyar, 319 Bugumil, 320

- Chembarsk IR; 80 Arty Bde
- . XXXIX Corps
 - . 102 ID - 405 Ligov, 406 Shchegrov, 407 Sarai, 408 Kuznets IR; 102 Arty Bde
 - . 125 ID - 497 Bilets, 498 Orgiev, 499 Olviopol, 500 Ingul IR; 125 Arty Bde
- . XL Corps
 - . 2 Rifle Div - 5, 6, 7, 8 Rifle Regts; 2 Rifle Arty Bde
 - . 4 Rifle Div - 13, 14, 15, 16 Rifle Regts; 4 Rifle Arty Bde
- . VIII Corps
 - . 14 ID - 53 Volhynia, 54 Minsk, 55 Podolia, 56 Zhitomir IR; 14 Arty Bde
 - . 15 ID - 57 Modlin, 58 Praga, 59 Lublin, 60 Zamosc IR; 15 Arty Bde
- . XXXII Corps
 - . 101 ID - 401 Kurachev, 402 Ust Medevit, 403 Volsk, 404 Kamishin IR; 101 Arty Bde
 - . 105 ID - 417 Lugan, 418 Alexandrov, 419 Atkars, 420 Serdob IR; 105 Arty Bde
- . 4 Finn Rifle Div (from Front reserves) - 13, 14, 15, 16 Finn Rifle Regts; 4 Finn Arty Bde
- . 12 CD - 12 Starodub DR, 12 Belgorod UR, 12 Akhtyrk HR, 3 Orenburg Coss Regt; 2 Don Horse Arty Bn

11th Army (GdK Sakharov) (8 ½ infantry, 1 cavalry divs)

- . XVII Corps
 - . 3 ID - 9 Old Ingria, 10 New Ingria, 11 Pskov, 12 Velikiye Luki IR; 3 Arty Bde
 - . 35 ID - 137 Nezhin, 138 Bolkhov, 139 Morshansk, 140 Sarai IR; 35 Arty Bde
- . VII Corps
 - . 13 ID - 49 Brest, 50 Bialystok, 51 Lithuania, 52 Vilna IR; 13 Arty Bde
 - . 34 ID - 133 Simferopol, 134 Feodosia, 135 Kertch-Enikol, 136 Taganrog IR; 34 Arty Bde
 - . Saratov Bde of 122 ID - Composition unknown
- . VI Corps
 - . 4 ID - 13 Belosersk, 14 Olonets, 15 Schlüsselburg, 16 Ladoga IR; 4 Arty Bde
 - . 16 ID - 61 Vladimir, 62 Suzdal, 63 Uglits, 64 Kazan IR; 16 Arty Bde
- . XVIII Corps
 - . 23 ID - 89 Belomorsk, 90 Onezhsk, 91 Dvina, 92 Pechersk IR; 23 Arty Bde
 - . 37 ID - 145 Novocherkask, 146 Tsaritsyn, 147 Samara, 148 Caspian IR; 47 Arty Bde
- . Trans-Amur CD - 3, 4, 5 and 6 T-A Cav Regts; artillery unknown

7th Army (GdI Shcherbachev) (7 infantry, 3 cavalry divs)

- . XXII Corps
 - . 1 Finn Rifle Div - 1, 2, 3, 4 Rifle Regts; 1 Arty Bde
 - . 3 Finn Rifle Div - 9, 10, 11, 12 Rifle Regts; 3 Arty Bde
- . XVI Corps
 - . 41 ID - 161 Alexandropol, 162 Akhalttsykh, 163 Lenkovan-Nasheburg, 164 Zakatal IR; 41 Arty Bde
 - . 47 ID - 185 Bash Kadiklaya, 186 Avlanduz, 187 Avars, 188 Kars IR; 47 Arty Bde
- . II Corps
 - . 26 ID - 101 Perm, 102 Vyatsk, 103 Petrozavod, 104 Ustchug IR; 26 Arty Bde
 - . 43 ID - 169 Novo Troitsk, 170 Molodetchensk, 171 Kobrinsk, 172 Lidsk IR; 43 Arty Bde
 - . 3 Turkestan Rifle Div (attached) - 9, 10, 11 and 12 Rifle Regts; 3 Arty Bde
- . II Cav Corps (in reserve)
 - . 9 CD - 9 Kazan DR, 9 Bug UR, 9 Kiev HR, 1 Ural Coss Regt; 9 Horse Arty Bn
 - . Combined CD - 19 Archangel DR, 16 Irkutsk HR; 1 & 2 Trans-Amur Cav Regts; artillery unknown
 - . 6 Don Coss Div - Units unknown

9th Army (GdI Letschitzky) (10 infantry, 5 cavalry divs)

- . XXXIII Corps
 - . 1 Trans-Amur Div - 1, 2, 3 & 4 T-A Regts; 1 T-A Arty Bde
 - . 2 Trans-Amur Div - 5 & 6 T-A Regts; 20 & 22 Turkestan Rifle Regts; 2 T-A Arty Bde
- . XLI Corps
 - . 74 ID - 293 Izhora, 294 Berezina, 295 Svirsk, 296 Grazovets IR; 74 Arty Bde
 - . 3 Trans-Amur Div - 7, 8, 9, 10 T-A Regts; 3 T-A Arty Bde
- . XI Corps
 - . 11 ID - 41 Seleguin, 42 Yakutsk, 43 Okhotsk, 44 Kamchatka IR; 11 Arty Bde
 - . 32 ID - 125 Kursk, 126 Rylsk, 127 Putivl, 128 Stary Oskol IR; 32 Arty Bde
- . XII Corps
 - . 12 ID - 45 Azov, 46 Dnieper, 47 Ukraine, 48 Odessa IR; 12 Arty Bde
 - . 19 ID - 73 Crimea, 74 Stavropol, 75 Sevastopol, 76 Kuban IR; 19 Arty Bde
- . Combined Corps
 - . 82 ID - 325 Tsarev Gurev, 326 Bielgerazh, 327 Korvan, 328 Novo Uzen IR; 82 Arty Bde
 - . 103 ID - 409 Novo Khoper, 410 Usman, 411 Sumy, 412

- Slavyansk IR; 103 Arty Command
- . III Cav Corps
 - . 10 CD - 10 Novgorod DR, 10 Odessa UR, 10 Ingria HR, 1 Orenburg Coss Regt; 3 Don Coss Horse Arty Bn
 - . 1 Don Coss Div - 9, 10, 13, 15 Regts; 1 Don Horse Arty Bn
 - . Terek Coss Div - 2 Gors-Mozdok, 2 Sunzha-Vladikavkaz, 2 Volga, 2 Kizlyar-Greben Regts; arty unknown
 - . Caucasian Native Horse Div - 2nd Dagestan, Kabardine Tartar, Chechen, Circassian & Ingush Horse Regts

Other

- . XLV Corps (in Front reserve behind 8th Army)
 - . 126 ID (only) - 501 Sarapul, 502 Christopol, 503 Chirgin, 504 Verkhne Ural IR; 126 Arty Bde
- . Odessa garrison (not at the front until July): 117 ID - 465 Yurzhum, 466 Malmizh, 467 Kinburn, 468 Narim IR; 117 Arty Command
- . Additional cavalry(not listed in original text and hence not included in the totals below, but present per Russian sources; perhaps they were in reserve at the outset)...
 - . 3 CD (in IV Cav Corps) - 3 Novorossisk DR, 3 Smolensk UR, 3 Elisavetgrad HR, 3 Don Coss Regt; 3 Horse Arty Bn
 - . Ussuri CD (was in line with 7th Army by 1 July) - Primorsk (regular) DR, 1 Nerchin Coss Regt, Ussuri Coss Regt, and perhaps one more regt; 1 Horse Mountain Arty Bn
 - . 5 Don Coss Div (in line with 7th Army by late June) - 27, 28, 29, 33 Regts; artillery unknown
 - . 1 Kuban Coss Div (in line with 7th Army by late June) - Just three regts (2 Uman, 2 Poltava, 2 Taman), artillery unknown

TOTALS: 40 ½ infantry divs (not counting 117 ID at Odessa or the opolcheniye brigades attached to the Armies); 16 cavalry divs (not counting the four units whose precise locations are unknown); about 600,000 foot³²¹ and 60,000 horse.

EN ROUTE BY TRAIN FROM THE NORTHERN FRONT:

V Siberian Corps

- . 6 Siberian Rifle Div - 21, 22, 23, 24 Regts; 6 Arty Bde
- . 50 ID - 197 Lesnot, 198 Alexander Nevsky, 199 Kronstadt, 200 Kronshlot IR; 50 Arty Bde

³²¹The total for the infantry doesn't count the strong replacement forces, which behind 9th Army alone reached a strength of 60,000 men. See Litvinov, "The breakthrough of 9th Russian Army in June 1916" (in Russian; St Petersburg, 1923; p. 87).

B. The First Assault of the Russian Southwest Front (4-9 June)

1. The k.u.k. 4th Army on June 4

Beginning at 4:00 AM on 4 June - a bright, moderately warm early summer day - Russian artillery fire pounded the entire theater of war between Kulikowice on the Styr and the city of Czernowitz lying far to the south. Soon it intensified against the selected points to a strength never hitherto experienced on the Eastern front, thus opening the Russian offensive which had been expected by the Aus-Hung. troops. In an order broadcast by radio early in the morning, and which we overheard, Brussilov left no doubt about the planned scope and importance of the operation. He proclaimed to his soldiers that "The time has come to drive back our dishonorable enemy. All Armies of our front are attacking simultaneously. I am confident that our iron Armies will achieve a complete victory..."

In the sector of the k.u.k. 4th Army, the most powerful and destructive fire was directed against 70 Hon ID, 2 ID, and the southern wing of 37 Hon ID. The Russian guns hammered with somewhat less force against the trenches on the northern wing of 7 ID and against the center of 4 ID. Thus the outline of the offensive by 8th Russian Army became completely clear to the defenders - the main blow would come between the Rovno-Kovel railroad line and Koryto, with a diversionary effort on both sides of Czernysz.

In fact GdK Kaledin had decided to break through the front of his opponents between Dubiszczce and Koryto with the main body of XXXIX Corps, with XL and VIII Corps, and with 4 Finn Rifle Div in the second echelon; this force totaled about 100 battalions and 320 guns. The principal effort was to be made in the Zorniszczce-Koryto sector. To the left of the attacking phalanx, the 101 ID of XXXII Corps would accompany VIII Corps in the direction of some heights two kilometers west of Koryto.

The first assignment of the attacking troops was to secure the net of Aus-Hung. positions as far as the line Stawok-Derno-Zabolotie-Malin-Kol. Koryto, *i.e.* their first and second lines. Then the attack would develop up to the Styr on both sides of Luck. For this purpose the 2 Finn Rifle Div and 126 ID were available, as well as (if necessary) 100 ID, which was stationed

behind the northern wing. XXX Corps was to thrust through Czernysz-Rudniki toward the Kolki-Cuman road in order to prevent the defenders from shifting troops toward Olyka. IV Cavalry Corps, as indicated above, would undertake a raid along the Sarny-Kovel railroad. Kaledin wanted to start the breakthrough assault south of the railroad after he determined the success of the preliminary artillery preparation. In any event, XXX Corps would attack on the 4th, and Gillenschmidt's Cavalry Corps no later than 5 June.³²²

All the apparently necessary defensive measures were already being taken by the command apparatus of Archduke Joseph Ferdinand's Army early on the 4th, as soon as the Russian drumfire began. 4th Army HQ alerted both brigades of 10 CD and sent them through Vladimir-Volynsky toward Luck. The Army's air units were ordered to bomb the enemy's assembly points and HQ at Olyka. GdI Martiny, the commander of X Corps, deployed 25 LW Bde of the Army's reserves, which had been placed under his command, in and behind the second position on a broad front rather than positioning it in depth; FML Szurmay deployed 4 Inf Bde in similar fashion.³²³ 26 LW Bde was stationed with HQ of 13 LW ID near Chorlupy; 22 Inf Bde and the staff of 11 ID (whose commander GM Grubic was now ill) were in the Ostrozec area. II Corps HQ also brought their reserve troops forward, behind the threatened 4 ID.

4th Army HQ ordered that ammunition should be expended sparingly, so that the supply - which was by no means abundant - would last throughout the major battle which was beginning and whose length no one could foretell.³²⁴ This measure, however, caused very unfavorable reactions among the troops. At any rate, the AOK sent more ammunition on the 4th and 5th, so that a shortage didn't

322Baluiev, p. 36. Zayontschovsky, p. 23

323This deployment of the reserves was based on the lessons of the New Year's Battle in Bukovina, but the outcome would show that it was a mistake here.

324The following ammunition was available on 3 June:

. X Corps had 400 rounds per rifle and 15,000 per machine gun; there were also 400 for each field cannon, 340 for each M.99 field howitzer, 300 for each M.14 field howitzer, 260 for each heavy howitzer, 430 for each 10 cm cannon, and 100 rounds for each 15 cm cannon.

. Corps Szurmay also had 400 rounds per rifle and 15,000 per machine gun; the artillery had 400 per field cannon, 300 per M.99 field howitzer, 300 per M.14 field howitzer, 260 per heavy howitzer, and 350 rounds per 10 cm cannon.

develop.

The Army Group commander GO Linsingen, whose HQ was at Jablon (60 km southwest of Brest-Litovsk) approved all the actions that had been taken. He expressed his expectation that "the Russian attacks undertaken to redress our success in south Tyrol will come to nothing", but also prescribed that if the enemy did break through "the reserves already on the scene shouldn't be committed prematurely, but used in a concentric counterattack through the enemy positions."

Meanwhile the Russians' fire, which rather early had also been directed against those upper echelon HQ in range of their guns, continued to bombard the foremost lines with varying intensity. In most places - particularly in the hardest hit central sectors of 70 Hon ID and of 2 ID - the barriers suffered substantial damage, the earthen wall was breached, parts of the trenches caved in, and communications were interrupted. Even in 2 ID's sector, however, the dugouts remained intact despite the heavy shelling. Thus the casualties of the divisions involved were kept within reasonable limits.

First thrusts by the Russian infantry

The bombardment slackened around noon, but in the afternoon the rain of shells against Martiny's and Szurmay's corps resumed. Between 5:00 and 6:00 PM Russian infantry detachments made exploratory thrusts in force at several points; many of the defenders chose to regard these as major assaults and unleashed barrage fire that used up large quantities of ammunition. Opposite the southern wing of 2 ID and opposite 37 Hon ID these thrusts were continued after darkness fell. In general the enemy was repulsed without difficulty; however, the Russians had been able to ascertain the amount of damage which their artillery had done to the obstacles and entrenchments.

From 4:30 to 8:00 PM the Russian XXX Corps launched several stubborn assaults against 4 ID of our II Corps; however, they all broke down in no man's land. The artillery of 41 Hon ID, which had mostly been left undisturbed, helped the defenders with flanking fire. The Russians returned to their trenches after suffering heavy casualties.³²⁵

In the evening of 4 June the HQ of 4th Army could report with

³²⁵According to Baluiev (p. 43) the Russians left 1900 dead or wounded men lying in front of the Austrian positions.

satisfaction that despite the hellish fire all units had suffered only relatively light losses, and that GM von Reymann's 4 ID had achieved a complete defensive victory.³²⁶ Since the Russian artillery fire had noticeably weakened after darkness fell, it was also anticipated that some of the significantly damaged positions could be repaired during the night. This was no doubt necessary, since it was obvious that the actions on 4 June were just the prelude to major fighting. Also our air units, whose activity was hampered toward evening by local storms, had already reported in the morning that Russian infantry reinforcements were moving toward the front through Klewan and Olyka, and that two cavalry divisions were also coming up - one from the area north of Rovno toward Klewan and one from Rovno toward Mlynów. Apparently the Russians were preparing for a decisive stroke.

In anticipation of this thrust, in the morning GO Linsingen had already asked Teschen for authority over 25 LW ID so that he could shift it toward Jalowiczy (12 km southeast of Luck). However, the AOK turned down his request, and in fact decided to use the Division for another purpose due to events which had unfolded in 1st Army's sector.

2. Diversionary attacks of 11th Russian Army, 4-5 June

General Sakharov, commanding the 11th Russian Army, certainly wasn't thinking of any wide-ranging operations, and held firmly to the task he'd been assigned - to tie down opposing units. For this purpose the VI Corps, followed by the Trans-Amur Border Watch Cavalry Division, was to attack along a front just 7 km wide in a direction which the Army commander believed would be effective - along the Tarnopol-Lemberg railroad. The other corps would keep enemy troops away from the area of VI Corps' main attack with limited thrusts of their own.³²⁷

4 June

³²⁶By 9:00 PM the reported casualties were as follows: 7 ID - 5 dead, 7 wounded; 70 Hon ID - 57 dead, 161 wounded. In X Corps the 2 ID had sent 137 wounded to the divisional medical facilities, and 37 Hon ID sent 105; more precise casualty figures were lacking. 4 ID had lost 189 men, dead or wounded.

³²⁷Cherkasov, "The Breakthrough at Luck. Studies and Source Material regarding the Operations of Southwest Front in June-July 1916. The Breakthrough of 11th Army." (In Russian; Moscow, 1927), pp. 115 ff.

After strong artillery preparation, around 11:00 AM on the 4th the Russian 16 and 4 ID advanced against GM Ritter von Willerding's 32 ID; also ready to move forward were thirteen armored cars stationed behind the attackers. Initial Russian successes at Cebrow and farther northeast were soon canceled by the defenders. The enemy renewed the assault in the afternoon and were able to penetrate into the second line on Heights # 369 (northeast of Cebrow) and to set foot in the foremost trenches at Heights # 389. However, the Budapest Division counterattacked and in bitter hand-to-hand fighting were able to clear the enemy out of almost all their positions.³²⁸ These actions caused the HQ of Böhm-Ermolli's Army Group to shift 57 Inf Bde of 29 ID from Zalosce about two hours' march farther south, to the border between 2nd and South Armies. The HQ of the latter Army again ordered that from 38 Hon ID (which was in reserve) the 76 Hon Inf Bde and three batteries should join IX Corps; these units first moved to Jezierna.

In the afternoon the Russian XVIII Corps made a diversionary attack south of the Tarnopol-Jezierna road against the left wing of FML Böltz's 19 ID, but was completely unsuccessful; the enemy was able to penetrate and keep only one sentries' outpost. Around 8:00 PM an assault was launched, after strong fire, against the inner wings of Böltz's Division and the German 48 Res ID; even before reaching our obstacles it collapsed under the well-directed and concentrated fire of the defenders.

V Russian Corps made some attempts to attack the southern wing of 2nd Army (IV and V Corps), but was held in check simply by our artillery fire.

More important for the development of the overall campaign was the thrust by XVII Corps, even though it was intended just to pin down opposing units. Originally the attack was to have been launched from the Dworec bridgehead. Since the Russians feared betrayal by the local inhabitants, however, they decided at the last minute to attack at Sapanow. Around 3:00 PM two regiments of the 3 Russian ID struck the center of our XVIII Corps, broke through, and forced the inner wings of the k.k. Lst IR # 1 and LW IR # 16 to retreat. Although the Viennese Landsturm were able to recover their positions at Sapanow shortly thereafter with a counterattack, the enemy was able to dig in farther north, at the bend of the Ikwa.

32832 ID lost 44 officers and 1800 men (dead, wounded and missing); Russian casualties apparently were higher, since on 4 June their VI Corps lost 5000 men (Cherkasov, p. 135)

This forced GO Böhm-Ermolli to give 1st Army HQ control over three battalions (II, V and VI) of IR # 84, which hitherto had been in the Army Group's reserve and hadn't yet joined 25 ID. The k.u.k. AOK, however, was concerned that a breakthrough was threatening at Sapanow and went further; they ordered 25 ID to march to Rudnia. The three battalions of the 84th would join the Division there as soon as they were replaced in Böhm-Ermolli's reserves by IR # 42. By shifting 25 ID it would also be possible to place it on trains at the Rudnia railroad station if it was needed in 7th Army's sector where - as will be related later - the Russians had also made a dangerous penetration.

5 June

Meanwhile the 5th of June passed without any major events for South and 2nd Armies. The Russian XVIII Corps, after the reverse suffered the day before, didn't continue to attack; they replaced the barriers which they'd removed opposite the center of Bothmer's Army so that the storm troops could advance. VI Corps was in fact supposed to strike again, but its troops were exhausted and weakened by the losses suffered the day before; they couldn't be organized in time for an assault and were content to direct moderate fire against the trenches of Willerding's and Böltz's divisions. This couldn't possibly fool the defenders into believing that an offensive was imminent. Opposite the k.u.k. 2nd Army, which hadn't been bothered on the 4th, the Russians also remained inactive on the 5th.

On the other hand, 5 June was again a quite active day for Puhallo's 1st Army. Already during the night the enemy tried to exploit their success against 1st IR # 1, but suffered a bloody rebuff. The holes in the line caused by the breakdown of LW IR "Cracow" # 16 the day before were closed by the 84th IR plus dismounted horsemen from Col. von Benes' Cav Bde and from 1st Huss Bde. These troops also recaptured a part of our second position that ran over the Heights # 256.³²⁹

The enemy brought up reinforcements on the 5th. After a powerful bombardment, enhanced by the enfilading positions of the Russian batteries, around 4:00 PM their infantry once again broke into the loose line composed of men thrown together from many units, and placed under the command of 7 CD HQ. The defenders were pushed back about 100 meters over Heights # 256. Now IR # 42 and

329Michel and Wohl, "Das Vierundachtzig-Buch" (Vienna, 1919), pp. 156 ff.

several March battalions of 7 CD were also committed; they were supposed to form a new front, anchored on the firm position of 1 Lst Inf Bde and connected with the old position at Sapanowczyk. Böhm-Ermolli's Army Group HQ also sent 58 Inf Bde HQ with IR # 74 from Popowce to Komarowka. In the evening the main body of 25 ID reached Kozin after exhausting marches.

The original plan was to recover the entire position lost at Sapanow by having all of 25 ID counterattack. However, the commander of 1st Army advised against this idea. The earlier position had been held only for honor's sake. The new line was shorter, better suited to the terrain, and not exposed to enfilading fire by the Russians. On the other hand, the new trenches didn't have shell-proof installations, which was a severe drawback now that the Russian artillery was so strong and effective.

General Sakharov had decided that on the 6th his VI Corps would again try to capture the important Heights # 369 south of the railroad. For the time being he was content with the ground he had gained at Sapanow.³³⁰ Presumably without knowing it, he had also drawn 25 ID toward the south and thus far away from Archduke Joseph Ferdinand's decisive battlefield at Luck; this had severe consequences for the defenders on 5 June.

3. The breakthrough attack by 8th Russian Army, 5-6 June

a. Loss of the first and second positions west of Olyka on 5 June

In the evening of 4 June, General Kaledin had decided to unleash the decisive assault toward Luck on the following day. For this purpose his artillery, which during the night had restricted their activity to harassing fire, toward morning intensified the bombardment to the greatest possible strength. The attacking troops of the spearhead group (XXXIX, XL, VIII and XXXII Corps) would advance around 9:00 AM.

Around midnight, however, parts of the two northern corps (XXXIX and XL) had already attacked the center and northern wing of 2 ID as well as the southern wing of 37 Hon ID. Although they were

³³⁰The Russian asserted that in the actions at Sapanow on 4 and 5 June they had brought back 69 officers and 2798 men as prisoners (Cherkasov, p. 140).

repulsed, X Corps HQ had shifted part of the reserves of 37 Hon ID (Battalion I of Hon IR 18) to a point behind the center of 2 ID. Since the Klewan-Luck highway seemed to be unprotected, 4th Army HQ ordered that during the morning the LW IR # 14 of 26 LW Bde should move to cover the point where the highway and rail line crossed the Putilowka 5 km east of Palcza. Moreover, since II Corps was secure, two battalions of the reserves of 41 Hon ID would shift south, behind the northern wing of 37 Hon ID. Finally, GM von Bauer's group (artillery, machine guns and foot detachments of 10 CD) moved from Zurawicze to Silno.

After daybreak the Russian artillery fire increased along the entire front of 4th Army, and opposite 70 Hon ID and 2 ID reached an intensity that was even significantly greater than the day before. The effect was overwhelming; the shells also raised enormous dust clouds which hindered visibility. Sand penetrated the breech mechanisms of the rifles and machine guns, making it difficult to load them. While this barrage was still going on, the Russian infantry crept closer to our positions; the assaulting columns burst forward a little before 9:00 AM. The 4, 37 and 7 ID were attacked by relatively small forces and only in isolated sectors; here the Russians never broke into the lines. 41 Hon ID remained completely unscathed.

The defeat of 2 Infantry Division

The fighting first took a bad turn for FML Edler von Sellner's 2 ID. Here the defending artillery was prevented from opening their barrage fire in time by the dust and smoke; this enabled the Russian XL Corps to break into the positions of Regiments 82 and 40 in one bound.³³¹ The garrison, half stunned by the frightful, massive bombardment, was partly surprised while still in their dug-outs and other installations. Nevertheless, the Szekels of IR # 82 bravely fought on. Many of these troops emerged from the dug-outs only as prisoners; others were killed when the enemy tossed in hand grenades. Several groups which still held out in the first line were captured when the Russians rolled up the position. The Rzeszow IR # 40 seems not to have offered any resistance worth mentioning. The Russians overran their foremost trenches very quickly.

Around 10:00 AM the battalions of 25 LW Bde, stationed in and behind the second position, became the targets of a rain of Russian shells, and were greatly surprised to see swarms of enemy

³³¹"History of IR 82", pp. 131 ff.

skirmishers advancing.³³² Meanwhile X Corps HQ had been informed by IR # 82 that the Russians had broken in. At 9:45 AM they placed 25 LW Bde under FML Sellner so that the lost position of IR # 82 could be wrested from the enemy with a "systematic counterattack." GdI Martiny also, without receiving permission from 4th Army HQ, brought up LW IR 25 (in the Army's reserve) from Chorlupy to Pokaszczewo.

The Army commander, presented with a *fait accompli*, now decided to commit all of 26 LW Bde (LW IR 14 and 25) from the reserves. At 10:30 AM he ordered: "All of 13 LW ID is placed under X Corps HQ and will be used for a decisive counterattack. The first position is to be recovered." Moreover, IR # 95 of 11 ID was shifted from Ostrozec to Zablotie. GM Bauer's group would march ahead to Palcza.

The HQ of FML von Szekely's 13 LW ID, which was supposed to oversee the counterattack, had been dispersed at Chorlupy by Russian artillery fire. Therefore direction was lacking, and valuable time was lost. The HQ of 25 LW Bde had already ordered a counterattack on its own initiative; X Corps HQ sent LW IR 14 to Derno, and LW IR 25 was supposed to accompany IR 40, whose withdrawal had now become known, back into its first position. However, these individual advances by regiments cannot be called a systematic counterattack. Also, there was no coordinated artillery preparation for the operation. Army HQ had failed to hold back at its own disposal any guns other than three batteries from 10 CD. Moreover, the batteries which had been stationed near the first line were now compelled to find new positions; some guns had already fallen into the enemy's hands. Finally, some misleading instructions had delayed the delivery of fresh ammunition.

Around 2:00 PM the HQ of 13 LW ID, which meanwhile had returned to operation, reported that 25 LW Bde had recovered the second line while suffering moderate casualties. This created considerable consternation. It had been believed that the Brigade had started in the second line and that it had already attacked from there toward the first position.³³³ Apparently the counterattack by 25 LW Bde had never gotten off the ground. In fact groups on the left wing of 2 ID, under the command of FML Szekely, had occupied the second position on both sides of the Olyka-Pokaszczewo road with the main body of 25 LW Bde, LW IR 14,

332Schönowsky-Schönwies and Angenetter, "Luck. Der russische Durchbruch im Juni 1916" (Vienna-Leipzig, 1919), pp. 163 ff.

333Kralowetz, "Olyka-Luck" (a manuscript)

and the remnants of IR 82; Jaeger Battalions 29 (Hungarian) and 4 (Galician) of 19 Inf Bde were still holding out in the first position. All these troops were maintaining themselves only with great difficulty against a much larger enemy force, which was attacking under the cover of strong artillery fire. Often the isolated battalions were fighting as islands surrounded by the greenish-brown Russian flood. On the left, where both Jaeger Battalions were stationed, a firm connection was still maintained with 37 Hon ID, which was standing its ground. South of the Olyka-Pokaszczewo road GM Klein, the commander of 3 Inf Bde, had the remnants of IR 40, the HQ of 26 LW Bde, Battalions II/LW IR 1 and I/Hon IR 18 plus LW IR 25. Apparently, however, IR 40 had already drifted back past the second position, and LW IR 25 wasn't yet fully deployed. Because of continuing uncertainty about the situation on the southern wing of 2 ID, the 70 Hon ID had set up a defensive flank facing north at Pelza.

At this moment of great tension, GO Linsingen asked why Regiments 40 and 82 had fallen back. The enemy hadn't committed any new troops besides those who'd already been identified. The Army Group commander expected "that this will remain the only instance in which a regiment gives up a strong, impregnable position." He also repeated his instructions that the strong reserve forces shouldn't be sent piecemeal to the corps, but kept together to mount an energetic counterattack. However, by now most of the Army's reserves had been expended. X Corps HQ had meanwhile learned that the enemy had already broken through 2 ID's new front in two places; they were considering another retreat.

Actions of 70 Honved Infantry Division

GM Goldbach's 70 Hon ID and the extreme northern wing of 7 ID were struck by Russian VIII Corps, followed by most of 4 Finn Rif Div, and farther south by the main body of XXXII Corps' 101 ID - a total of 56 battalions.³³⁴ Here also the attackers, moving in thick masses, were able to break into our fully smashed trenches in one bound. Local reserves did drive out the intruders; however, the Russians renewed their efforts around noon. Battalions from the Corps' reserves (IR 89 and 90) had to be thrown into the furious action. Both wings of 70 Hon ID as well as the left wing of 7 ID maintained themselves in the foremost trenches. However, the center of 70 Hon ID buckled, and at 1:15 PM FML Szurmay requested IR 58 from the Army's reserves. Archduke Joseph Ferdinand gave him the Regiment, but stipulated

³³⁴Vinogradsky, "La guerre sur le front oriental en Russie - en Roumanie" (Paris, 1926), p. 167; also Baluiev, pp. 39 ff.

that it should only be deployed in case of utmost need. The fighting raged with undiminished strength until 4:00 PM. The last two and a half battalions of the Corps' reserve were employed to strengthen the Honveds' threatened center. IR # 58 stayed in the third position as a back up.

Around this time, the commander of X Corps phoned the Army's Chief of Staff, GM Berndt, to report that in his opinion it wouldn't be possible to recover the first position, and that it was improbable that the second line could be held. Therefore it would be best to pull Sellner's group (2 ID and 13 LW ID) into the third position. After this request was repeated in writing, the Archduke-Army commander stated, "The Corps commander can do what he believes is correct based on his knowledge and his duty." GdI Martiny now decided, after considering what he knew about the situation of Corps Szurmay (which, however, he pictured as gloomier than in fact it was), to draw Sellner's group back to the third line. 37 Hon ID would have to bend its right wing back considerably.

Now FML Szurmay also reported. Based on information from GM Goldbach, he figured that the regiments of 70 Hon ID had suffered heavy casualties (40 to 50%). The continuing heavy fighting would demand further sacrifices. Goldbach would need fresh troops to hold onto the first position, which he intended to recover in the center with a counterattack being prepared.

FML Szurmay, who apparently was also influenced by the situation of X Corps, forwarded Goldbach's report to Luck, while asking for the last regiment of 11 ID (IR # 95), which he needed to occupy the third position between Malin and Bakorin. This signaled his intention of going back into the third line; in a phone conversation with the Army's Chief of Staff he indicated he had little hope that 70 Hon ID could continue to hold out. At any rate, his opinion wasn't completely justified since both flanks of the Division were still in the foremost trenches, the center was counterattacking, and the unbloodied IR 58 was still in reserve.

Based on this report, and because 4th Army HQ knew that X Corps had decided to retreat to the third position, they believed it would be best if FML Szurmay also pulled back 70 Hon ID under cover of the night. Therefore at 7:00 PM Szurmay received this order: "If further resistance at the front seems pointless, the troops should withdraw to the third position." Because of the situation of X Corps, the Archduke retained immediate authority over IR 95.

Meanwhile the counterattack launched by the center of 70 Hon ID reached the "Hundred Meter Line", but soon afterward the exhausted soldiers, confronting larger enemy forces, had to withdraw again to the second position, which lay scarcely a kilometer behind the foremost trenches. Both wings, however, were still standing firm in the first position against continuing assaults. The situation was not unfavorable, but FML Szurmay decided to make use of the authorization he'd been given to pull 70 Hon ID back to the third position.

The situation in the night of 5-6 June

70 Hon ID didn't receive Szurmay's order until 10:00 PM. Now they would need to hurry to carry out the movement to the rear during the short summer night. Unfortunately it started to rain, and the ground became slippery. This delayed the withdrawal of the batteries. As the rear guards began to leave the forward trenches, which hitherto had been so gallantly defended, dawn was breaking. The Division, which had numbered 12,200 men at the start of the 4th, now had about 5450; however, they hadn't lost a single gun.

2 ID had occupied the third position during the evening. The movement took place without interference from the enemy; the Russians, exhausted by the battle, were content to take over the second line. Now for the first time it was discovered that Sellner's group had suffered shockingly high casualties. IR # 82 was reduced from 5330 men to 718.³³⁵ IR # 40, which once had also numbered about 5000 troops, now had just 270. Only 140 men were left of the full-strength Battalion I/Hon IR 18, and 450 of the 1500 Jaeger who'd made up FJB # 29. LW IR "Vienna" # 1, which had entered the fighting with 3270 riflemen, had just 742 left by nightfall.³³⁶ The casualties of the remaining regiments of 13 LW ID, and of FJB # 4, were similarly heavy. The artillery had lost 37 guns to the enemy.

In the evening of 5 June the Aus-Hung. leadership was confronted by the disturbing fact that east of Luck two divisions had withdrawn from their defensive front, constructed with all available resources, into their third line. Because of the heavy casualties and the shaken morale of the troops and their commanders it was impossible to reckon with certainty that they would be able to stand fast. However, the k.u.k. high command

335"History of IR 82", p. 135

336Schönowsky-Schönwies and Angenetter, Appendix 1.

also had to recognize that they couldn't send any assistance now that 25 ID had been shifted to the south. They left this task to GO Linsingen. The latter had already released 89 LW Bde from his reserves, and moved them from Kolki to Zurawicze. On the 6th they would march to Palcza, where five German battalions from XLI Res Corps (under Lt Col. Jachmann) were being sent by rail. From these troops and several batteries provided by 4th Army, FML Smekal (hitherto commanding 45 LW ID) would build a combined division; its mission was to oppose a further enemy advance with a flanking operation from the northwest. GO Linsingen was hoping that this operation wouldn't be necessary. Rather, he exhorted 4th Army toward midnight to ensure that the enemy's attack would bleed to death on "our formidable positions." He also expected "that 4th Army HQ would exert personal influence on the lower-ranking commanders to bring the troops to a halt, with consideration for the neighboring groups. Only then can we expect success by bringing up further reserves."

From battle reports the commander of 8th Russian Army, General Kaledin, gained the impression in the evening of the 5th that the breakthrough at Olyka was successful. Around 11:00 PM he ordered that the offensive would continue on the 6th. To help forward the XXXII Corps, which was hanging back, he sent them a brigade of the 2 Finn Rif Div; the Corps would advance to the line Ml. Gorodnica-Kol. Malewanka. 12 CD would move into the area south of Olyka.³³⁷

b. Retreat of the whole 4th Army on 6 June

The catastrophe of Corps Szurmay

5 June had been the "black day" for 2 ID; on the 6th, catastrophe would befall the neighboring Corps Szurmay with elemental fury.

The troops of VIII Russian Corps rose early from their trenches and hurried after the rear guards of 70 Hon ID. This Division was supposed to occupy the third position between Bakorin and a point two kilometers east of Heights # 274.³³⁸ GM Prusenowsky's 4 Inf Bde was on the northern wing; south of Stawiszczce the Hon IR 314, IR 58 and Hon IR 13 were at the front. Regiments 315 and 312 stood in reserve. However, in some areas the troops were just occupying the line as the quickly advancing enemy

337Baluiev, p. 46

338TRANSLATOR's NOTE - However, on the map (Beilage 20) "Bakorin" appears as "Bekorin" and "Heights # 274" appear as "# 247."

intervened. Hon IR 314 fell back beyond the position, leaving a gap in the front west of Stawiszczce. The batteries had very little ammunition; the Division's Howitzer Regiment had no rounds left, and pulled back to Ostrozec.

The Russians were already attacking along the whole front of the Division at 7:00 AM. The first assaults were halted by barrage fire, in which several batteries used up their last ammunition. Toward 8:00 AM the advancing enemy struck at Kol. Malin, where the intact Stanislau IR # 58 collapsed completely, and into the gap in the line farther north. Regiments 315 and 312 recovered the town with a counter-thrust, but the Russians remained within storming distance of the position and were constantly being reinforced. Strong forces were shifted against 4 Inf Bde, which began to crumble.

The Army commander, informed by FML Szurmay of this critical situation, now placed the Army's last reserve infantry regiment, IR 95, at Szurmay's disposal for the purpose of counterattacking from the north. Yet the situation worsened from minute to minute before this attack could develop. Around 9:00 AM the HQ of 4 Inf Bde reported that the enemy had broken into the lines of the Grodek IR # 90 and that a large part of the Regiment had been taken captive. Farther south, IR # 58 abandoned its positions without having been engaged in serious combat. Szurmay reported that he now had to contemplate also withdrawing 7 ID.

4th Army HQ feared that the front might collapse at the junction between Corps Szurmay and X Corps (which still hadn't been assaulted on the 6th). This would open a direct route to Luck for the Russians. The Archduke now sent his remaining reserves - GM Bauer's group and the arriving 8 Cav Bde of 10 CD - to Luck to establish a cordon along the bridgehead. Moreover, all supply trains were ordered to cross the Styr. In a report to Jablon at 9:10 AM, the Archduke raised the possibility of a retreat behind the Styr and asked for directions on how to ensure coordination with Corps Fath in this scenario. If it became necessary to withdraw over the Styr, the Army's three corps would deploy as follows:

- . Corps Szurmay on a line from Wojnica to Nowo Staw, and including the southern part of the bridgehead to Wygodanka;
- . X Corps farther north on a position up to Zydyczyn; and
- . II Corps from there downstream along the river.

Meanwhile the Archduke would do everything possible to avoid this measure, which to him appeared catastrophic. The high command indicated in a message to Linsingen at 11:45 AM that they also "didn't consider it advisable for 4th Army to initiate a general

retreat behind the Styr because of the local success of the Russians at Malin."

Meanwhile the counterattack by IR # 95 was given up after it had barely started. The chain of command broke down completely on the northern wing of 70 Hon ID, where three regiments from 11 ID (# 89, 90 and 95) had been stationed. The commander of 4 Inf Bde, GM Prusenowsky, who was supposed to take over 11 ID HQ from GM Grubic due to the latter's illness, couldn't be located after 6:00 AM. The HQ of 22 Inf Bde was also ineffective. Since the counterattack didn't develop, the situation farther south could no longer be saved. Under pressure at many points, the remnants of 70 Hon ID withdrew around 10:00 AM. FML Szurmay ordered the Division to take up a new position on the line Wierchowka-heights east of Ostrozec-Piane. 7 ID would bend its northern wing back toward Piane. When 4th Army HQ was informed, they exhorted X Corps to maintain a firm connection with Szurmay; all reserves of X Corps should be sent to the southern wing to hinder an enemy advance through Nowosielki. At the same time (around 10:45 AM) GO Linsingen again ordered Archduke Joseph Ferdinand to ensure by exerting his personal influence that the officers of both corps held out.

X Corps decides to retreat

Yet GdI Martiny, very upset by the appearance of Russian detachments at Nowosielki, was concerned that the further retreat of Corps Szurmay would allow the enemy to advance from the south and cut him off from the Styr.³³⁹ He decided around 11:45 AM to pull his three divisions back to the line Wierchowka-Romanov-Zwierow-Wertepa; the movement would begin at noon. To hinder the Russians from breaking in past the southern flank, Martiny sent 19 Inf Bde - the Corps' reserve, reduced to 2000 riflemen - to the heights south of Romanov. Because this retreat would bring X Corps' left wing 22 km behind the right of II Corps, he simultaneously reported his decision to Luck.

Army HQ, however, ordered Martiny to cancel the order for the retreat, because it would force the entire II Corps to pull back and make it difficult to assemble the force for the counter-attack. Nevertheless, a report which the Archduke sent shortly thereafter to Jablon betrayed the fact that he had little confidence that he could fend off the envelopment of X Corps from the south under the powerful, almost unstoppable pressure which the Russians were exerting from Pelza toward Luck. If the Corps

339Kralowetz, "Olyka-Luck" (a manuscript)

couldn't hold, it was questionable whether the Army would be able to stay on the eastern bank of the Styr. Therefore as a precaution the II Corps was notified that retreat might be a possibility.

Actually the order to retreat, which X Corps HQ had issued on its own responsibility, could no longer be countermanded. Martiny's divisions, without being heavily attacked, had already started to march back to the line designated by HQ.

In Corps Szurmay, 70 Hon ID was engaged around noon in preparing a new position between Wierchowka and Piane. The enemy was probing ahead only cautiously, but their artillery was firing with greater intensity. Under 7 ID, the withdrawal of 14 Inf Bde on the north wing coincided around noon with the start of an attack by the right wing of XXXII Russian Corps. Nevertheless the withdrawal took place, as the troops reported, with little difficulty.

The general withdrawal begins

Because of the retreat of X Corps the Army's new front once again burst open; anyway, some of the troops were already worn out. 4th Army HQ was now forced to draw the necessary consequences. II Corps had to give up its positions, all of which it had hitherto held and some of which (41 Hon ID's sector) hadn't even been attacked. While the left wing kept its connection with Corps Fath, the right wing would pull back to the Konopielka at Wertepa.

Meanwhile the battalions of 4 Inf Bde, where continuing uncertainty still reigned, were crumbling more and more. Shortly after 3:00 PM the 70 Hon ID reported that the enemy had broken through their regiments at Ostrozec and Piane. FML Szurmay was compelled to order 7 ID back to the Ikwa-Styr line between Wojnica and Msztyszyn, and 70 Hon ID with 11 ID to the stretch of the river as far as Nowo Staw and to the southern part of the Luck bridgehead (by Krupy).

To prevent gaps in the line, the Archduke now ordered X Corps to withdraw to the line Wygodanka-Wiszniew. Szurmay, however, was told not to pull back beyond the Luck-Dubno highway. Yet this was too much to expect from the fully unnerved troops of 70 Hon ID. Moreover, it was now determined that 7 ID had suffered greater losses than hitherto estimated during its withdrawal, and was menaced on the flank and in the rear by the quickly advancing XXXII Russian Corps west of Piane. Therefore the retreat would

have to proceed as originally ordered by FML Szurmay.

Meanwhile around 3:30 PM the II Corps began its march back to the line Wertepa-Zurawicze-Siemki, beginning on the right wing. The enemy didn't pursue. 89 LW Bde came up from Silno to the Kiwercy railroad station, where they would concentrate with Jachmann's German brigade.

Situation of the Russians

The 8th Russian Army, which also had suffered some losses in the heavy fighting of the last two days, had won a surprising success on the 6th without attacking in great force. The strong right wing of XXXII Corps, after inflicting additional heavy casualties on the retreating Kecskemet IR # 38 on the northern flank of 7 ID, had thrust as far as Ml. Gorodnica. The main body of VIII Corps reached the Piane-Ostrozec area, while advanced guards were at Worotniewo. XL Corps was on the line Garazdza-Zwierow. XXXIX Corps, held up by forests and bad roads, reached Palcza, Wolka Kotowskaja and Silno. XXX Corps had to be content with occupying the evacuated Austrian positions between Boguslawka and the Styr. Farther north the XLVI Corps, spurred on by sharp orders from Brussilov, attacked the inner wings of Corps Fath and of Hauer's Cavalry Corps. They were trying to open the line for Gillenschmidt's mounted squadrons, who had assembled at Bielskaja Wola and Rafalowka. These thrusts, which didn't start until the evening and night, were unsuccessful; the defenders believed that they were merely diversions.

On the 6th the V Siberian Corps began to arrive by train from the north at Rovno; they were ordered to march to Olyka.

Kaledin was fully aware of the success he had won on the 6th. The k.u.k. 4th Army was in full retreat in front of him, and its combat strength seemed to be greatly diminished. Many detachments of the Galician regiments in front of VIII Corps had thrown down their weapons almost without fighting. Under these impressions, Kaledin ordered a pursuit for the 7th. XLVI Corps would renew their attempts to break through; to support them, XXX Corps would capture the crossing points at Kolki. XXXIX Corps would advance on both sides of the railroad in the direction of Roziszczce. The two middle corps of the main attacking group (XL and VIII) would take Luck; the latter would make its principal effort on the right wing. The troops of XXXII Corps were searching the captured positions for liquor, and thus had gotten out of hand; the Corps was told merely to mop up the east bank of the Styr between Czekno and Murawica. 12 CD was ordered to cross

the river between Czekno and Torgowica and then to scout through Czarukow toward Torczyn.³⁴⁰

4th Army occupies the Luck bridgehead

Meanwhile Szurmay's troops, hoping in vain to find safety, were hastening back to the Styr. 7 ID, with their northern wing in considerable disorder, deployed on the western bank late in the evening; they also held the crossing points on the eastern bank from Wojnica to Torgowica. Farther north, between Msztyszyn and the Polonka brook, stood 70 Hon ID, parts of the artillery, and IR # 58. The remnants of 208 Hon Bde (1280 riflemen) and several batteries assembled in the bridgehead of Krupy, which was held by the still intact IR # 95, 8 Cav Bde, and two March battalions. Regiments 89 and 90, which were no longer reliable for combat (each had 600 to 700 riflemen), were stationed in the town of Krupy. The last of the retreating detachments didn't arrive in their camps or in the unfamiliar defensive positions until after midnight.

Under X Corps, GM Sellner's group was stationed in the bridgehead between Wygodanka and Kol. Podgajcy with the remnants of IR # 40 (about 600 riflemen) and GM Bauer's group. Adjacent to them as far as Poddubcy the troops of FML Szekely (13 LW ID and 19 Inf Bde) took up new positions in the open field. GM Tabajdi's 37 Hon ID, which was still relatively intact, stood on both sides of the railroad as far as the Konopielka. II Corps was preparing to defend the area Wertepa-Sofijewka-Zurawicze-Kolki, parts of which were free of forests. Toward midnight the 89 LW Bde arrived very tired at the Kiwercy railroad station. By this time only three battalions of Jachmann's brigade had arrived, because their trains were delayed.

The higher command echelons were earnestly trying to improve the situation of 4th Army, which had become critical so quickly. Already at noon the k.u.k. high command ordered GO Böhm-Ermolli to send 29 ID (for the time being without IR # 42), which was in 2nd Army's reserves, by rail to 4th Army. 1st Army HQ, announcing their firm intention of holding onto the foremost positions, extended their left wing to Wojnica and pulled further reserves out of the front from 46 LW ID, which already held a long line. They felt confident in doing this because intercepted radio broadcasts indicated that the Russians were also shifting units

340Ryedkin-Rymashevsky, "The Operations of XXXII Corps during the Breakthrough at Luck in June 1916" (in Russian; Moscow, 1926), p. 15. Also Baluiev, p. 47

from the Ikwa front toward the north. Finally the k.u.k. XVIII Corps would use 25 ID to recover the old position at Sapanow on 8 June; once this task was complete the 25 ID would be made free for 4th Army.

The k.u.k. high command left the details of the operation at Luck to GO Linsingen, who was already energetically preparing for a counterattack. Besides Smekal's Division, he had ordered 2 Gd Cav Bde to come to Luck from Group Gronau. Moreover, GFM Prince Leopold of Bavaria's Army Group had placed GM Biss' Brigade (six battalions, reinforced by three batteries) on railroad trains with the same destination. GO Linsingen was placing all the arriving reinforcements under GdK von Bernhardt, who would lead the counterattack from the area around Kiwercy. To bring the quickest relief to 4th Army, Linsingen planned to open the assault with Division Smekal early on 7 June. However, this didn't come to pass because the situation continued to deteriorate on the 7th.

4. The Battle of Luck, 7-9 June

a. Loss of the bridgehead, 7 June

Early on the morning of 7 June, the troops on the northern wing and in the center of Kaledin's Army once again pressed hard against their opponents.

XLVI Corps assaulted the southern wing of Cavalry Corps Hauer, hoping to finally open the way for Gillenschmidt's horsemen. However the operation failed; hussars from 11 Hon CD struck back, taking prisoner 150 of the attackers. XXX Corps, entrusted with a similar mission to that of the XLVIth, suffered a like misfortune. Accurate flanking fire by the batteries stationed on the right wing of Corps Fath destroyed the Russians seeking to attack from Koszyszcze toward the Kolki bridgehead. Attacks in the morning by XXX Russian Corps also collapsed in front of the northern wing and center of the k.u.k. II Corps. Thus the V Cavalry Corps, which came up to the front, couldn't begin its operation.

On the other hand, Kaledin's central corps (XXXIX, XL and VIII) won a surprisingly great success.

Already at 8:30 AM the HQ of the 4th k.u.k. Army learned that 19

Inf Bde at Poddubcy and also parts of 13 LW ID farther south were falling back in front of a strong Russian attack. Since this would also impact on the southern wing of 37 Hon ID, which hitherto had been able to weather all the storms, Army HQ requested that Smekal's Division (placed directly under GO Linsingen) should advance as soon as possible. FML Smekal agreed, although shortly before he had doubted whether he could attack in the morning since the concentration of his troops was still incomplete. X Corps HQ was now ordered to have 37 Hon ID take part in Smekal's thrust, which was to develop on both sides of the railroad; II Corps would also join in. And, as if filled with evil forebodings, 4th Army HQ added that under all circumstances the Luck bridgehead must be held, just as Linsingen had demanded in his order the evening before. In the event, the bridgehead became the center of the activities that unfolded on the 7th.

Weakness of the bridgehead position

The first hasty development of this bridgehead took place during the fighting of autumn 1915. Later it was continued under professional direction. It consisted of outer and inner positions, and the former had two lines. Both positions were furnished with obstacles, shell-proof installations and observation points. There were emplacements for batteries and searchlights, connected by telephone lines. The bridgehead protected six high water bridges that crossed the entire valley (all of which was a swamp). There were also three low water bridges that carried traffic over the Styr, which was just 25 to 30 paces wide but very deep.

This technically well-built bridgehead, however, was dominated in the east and in the south by higher ground. To address this problem, the heights by Krupy had been included in the outer girdle of fortifications. However, this southern extension of the lines was shaped like a sack, and could be enveloped. The forests which extended up to the bridgehead in the north and east provided cover to the enemy. At the time when the already-demoralized defenders took up their positions, high grass and wheat interfered with their line of sight. The rush of events didn't allow any time to make good these deficiencies. Also the troops had no opportunity to study the descriptions of the bridgehead, the latest of which had been issued on 3 June. Thus their occupation of the foremost lines involved considerable difficulties. Finally, there was no overall commander for the entire bridgehead. At 8:00 AM on the 7th, the HQ of X Corps did name FML Sellner as commandant. However, the portion south of

Wygodanka fell under the jurisdiction of Szurmay, who early on the 7th had placed the troops from 11 ID stationed in the Krupy bridgehead under the HQ of 70 Hon ID. At 9:30 AM the HQ of 4th Army left Luck for Perespa, which had good communications and from which they hoped to bring up reinforcements for the counterattack.

The position crumbles

Smekal's Division began to advance around 10:00 AM. However, at 9:30 the southern wing of 37 Hon ID was already being pushed back by 2 Rifle Div of the Russian XL Corps. Since FML Szekely's group had come under pressure even earlier, at 10:30 GdI Martiny ordered 13 LW ID to withdraw to the bridgehead position between Podgajcy and Huszcza. A defensive success by 25 LW Bde made it easier for the troops to occupy the new position. Meanwhile the attack of Division Smekal soon came to a halt because of the thick woods in the swamps and powerful Russian counter-blows. Therefore at 11:30 AM Smekal received an order from 4th Army HQ to at least hold the line Sikiryrczy-Kiwercy railroad station-Kiwercy town; for this purpose 37 Hon ID was placed under his command. At this time the northern brigade of the Honved division was standing its ground along the railroad. The southern brigade, along with most of the division artillery, held a line by Boruchowo; the Russians once more broke through here around 11:00, and the Honveds reached the Teremno-Kiwercy (town) sector only after a rather disorderly retreat.

The Russian VIII Corps had moved cautiously toward the southern part of the Luck bridgehead in the morning hours. Their initial hesitation made it possible for IR # 58 and 208 Hon Bde to change places, so at least the infantry of 70 Hon ID and 11 ID were back under their correct HQ. VIII Russian Corps began to assault the eastern side of the Krupy bridgehead at 10:00 AM, but at first they were repulsed by 11 ID. On the southern side (where 8 Cav Bde of 10 CD was stationed) and from Nowo Staw to Mlynow the 70 Hon ID, 7 ID and left wing of 46 LW ID were able without difficulty to keep the advance guards of Russian XXXII Corps - who were feeling their way forward - away from the crossing points on the Styr.

Around noon the pressure against X Corps increased. On the southern wing of Sellner's group, parts of the Russian 4 Rifle Div temporarily pushed IR # 40 back to a hook-shaped position stretching to the Styr at Bol. Podgajcy. At the same time (around 11:15 AM) GdI Martiny felt compelled to send his three divisional commanders guidelines for the occupation of the

western bank of the Styr; they would come into effect when further resistance in the bridgehead became impossible.

GO Linsingen was increasingly interfering with the direction of 4th Army, although without leaving his HQ 200 km behind the front. Based on the latest trials of X Corps, he came to the depressing conclusion that his planned counterattack from the area of the Kiwercy railroad station was no longer feasible. Therefore in a teleprinter message at 12:15 PM he designated Roziszcze and Perespa as the assembly points for Bernhardt's group. Smekal should cover their deployment by holding the line Kiwercy (town)-Sikiryczy and should only withdraw with his left wing along the Konopielka when forced to do so. Similarly the II Corps, if it had to retreat, was to hold Kolki and move their right wing back along the Konopielka only step-by-step. Linsingen told X Corps and Szurmay's Corps to hold onto the bridgehead and the Styr-Ikwa line. To this order Archduke Joseph Ferdinand added a short appeal to his subordinates to remember that any further retreat would have enormous consequences; it didn't reach the HQ of the corps and of Division Smekal until between 2:15 and 4:15.

Meanwhile at 1:30 FML Smekal had ordered his brigades, both of which were under pressure, to retreat behind the Styr between Kol. Sierchow and Roziszcze. Smekal reported this important measure around 3:00, but 4th Army HQ didn't learn about it until 6:30. At roughly the same time as Smekal (1:35) GM Tabajdi, commanding 37 Hon ID, also decided that he could no longer count on his badly intermingled units to continue their resistance. He would only hold the bridgehead position until his artillery could withdraw to the western bank; then the infantry would follow them to the other side of the Styr between Miluszy and the area west of Zydyczyn.

Changes in the chain of command

These individual decisions to retreat would make the situation more difficult, and now some important changes in personnel further complicated matters.

At 2:50 PM an order from the k.u.k. high command arrived which relieved Archduke Joseph Ferdinand from the command of 4th Army. The Archduke left the area shortly thereafter. His successor would be GO von Tersztyanszky, who had been at home waiting for a new assignment since his removal from command of 3rd Army in September 1915. Until Tersztyanszky arrived, Army Group HQ would lead 4th Army directly. This change in command fulfilled a

request of the German OHL. Now GO Conrad demanded that Linsingen should also be relieved, so that responsibility for the defeat wouldn't rest solely on the Aus-Hung. leadership. Finally it was decided to find another position for Linsingen's Chief of Staff GM Stolzmann, whose assessment of the situation at the start of the Russian offensive had been completely unrealistic.³⁴¹

Furthermore, at 3:45 PM GdI Martiny learned that he was being replaced by FML von Csanady (hitherto commander of 38 Hon ID). Until Csanady arrived, FML Smekal would lead X Corps. In turn, Prussian GM Biss would temporarily take over Division Smekal. The Chief of staff to X Corps, GM von Kralowetz, would be succeeded by Lt Col. Rasky (but this change wasn't in fact implemented until the 13th).

FML Smekal had already learned about his new responsibility around 3:00; for the time being he stayed at Kol. Sierchow, from where he ordered 37 Hon ID to occupy the northern part of the bridgehead from Kol. Huszcza to Zydyczyn. Therefore Tabajdi now had to countermand his orders to retreat, but only some small Honved detachments occupied parts of the northern sector. Substantial parts of 37 Hon ID's northern brigade crossed to the western bank of the Styr (west of Zydyczyn) in relatively good order. Still further north, according to Smekal's order, Jachmann's Brigade would deploy as far as the railroad bridge at Roziszczce; further downstream 89 LW Bde guarded the river down to the mouth of the Konopielka. Smekal reported to 4th Army HQ that he intended to cover the crossing points by offensive operations on the eastern bank, but this wasn't spelled out in the orders which he actually issued. Moreover the stretch of the river between Zydyczyn and Kol. Sierchow wasn't guarded, which would have adverse consequences. Of the other troops of Bernhardi's group, only the leading detachments of Brigade Biss were arriving. GdK Bernhardi himself wasn't yet on the scene; a railroad accident delayed his arrival until evening.³⁴²

North of the Konopielka FML Kaiser's II Corps also had to endure sharp attacks by XXX Russian Corps in the afternoon. The

341Cramon and Fleck, "Deutschlands Schicksalsbund mit Österreich-Ungarn" (Berlin, 1932), p.138. GM Stolzmann wasn't replaced by General Staff Col. Hell until mid-July. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - For details regarding the long-standing feud between Archduke Joseph Ferdinand and Linsingen, and how it harmed operations, see Stone ("Russian Front"), pp. 241-42.

342Bernhardi, "Denkwürdigkeiten aus meinem Leben" (Berlin, 1927), p. 431

withdrawal of Division Smekal exposed the southern flank of II Corps. FML Kaiser's southern wing was now attacked by Russian XXXIX Corps between Kol. Dobraja and the Kiwercy station; therefore he decided at 3:00 PM to break off the fighting. Under cover from rear guards along the line Kolki-Sitnica-Lyszczycze-Chopniew-Czolnica, 4 ID withdrew to the bridgeheads at Godomicze and Sokul and 41 Hon ID to the one at Wiszenki. The Corps carried out the retreat in good order and with little interference from the enemy.

The bridgehead battle is decided

Meanwhile the battle for the Luck bridgehead reached its high point. The Russian XL and VIII Corps had brought up their artillery, which prepared the way for the infantry with a heavy bombardment.

Already around 2:30 the HQ of X Corps was reporting to Perespa that they had little confidence that they could hold the bridgehead for long. The divisional commanders had stated that the troops were fully exhausted; they could hold on during the day, but hardly during the night. When X Corps HQ asked whether resistance should be continued to the last extremity, GM Berndt referred to Linsingen's order that the position should be defended under all circumstances. Therefore X Corps remained in place. Neither this discussion nor the order to retreat by 37 Hon ID (even though it had been revoked) indicated that the will to resist was very strong.

South of Wygodanka the 11 ID had been engaged in heavy fighting since 1:00 PM against VIII Russian Corps, which was sending about one division through Ostrozec and two on both sides of the Dubno highway. Although with difficulty, the positions were still held thanks to the intervention of the remnants of IR 89 and 90 (formed into one battalion). Toward 3:00 the Russian batteries increased their fire into a heavy barrage. Enemy infantry now attacked 8 Cav Bde of 10 CD, which was stationed on the southern front and reinforced by a March battalion from 41 Hon ID. The artillery of 70 Hon ID was able to deliver flanking fire from Pulganow that mowed down rows of Russian troops, but the situation in the bridgehead was becoming more critical. Since the bridges at Boratyn were already under fire, only a few of the troops of IR 58, coming up from 70 Hon ID, were able to cross over to the eastern bank. Nevertheless, a battalion of the Regiment was sent forward into the ever more desperate fighting. The other parts of the 58th were left to guard the crossing points next to Boratyn.

At 6:20 the HQ of 11 ID had to report that both wings of the Krupy bridgehead were being pushed back and that everyone was falling back toward the bridges. The troops had little will left to fight, and it seemed there was no hope of getting them to halt on the eastern bank; therefore FML Szurmay ordered that 11 ID should at least defend the western bank between Bol. Boratyn and the mouth of the Polonka. But even this was uncertain, since the Chief of Staff of 11 ID reported at 7:00, "This is a debacle; our troops have no further value." As evening thunder storms set in, infantry and batteries hastened in wild flight over the high-water bridge at Ml. Boratyn and the low-water bridge at Bol. Podgajcy, which were under destructive fire by Russian guns. The bridge at Bol. Podgajcy caught fire around 7:30, but wasn't completely destroyed due to the rain.³⁴³ The panic which had overcome the infantry now spread to the artillery. Several batteries from 70 Hon ID which had been attached to 11 ID now began to retreat all the way to Sokal.

³⁴³The time at which the bridge at Ml. Boratyn was destroyed can no longer be determined.

The bridgehead is evacuated

The reports which arrived at Perespa at 6:30 PM strengthened GM Berndt's conviction that it was unthinkable to defend the bridgehead, given the current condition of the troops; if the enemy broke through during the night at even one point the consequences could be substantial. In a teleprinter message to GM Stolzmann, Linsingen's Chief of Staff, Berndt proposed that the troops should immediately be pulled back behind the Styr; on its western bank a well-built position between the mouth of the Ikwa and Nawoz could be readily defended. He received permission at 7:30. An order from Linsingen followed, instructing that the Styr should be defended by Szurmay between Wojnica and the Polonka, by X Corps from there to Zydyczyn, by Bernhardt to the Konopielka, and finally by II Corps down to Kolki. The Corps HQ would determine the time at which to evacuate the eastern bank. Bernhardt should make sure that the troops detraining at Roziszczce were covered. An appendix from Army HQ designated 10 CD, which had been joined by 4 Cav Bde (coming up from Torczyn), as the Army's reserve at Zaborol.

At 10:00 PM the 4th Army HQ left Perespa and took a train through Kovel to Vladimir-Volynsky, where they arrived around 6:30 AM on the 8th.

Based on the instructions to retreat, FML Sellner (who in spite of his illness was still leading X Corps until the arrival of Smekal) ordered the evacuation of the bridgehead. On the Corps' southern wing GM Bauer's group (remnants of IR 40, cavalry rifle battalions of 10 CD and several March companies from 40 Hon ID) had already started to retreat. On the western bank the troops would occupy the positions already built, with GM Bauer's men between Corps Szurmay and the town of Gniwada, and those of FML Szkekly (13 LW ID and the remnants of 37 Hon ID and of 19 Inf Bde) north from there to Zydyczyn.

The retreat of X Corps, closely pursued by the Russians, was very costly. The barbed wire of the inner circle of defenses hampered the quick movement of the troops. Detachments of Bauer's group were taken prisoner because the bridge at Rowancy was blown up prematurely. Many soldiers drowned when they sought safety by swimming to the west bank. A similar misfortune befell parts of 13 LW ID who arrived around 9:30 at the bridge southwest of Luck only to find that it had already been blown up. This caused new casualties to the Viennese LW IR # 1. The other two bridges at Luck and the one at Wyszkw were blown up at 10:00; the eastern bridge at Miluszny had already been destroyed around 8:45, and

the western one was blown at 10:45. At Zydyczyn the crossing over the eastern arm of the river had burnt at 6:00 PM; the one over the western arm was blown up at 5:00 AM on the 8th.³⁴⁴ Tired to death and without particular concern about orders to occupy and secure the positions constructed on the Styr, the soldiers of X Corps sank to the ground for a brief rest.

To complete the tale of woe, the 7 ID had also suffered a setback during the afternoon. Around 2:00 PM the XXXII Russian Corps burst out of the woods at Kol. Malewanka and from Uzyniec against the lower Ikwa. 46 LW ID at Mlynow was able to easily repulse the enemy, and the Nagyvarad IR # 37 evacuated the Rudlewo bridgehead without any noteworthy losses. However, at Torgowica the IR "Ottocac" # 79 was surprised by a regiment of the 2 Finnish Rifle Division; a large number of troops were taken prisoner.³⁴⁵ The right wing of 7 ID thus fell back to a position about 2 km south of the Ikwa, but the enemy sent just a regiment over the river at Torgowica. Division HQ had to report that the morale of the troops had suffered greatly due to the retreat and that the unit's strength had sunk from 18,000 riflemen at the start of the battle to about 7,000. Due to the lack of reserves, it was even questionable whether the Division could now defend the stretch of the river for which it was responsible. Since GO von Puhallo was justifiably concerned about the security of his left flank, the high command decided that 7 ID (which he had supported several times already in the last few days) should be placed under his 1st Army. The border between 1st and 4th Armies, as established on 8 June, ran through the southern edge of Lawrow, south of the road leading to Korszew and then along the southern bank of the Korczeska and the Luga to Markostaw. Corps Szurmay now consisted of just 70 Hon and 11 ID.

The magnitude of Kaledin's success

When darkness fell the 4th Army, having suffered very heavy casualties, was standing mostly on the western bank of the Styr. Because II Corps had been forced to retreat also, GO Linsingen had to abandon thoughts of a counterattack on the eastern bank.

344The times given for the destruction of the bridges are those reported by the detachments responsible for the explosions. The retreating troops estimated that the times were substantially different.

345The Russians state that here they took 42 officers and 2060 men prisoner; see Giltshevsky, "Military Operations of the Reserve Divisions in the World War" (in Russian; Moscow, 1928), p. 90. Also see Ryedkin-Rymashevsky, p. 17.

For now he was concerned only with holding the line along the Styr, so that the fronts farther north and south wouldn't also be forced to withdraw. However, he couldn't place any great hope in the power of resistance of Corps Szurmay and X Corps, parts of which had pulled over the Styr in complete disorder. Linsingen figured they would eventually have to continue to retreat. Meanwhile reserves were arriving at Perespa by train at two to three hour intervals. The plan was to counterattack from this area if the enemy followed X Corps and Corps Szurmay over the river.

In contrast to their normal custom, the Russians at Luck in fact were not content with the occupation of the conquered bridgehead position. Parts of VIII Corps had pursued through Krupy to the Styr. A regiment of the 4 Rif Div hastened along the Rovno highway through the undefended inner circle of fortifications and captured Luck around 9:00 PM. The magazines and railroad installations there had been quickly destroyed, but numerous stragglers fell into the hands of the Russians. During the night a regiment of 2 Rifle Div hastily built a bridge and crossed the river at Zydyczyn, the point which had been left unguarded; the riflemen firmly established themselves at Kniaginok.

The 8th Russian Army had achieved a great success. The whole defensive position of their opponents had been ripped apart on an 80 km front. According to Russian sources, since 4 June they had captured 922 officers and 43,618 men; their booty included 66 guns, 150 machine guns, 71 trench mortars and a large amount of military equipment. It is true that the victory was dearly bought; Kaledin's Army had lost 33,000 killed or wounded since the battle began. However, the soaring morale of the men allowed them to hope for greater triumphs.

Since the Russians had already reached the Styr in the evening of the 7th, they rightly believed they would be able to cross the river. Now a fateful question was rising - should the next advance be toward Kovel or toward Lemberg?

Kaledin planned to have only his right wing mount a major assault on 8 June. XLVI Corps was supposed to finally open the road to Kovel for Gillenschmidt's horsemen, while XXX and XXXIX Corps completed the task of hurling the Austrians over the Styr. XXX Corps would attack the Kolki-Nawoz sector while the XXXIXth advanced in the area on both sides of the railroad. Kaledin held back his Army's center and left wing. XL and VIII Corps were instructed to just advance their leading units a few kilometers beyond Luck; XXXII Corps would stay on the Styr and the Ikwa.

Only 12 CD would cross the river between Czekno and Torgowica, in order to reconnoiter through Czarukow toward Torczyn.³⁴⁶

b. The Russians break over the Styr at Luck, 8-9 June

Linsingen's concerns that the troops who'd withdrawn through Luck might be completely incapable of further resistance were proved justified all too soon on the 8th.

Operations on 8 June

When the advanced guards of Russian XL Corps moved west through Luck and Wyszkw at 7:00 AM, 13 LW ID immediately fell back toward Zaborol and Bogoluby; this Division had been reduced to no more than 1400 riflemen.³⁴⁷ X Corps HQ, still led by FML Sellner, ordered at 8:15 that 19 Inf Bde (stationed at Zaborol as the Corps reserve) should deploy against the enemy on both sides of the Luck-Torczyn road, while 13 LW ID, in conjunction with 37 Hon ID, withdrew through Szepiel-Zabolotcy to the northern bank of the Sierna brook.

Soon afterwards FML Smekal finally arrived at Torczyn to take command of X Corps. A message just sent from 4th Army HQ stated that Corps HQ "would bear the most serious responsibility if they even think for a moment about a further retreat." Therefore at 8:30 Smekal issued this order: "The assignment for today is to reoccupy the western bank of the Styr." Thus 37 Hon ID, 13 LW ID (along with 19 Inf Bde) and GM Bauer's group (3 Inf Bde plus cavalry detachments) would hold fast to their existing lines; if their strength permitted, they would advance to the abandoned works on the river. As a precaution the 4 Cav Bde, which had spent the night in Torczyn, would take up a fall-back position on the upper Sierna and at Usicy.

This order from FML Smekal reached 13 LW ID when they were already on the Sierna, to which they had meanwhile retreated without being under any pressure from the enemy. Now they had to move forward again, half the way toward Bogoluby. By this time Jachmann's German Brigade was engaged in a fight on the Luck-Kovel highway. Since they had been ordered to go back behind the Sierna if the enemy attacked north, they began to do so around 10:00 AM. Jachmann's neighbors to the west, 37 Hon ID, didn't take part in the action which accompanied the Germans' retreat. However, GM Tabajdi did order his Division, which had about 2500

³⁴⁶Baluiev, p. 49

³⁴⁷Of this total, LW IR # 1 had just 80 men.

riflemen, to also retreat to the north bank of the Sierna; they occupied the Bukow-Ozdeniz sector and established contact with 13 LW ID, which was stationed south of the brook.

Because of the withdrawal of X Corps, in the morning of the 8th FML Szurmay was also compelled to pull back his troops north of Nowo Staw, who were still standing along the Styr (208 Hon Inf, 8 Cav Bde and 11 ID). They retreated behind the Polonka, where they linked up at Polonnaja Gorka with X Corps' Group Bauer (which had fallen back to a line between Zaborol and Gorodyszce). GM Bauer's horse batteries had previously kept some Russian cavalry advancing out of Luck under effective fire. These were probably troopers from 12 CD, who had spared themselves the assignment of trying to cross the Styr south of Czekno, where the western bank was still occupied by the Hungarians.

The withdrawal of Corps Szurmay was consistent with Linsingen's wishes. He intended that if X Corps was compelled to retreat they should at least always maintain a continuous front toward the east, and that their neighbors (Szurmay and Bernhardt) should pull back their own units adjacent to X Corps. Then Corps Bernhardt (where the k.u.k. 29 ID and German 108 ID were starting to arrive) would counterattack over the Sierna against the northern flank of the enemy who were pushing back X Corps. Linsingen had suggested to Teschen that this maneuver could be turned into a pincers attack if there was a simultaneous thrust against Luck from the south.

At 2:00 PM the enemy again attacked toward Zaborol, whereupon the center and southern wing of X Corps fell back another 5 km toward the west. The precise positions held by the handful of fully demoralized troops in the wide, forested area between the Polonka and the Sierna couldn't be determined until evening. Nevertheless at 6:15 the HQ of X Corps ordered a new advance to the line Gorodyszce-Zaborol-Bogoszowka-Bukow. This order was only partly obeyed by Group Bauer and completely ignored by 37 Hon ID. The result was that wide gaps appeared in the Corps' front, and also between X Corps and Szurmay's men. Therefore during the night FML Szurmay had to withdraw 8 Cav Bde from the line so that on the 9th they could cover the crossing points on the Polonka west of Polonnaja Gorka.

Thus on the 8th Kaledin had been able to break through his opponents' sixth position at Luck without great difficulty, even though it lay behind a significant river barrier. On his northern wing, however, where he had planned decisive measures, he was denied success. It is true that XXXIX Russian Corps won a

victory over the k.k. 89 LW Bde. This unit had been reinforced by parts of Jachmann's Brigade, and early on the 8th was ordered by Bernhardt to occupy a bridgehead east of the Styr at Roziszcze. In the evening, when they were instructed to retreat, the Landwehr suffered some casualties.³⁴⁸ However, the k.u.k. II Corps - which now was placed under GdK Bernhardt - was able to occupy the northern bank of the Styr at the right time and in good order; they destroyed all the crossing points before the columns of XXX Russian Corps arrived. Only at Kolki, where a bridge fell almost undamaged into the hands of the Russians because of a faulty explosive charge, were enemy detachments able to reach the north bank. The commander of 7 Inf Bde (Col. Ritt. von Steinitz) led a counterattack by the Moravian IR # 99, which was joined by parts of 90 LW Bde (from Fath's Corps), and drove the enemy back again.

To the north, 26 LW ID of Corps Fath fended off Russian assaults west of Czartorijsk. Farther to the northwest, 53 ID only had to pull back their outposts to the main position due to an attack by the southern wing of XLVI Russian Corps. At Brussilov's express command, Gillenschmidt dismounted some of his cavalry to join the offensive of XLVI Corps' northern wing against the positions which Hauer's k.u.k. Cav Corps held in the forests; their goal was to break through toward Maniewiczze. Here, however, the Russians suffered a complete defeat; many of their cavalry regiments were reduced to half their authorized strength.

South of Luck, the foremost troops of Russian VIII Corps advanced cautiously toward the Polonka. The center of the Corps paused east of the river to prepare for the crossing attempt. XXXII Corps, reinforced by 126 ID from the Front's reserve, deployed troops between Torgowica and Dobratyn. They were preparing to thrust to the south, for which purpose the Corps was also shifting men from their left wing toward the north.³⁴⁹

Plans of the two sides for the next day

348The casualties, mostly prisoners, were lost mainly because the railroad bridge at Roziszcze was exploded prematurely. A battalion of Jachmann's Brigade also came to grief here.

349Baluiev, p. 50. Ryedkin-Rymashevsky, p. 20. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - The point of this passage is that although the ultimate goal of XXXII Corps was to advance to the southwest, they were to do so from the advanced (northern) part of the line. The Corps' southern wing (mainly 105 ID) hadn't pushed ahead at all against 46 LW ID, and was now detaching regiments for the northern wing.

This development wasn't hidden from the HQ of 1st k.u.k. Army at Bereszteczo. They were also aware of the weakness of the southern wing of 4th Army and of 7 ID, and were trying to help. GO Puhallo was pulling eight battalions and five batteries from the front of 46 LW ID; although this Division held a long line, it wasn't expecting an attack since the opposing Russian regiments were seen to be marching farther north. The units from 46 ID, placed under the commander of 92 LW Bde (GM Haas), assembled at Bokujma and Rudka. Army Group commander Böhm-Ermolli intended that they, together with 21 Cav Bde (of 4 CD) which had been sent to the left wing of 1st Army, should counterattack toward Luck as suggested by Linsingen.

For 9 June, Linsingen and Puhallo planned to have their foremost lines stand fast; this would win time for the troops designated for the counterattack to arrive and deploy. 4th Army HQ did tell X Corps that if the Russians attacked again in great strength the Corps could withdraw to the line Ozdeniz-Usiczy-Gorodok; there, however, they would have to offer protracted resistance.

The Russian generals were fully aware that the center of 8th Army, which had advanced far ahead of the wings, would be able to push back their battered opponents without difficulty. Therefore Brussilov's Chief of Staff, Gen. Klembovsky, urgently exhorted Kaledin to utilize his troops' fresh attacking spirit to achieve new successes. Brussilov himself, however, remembered the events of autumn 1915 and feared that German units would carry out a counter-thrust from the Kovel-Sarny railroad. Therefore it seemed to him that the two wings of 8th Army would have to be brought up to the level of the center before the pursuit could continue over the Styr toward the west. The orders he issued on 8 June reflected this concept. To forestall an eventual German counterattack, Kaledin's north wing should attack toward the sector Rudka Czerwiszcze-Kaszowka-Sokul. Once more the IV Cavalry Corps was instructed to break through to the enemy's rear areas, regardless of casualties. In general, the center of the Army would just hold onto the ground already gained. XXXII Corps on the left wing would thrust through Torgowica toward Demidowka; this was also in accordance with the wishes of the Stavka. The goals were to assist 11th Army, which was stuck in place, and to force the Austrians to give up Dubno.³⁵⁰ Prisoners taken on the Sierna included Germans from Reserve IR 268, which was part of the 81 Res ID stationed north of Pinsk³⁵¹; therefore Brussilov

350Zayontschovsky, pp. 27 ff. and p. 35. Baluiev, pp. 21 and 49.

351A battalion of 268th Reserve IR was part of Lt Col. Jachmann's

asked General Evert, commanding the Western Front, to seek to prevent additional German troops from being shifted to the south. V Siberian Corps, under Brussilov's direct control, would assemble at the Olyka railroad station.

Operations on 9 June

Early in the morning of 9 June, both wings of the k.u.k. X Corps were in motion, advancing to secure the line Gorodyszce-Zaborol-Bukow. X Corps had just taken up their designated positions on this line when they were attacked at 8:00 AM by parts of XL Russian Corps. At Zaborol the 19 Inf Bde was struck on two sides and pushed back. The other troops of X Corps joined the Brigade's movement to the rear. 37 Hon ID was also struck from the east; the Division's Chief of Staff reported at 11:00 that it was already questionable whether the line on the Sierna could be held.

Around 10:00 Russian detachments were able to cross to the southern bank of the Polonka at Ceperow and Ozdow. In order to avoid being pushed to the south and thus separated from the rest of 4th Army, Szurmay now had to pull his Corps sharply toward the west. Despite Szurmay's fears, the enemy did little to interfere with this maneuver. However, he lost his connection with 7 ID, which had been attacked at Torgowica by XXXII Russian Corps and whose left wing had been bent back to Rykany. To protect his now open western flank, Puhallo shifted GM Haas' group from Bokujma toward Lawrow; in the evening of the 9th they reached Radomysl. In the same evening the 70 Hon ID, after very exhausting marches and several rear guard actions, was on the western bank of the Leniewka between Czarukow and Korszew; the Division had been brought up to a strength of 6000 riflemen by incorporating four March battalions. Behind them was the 11 ID, whose combat value Szurmay evaluated as "about zero." 8 Cav Bde was sent to GM Bauer; since he had also received 4 Cav Bde, his entire 10 Cavalry Division was finally united.

Under X Corps, around 6:00 PM the 10 CD (with the attached 3 Inf Bde) was stationed between Gorodok and Kol. Budki; farther north the 19 Inf Bde held the line to Usiczny, then 13 LW ID was on the western bank of the Sierna as far as Szepiel. They hadn't been pursued by the enemy. However, 37 Hon ID - which had fallen back in three groups to Szepiel, Zablotcy and Ozdeniz - was assaulted heavily again at 6:00 PM by parts of the Russian XL Corps and squadrons of 12 CD. The Honveds were thrown back to Boratyn,

combined brigade.

where barely 1500 men and two batteries assembled during the night. In this gloomy situation, at 7:30 FML Csanady assumed command over the X Corps at Zaturcy; it consisted of not more than 3000 riflemen. Since the combined division in Corps Bernhardt had been taken over by Prussian GM Rusche in the evening of 8 June, FML Smekal became temporary commander of 11 ID on the 10th.

Now the right wing of Corps Bernhardt, which meanwhile had been reinforced by the 2 Prussian Gd Cav Bde, had to pull back to avoid losing its combat strength before the counterattacking group was fully assembled; the new position was the line Kol. Libensztat-Kopaczewka. The left of Corps Bernhardt and the adjoining wing of Kaiser's II Corps weren't engaged. However, downstream from Kopyli the XXX and XLVI Russian Corps launched prolonged attacks. Their crossing attempts at Kopyli, Kolki and Kulikowiczy, as well their assaults west of Czartorijsk and against Corps Hauer, were unsuccessful. The enemy were able to establish a firm foothold on the northern bank of the Styr only at Siemki (east of Kolki). To drive them out, FML Fath brought up his Corps' reserve from the sand hills at Komarow to counter-attack under the commander of 51 LW Bde, GM Pfeffer. The wild fighting in the swamps and woods along the Styr lasted without pause through the night. It was brought to a successful conclusion the next day, despite stubborn Russian resistance, by a joint effort of Pfeffer's group and units sent to help by 4 ID (parts of IR # 8 and 99). The Russian 80 ID of XXX Corps was thrown back over the river. Over 1300 unwounded prisoners remained in the hands of the victors.³⁵² Although this was a small-scale victory, it was a ray of light amidst the unbroken series of defeats and retreats since 4 June, and was expected to lift the spirits and self-confidence of the troops.

5. Observations on the breakthrough battle at Olyka-Luck

By the evening of the sixth day of the great breakthrough battle in Volhynia, the Aus-Hung. front had been torn apart between Mlynow and Siemki on a length of 85 km and - reckoning from Olyka to Usiczy - a depth of 48 km. The southern wing of 4th Army had suffered very heavy losses of men and equipment.³⁵³ At least as

352Wisshaupt, "Die 52. Landwehr-Infanterie Brigade im Weltkrieg 1914-1918" (Reichenberg, 1928), pp. 793 ff. Also see, by the same author, "Das Gefecht bei Siemki, 9. bis 10. Juni 1916" (in Österr. Wehrzeitung, Issues 35 to 48 of 1924).

353Casualties among the riflemen from 4 to 8 June (dead, wounded

serious was the collapse of morale; the troops had lost both self-confidence and trust in their leaders. A gap of 15 km had opened between the inner wings of 4th and 1st Armies. When the first reinforcements arrived, they were sucked into the retreat, which was growing like an avalanche. As of the evening of the 9th, it still wasn't clear when and where we would succeed in bringing the retreat to a halt and opening the planned counter-attack with the reserves that were approaching by train. Thus the enemy, with just 15 infantry and 7 cavalry divisions, had won a surprisingly great success against the 12 infantry and 4 cavalry divisions which 4th Army had stationed between Kuchocka Wola and Mlynów.

Causes of the catastrophe at Olyka

The collapse had started at Olyka. The Aus-Hung. leadership certainly erred when they pulled 4 Inf Bde, made up of east Galician regiments, from the front and replaced it with 19 Inf Bde from the Army's reserve shortly before the anticipated Russian offensive. 4 Inf Bde on 4 and 5 June would have suffered the same fate which befell 19 Inf Bde. The latter unit, however, consisted of troops who had often been distinguished, were familiar with the area, and trained for offensive operations. If the 19 Bde had been in place to counterattack, they probably would have been successful. Instead, however, they were crushed by the hurricane of the Russian bombardment. 4 Inf Bde, which was deployed behind 70 Hon ID, was sent to counterattack on the 5th and failed the test.

The well-tried 13 LW ID stood behind 2 ID. The leadership, however, failed to use the excellent Landwehr regiments in a well-planned counterattack with proper artillery preparation and utilization of the terrain. The Division's strength was squandered in isolated thrusts, some of which were undertaken only to recover the second position (in which the authors of the orders believed 25 LW Bde was already deployed).

and taken prisoner) were: 2 ID - 11,600; 4 ID - 5700; 11 ID - 13,900; 13 LW ID - 11,700; 37 Hon ID - 13,600; 41 Hon ID - 5300; 70 Hon ID - 10,300; 7 ID - 9900. The 10 CD had lost 200 men. Total casualties for 4th Army, including 7 ID (which meanwhile had transferred to 1st Army) but not including Smekal's Combined Div (for which figures aren't available) were 82,200 men. At this time about 17,000 wounded men and 5000 sick were in the field hospitals. The Russians stated that in the Luck area they had taken about 45,000 wounded and non-wounded prisoners from 4 to 9 June.

Thus by evening on the 5th the 13 LW ID and remnants of 2 ID were back in the third position. The Russian XXX Corps, which had paid an enormous cost in blood to win this initial success, was content to occupy the second position. The Russians' situation wasn't very favorable, since their flanks were threatened from the north and south. Moreover, in order to continue the breakthrough they would need to bring the artillery forward, and this wouldn't be easy because of the maze of trenches. The Aus-Hung. leadership, however, not only failed to make a pincers assault on the enemy who'd broken into our lines; they made another mistake which worked to the Russians' advantage.

In the evening of the 5th, the 70 Hon ID, which had been the target of Kaledin's main assault, was holding out with both their wings still in the first position and their center (which had been joined by 4 Inf Bde) in the second position. Behind them stood the full-strength IR # 58, and behind the junction of 70 Hon and 2 ID stood the also intact IR # 95. Nevertheless, FML Szurmay suggested that the 70th Div should pull back to the third position, and 4th Army HQ agreed. Thus the breach was unnecessarily widened by another nine kilometers.

In the morning of the 6th, the 70 Hon ID was just settling into the third position when it was soon subjected to a new attack. Although the Hungarian Landsturm troops had fought very bravely in the forward trenches during the 4th and 5th, they didn't display the same stubbornness in the third position, which they hadn't built, scarcely knew, and didn't feel comfortable with. The 4 Inf Bde, as on the day before, lacked the necessary will to fight, and in most cases the two regiments of 22 Inf Bde shirked their duty. 70 Hon ID and the regiments of 11 ID pulled back.

Now the scene of June 5 was played out again, although this time with the roles reversed. Because 70 Hon ID had retreated, X Corps HQ believed that their troops could no longer stay in place, and ordered them to withdraw to the line Wygodanka-Wertepa. This also affected the southern flank of II Corps, which until now had kept the enemy out of their trenches. Szurmay also pulled 7 ID back behind the Ikwa and the Styr. Thus the entire front between Siemki and Mlynow was turned upside down. If X Corps and 7 ID had stayed put, perhaps the Russian penetration of 70 Hon ID's lines could have been sealed off. On the other hand, it surely wouldn't have been easy for X Corps to hold their ground; even though the Corps wasn't heavily attacked on the 6th, the troops were still suffering from two days of destructive artillery fire, which the Russians had directed

against the affected sectors with an intensity never before experienced in the East. The bombardment still wasn't as strong as that which the Italians had directed in the third and fourth Isonzo battles against Boroevic's Army, which contained troops of similar national background to those stationed on the northeast front. But the eight months' pause in fighting on the latter front had left the soldiers here less prepared to cope with the effects of heavy combat. Moreover, the troops were discouraged by the failure of the rigid defensive tactics, which had worked during the New Year's Battle and the actions around Lake Narotch but couldn't cope with the Russians' new method of attack. It must also be conceded that the east Galician regiments here often lacked the firm will to hold out against the Russians.

Causes of the defeat at Luck

On 7 June the enemy again struck with full fury, initially against the Wygodanka-Wertepa defensive line which was supposed to cover the deployment of Smekal's Division; most of the line wasn't fortified. The Russians soon broke through and thrust through the forest on both sides of the Palcza-Roziszczce railroad into the area where Smekal was deploying; his Division had believed that the forest made the area impractical for an attack. Here we must consider whether it might have been preferable to have already pulled X Corps back in the evening of the 6th into the bridgehead position between Wygodanka and Zydyczyn. This would have forced the Russians to decide whether they would be able to thrust ahead into the narrow area between the bridgehead and the swamps along the Konopielka. Yet the question whether II Corps would then have been able to fight on with an open southern flank (even though reinforced by Division Smekal) cannot be definitely answered.

In the afternoon of the 7th the Russians struck mainly against the southern part of the Luck bridgehead. At this precise time there was a series of personnel changes affecting the higher command positions. Since the battle started the Army Group commander had been forcefully urging his subordinate generals to personally ensure that the officers and men stood their ground, but the command shakeup made this, at the very least, difficult. Temporarily there was no leadership at all.

It must be conceded that the personal relations between GO Linsingen and Archduke Joseph Ferdinand didn't develop into the kind of mutual understanding that was necessary to carry out a

successful operation.³⁵⁴ Also the two Chiefs of Staff (Generals Stolzmann and Berndt) had never had any confidential meetings to address issues of command control. This tension between the two headquarters became a liability in the critical hours of the battle. Moreover there were disputes between the Archduke and his Chief of Staff; although they didn't affect the actual measures of 4th Army HQ during the battle itself, they had negative effects during the period of preparation.³⁵⁵

The situation, which had already been very serious around noon on the 7th, thus deteriorated due to failures of the higher-ranking generals and decisions by some of them to retreat on their own authority. Nevertheless the regiments at Krupy, most of which had already suffered greatly, to a great extent still fought bravely in the afternoon. Toward evening they suddenly gave way to the overwhelming Russian pressure. Their retreat in full flight and the premature demolition of the bridges increased the casualties. These hasty measures were an indication of the great nervousness that had gripped most units. The battered troops of X Corps and of Corps Szurmay lay down exhausted for the night on the western bank of the Styr; they weren't even aware that during the night several Russian battalions had also crossed the river.

In retrospect, it can perhaps be questioned whether it was wise to attempt to defend the bridgehead position at all, since its lay-out was unfavorable and the troops were already burnt-out. Other experiences have taught that defeated troops can rally quickest when stationed behind a river barrier which can hinder the pursuers. This could have been achieved if 4th Army had retreated behind the Styr in the evening of the 6th, an option which Army HQ had considered already in the morning of that day. However, retention of Luck had become a point of honor to 4th Army since the fall campaign of 1915. It is understandable that they didn't want to give up this fortified point, which had been

354The relationship between the generals became cold mainly after Archduke Joseph Ferdinand was promoted to General-Oberst in 26 February 1916. He had hoped that this would entitle him to command the Army Group. This was prevented by the Germans, however, when they also promoted GdI Linsingen to the rank of General-Oberst with an earlier effective date.

355TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - The Archduke resented the fact that Berndt had been appointed as Chief of Staff against his wishes (after the first defeat at Luck in fall 1915), and therefore subjected the General to a series of personal slights (such as refusing to ride with him in the same automobile). See Stone, p. 242.

recovered with the expenditure of so much blood - and its bridgehead which had been constructed with so much effort - without offering serious resistance.

The outcome of the fighting

The events west of Luck on the 8th and 9th were just the natural consequence of those which had already unfolded. We must question why Brussilov didn't exploit the successes he'd won up through the crossing of the Styr at Luck with a decisive thrust in the direction of Vladimir-Volynsky. Until they reached the Styr the Russians didn't make any tactical mistakes, and the result was an unbroken chain of circumstances that worked to the disadvantage of the 4th k.u.k. Army. Once on the Styr, Brussilov turned his gaze toward Kovel, while also keeping an eye on the north where he feared a German counterattack. The salvation of the defenders was that he failed to realize that he could have sent his great mass of cavalry toward Kovel by a detour through Luck and Torczyn, or could have advanced southwest through the gap in the front toward Lemberg and thus threatened the Austrian front in Galicia from the flank.³⁵⁶

In a report to the k.u.k. AOK in August 1916, the Chief of Staff to 4th Army HQ (GM Berndt) wrote:

"The catastrophic outcome of the Battle of Olyka-Luck cannot be regarded as an unavoidable result of destiny. It is certainly conceivable that other commanders with other troops under otherwise identical circumstances could have repulsed the Russian offensive or limited the breakthrough so that it wouldn't have had such disastrous impact on the entire Eastern front."

And in another part of his report, in connection with his description of events through 7 June, he noted: "The fact that the Russians didn't better exploit their advantage in the next few days was not our doing."

We can hardly dispute this frank and soldierly conclusion.

6. Attacks by Sakharov's Army northwest of Tarnopol, 6-9 June

As ordered by GdK Sakharov, commanding the 11th Russian Army, VI Corps renewed its assault on 6 June between the Tarnopol-Zloczow railroad and the Sereth. They were supported by XVIII Corps,

356Diakow, "Brussilow und seine Reiter" (Mil. wiss. Mitt.; Vienna, 1933; pp. 9 ff.)

which was to direct artillery fire and diversionary attacks against the German 48 Res and k.u.k. 19 ID.

After artillery fire for effect, which escalated into a heavy barrage, the storming columns of VI Russian Corps struck Willerding's 32 ID several times starting at 3:20 PM. Although the attacks were resumed until sunset, they were all shattered by the heroic resistance of 32 ID, reinforced by several battalions from 76 Hon Inf Bde. The heavy casualties which the Russians suffered in the assaults, which in some cases had led to hand-to-hand combat, forced Sakharov to postpone resumption of the operation until 9 June.³⁵⁷ The diversionary attacks of XVIII Russian Corps were repulsed by the defenders without difficulty.

Sakharov now pinned his hopes on his XVII Corps which on the 7th, along with the Trans-Amur Cavalry Division, was supposed to attack the sector defended by 1 Lst Inf Bde south of Sapanow. However, this operation never progressed beyond some feeble artillery preparation. Before dawn on the next day (8 June), the k.u.k. 25 ID struck before XVII Russian Corps; the Division's attack was aimed at recovering ground lost when the Russians broke into the lines at Sapanow on the 4th. After temporarily regaining the heights north of Sapanow, however, the troops were hit by a Russian counter-thrust and GM Boog had to pull them back to their starting-points. The Trans-Amur horsemen tried to pursue the Austrians, but were checked by barbed wire and defensive fire.

On Sakharov's southern wing the VI Corps was meanwhile getting ready to renew their offensive. The preparations were no secret to the threatened IX k.u.k. Corps. FML Kralicek had no reason to question the continued steadiness of his troops, but had to reckon with a continuing deterioration of their strength if the fighting was protracted. Therefore he suggested that the pressure on 32 ID should be relieved by having IV Corps of 2nd Army, hitherto not heavily engaged, attack on the eastern bank of the Sereth. Because of local conditions, IV Corps HQ wasn't willing to attack but they were ready to send reserves to help Kralicek.

VI Russian Corps attacked anew between the railroad and the Sereth on the 9th. In eleven hours of battle which raged back and forth, 32 ID repulsed seven powerful assaults; they were

³⁵⁷VI Russian Corps lost 8000 men on 4, 5 and 6 June (Cherkasov, p. 141). The k.u.k. 32 ID lost a total of 54 officers and 2875 men during these days.

aided by several battalions of 19 ID which hurried to the scene. Only at one point (on Heights # 389) were the enemy able to dig in along a small section of our front; they couldn't be dislodged by a counterattack. In the evening, IR # 12 and a heavy battery from the k.u.k. IV Corps came up as reinforcements behind 32 ID.

General Sakharov had only partly achieved the goal he'd been given by Brussilov, which was to pin down opposing units on his front by attacking them. He had been successful in drawing the k.u.k. 25 ID toward Sapanow and keeping them in place there. However, 11th Russian Army hadn't been able to hinder the departure of 29 ID by rail or the shifting of 92 LW Inf Bde and of 21 Cav Bde toward the north.

7. The attacks of 7th and 9th Russian Armies

a. The plans of Generals Shcherbatchev and Letschitzky

The plans of attack of the commanders of 7th and 9th Russian Armies were based on the general instructions issued by General Brussilov on 25 May.

7th Army

GdI Shcherbatchev, commanding 7th Army, had decided to attack part of the position of the k.u.k. XIII Corps which jutted forward to the east at Jazlowiec. He recognized the strength of this line, before which his troops had been dug in for six months. However, he thought it could be breached because it was so far advanced that it was vulnerable to flanking fire. Moreover, the Russian trenches in front of Jazlowiec were sited on higher ground than those of the defenders and provided a good view into the valley of the Strypa.

General Shcherbatchev, who kept the lessons of the New Year's Battle in mind, made thorough preparations for the attack. Seven jumping-off positions were built and new positions prepared for batteries. The attacking troops were trained in trench fighting, and shown how to destroy obstacles and throw hand grenades; they carried out exercises against exact models of the positions they would actually attack. For the assault on Jazlowiec, the three divisions of II Corps would use 48 battalions on a front just 7 km wide, after thorough artillery preparation. Since there was a lack of heavy artillery (General Shcherbatchev had a total of

just 23 heavy guns), the actual breakthrough attempt would be made by 3 Turkestan Rif Div with its regiments closely packed together on a front of only 2 km. To the north, one regiment from 26 ID would take the advanced work at Gipsarka, from which the defenders might threaten the attackers with flanking fire. To the south of 3 Turkestan Div, two regiments of 43 ID would thrust along the Popowce-Jazlowiec road. Both of the groups on the flanks would make up for their lack of heavy artillery by hurling gas grenades and firing from armored cars. The objective of the assault was to hurl the defenders at Jazlowiec over the Strypa. As soon as the Austrian front was broken at this point, two regiments from 26 ID would widen the breakthrough in the direction of Trybuchowce. Thus in the decisive sectors the Russians massed 32 battalions, 124 machine guns and 107 guns against just 5 battalions, 40 machine guns and 24 guns from the k.u.k. 15 ID. In addition, General Shcherbatchev had 12 battalions in reserve (a regiment from II Corps and one regiment apiece from XVI and XXII Corps), as well as the II Cav Corps which was held in readiness to pursue in the area west of Pauszowka. The XVI and XXII Corps on the northern wing of 7th Russian Army would first only pin down the enemy. As a deception measure, however, Shcherbatchev also built *places d'armes* here. Since the end of May, Russian mounted detachments had been very active in front of Buczac, but they always pulled back during the nights.

9th Army

For his breakthrough, the energetic commander of 9th Russian Army GdI Letschitzky had chosen a sector of the Aus-Hung. front south of the Dniester, about 16 km wide, between Dobronoutz and Mitkeu. Here the assaulting group could strike the opposing line at a point of refraction, although they would have to move through open country which was vulnerable to flanking fire from the heights by Horoschoutz. Despite this drawback, General Letschitzky believed that he couldn't find a more favorable place to attack. On the right flank of 9th Russian Army the Dniester between Mitkeu and Latacz was a serious obstacle to an offensive because of its steep banks and many bends. Also, any assault in the eastern part of the Dniester sector would have to deal with the strong bridgeheads at Zaleszczyki and Sinkow. The southern wing of Letschitzky's Army was served by just a few roads, and was hemmed in on the right by a broad zone of forests and on the left by the Romanian border.

Thus it seemed that an offensive by the Army's center offered the best prospects of success. Here General Letschitzky had a force

of 5 ½ infantry and 2 cavalry divisions with a total strength of 88 battalions, 60 squadrons and 482 guns. The decisive blow would be dealt by XI Corps, reinforced by 19 ID from XII Corps plus the 1 Don Coss Div. They would deploy in close order with 11 and 32 ID in the first line, 19 ID in the second; the opposing positions would be taken on both sides of the deep valley of the Horoschoutz brook. Then, by a sharp thrust at night, XI Corps would break through between Dobronoutz and Pohorloutz to Jurkoutz, taking the strongly defended Heights # 458 (or "Cavalry Strong point") from the rear. 1 Don Coss Div would be ready to pursue; once the line was broken, they would ride through to Doroschoutz, cutting off the Austrian troops still stationed north of the Dniester. In conjunction with XI Corps the XLI Corps (3 Trans-Amur Div plus half of 74 ID) would first advance out of the loop in the Dniester at Samuszyn to Okna, and then to Doroschoutz. In the Army's reserve were the other half of 74 ID at Krzywczce and half of 12 ID at the village of Dolzok. The rest of 12 ID were at the disposal of General Brussilov. The two corps on the flank of 9th Russian Army (XXXIII on the Dniester and the Combined Corps at Rarancze) would use their own judgment on ways to pin down the enemy. III Cavalry Corps would initially remain along the Bessarabian border.³⁵⁸

Austro-Hungarian counter-measures

The Russian preparations to attack didn't remain concealed from the HQ of 7th k.u.k. Army. By the end of May, GO Pflanzner-Baltin already knew that Letschitzky had deployed his best troops (XI and XII Corps) opposite the right wing of Benigni's Group. In his frequent visits to the front, Pflanzner had personally observed that for some time the Russians had been digging positions in the Samuszyn loop and especially in the hilly country opposite 42 Hon ID and 3 CD. A whole system of approach trenches and jumping-off points was developing ever more thickly in no-man's land; the network had nearly reached our listening posts. The trench garrisons had been watching this growing menace for days and weeks without being able to interfere. The ammunition for the howitzers was stingily apportioned and had to be conserved to face the pending storm. Moreover, much of 7th Army's heavy artillery had been taken away for the offensive in south Tyrol, even though GO Pflanzner-Baltin had warned the high command about the Russian preparations to attack both his right

358 Litvinov, "The Breakthrough of 9th Russian Army in June 1916" (in Russian; Petrograd, 1923), pp. 41 ff. Bielkovitch, "Remarks on the Breakthrough in May 1916" (in Russian, in "Voyenno istorichesky sbornik", Part III, 1920), pp. 60 ff.

and left wings. The staff at Teschen, in the comforting knowledge of the strength of the defensive works (prepared with all available engineering skills), believed that 7th Army had nothing to fear.

In any event, it seemed that in the most threatened defensive sector between Dobronoutz and the Dniester FZM Benigni had sufficient force to oppose even a strong Russian assault. In the evening of 3 June, stationed here were 29 battalions and 165 guns under the following HQ:

- . FML Adolf Ritter von Brudermann's 3 CD, which was reinforced by a battalion from Hon IR # 26 and by Major Russ' detachment;
- . GM Jesser's command (79 Hon Inf Bde plus FJB # 13 of his 30 ID); and finally
- . FML Snjaric's 42 Hon ID.

At Jurkoutz and south of Horoschoutz the HQ of 7th Army were holding ready in reserve 16 battalions - most of 30 ID and half of 36 ID. The situation on the lower Strypa was far more unfavorable. Here there were no longer any reserves stationed behind XIII and VI Corps since the 13 LW ID had been sent to Volhynia by the high command. Similarly, Pflanzler-Baltin had no reserves available for the Dniester front. In the upcoming operations this would have decisive consequences.

b. The Russians thrust against Benigni's group, 4-9 June

4 June - Horoschoutzbach and Dobronoutz

Heavy artillery fire, which began around 4:00 AM on 4 June, heralded the attack of Letschitzky's Army along the entire front of Group Benigni. Gas was released against the trenches of 42 Hon ID at Onuth, and a few Russian batteries also fired gas shells. Since our troops had good gas masks, there were just 2 fatalities and 12 men taken sick. The Russians were using a new method of firing their guns with varying intensity, striking various targets in rotation and finally pounding the positions of 79 Hon Inf Bde south and north of the Horoschoutz brook. The fire not only damaged the barriers and the thickly packed trenches; it also hurt the morale of the men, who for months had been unaccustomed to fighting. The garrison of the trenches fled into their bunkers and stayed there, awaiting the enemy onslaught as if they were locked in prisons. The barrage fire suddenly lifted around 12:00 noon. The enemy infantry sprang out of their approach trenches and nearby *places d'armes*, and events took

their inevitable course. In a few moments the Russians reached the positions of 79 Hon Bde before the garrison of the trenches could emerge from the bunkers to man their posts on the breastworks.

GM Elmar, in charge of artillery for Group Benigni, ordered concentrated barrage fire to be directed in front of the endangered part of the position as soon as the first Russian storming columns appeared. However, the barrage was ineffective. All the batteries were being simultaneously asked for help from other infantry positions. The telephone lines were clogged, and many lines had been broken.³⁵⁹

First a small group of Russians broke into the foremost trenches of 79 Hon Bde, followed by thick lines of skirmishers who widened the penetration and rolled up the line by the Horoschoutzbach to the right and left. The bewildered defenders don't seem to have offered prolonged resistance in either the forward or rear trenches - only 600 troops from 79 Hon Bde escaped and the Russians counted 7000 prisoners.³⁶⁰ Weak infantry fire was heard only in isolated parts of the line. Soon our artillery fire also stopped. The light batteries, using the defensive tactics successful during the New Year's Battle, had been brought up close to the line to provide flanking barrage fire, but now had to change positions to avoid falling into enemy hands. The regiments of XI Russian Corps made their way slowly forward through the maze of trenches; at 2:00 PM the first enemy troops got through the Horoschoutz trenches and appeared on the heights north of Dobronoutz. Four batteries were lost there.

Around 1:00 PM the reserves behind the right wing of Benigni's Group were placed in motion. However, it was a long time before these troops could arrive and deploy. Meanwhile the 19 Russian ID, following the two divisions of XI Corps which were in the lead, expanded the area affected by the breakthrough toward the southwest; the left wing of 3 CD wavered, and the Russians pushed into Dobronoutz. This occurred around 3:00 PM. Then Benigni's reserves finally closed the breach. 16 Inf Bde and IR # 97 thrust along the Horoschoutzbach; simultaneously the commander of 3 CD, FML Brudermann, had IR # 16 (attached to his unit) counterattack from the south while FML Snjaric had two battalions of 42 Hon ID strike from the north. The Croats of the Varasdin IR # 16 recaptured Dobronoutz from the Russians, and farther north the enemy advance was halted by the gallant Jaeger

359Max Pitreich, "Okna", pp. 16 ff.

360Litvinov, p. 49

battalions of 16 Inf Bde after a bitter struggle.

4 June - Okna

While these events unfolded, the situation also became suddenly quite serious for the 42 "Domobranen" Division. Soon after 1:00 PM the 3 Trans-Amur Div began to attack from the loop in the Dniester at Samuszyn. A half hour later it seemed that the assaults had been repulsed, but then the Russians made new thrusts against the Czarny Potok Heights. FML Snjaric shifted the greatest part of his reserves to the heights southeast of Pohorloutz, chiefly because the enemy had meanwhile broken into the trenches by Horoschoutz. Toward 2:00 PM the Russians were able to penetrate the trenches of 42 Hon ID at several points between Mitkeu and Onuth. At first the enemy troops at Mitkeu were once more thrown out. At 3:00 PM, however, the Croats' whole left wing succumbed to a new assault. 42 Hon ID suddenly lost its anchor on the Dniester. The Russians quickly widened their penetration; they dispersed the Hon IR # 28, forced the batteries deployed south of Mitkeu to quickly retreat, and struck at the rear of Hon IR # 27 at Onuth.³⁶¹ Both the 27th and 28th Honved Regiments, which at the start had stubbornly defended their trenches, were as good as destroyed. Several hundred dead lay on the battlefield, and the Russians took more than 4000 prisoners; the rest of the men sought refuge in flight.³⁶² The Russians had already penetrated 5 kilometers deep into the center of Group Benigni; Okna fell at 5:00 PM. Then reserves finally limited the frightful collapse.

From the bridgehead at Sinkow, Col. von Dokonal's Group (one Cavalry Rifle Bn apiece from 5 Hon CD and 8 CD plus an infantry battalion) and Hon IR # 305 of 51 Hon ID had hastened by forced marches over the Dniester and rushed to the front. Dokonal's Group closed the gap at Mitkeu, while Hon IR 305 threw the enemy out of Okna and reached the high ground east of the town. The counterattacking troops however weren't able to recover the lost positions by the Samuszyn loop, or at Dobronoutz. Through evening they still didn't have any artillery support, since their batteries had become separated, and they suffered significant casualties. That night a cohesive front was re-established between the Czarny Potok Heights and the Dniester. Nevertheless the events of 4 June had been shocking enough. Almost the entire laboriously constructed position was lost. Only two pillars had withstood the Russian flood - the hotly contested outpost of 3 CD

³⁶¹Max Pitreich, "Okna" p. 18

³⁶²Bielkovitch, p. 68

on the heights east of Dobronoutz (called the "Cavalry Strongpoint")³⁶³, and the Heights of Czarny Potok which were stubbornly defended by the Croatian Hon IR # 26.³⁶⁴ The greatest part of Group Benigni, with units intermingled, now lay on open ground and tried to dig in during the night.

Pflanzer-Baltin's counter-measures

Upon the first report of the Russian incursion, HQ of 7th Army set IR # 53 and 9 Inf Bde (IR # 54 and 93) in motion; they had been in reserve behind XI Corps and now came up partly on foot and partly by train or truck. IR 53 was attached to 3 CD; 9 Inf Bde was ordered to Pohorloutz along with LW IR 5 (stationed hitherto behind the left wing of Group Benigni). Just like the infantry, the artillery needed replacements and reinforcement. Benigni's Group had lost a third of its guns - 32 were out of action due to damage and 14 had fallen into enemy hands.³⁶⁵ FZM Benigni therefore requested from Army HQ permission to pull the troops north of the Dniester (51 Hon ID, 5 Hon CD, 8 CD) back to the southern bank to provide artillery and further reserves for the battle. Army HQ, however, decided to retain the positions on the northern bank; they did send one battery each from XI Corps and Group Hadfy to Benigni's right wing.

GO Pflanzer-Baltin, who was confined to a sickbed in his HQ at Kolomea by attacks of fever, wasn't able to fully evaluate the very serious situation of Group Benigni in his first survey. Above all he attributed the severe setback to the fact that the reserves weren't employed for a counterattack from the flanks under a unified command. For the 5th, he ordered Benigni to reconquer the position at Samuszyn with Hon IR 305 (already on the scene) plus the reinforcements which had been sent (9 Inf Bde and LW IR 5) under one general, the commander of 5 ID (FML Edler von Habermann). However, this plan couldn't be carried out.

5 June

In the morning of the 5th, before FML Habermann had assembled at

363Dragoni, "Die Wiener Kavallerie-Division in der Brussilow-Schlacht" (Österr. Wehr-zeitung, Issue 23 of 1926); Höpler, "Die Wiener Reitende in der Durchbruchs-Schlacht im Juni 1916" (Österr. Wehrzeitung, Issues 23 and 24 of 1926); Sacken, "Geschichte des k.u.k. Dragoner-Regiments Friedrich August König von Sachsen # 3", Vol. II (Vienna, 1927), pp. 376 ff.

364Max Pitreich, Okna, p. 19

365Max Pitreich, "Okna", p. 20

Pohorloutz the reinforcements, which had come from considerable distances, the Russian XI Corps resumed their attacks. The important Czarny Potok Heights were finally taken by the enemy. Then the defenders' reinforcements began to intervene. IR # 54, which arrived by rail at Pohorloutz, had to be sent to counter-attack. They succeeded in wresting Czarny Potok Heights from the Russians. However, the latter had meanwhile also made progress toward the south, so IR # 93 (which had arrived late in the night at Jurkoutz) also had to be sent into the fray north of the Horoschoutzbach, where they made a frontal assault. The bravery of both these north Moravian regiments and of the Jaeger (16 Inf) Brigade ensured that the new Russian thrusts were held in check.

7th Army HQ ordered at noon that IR # 1 and three battalions from 202 Hon Inf Bde, in the area of XI Corps, should be moved closer to the right wing of Group Benigni. But the rapidly mounting casualties made further reinforcements urgently necessary. FZM Benigni again asked Army HQ if he could take 51 Hon ID, 5 Hon CD and 8 CD back to the south bank of the Dniester, so he could be as strong as possible at the decisive point. GO Pflanzner-Baltin still opposed this, since the bridgehead at Sinkow was pinning down considerable Russian forces. However, in the evening a report arrived that the Russians had captured the Czarny Potok for the second time; at the urging of the Army's Chief of Staff (Col. Ritter von Zeynek) the commander then did approve the evacuation of the north bank of the Dniester.

After night had fallen, the Czarny Potok Heights were again recovered by the north Moravian IR 93 and Croatian Hon IR 26 in bitter hand-to-hand combat. Meanwhile 51 Hon ID and 8 CD were marching over the Dniester in the area of Toutry. 5 Hon CD took up a defensive position on the south bank as far as Doroschoutz. Group Hadfy stayed on the northern bank at Zaleszczyki. They bent back their right wing, which was under repeated attack, to the Dniester. 42 Hon ID withdrew its left wing to a new line between Wihnanka and the heights south of Okna. This was carried out without interference from the enemy.

6-7 June

The Russians didn't realize until the morning of the 6th that their opponents had pulled back, and then sent XXXIII Corps slowly toward the Dniester and XLI Corps up to the new positions of 42 Hon ID. FZM Benigni now had 4 ½ infantry and 2 cavalry divisions on his right wing. The 3 CD was reinforced by IR # 16, the 30 ID by IR # 93 and 97, and the 42 Hon ID by Hon IR 305 and LW IR 5; they were all standing in the front line. Each

divisional sector would also soon have a whole regiment in reserve - 3 CD had IR 53, 30 ID had Lt Col. Bozo's regiment (created from the three bns of 202 Hon Bde), and 42 Hon ID would have LW IR 5, which was to be relieved by 8 CD. Three more uncommitted regiments of 51 Hon ID were stationed at Toutry. 79 Hon Inf Bde, behind the lines, had been brought back to a strength of 3000 men by incorporating replacements. The artillery on the eastern front of Group Benigni had been reinforced by 37 guns which had been made free by the left wing. The situation seemed to have substantially improved.³⁶⁶

However, heavy new fighting developed on Benigni's right wing at noon on the 6th. XI Russian Corps sought to widen their penetration at Dobronoutz toward the south. After drumfire the enemy broke into the stubbornly defended trenches of 3 CD. A counter-thrust by Uhlan Regt "Kaiser" # 4 and parts of IR 53 drove them back. The Russians also stormed against Col. Freih. von Testa's Jaeger Brigade in the Horoschoutzbach sector, but were thrown back by parts of the gallant IR 93. Farther north a combined operation by parts of IR 54, 93, 97 and Hon IR 26 even drove the enemy out of some of the trenches that made up our original position. At noon on the 7th, columns of XI Russian Corps - advancing in seven rows - again tried to capture the stubbornly defended Czarny Potok Heights in a surprise assault. Once more the enemy was defeated by the brave Croats of Hon IR 26 and the north Moravians of IR 54.

A pause in the fighting - 8-9 June

Now the battle halted. The Russians were worn out, having already lost 13,000 men during their assaults.³⁶⁷ XI Russian Corps didn't make a new attempt to break through the right wing of Group Benigni until the afternoon of the 9th, when they directed especially sharp attacks against the positions of 3 CD on the heights. The half of 12 ID which hitherto had been held in General Brussilov's reserve was brought to the line; General Letschitzky gave them the urgent assignment of capturing the heights east of Dobronoutz, from which Austrian guns and machine guns were hitting the assaulting Russian groups with flanking fire. The Russians still couldn't win a success over the gallant troopers of 3 CD. However, the tense situation and the heavy casualties of the defenders made it necessary to bring reserves to this area.

³⁶⁶Max Pitreich, "Okna", p. 22

³⁶⁷Litvinov, p. 51

Already in the afternoon of the 6th FZM Benigni had brought ahead the three regiments of 51 Hon ID from Toutry and placed them behind the heavily engaged right wing between Pohorloutz and Horoschoutz. At Okna, opposite 42 Hon ID, the XLI Russian Corps had been exhausted by their first attack; they dug in and didn't attack any further. 7 June also passed for the most part quietly in this sector; yet many troop movements were observed behind the Russian front. It seemed that in the triangle Onuth-Sinkow-Dniester alone there were three Russian infantry divisions (74 ID, 32 ID and 3 Trans-Amur Div) plus a strong cavalry force, all preparing for a fresh onslaught. Three Russian infantry divisions (11 and 19 ID and the entire 12 ID) had definitely been identified opposite the southern wing of Group Benigni. Thus the Russians had six infantry and one cavalry divisions opposite Benigni's four and a half infantry and two cavalry divisions. In addition the Russians had numerous replacement troops behind the front of each of the attacking corps. General Letschitzky was filling the depleted ranks of XI and XLI Corps from this reserve manpower. Group Benigni, on the other hand, had already seen their best battalions melt away and had used up all available replacements. Also, FZM Benigni now had to give up units to reinforce XIII Corps, because disastrous events had meanwhile occurred on the Strypa.

c. The Russians break through at Jazlowiec, 6-7 June

6 June

Believing that the fortifications of the k.u.k. 15 ID at Jazlowiec had been sufficiently softened by artillery, at 2:30 AM on the 6th General Shcherbatchev ordered six regiments of II Corps to open their attack. However, despite two days of bombardment this wasn't an assault on fully destroyed positions and shattered defenders. Although the Russian infantry had a heavy numerical superiority, they were only able to capture the first position of the k.u.k. 15 ID, where it bulged forward to the east of Jazlowiec, slowly and with severe casualties. This occurred at 6:00 AM. The Hungarians of Regiments # 65 and 66 were still holding firm in an intermediate position on the eastern edge of Jazlowiec and in the neighboring villages. GdI Freih. von Rhemen unleashed a counterattack by the four battalions of his Corps reserve, which he had held in readiness at Jazlowiec since the preceding day, on the road leading to Popowce. After initially gaining ground, however, this group was pushed back to Jazlowiec by a new Russian thrust.

General Shcherbatchev instructed his II Corps to expand their penetration, which was just 4 km wide and 1 ½ km deep, in the direction of Trybuchowce. But the attackers couldn't move forward; bombarded on the flank by our artillery, around noon they dug in in front of the burning town of Jazlowiec. Shcherbatchev, who hadn't achieved his goals for the day, ordered the offensive to resume on the 7th. The first assault had cost II Russian Corps more than 6000 men³⁶⁸, but 15 k.u.k. ID had also suffered substantial losses. As instructed by Pflanzner-Baltin, GdI Arz now sent four battalions to GdI Rhemen as reinforcements from his VI Corps, and FML Hadfy sent the Dragoon Regiments 5 and 11 from his Group.

368Nagaibakov and Pogonyalo, "The Operation of Jazlowiec - Activity of II and XVI Russian Army Corps in June 1916" (in Russian in "Voyna y Revolutsia", Issue XI of 1929), p. 12

7 June

GdI Rhemen had been instructed to throw all available reserves in the area into the fight. He worked to restore order to 15 ID so that on 7 June it would be possible to counterattack out of the intermediate position at Jazlowiec. Early on the 7th, however, 15 ID believed that they were again under heavy assault, although only Russian scouting detachments were advancing. General Shcherbatchev, the cautious Russian army commander, preceded the new infantry assault with prolonged artillery fire. The six regiments of his attacking group finally moved forward around noon.³⁶⁹ After a heavy fight, the attacking Russians broke through to Jazlowiec and over the fortified heights north and south of the town. GdI Rhemen tried to prevent the collapse of his front by committing his last reserves, but the breakthrough assumed ever greater proportions. Russian mounted detachments, followed by infantry columns, thrust through the gap. Some isolated groups were still fighting gallantly against the oncoming enemy at 6:00 PM, but thousands of men had lain down their arms.³⁷⁰ Defeat could no longer be held off. With their center completely broken the shattered 15 ID withdrew over the Strypa.

The threat of collapse on the lower Strypa presented GO Pflanzner-Baltin with some difficult decisions. At noon he had still believed the situation was under control; he thought the main danger of a further enemy advance was on the eastern front (Group Benigni) and that the Strypa front would hold. If the Russians also assaulted the Dniester front, then the high command would have to provide reinforcements, since there were no reserves on the Dniester. In the afternoon the HQ of 7th Army received a telegram from Teschen, stating that air reconnaissance had reported the assembly of strong enemy forces opposite the Army's left wing. Therefore the high command had ordered that half of 38 Hon ID (75 Hon Bde) with four batteries should shift from Kozowa to Podhajce. The Brigade would transfer to 7th Army early on 8 June. Soon afterwards reports from XIII Corps to Kolomea brought the bad news that the center of 15 ID had been ripped asunder and that the Division had pulled back over the Strypa into the second position, which was about 2 km west of the low ground. The Russians had apparently already advanced to Rusilow.

Pflanzner-Baltin now decided to take units away from Benign, even

³⁶⁹Nagaibakov and Pogonyalo, pp. 28 ff.

³⁷⁰Per Cherkasov (p. 29) on the first two days of the battle the 7th Russian Army had taken 9000 prisoners.

though he was threatened by new Russian assaults, to support the sorely pressed XIII Corps. Around 5:30 PM he sent an order from Kolomea to Benigni to send 79 Hon Inf Bde by rail to Nizniow. GdI Arz was instructed to use trucks to move the infantry of 75 Hon Inf Bde (which was to arrive from Bothmer's Army) as quickly as possible from Podhajce to Buczacz.

Meanwhile the retreat to the lower Strypa didn't remain restricted to 15 ID. 2 CD likewise fell back to the second position, and 36 ID evacuated the fortifications at Trybuchowce. Around 10:00 PM, GdI Rhemen reported that 15 ID's power of resistance was broken. Col. Zeynek informed the high command of the retreat of XIII Corps to the second position, and warned that a further loss of ground was likely. At the close of this telegram he noted that the connection of the fronts of XIII and VI Corps wasn't secure. To solve this problem, 7th Army HQ instructed GdI Arz to maintain contact with XIII Corps under all circumstances. GdI Rhemen was ordered to prevent a further advance by the Russians into the "area Buczacz-Hubin-Nizniow." In other words, if necessary the XIII Corps should fall back to the west with their right wing on the Dniester while the left wing - at least temporarily - stayed on the Strypa. The dangerous gap which would certainly develop between Group Hadfy and the neighboring XIII Corps as the latter fell back to the west was to be covered by LW IR # 5, which was taken from Group Benigni in the night of 7-8 June.

d. XIII Corps withdraws from the Strypa, 8-10 June

8 June

Early on 8 June some weak Russian detachments crossed the Strypa at Jazlowiec. XIII Corps had received a new order from 7th Army HQ to stand on the western bank, and meanwhile had deployed in the second position in most sectors. 15 ID was between Hubin and a point east of Sokolow; farther north was 2 CD (strengthened by four battalions from VI Corps) at Leszczance; still farther north was the right wing of 36 ID, holding the line to the south of Buczacz. The left wing of the latter Division was still in the first position east of Buczacz, next to the neighboring 12 ID of VI Corps.

General Shcherbatchev moved very slowly from Jazlowiec toward the west. On 8 June he first wanted to gain the eastern bank of the Strypa with II Corps, and with the left wing of XVI Corps at

Trybuchowce. Here, however, he found that his opponents had gone. XVI Corps, which had already moved dangerously close to the left wing of 36 ID and to 12 ID, prepared for a systematic attack on Buczacz. East of Potok Zloty Russian horsemen were already striking the thin lines of 15 ID in the morning. The troops and their leaders were still under the influence of the frightful Russian blow at Jazlowiec; because of the surprising collapse of the first position, which they had considered impregnable, they doubted whether they could offer prolonged resistance to the enemy from the incomplete second position. Even GdI Rhemen soon gave up on the fight along the Strypa. He had no further reserves. Although the reinforcements from South Army and Group Benigni (75 and 79 Hon Inf Bde) were hurrying, they couldn't arrive until the 9th. If the already battered regiments of 15 ID again fell into disastrous confusion, then the artillery might easily be taken by the oncoming Russians.

Around noon, when XIII Corps HQ made 7th Army HQ aware of these dangers and requested permission to retreat to the third position on the Barysz brook, the HQ at Kolomea was also receiving a premature report stating that the enemy had broken into the position of 36 ID east of Buczacz, and that therefore the southern wing of VI Corps would also have to pull back.

It was impossible for GO Pflanzner-Baltin, still confined to a sickbed, to get a clear picture of the real condition of XIII Corps. Thus the Army commander was forced to issue orders based on the unfavorable situation which had been reported³⁷¹. In case 15 ID couldn't hold on any more, XIII Corps would oppose any further Russian advance on a line that ran along the Baryszbach as far as Porchowa, and then from the heights east of Zubrzec to a point south of Buczacz and finally up to the junction with VI Corps at Pyszkowce. XIII Corps would moreover have to guard the Dniester sector between the bend at Nawalach and Nizniow. Part of 75 Hon Inf Bde, which was coming up in forced marches, was ordered to Buczacz; the Brigade's main body was sent to the area southeast of Barysz town, behind the thinly-stretched center of XIII Corps. 79 Hon Inf Bde, approaching Nizniow by train, was to support the wavering lines of 15 ID. FZM Benigni was ordered to also send Hon IR 302 (of 51 Hon ID) from his Group to Nizniow by train.

371TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - As is evident from the next paragraph, the situation was by no means critical; in reality the Russians were being halted on the Strypa by our artillery, and 36 ID soon restored the situation at Buczacz.

These orders were issued at Kolomea around noon. Only a few hours later the XIII Corps, which could no longer stand the strain, pulled back to the new front which Army HQ had specified. II Russian Corps, whose infantry had been unable to cross the Strypa until this time because of our artillery fire, followed hesitantly. Only the k.u.k. 15 ID, retreating at Sokolow, was assaulted by Russian mounted detachments, which however they quickly shook off. Meanwhile the 36 ID drove out the enemy troops who'd broken into their trenches - they were only strong scouting groups. 12 ID stayed in their old position; only their extreme right wing was slightly bent back.

Developing plans of both sides

In a telegram which arrived in the evening, the high command expressed the hope that the distinguished army commander GO Pflanze-Baltin would again master the situation and announced that they wanted to send reinforcements to 7th Army. The staff at Teschen said they would agree to having XIII Corps retreat to the lowest reaches of the Baryszbach and to the Zubrzec area; however, they demanded forcefully that VI Corps shouldn't become separated from South Army under any circumstances. GdI Bothmer had already urgently requested the high command that morning to instruct Pflanze-Baltin in this sense.

Meanwhile 7th Army HQ was drawing up secret orders for the withdrawal of the supply trains of VI Corps to the lower Zlota Lipa and those of XIII Corps behind the Dniester. Although the high command was insisting on a firm link with South Army, Pflanze-Baltin was contemplating a wide-ranging strategic retreat. He wanted to free 7th Army from its dependence on the positions which they had held for so long - which anyway by now had mostly been lost - and to go back with XIII and VI Corps over the Dniester to the Pruth. For the left wing, this would entail a march of 80 km. GO Pflanze-Baltin didn't believe that South Army would face any deadly danger of envelopment by the Russians in the meantime. If the Russians thrust ahead further toward Lemberg, he wanted to strike them in the flank. However, he felt it was more likely that the enemy would change the direction of the attacking force which hitherto had been heading west. While they were taking time to regroup, 7th Army would be able to reorganize and to receive replacement troops and ammunition along the Pruth between the Romanian border and Delatyn, far separated from the Russians. This was an extraordinarily bold plan. The intended withdrawal of 7th Army to the Pruth would have opened a gap of 100 kilometers in the Galician front. In his calculations, GO Pflanze-Baltin was underestimating the dangers

that this would have entailed for Bothmer's Army. Because of the condition of the troops, 7th Army wouldn't have been quickly able to gather enough striking power to re-cross the Dniester and thrust against the enemy's flank.

On 8 June General Shcherbatchev was ordered by General Brussilov to continue the attack. The successes achieved to date should be exploited and in particular the cavalry should drive into the enemy's rear regardless of casualties. For the 9th, Shcherbatchev planned to have XVI Corps together with the left wing of II Corps advance toward Buczacz and push back the Austrians who were still stationed on the east bank of the Strypa. The main body of II Corps would move toward the Baryszbach on a broad front. 6 Don Coss Div would drive ahead to Nizniow and the other divisions of II Cav Corps would send detachments to pursue the enemy in the direction of Monasterzyska, in the Austrian rear. 3 Turkestan Rif Div, which had already lost a third of their men on the battlefield, was to assemble at Jazlowiec in the Army's reserve.

9-10 June

9 June dawned. Parts of the k.u.k. 15 ID which had retreated from the Strypa were stationed under the leadership of GM Leide in the bends in the Dniester south of Potok Zloty³⁷². Along with LW IR # 5, a March Battalion of 21 LW ID, and six batteries, they were supposed to cover the disintegrating front between Group Hadfy and XIII Corps. Russian mounted detachments appeared on the lower Baryszbach at an early hour; they penetrated the picket line of 15 ID and spread panic through the supply trains. However, 79 Hon Inf Bde were already getting off their trains at Nizniow. The intervention of this Brigade in some measure stiffened the thin front of 15 ID. Pursuing Russian cavalry was also repulsed in the morning in 2 CD's sector. Behind the enemy horsemen, line after line of infantry were advancing slowly from the Strypa toward the lower Baryszbach. This movement took up the whole morning. In the afternoon a Russian infantry division entrenched in front of the southern wing of XIII Corps. Behind them the II Russian Cavalry Corps seemed to be assembling at Potok Zloty, as if they wanted to thrust over the Dniester to the south. Pflanzer-Baltin believed there was an ever-increasing danger that the northern wing of 7th Army would be cut off from the parts that were fighting at Zaleszczyki and Okna. But it also seemed that the Russians now wanted to strike a blow against

372TRANSLATOR's NOTE - According to the map (Beilage 21), GM Leide's group consisted of about one-fourth of 15 ID.

the junction between 7th and South Armies. VI Corps and the northern wing of XIII Corps were confronted by strong enemy forces. The Russians were directing powerful artillery fire against Buczacz.

While these preparations for a new Russian attack were beginning, GO Pflanze-Baltin hurried to XIII Corps despite his illness. In the afternoon he visited GdI Rhemen at Nizniow and the commander of 15 ID (GM Ritter von Weiss-Tihany) at Koropiec and gave both generals their orders. The mood was oppressive. The leaders and troops had little confidence that they could hold onto the hastily constructed trenches on the Baryszbach. Pflanze-Baltin ordered four mounted squadrons to be assembled from each of the five cavalry divisions of the Army. The squadrons from 3, 5, 6 and 8 CD were placed under GM von Fluck and instructed to ride quickly to the Dniester front at Horodenka; the squadrons of 2 CD were placed under XIII Corps. Furthermore, Pflanze-Baltin gave 15 ID the Hon IR 302 (coming up by train from Group Benigni), sent parts of LW IR 5 by truck from Odaje to Nizniow, and ordered 75 Hon Inf Bde to intervene the next day on XIII Corps' widely-stretched northern wing. He then returned to his HQ.

Pflanze-Baltin was still determined that if forced to retreat the XIII and VI Corps would move over the Dniester to the Pruth. The supply trains of XIII Corps were already rolling south. However, when the Army commander returned to Kolomea he found an order from the high command which explicitly forbade VI and XIII Corps to withdraw over the Dniester, regardless of circumstances. All efforts were to be directed toward maintaining a firm connection with South Army.

Thus Pflanze-Baltin's plan was buried. The Army now had to hold out with the shattered 15 ID, the 79 Hon Inf Bde (just three battalions strong) and the exhausted Rifle Battalions of 2 Cavalry Division. Events unfolded quickly. Toward evening the detachments of the II Russian Cavalry Corps who'd been instructed to advance toward Monasterzyska thrust deep into the arc formed by the positions of Corps Rhemen. At Zubrzec the Russian horsemen suddenly rode down upon 2 CD, which collapsed in great confusion. The remnants of this Division, just 500 combatants, fled back to the Baryszbach. Their neighbors to the left, 36 ID, found themselves being enveloped from the south and bent their right wing back north to Gaje. The main body of 75 Hon Inf Bde, who'd come up quickly in forced marches, flung themselves into the wide, yawning gap in the evening. In the night the Russians, who'd already reached the heights southeast of the town of Barysz, pulled back toward the Strypa.

But 7th Army HQ received incorrect reports that the counterattack by 75 Hon Bde had failed. Therefore Pflanzner-Baltin ordered GdI Rhemen that if XIII Corps could no longer hold out they should offer new resistance in the third position (Scianka-Baryszbach-Jezierzany). VI Corps would then have 12 ID occupy a switch position on the line running from Jezierzany to Przewloka and then north to the junction with 39 Hon ID. However, GO Pflanzner-Baltin didn't ignore the fact that 15 ID and 2 CD had very little staying power, and that therefore he had to reckon on a further retreat by XIII Corps. In that case it seemed to him almost impossible that VI Corps could hold a front facing south between the Koropiec brook and the Strypa. Therefore he was thinking of turning his whole northern wing so that it faced more toward the southwest. In the night of 9-10 June he reported his impressions to the high command: "In case further retreat is necessary, which can't be ruled out in light of the strong attack against XIII Corps, the Corps must hold a sector on the Dniester between Koscielniki and Koropiec as well as the Koropiec brook as far as Zalesie; to their left the VI Corps would defend the Koropiec brook to a point north of Holhocze." However, FML Metzger phoned Col. Zeynek and told him that the high command wouldn't agree to a retreat by VI Corps to the Koropiecbach. "This would mean that the entire east Galician front, under construction for three-quarters of a year, would have to be abandoned because of XIII Corps." To prevent any further destruction of the Strypa front, the AOK ordered that VI Corps should be reassigned to South Army.

Already the withdrawal of XIII Corps had led to very costly fighting for the right wing of VI Corps. In the afternoon of the 9th the XVI Russian Corps attacked with three regiments against the heights north of Pyszkowce, held by IR # 20 and 56 of 12 ID. The two west Galician regiments offered strong resistance; they were pushed back behind the line of ponds at Medwedowce, but then were able to make a stand in a new position. Similarly the right wing brigade of II Russian Corps was held in check by IR # 5 of 36 ID and parts of 75 Hon Inf Bde, and couldn't move forward south of Buczacz. General Shcherbatchev was very indignant about this setback, so he insisted that in the night the same Russian brigade should attack again, with a wide sweep south of Buczacz, in order to thrust in the rear of their opponents. Meanwhile 36 ID evacuated the bridgehead and withdrew along with 75 Hon Bde to the Baryszbach. At dawn on the 10th the first Russian detachments entered Buczacz and took the bridges on the Strypa. At this time 12 ID was still stationed along the line of ponds northeast of the city, with their right wing somewhat bent back. However, after occupying Buczacz the Russian group sent to

envelop 12 ID didn't strike north quickly enough at the Division's exposed flank. They left the pursuit to their neighbor to the right, XVI Corps, which attacked frontally toward the west starting around 6:00 AM. Now GdI Arz had no option but to have 12 ID make a fighting retreat from the east bank of the Strypa to the designated switch position (Jezierzany-Przewloka).³⁷³ Also 39 Hon ID gave up their positions on the east bank of the Strypa at Bobulince and pulled their endangered right wing over the river.

Thanks to these movements, the right wing of VI Corps was able to escape in time from the Russians' planned encirclement. However, the crisis at the junction of 7th and South Armies wasn't over. For after the fall of Buczacz there was increasing danger that a new Russian attack might break through the bent-back front of VI Corps and then into the flank of Bothmer's Army, which was still standing fast on the Strypa.

8. Activity of the Russian high command and the counter-measures of the allies between 5 and 9 June

The Russians

On 4 June, the day when Brussilov's offensive began, the commander of the Russian West Front (General Evert) asked if the attack which he was supposed to launch on 10 or 11 June could be postponed. Alexeiev did let him change the date to the 14th, but commented that "under these circumstances it is difficult for us to make the calculations necessary for our decisions."³⁷⁴

The favorable course of the first two days of battle in Volhynia and on the Dniester caused the Chief of Staff of the Stavka to consider whether the Southwest Front might need reinforcements to exploit their victory. These could only be taken from the North Front. Therefore the Front commander General Kuropatkin was ordered on the 5th to prepare further units to follow V Siberian Corps, which had already left by rail. Alexeiev also indicated that feint attacks to conceal these movements, and especially a landing in the Gulf of Riga, were desirable. Kuropatkin therefore ordered that small assaults should take place in mid-June, but he didn't plan a landing maneuver because of its difficulty.³⁷⁵

373Arz, p. 100

374Zayontschovsky, p. 32

375Ibid., p. 43

The deep penetration of 8th Army at Luck on 8 June justified the Stavka's hope that they could strike a decisive blow against the left wing of the Aus-Hung. forces with a thrust toward Lemberg. However, Alexeiev was concerned that German units might counter-attack from the area Kobrin-Brest Litovsk against the open north flank of the right wing of Southwest Front while they moved to Lemberg. The threat could be canceled by a Russian thrust through Pinsk to Kobrin. This was the first time that the Kobrin operation was discussed; initially conceived as a defensive measure, it eventually would assume greater importance.

Based on these considerations, Alexeiev issued new orders on 9 June.³⁷⁶ North Front should carry out feint attacks and prepare a corps to be sent to Sarny. Because of a new plea from Evert, the main assault toward Vilna by West Front was again postponed (until the 17th). However, to secure the northern wing of the neighboring Southwest Front, Evert was supposed to take Pinsk as soon as possible, while having units available for a subsequent attack to Kobrin. For this purpose he was given III Corps, hitherto stationed at Dvinsk. The principal task of Southwest Front was to smash the left wing of the Aus-Hung. forces and to cut their lines of communication leading to the San and to the west. To carry this out, Kaledin's right wing would first advance until it was as far west as the units at Luck, and then the entire 8th Army would strike a concentrated blow in the direction of Rawa Russka. Brussilov would restrict activity on the Strypa to deception operations.

Now Kuropatkin selected XXIII Corps to leave his sector by train, while Evert directed the Grenadier Corps to attack Baranowicze on the 13th and the reinforced XXXI Corps to capture Pinsk. Brussilov, concerned for his right flank, didn't adhere to the guidelines issued from Mogilev by the Stavka, which anyway weren't very helpful. Indeed, for the time being he paid no heed to Alexeiev's instructions, and carried out operations according to his own scheme. Consequently, in Volhynia he would keep attacking in the direction of Kovel, while he gave both his southern armies (7th and 9th) a free hand to finish the breakthrough on both sides of the Dniester if they were able to do so.

The allies

The catastrophe which had so surprisingly overtaken the Aus-Hung. Eastern front naturally caused great concern for the chiefs of

³⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p. 33. Also Klembovsky, p. 45

staff of the two allied Empires. The offensives against Italy and against Verdun were both based on the premise that the Eastern front could be held with just the forces already allotted. The leadership of the Central Powers was well aware that the Russians had distributed their own units unevenly. Two thirds of the Russian divisions were stationed between Pinsk and Riga, and had a threefold numerical superiority over the German Eastern front. South of the Pripyat the two sides had roughly equal strength. However, the relative strength between the sectors of the allied front wasn't considered unalterable. At a meeting which Conrad held with Falkenhayn in Berlin on 24 May it was agreed "that the strategic reserves of the German Eastern front would be placed at the disposal of the Aus-Hung. front if the Russians shift strong forces from the north to Galicia."

Because of the Russian incursions at Olyka and Sapanow, in the evening of 5 June GO Conrad had already felt compelled to request German reinforcements for Linsingen's Army Group, which would allow the Aus-Hung. reserves to be sent to Pflanzer-Baltin's Army. Because heavy concentrations of enemy troops had also been identified at Tarnopol, Conrad furthermore stated that if necessary he would also seek reinforcements for the German South Army.

Because the deployment of the Russian units hadn't changed, and because an offensive by the English on the Western front was anticipated, Falkenhayn turned down this request; however, he did agree to have Prince Leopold's Army Group send GM Biss' combined brigade to Kovel. At the same time, through GM Cramon he advised Conrad to send the reserves from the Italian front to Galicia.

The alarmingly rapid deterioration of the situation at Luck on 6 June, when the entire 4th Army had to withdraw, caused Falkenhayn to send serious warnings to Teschen around midnight. He felt that the Aus-Hung. units that were being sent to GO Linsingen to date (89 LW Bde, 29 ID) were insufficient and asked Conrad "to approve the release of more substantial support." However, due to the still tense and uncertain situation in Galicia, for the time being Conrad didn't want to pull troops from there any more than he wanted to take them from south Tyrol.

When the fighting at Luck took a catastrophic turn on 7 June, Falkenhayn wired Teschen "that without very decisive measures" it would be impossible to restore the situation on the Styr. Therefore he was sending 108 ID (from the sector of his Eastern Command) and X Corps (from the West) to Kovel. He demanded that Conrad should simultaneously send all available regiments from

Galicia to Volhynia, and invited him to Berlin for a conference.

Conrad accepted this invitation with inner reservations; he knew that Falkenhayn would also demand a halt to the offensive in south Tyrol, which Conrad himself had called "the pet idea of the AOK" (in a letter to GO Freih. von Bolfras on 21 May).

The Berlin conference of 8 June

There are no minutes describing the course of the conference, which took place in the evening of the 8th. However, General Cramon wrote in his memoirs that "Conrad will look back only unwillingly on this conversation."³⁷⁷ The basis for the talks was a situation report which had been prepared at Teschen on 7 June, and which Conrad brought with him. The principal concept, which followed from a clear analysis of the overall situation, was to strike the Russians in Volhynia a mighty blow as soon as possible.³⁷⁸ This would cancel the success they had achieved and any repercussion it might have on the Western Powers and on the neutrals (above all on Romania). In Conrad's opinion it would require more units than were currently assigned to the Eastern front.

The Chief of Staff believed he could remove at most one to one and a half divisions from the Italian front, which now had sunk in his eyes "to a secondary theater of operations." Further units would follow after the Austrians reached the edge of the heights north of Schio and Bassano; if possible divisions with Slavic personnel or with mountain equipment wouldn't be sent. No more troops could be taken from Galicia, where the serious fighting on the Strypa was devouring all the reserves. Therefore, difficult as it was, Conrad asked Falkenhayn "to quickly deploy three to four more divisions on the Galician front" and suggested that he "temporarily halt or reduce the German attack in the West."

Conrad seems to have met with little benevolence from Falkenhayn. Nevertheless the two Chiefs of Staff did arrive at an agreement, which was reflected in an exchange of notes after the meeting to summarize its results. Conrad agreed that besides 61 ID, which on the 8th had already been selected to entrain for the north, he would take some heavy artillery from the Southwest Front; after the southern edge of the Sieben Gemeinde plateau was reached, at least two and a half more divisions would follow if necessary.

³⁷⁷Cramon, "Bundesgenosse", p. 59

³⁷⁸Falkenhayn, "Heeresleitung", p. 208

Falkenhayn, on the other hand, pledged that in addition of the four divisions already on the rails (GM Rusche's combined division, 108 ID, and X Corps) he would also send 11 Bav ID to Army Group Linsingen; however, the Bavarians would proceed only if they weren't needed north of the Pripyat. Linsingen would carry out the thrust from Kovel in the area south of Rovno without waiting for 61 ID; thus he would have 7 ½ divisions (the four German divisions listed above plus the k.u.k. II Corps, 29 ID and 89 LW Bde). His operation would take place in cooperation with Army Group Böhm-Ermolli, which was to send the reserves of 1st Army toward the north. Orders in this sense were sent to both Army Groups (Linsingen and Böhm-Ermolli) on 9 June.

Finally Falkenhayn demanded that no reinforcements should be sent to the units south of the k.u.k. 4th Army, so that the counter-attack in Volhynia would have the greatest possible power. Despite this demand, Conrad felt that "sending even a small force would be enough to prevent a catastrophe that could affect the overall situation." For this purpose, on 9 June he ordered Archduke Eugene's Army Group to prepare small groups of reserves, several battalions strong, with troops whose nationality was suitable for employment in the Russian theater of operations.

Full of dire forebodings, apparently Conrad took these last measures with the Dniester sector in mind. In fact, in the next few hours a catastrophe developing here would again threaten the security of the entire Aus-Hung. Eastern front.

C. New Russian thrusts on both banks of the Dniester, 10-16 June

1. The breakthrough at Okna (10-12 June)

a. The Russians push through the line (10 June)

The initial fighting

In the evening of 9 June, the HQ of Group Benigni received reports that the enemy were entrenching and putting up barbed wire between the western edge of Okna and the Dniester, opposite the units under the overall command of FML Snjaric (9 Inf Bde, 42 Hon ID, main body of 51 Hon ID, and 8 CD). Undiminished Russian artillery fire had continued throughout the day against the valley and heights of Czarny Potok, and at Dobronoutz; their guns

hadn't fired once against the part of the positions between the heights south of Okna and the Dniester. Thus it seemed that the Russians wouldn't undertake an immediate new attack against the left wing of Snjaric's Division. The HQ of Benigni's Group was confident. Although the majority of the units had suffered heavy casualties, three regiments of 51 Hon ID plus the 8 CD and 5 Hon CD were still at full strength. In reserve behind the center and right wing of Group Benigni were six fresh battalions of 51 Hon ID assigned to FML Snjaric at Pohorloutz, a battalion of 42 Hon ID and a Jaeger Battalion of 30 ID at Jurkoutz, and the hard-fighting IR # 1 of 5 ID in the area south of Dobronoutz. However, this Regiment was stationed quite a distance from Okna; this drawback, and the fact that FML Snjaric had no reserves behind his left wing other than one rifle battalion and a hussar regiment from 5 Hon CD, were soon to have bitter consequences.

General Letschitzky, the commander of 9th Russian Army, prepared a new attack on the entire front between the Dniester and the forested zone south of Dobronoutz in order to achieve his old goal, to break through to Jurkoutz. On 10 June the XLI Corps, reinforced by 2 Trans-Amur Div, was to advance through Okna in the direction of Zastawna, and XII Corps would strike between Pohorloutz and Dobronoutz to Jurkoutz. XI Corps and 1 Don Coss Div were standing ready as reserves behind the attacking divisions. III Cavalry Corps, on the extreme left wing of 9th Army, was supposed to cross the Pruth on the Romanian border by Wama and ride through to Czernowitz.³⁷⁹

No preparations by the Russians to attack were detected in front of Group Benigni in the night of 9-10 June; only on the Czarny Potok Heights did the usual trench mortar fighting flare up. When day broke, the enemy hadn't moved their line any nearer to FML Snjaric's left wing. In the other sectors of the front they seemed to have relieved some troops, and opposite GM Jesser's division they were digging trenches. Around 7:00 AM the Russian artillery began to bombard the Czarny Potok Heights and the positions of 42 Hon ID. An hour later they opened a heavy barrage in these sectors. FZM Benigni expected a concentrated assault against Pohorloutz. During the preparatory fire, the attacking Russian infantry assembled opposite the left wing of the front commanded by FML Snjaric. Toward 10:00 an assault developed out of Okna, but it was checked by the barrage fire of our artillery.

Thus the battle seemed to be progressing favorably on the left

379Litvinov, pp. 50 ff.

wing of FML Snjaric's sector. Meanwhile bitter fighting had broken out south of Okna, in the Czarny Potok valley, and on the Czarny Potok Heights. Here the Russians deployed in depth on a front five to six kilometers wide to storm the right wing of the units placed under FML Snjaric. Around 10:00 AM the attackers pushed onto the Czarny Potok Heights, but were thrown out again by the gallant north Moravians of 9 Inf Bde in hand-to-hand combat. Russian storming columns broke into the trenches of 42 Hon ID at several points on both sides of the Czarny Potok valley, touching off a fearsome action. FML Snjaric threw some of the reserves at Pohorloutz - six battalions of 51 Hon ID - into the fray. By counterattacks, they kept the center of the 42nd Division from breaking. Then, however, blow after blow caused the collapse of Benigni's front.

The front collapses at Wihnanka

Apparently it was about 10:30 AM when swarms of Russians suddenly struck Hon IR # 305 at Wihnanka and overran their positions. A half hour later the 5 Hon CD was greatly astonished to see attacking Russian infantry on the heights at Doroschoutz. After falling back, some of the troops of Hon IR 305 rallied and struck back at the enemy but were unable to recover the lost ground. Around noon the Russians pushed into Doroschoutz; the remnants of Hon IR 305 - as well as the Honved Hussars of 5 Hon CD, who'd been attacked from behind - fled to the rear. At the same time the positions of 8 CD west of Okna were lost.³⁸⁰

As soon as FZM Benigni learned at 11:00 AM that the Russians had broken through at Wihnanka, he had already alerted IR # 1 in the area south of Dobronoutz and ordered them to move through Jurkoutz to the left wing of FML Snjaric's front. Meanwhile the battle on the heights around Pohorloutz once again flared up with great intensity. Toward noon waves of attacking Russians once more struck the battalions of 42 and 51 Hon ID. Some of Benigni's reserves (FJB # 13 and Bn IV/Hon IR 26) came up from Jurkoutz and counterattacked, but couldn't drive the Russians away from the places which they'd penetrated. The loss of the heights at Pohorloutz also forced 9 Inf Bde to pull back. With their left flank exposed, the brave defenders of Czarny Potok Heights had to withdraw from their trenches. Here and there some isolated troops were still counterattacking on their own

³⁸⁰In this fighting Rittmeister Gottfried Barton of LW UR # 6, commanding the II Cav Rif Bn of 8 CD, was especially distinguished in some counterattacks; he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order.

initiative. They were overrun by Russian cavalry and taken prisoner. By now it was almost 3:00 PM.

Contradictory orders for the retreat of 7th Army

When the Russians had already pushed through Pohorloutz, FZM Benigni ordered FML Snjaric to assemble the withdrawing troops on the heights north of Jurkoutz to offer new resistance to the enemy; if possible, they would link up with 30 ID on the right and 5 Hon CD on the left. 7th Army HQ had been informed at noon about the unfortunate course of the fighting. GO Pflanzner-Baltin couldn't doubt that the battle was lost, since he had no more reserves to bolster Benigni's badly broken front. And so, once the full magnitude of the Russian breakthrough became apparent, he decided to pull the right wing of his Army back behind the Pruth, as he had always intended if forced to retreat. Full preparations had already been made for this retreat, and the corps supply trains of Benigni's and Hadfy's groups had been ordered to move south.

Then an order from the high command arrived at Kolomea around 1:30 PM: the main task of 7th Army was to cover the Stanislaw-Kolomea area, and protection of Bukovina was to be entrusted to a smaller group. It was immediately clear to GO Pflanzner-Baltin that this change to the orders would put Group Benigni in a difficult situation. Although they were being rolled up from the north, they were supposed to move west according to the intentions of the high command. With a heavy heart, the Army commander issued his orders for the retreat to Korda, Benigni and Hadfy. XI Corps, assigned to defend Bukovina, was to pivot on its right wing as it withdrew south from the front on the Bessarabian border to the sector on the Pruth between Wama and Hlinitza. Group Benigni would at first just withdraw to the prepared positions between Walawa and Kadobestie; then during the 11th they would retreat to the line Oschechlib-Stawczan. Group Hadfy would go back to a line between Benigni's troops and the Dniester, and then along the river to a point south of Koscielniki.

When these orders arrived at the HQ of Group Benigni, they naturally caused consternation. The Russians had already taken Doroschoutz and Pohorloutz; between these two places all Aus-Hung. troops had disappeared as if they had been swallowed up by the earth. In this area there was no longer any leadership, any communications, or any source of information. The railroad station at Zastawna was already under fire from Russian guns. And east of this gaping hole in the line the troops were fleeing:

the remnants of 8 CD, 42 Hon ID and 51 Hon ID from Pohorloutz toward Jurkoutz, and those of 9 Inf Bde to Bojanczuk. All of FML Snjaric's troops were thus moving back toward the south. Under these circumstances, how would it be possible to have Group Benigni retreat toward the west as ordered? The Russians could push ahead unhindered, through the wide gap which had so ominously developed between Pohorloutz and Doroschoutz, to Zastawna and then to Kotzmann. They could reach the line Walawa-Kadobestie before Group Benigni could. The enormous supply trains - now driving away from the battlefield in a great mass - might fall into the hands of the Russians.

In this critical hour Benigni's HQ sought to have military police block all the roads leading from the battle south toward the Pruth, so they could divert the retreat through Walawa to Kotzmann. Then FZM Benigni and his immediate staff hastened from Zastawna to the heights east of Werboutz so they could restore communications with their divisions. Meanwhile Lt Col. Szeifert assembled the remnants of 42 Hon ID - about three or four battalions - in front of Jurkoutz to offer resistance to the Russians. When IR # 1 came up, FZM Benigni ordered them to deploy to the right of Szeifert's group and to cover the retreat. Since the enemy had already penetrated deeply behind the left flank, it would be impossible to withdraw step-by-step.

The hasty retreat of Group Benigni

Therefore FZM Benigni decided to immediately pull back all his troops to the line Oschechlib-Stawczan, under the protection of the groups which were still in place at Jurkoutz. The orders to retreat were issued around 3:00 PM. It would take at least all afternoon for the necessary connections to be re-established with the divisional staffs and for the troops to start moving in the desired direction. These were anxious hours. No one could say whether it would be possible to bring the divisions still in the original positions on the right wing (30 ID and 3 CD with 72 Inf Bde) to the west. The order to retreat to Kotzmann naturally caused dissatisfaction, because the preparations had all based on the idea of withdrawing to the south. Around noon strong cavalry units had been reported in the valleys east of Okna behind the attacking Russian infantry. Between 2:00 and 3:00 PM a force of at least an entire Russian infantry division was spotted marching from the east toward Pohorloutz. The enemy thus had enough time and also the available units to drive deep into the gap in the left wing and through Zastawna, which would block the route of Group Benigni to the rear.

However, the Russians didn't know how to exploit the breakthrough they'd achieved. Near the battlefield they had only 1 Don Coss Div and one brigade from the Caucasian Native CD, while the entire III Cavalry Corps was on the south wing to carry out the operation over the Pruth against Czernowitz.³⁸¹ Russian infantry didn't pass the line Zastawna-Jurkoutz until after 5:00 PM, at which time they struck the assembled remnants of 42 Hon ID at Jurkoutz in the flank. Since they were already outflanked, the Croatian Honved gave up the town, but then took up a new position at Werboutz; farther east the gallant Silesians of the Kaiser IR held back the enemy advance. Behind these covering troops, General Staff officers exerted all their strength to keep the movement to the west in flow. It was a tragic procession which took the road to Kotzmann - endless columns of wagons in several rows, moving right behind each other, with the artillery inserted between them. The supply trains from the divisions on the right wing came together from several directions and pushed on through Walawa. Behind the vehicles came the troops, worn out and tired: the battalions of 42 and 51 Hon ID and of the 30 and 36 ID; between them were the rifle battalions of the cavalry. Toward evening, one Russian mounted detachment after the other appeared on the rolling hills southeast of Zastawna; they rode south and approached the road where the Austrians were retreating. At this time the endless line of wagons was still passing through Walawa, where a tangled traffic jam developed. Fortunately at this critical moment a sapper company opposed the Cossack riders and brought them to a halt. The Russian cavalry were also held up by the barbed wire of the intermediate position. They turned aside, and rode into some wet grassland. Many horses and riders fell; the survivors pulled back to the north.³⁸²

Similar events unfolded in Kotzmann after nightfall. Cossack patrols appeared in front of the village, but were driven off by detachments of 3 CD as they came up. But it still wasn't clear what would happen in the next few hours. Finally, around 3:00 AM all the supply trains and most of the troops had gotten through Kotzmann. Everyone breathed more easily. Now it was still necessary to get the exhausted troops into the position chosen by their leaders, facing toward the east.

b. Retreat of the k.u.k. 7th Army (11-12 June)

11 June

381Max Pitreich, "Okna", pp. 31 ff.

382Litvinov, p. 58

XI Corps had started to retreat in the evening of the 10th. At 10:00 PM Papp's Brigade repulsed a weak Russian attack at Bojan and then withdrew behind the Pruth, unhindered by the enemy. By the morning of the 11th, the 10 Inf Bde (IR # 13 and Lt Col. Scholtz's group) held the Czernowitz bridgehead, while 40 Hon ID (80 and half of 202 Hon Inf Bdes) was in the positions on the southern bank of the Pruth between Strilecki Kut and Hlinitza.

While the main body of XI Corps withdrew behind the Pruth, 24 ID held an intermediate position facing east at Schubranetz, where they were told to stay for the time being to maintain a link with Group Benigni. However, Benigni's battered divisions had long before retreated west past the Walawa-Kadobestie position (which they'd originally been ordered to hold) into the area west of Kotzmann. At 5:30 AM on the 11th, Army HQ had ordered FZM Benigni to give priority to restoring order to his badly intermingled formations. Groups Benigni and Hadfy were only supposed to stay on the line Luzan-Chliwestie-Zaleszczyki if they weren't harassed by pursuing Russians. Their next line of resistance was to be a prepared position between Wolczkowce and Niezwiska. 24 ID was re-assigned to Group Benigni. They were supposed to withdraw to Schipenitz, while behind them the 3 and 8 CD, along with Col. Kranz's Cav Bde, were to unite as a Cavalry Corps under FML Brudermann.

In the night of 10-11 June, HQ of Group Hadfy had moved 21 LW ID out of the Zaleszczyki bridgehead to the southern bank of the Dniester and assigned them a position between the river and the fork in the railroad 5 km southwest of Zaleszczyki. Thus the left wing of 5 Hon CD was covered by 21 LW ID, but the 5th CD could only stretch their right wing as far as Juzynetz. After the heavy casualties, Group Benigni was too weak to cover the entire area between Juzynetz and the Pruth. With their weakened units they were able only to occupy a makeshift line between Chliwestie and Oroscheny. To close the gap between 42 Hon ID and 5 Hon CD, GM Fluck's Cavalry Brigade was brought up from Horodenka and posted at Stawczan.

Thus early on the 11th a new emergency front was created, with great difficulty, between the Pruth and Dniester. Meanwhile 24 ID was still stationed far ahead at Schubranetz, because they hadn't received the order to retreat to Schipenitz in time. When this Division finally began to move back in the morning, they were suddenly attacked by 1 Don Coss Div, advancing from Kotzmann; after losing a large number of prisoners, the 24th fled to the south. Only part of the Division reached Schipenitz; the

rest crossed to the south bank of the Pruth at Hlinitza. In the afternoon, when GO Pflanze-Baltin came to Sniatyn to visit Group Benigni, fighting had already begun at the gates of this city. Russian cavalry were attacking 30 ID and 72 Ind Bde. The front began to crumble, causing considerable anxiety in the supply trains moving toward Kolomea. There could be no doubt that the worn out divisions were incapable of further fighting. FZM Benigni asked GO Pflanze-Baltin for permission to continue the retreat and not to resume operations until the troops were reinforced, refreshed, and ready to counterattack.³⁸³ Meanwhile pursuing Russian troops were also striking against Group Hadfy. In the late afternoon the fighting spread to involve Fluck's Cav Bde. In the evening, Pflanze-Baltin ordered Groups Benigni and Hadfy to pull back to the line Wolczkowce-Niezwiska.

At the same time, GdK Korda was given wide-ranging orders for the defense of Bukovina. First his XI Corps was to hold the Pruth between the Romanian border and Hlinitza. He was given FML Brudermann's Cavalry Corps, which was instructed to secure the area between Hlinitza and Group Benigni. In case Korda's group was thrown back from the Pruth, they would then fall back in stages to the Carpathians. In this case, Cavalry Corps Brudermann and 40 Hon ID would cover the routes to Seletin and to Kutu-Wiznitz, while the Brigades of Lt. Col. Papp and of GM Adalbert von Kaltenborn³⁸⁴ would protect the potential invasion routes to Gurahumora.

Miserable condition of 7th Army

In general GO Pflanze-Baltin saw the situation of his Army as serious. In the evening of the 11th he wired the high command: "Group Benigni cannot resist any enemy attack until they have had some rest." Therefore the retreat would have to continue, with Group Benigni to Kolomea and with Group Hadfy to Ottynia. Pflanze intended to offer resistance on the line Wolczkowce-Niezwiska. But if the enemy pushed ahead and the line couldn't be held, then XIII Corps would have to pull back past the Dniester to Stanislau. The telegram closed with these words: "Currently there is absolutely no possibility of stopping an attack. A decision to try to do so would lead to the complete destruction of Group Benigni."

In the night of 11-12 June the Groups of Benigni and Hadfy broke away completely from the enemy and by noon of the next day

383Max Pitreich, "Okna", pp. 33 ff.

384Kaltenborn's unit was the combined 10 Infantry Brigade.

reached their newly assigned defensive sectors after strenuous marches. Group Benigni (30 ID, 42 Hon ID, the main body of 51 Hon ID, and parts of 5 ID, of 202 Hon Inf Bde and of 36 ID) deployed between Wolczkowce on the Pruth and Slobodka Polna; Group Hadfy was between the latter point and Rakowiec on the Dniester (with Cav Bde Fluck, 5 Hon CD, 21 LW ID and 6 CD). GM Leide and his group (parts of 15 ID) had evacuated the bend in the Dniester at Nawalach and had pulled back to the southern bank. On Benigni's southern wing, 24 ID had also broken free from the enemy; they moved with one brigade to Zablotow, and with the other to Rudniki.

7th Russian Army moved forward only hesitantly on the 11th; meanwhile their XI and Combined Corps, as well as III Cavalry Corps (all three of which had originally faced to the west) were diverted south to the Pruth. XXXIII Corps (which crossed the Dniester) as well as XLI and XII Corps pushed after the Austrians who'd retreated to the west. In the van were the cavalry (Cauc Native CD and 1 Don Coss Div), who swept ahead to Horodenka, Nepolokoutz and Luzan. Behind the cavalry, the infantry divisions reached Serafince, Stawczan, Kotzmann and the area farther east. Because enemy troops appeared suddenly on the north bank of the Pruth in front of Hlinitza, Pflanzner-Baltin ordered GdK Korda to hold reserves in readiness behind the left wing of XI Corps.

To add emphasis to his instructions, the commander of the k.u.k. 7th Army came to Zablatow early on the 12th for another visit to Benigni's Group HQ. He found that the troops were still in a miserable situation. 24 ID, which once had 16,000 men, now had just 3500 available. 72 Inf Bde had shrunk to 2100 combatants, and 30 ID to 3500. IR # 1 alone had lost 1000 troops. 42 Hon ID (including the attached parts of 5 ID and 51 Hon ID) totaled just 5200 riflemen. During the march to the rear, many exhausted soldiers were left behind; many units were disorganized, a large number of guns were unserviceable, and thousand of prisoners had fallen into Russian hands. The road from Zablotow to Kolomea was still choked by countless supply trains in a chaotic mass. Some batteries were pulling back because they had expended all their ammunition. 7th Army HQ reckoned that Group Hadfy was opposed by two Russian infantry divisions, Group Benigni by four, and Group Korda by two more; all of these were full-strength divisions with a substantial numerical superiority. The enemy also had a strong cavalry force. GO Pflanzner-Baltin now doubted that the center of his Army, which was stretched thin between the Pruth and Dniester, could prevent the Russians from advancing toward Kolomea and Stanislau. If the Russians did keep attacking - and

there was little doubt that they were pushing to the west - then the retreat would have to continue.

In this situation, Pflanze-Baltin felt that the best solution would be if he could bring his "ruined Army" into a position where they could threaten the flank of the Russian advance. Therefore he was thinking of taking Groups Benigni and Hadfy into the mountains to Berezow and Delatyn and to have XIII Corps join these parts of the Army at Nadworna.

12 June

Meanwhile on the 11th GdI Falkenhayn had already offered the k.u.k. high command a German division from Macedonia to reinforce 7th Army. However, at the same time he declared that "a decisive change in the command [of 7th Army] is essential." The simplest solution would be to appoint GM Seeckt, currently Mackensen's Chief of Staff, as "First Chief of Staff" to 7th Army. GdI Falkenhayn was apparently concerned that Pflanze-Baltin wouldn't deploy the German reinforcements together in one place, but would split them up to plug holes in the line. At first GO Conrad, who later called Pflanze-Baltin his "best Army commander", refused to agree to this proposal. However, when Falkenhayn announced on the 12th that 105 German ID was coming by train, he again appealed to his ally "to find a way to ensure that there is German influence on the operation", and Conrad said he was ready to give GM Seeckt the new position of supervisory head of 7th Army HQ staff. GO Pflanze-Baltin was informed of this measure, so bitter to him, in the afternoon. The dangerous situation made it necessary to bow to the demand of the German OHL, and FM Archduke Friedrich expected the Army's commander and chief of staff to understand and cooperate with this measure. GO Pflanze went along with the wishes of his commander-in-chief, although reluctantly. Col. Zeynek, however, was of the opinion that the HQ couldn't function with two chiefs of staff and declined to remain after GM Seeckt arrived at 7th Army.

In the evening GO Pflanze-Baltin issued preliminary instructions for the eventual retreat of Groups Benigni and Hadfy to the area of Berezow and Nadworna. The southernmost unit, 24 ID, would march through the basins of Kosow, Pistyn and Berezow to Delatyn. If necessary, Col. Kranz's Cav Bde would protect the road from Kosow to Zabie. In the night of 12-13 June the high command announced that two divisions (105 German and k.u.k. 48 ID) were being sent to 7th Army. This offered Go Pflanze-Baltin a slight chance that he could attack the Russians with the help of these troops.

He now outlined his plans for the high command. "Together, the groups of Benigni and Hadfy have a combat strength of about 28,000 riflemen. If the Russians, as seems likely, send three corps (XXXIII, XLI and XII) to the west, our groups won't be strong enough to resist such an attack. Therefore they must avoid the blow until the expected reinforcements arrive." If the reinforcements took the railroad through Körösmezö-Delatyn, they wouldn't arrive until 19 June. Therefore, if the Russians made their main attack to the west, Groups Benigni and Hadfy would have to pull back to the area Berezow-Lanczyn-Nadworna, since they couldn't offer prolonged resistance if isolated at Kolomea. However, Benigni and Hadfy alone wouldn't have enough men to securely hold the 34 km sector from Berezow to Nadworna; the main body of XIII Corps would also have to be drawn to Nadworna, leaving just 2 CD to guard the area between Nadworna and Halicz against invasion. "In this manner", GO Pflanzler-Baltin continued, "it would be possible to concentrate the majority of 7th Army at Berezow-Nadworna, from which we could go over to the offensive. It would be difficult for the enemy to ignore such a strong force while thrusting along the Dniester through Stanislau. Rather they would be compelled to turn their main body toward the south; thus we would simultaneously protecting the areas of Delatyn and Stanislau."

c. South Army stands fast (10-12 June)

In the critical days of mid-June, the greatest concern of GdI Bothmer was that Pflanzler-Baltin would pull the left wing of the k.u.k. 7th Army back over the Dniester and thus expose the flank of South Army, which was still standing firm on the upper Strypa. This is why in the night of 9-10 June the commander of South Army had once more asked the high command to place the k.u.k. VI Corps under his control.

10 June

Early on the 10th, after the fall of Buczacz, General Shcherbatchev had his troops again start to advance west. In the area between the Dniester and the Buczacz-Monasterzyska railroad the 7th Army's II Corps and II Cavalry Corps moved cautiously toward the new positions of the k.u.k. XIII Corps. In the woods southeast of the town of Barysz parts of 38 Hon ID were still opposing the Russian advance; they slowed the enemy down and didn't allow them to push west over the Barysz brook until the

end of an action that lasted several hours. In the positions on both sides of the Jezierzany-Monasterzyska road the k.u.k. 36 ID was stationed with greatly weakened troops. Opposing them were Russian armored cars, which thrust from Buczacz to Jezierzany. A Cossack regiment ventured ahead toward Olesza. Behind the Russian cavalry the XVI Corps crossed the Strypa on a wide front; their left wing (41 ID) advanced in light fighting up to the line Jezierzany-Przewloka. The right wing of the k.u.k. 12 ID had meanwhile pulled back to Olesza, in the third position; south of this town they linked up with XIII Corps. In the afternoon the left wing of 12 ID, which had still been holding out on the western bank of the Strypa at Bobulince, also fell back into the third position (at Kurdwanowka), under pressure from the Russian 47 ID. A gap developed in the center of VI Corps. Therefore GM Blasius von Dani's 39 Hon ID, whose right wing had been pulled back to the western bank of the Strypa, was outflanked from the south. In the evening scouting troops from Russian XXII Corps attacked over the Strypa against the left wing of 39 Hon ID at Wisniowczyk.

Thus after the withdrawal of XIII Corps on the Baryszbach the Russians were able to exert pressure from the south against the k.u.k. VI Corps, which meanwhile (around noon on the 10th) had been placed under South Army. At the same time the high command instructed GdI Bothmer to oppose the Russian attacks over the lower Strypa with the reserves of his Army. At 2:00 PM Bothmer sent his first orders to VI Corps, now placed under his command as he had desired. They were to stand fast in their present positions regardless of cost. Later on the 10th, GdI Arz threw two battalions of 12 ID into the wide gap in the line at Kurdwanowka, in order to recover the lost connection between 12 ID and 39 Hon ID. At the same time, from the scanty reserves stationed at Podhajce, Bothmer sent six German companies to the area east of Monasterzyska and placed them under VI Corps. He also assembled three regiments (Res IR 223 from 48 Res ID plus LW IR 19 and Hon IR 310 from Corps Hofmann) and three batteries at Michalowka; he placed them under the commander of the German 48 Res ID, G.Lt von Oppeln-Bronikowski.

These troop movements were observed by Russian pilots. Nevertheless, General Shcherbatchev decided to make the main effort in his continuing attack on the north wing. His south (left) wing, II Corps, was worn out by the fighting to date and felt that they weren't even able to send strong scouting detachments west over the Baryszbach toward the positions of the k.u.k. XIII Corps. Therefore for 11 June General Shcherbatchev ordered his two northern corps (XVI and XXII) to attack. XVI Corps were supposed

to throw their opponents back to Olesza-Gnilowody and to thrust with at least a brigade to Kotuzow, in the rear of the Aus-Hung. units which were still holding out on the western bank of the Strypa against XXII Corps. The latter Corps was supposed to accompany the XVIth in their advance over the Strypa. II Corps, on the other hand, would entrench in the sector they'd reached on the Baryszbach. II Cavalry Corps was instructed to exploit any opportunity that might arise due to success by the northern wing, if possible riding through their opponents' broken lines to Podhajce. Shcherbatchev sent 3 Turkestan Rif Div, which had been pulled from the front of II Corps, from Jazlowiec to Trybuchowce, nearer to his right wing.³⁸⁵

11 June

At 5:00 AM on the 11th, G.Lt Oppeln-Bronikowski's Division moved south from Michalowka for the new attack toward Buczac. GdI Arz had instructed the commander of 12 ID, FML Hinke, to join Oppeln's attack with his left wing. However, before Oppeln reached the battlefield of VI Corps, the Russians struck first. Their artillery had already begun an early bombardment of the positions of 12 ID, whose left wing fell back from Kurdwanowka under fire from the heavy Russian batteries. Meanwhile 47 ID on the north wing of Russian XVI Corps attacked out of the Strypa valley against the bent-back right wing of 39 Hon ID; they pushed north, and toward 11:00 AM they reached the line Kurdwanowka-Sapowa. As this happened, the southern division of XVI Russian Corps (41 ID) attacked from Jezierzany-Przewloka against the center and right wing of 12 ID.

The Russian infantry appeared in front of Olesza around noon. 12 ID lost the town. Now, however, G.Lt Oppeln-Bronikowski led his regiments in a coordinated counterattack. First Kurdwanowka was recovered from the Russians. In difficult, prolonged fighting the two Aus-Hung. regiments on the right wing of Oppeln's Division (LW IR 19 and Hon IR 310) pushed the Russian 47 ID back to its starting points behind the Strypa. The Russian 41 ID fared no better. Around 2:00 PM its right wing suffered a heavy blow from the German Res IR 223 on the hills between Kurdwanowka and Olesza. The German attack continued to the southeast, and also allowed the 12 ID to move forward; they recaptured Olesza. After hard fighting, the Russian 41 ID pulled back to Przewloka and the area east of Jezierzany. The defeated Russian regiments were only able to hold this line by committing their last

³⁸⁵Ryedkin-Rymashevsky, pp. 52 ff.

reserves.³⁸⁶ During the 11th, the Russian XXII Corps had restricted their activity to local fighting between Sapowa and Bieniawa, designed to pin down their opponents.

Even before Oppeln's powerful stroke against the Russians on the hills at Olesza, Bothmer's left wing had also begun to counter-attack. Early on the 11th, after a two hour struggle the k.u.k. IX Corps' 32 ID, reinforced by troops from 38 Hon ID, captured the much-contested Heights # 389 (by Worobijowka) from VI Corps of the Russian 11th Army. At mid-day the IX Corps again lost this important strong point north of the Tarnopol-Zborow road. Fighting continued around this small stretch of trenches until evening, when the Aus-Hung. infantry still on the heights were pulled back to their starting positions.

12 June

Early on the 12th the positions of the k.u.k. 32 ID between Cebrow and Hladki were subjected to a heavy barrage. A new Russian assault was expected. When the bombardment died down, new actions with Russian infantry flared up by Worobijowka. However, the enemy didn't get past our trenches, and thus Sakharov's prospects of breaking through north of the Tarnopol-Zborow road were shattered.

Under 7th Russian Army the XXII Corps, which had waited in vain for a success by their neighbor to the left, initiated lively fighting on the 12th. Increased artillery activity and small-scale attacks at Sapowa and Wisniowczyk, as well as the observation of enemy preparations in front of Mogila Heights, kept 39 Hon ID and Corps Hofmann in suspense. The fighting died out for Division Oppeln and 12 ID on the 12th. The Russian XVI Corps had suffered very heavy casualties the day before, and their troops were lying exhausted in their trenches between Sapowa and Jezierzany.

The situation also remained quiet on the lower Baryszbach. The Russian II Corps had dug in opposite the k.u.k. XIII Corps. However, Bothmer wasn't relieved of serious concern about his southern wing. One piece of bad news after the other had come from the k.u.k. 7th Army since 6 June. In the morning of the 12th the commander of South Army had once more been informed that Pflanzer-Baltin intended to take XIII Corps back to the lower Koropiec brook and then over the Dniester. Therefore GdI Bothmer approached the high command with a request that his South Army

386 *Ibid.*

should also take charge of XIII Corps. Bothmer justified his demand on the grounds that a withdrawal of XIII Corps could make the entire front from the Dniester and the Ikwa untenable. The South Army wasn't in a position to prevent such a disaster by plugging gaps in the line with their own units. On the other hand, Bothmer promised he could hold the front if XIII Corps was placed under him. At the same time the commander of South Army suggested - and in this at least he was in agreement with Pflanzner-Baltin's plans - that the arriving reinforcements should advance either over the Pruth (from the south) or toward the Dniester (from the north).

The k.u.k. 7th Army is ordered to stay on the defensive

The high command turned down Bothmer's second proposal, but they didn't hesitate a moment to place XIII Corps under his command to avoid the danger of a gap developing between the South and 7th Armies. Now the next goal of the high command was to initiate a change in the situation in Volhynia through a major counter-attack. Until then, the positions in east Galicia would have to be held. Therefore the reinforcements coming on the railroad (German 105 and k.u.k. 48 ID) should be sent through Stryj to Stanislau, behind the weakest part of the front. Until their arrival, 7th Army was to slow the pace of any Russian advance between the Dniester and Pruth. GO Pflanze-Baltin was given orders to this effect in the night of 12-13 June; he was also instructed to avoid a major Russian thrust between the Dniester and Pruth by having Group Benigni withdraw to the area southwest of Kolomea, and Group Hadfy to Ottynia and Tysmienica. If the Russians did continue to advance, the right wing of South Army was to bend back to Mariampol, with the main body of XIII Corps in a position on the heights northeast of Stanislau.

These orders crossed up Pflanze-Baltin's plan of concentrating the main body of 7th Army (including XIII Corps and the arriving reinforcements) in the Berezow-Nadworna area, from which they would attack the Russians. The high command based their decision on the fact that a successful counter-thrust from the Carpathians would require stronger reinforcements than the two divisions which were on their way; however, it would be impossible to provide more units until the close of the great counterattack in Volhynia. Also, the high command feared that the road and railroad between Körösmezö and Delatyn, which led into the area where Pflanze-Baltin had intended to assemble 7th Army, would be too heavily burdened. Moreover, the Russians would be able to thrust through the weak forces east of Kolomea and into the mountains at Berezow, disrupting the re-deployment of 7th Army. Meanwhile the enemy would have a free hand to advance to Stanislau and Stryj. Therefore the 7th Army would have to restrict themselves to defensive operations.

2. Development of the situation in east Galicia and the Bukovina, 13-15 June

a. The situation of 7th Army

The k.u.k. high command wasn't relieved of concern and fear that the pressure along the Dniester which the Russians had exerted since the breakthroughs at Jazlowiec and Okna would completely overwhelm Pflanzer-Baltin's left wing. Everything possible was being done to shore up the front. Meanwhile however the situation was changing, although at first imperceptibly.

The Russians turn toward the Pruth

On 12 June General Brussilov had ordered all his armies to move generally toward the west. GdI Letschitzky, however, decided only to take security measures in the west while attacking the Aus-Hung. units which had withdrawn to the Pruth, aiming to throw them back into the Carpathians. Therefore the XII, XI and Combined Corps - with 1 Terek Coss Div - were to cross the Pruth between Napolokoutz and Bojan, and to capture Czernowitz. The Caucasian Native CD and III Cavalry Corps (1 Don Coss Div and 10 CD) would ride west to the line Stanislau-Kolomea-Kuty. Meanwhile behind the cavalry just the XXXIII and XLI Corps would move further west between the Dniester and the Pruth. General Letschitzky insisted on carrying out this plan because he thought it was advisable to first turn against Korda's group, and dispel any threat to his flank and rear, before operating toward the west. He left open the date for crossing the Pruth, and developed the new operation slowly.³⁸⁷

XII and XI Corps, and the divisions assigned to these HQ from the former Combined Corps, turned cautiously to the south. The Russian advanced guards appeared on the 12th along the northern bank of the Pruth, in front of the positions of Lt. Col. Papp's Brigade, the combined 10 Inf Bde (IR 13, Group Scholtz) and 40 Hon ID, and in front of the right wing of Brudermann's Cavalry Corps. The air units of 7th Army observed that strong enemy forces farther in the rear were marching from the north toward Schipenitz. Initially 7th Army HQ believed that just two Russian corps were involved - the aggressive XI moving toward Hlinitza and Sniatyn, and the Combined Corps along the Pruth east of Neumamajestie. Army HQ ordered GdK Korda to position most of his

³⁸⁷Klembovsky, pp. 49 ff. Litvinov, p. 58.

reserves behind the left wing of XI Corps.

The initial actions on the Pruth

In the night of 12-13 June, a weak enemy force sought to cross the Pruth north of Wama, in the sector held by Brigade Papp. Fighting continued at the gates of Czernowitz during the next day. Russian infantry moved right up to the bridgehead positions of 10 Inf Bde, while enemy artillery opened fire on the bridges which carried roads and rail lines over the Pruth. Around 1:00 PM the Russians, deeply deployed in several waves, stormed the Czernowitz water works, which lay north of the river, but were thrown back by parts of IR # 13 in hand-to-hand combat. For the time being the enemy had to give up their goal of occupying the city.

Now GdK Korda reported to his Army commander his impression that the main body of the 9th Russian Army was slowly assembling against the Pruth front. But the picture still wasn't clear. In the night of 12-13 June Groups Hadfy and Benigni stayed in the positions they had reached the day before (between Wolczkowce and Niezwiska). In the morning of the 13th, enemy troops advanced against Benigni's south wing in the area north of Wolczkowce. Their strength was estimated as one or two infantry brigades. The 5 Hon CD of Group Hadfy had already been attacked from Targowica in the evening of the 12th. While FZM Benigni held his positions and wanted to respond to the Russian assault with a counterattack, early on the 13th FML Hadfy pulled his troops back behind the line Slobodka Polna-Soroki and to the heights east of Czortowiec-Niezwiska. Russian cavalry followed them slowly. Behind the horsemen there were apparently one or two infantry divisions in the Horodenka area. FML Hadfy expected that on the 14th - at the latest - he would be attacked by a larger enemy force and that his thinly-occupied front couldn't hold. Therefore GO Pflanzler-Baltin felt obliged to have Groups Benigni and Hadfy withdraw about another 10 km farther west in the night of 13-14 June, to a prepared position on the Czerniawa and Okno brooks.

Meanwhile new fighting flared up in Group Korda's sector. Advanced Russian troops north of Wama sought to cross the Pruth in the night of 13-14 June. In the next morning enemy scouting detachments probed against the Czernowitz bridgehead. Also in the morning there were several reports that about three infantry divisions with a strong force of cavalry were advancing against Groups Benigni and Hadfy.

GO Pflanzler-Baltin decided to oppose this enemy concentration in the prepared positions on the Czerniawa and Okno brooks. He now

told Groups Benigni and Hadfy, "There is no reason to avoid the fight. It is impossible for us to carry out our assignment without offering resistance, because the two divisions coming here won't start getting off their trains at Stanislau on the 17th, and probably won't be finished until the 23rd. Therefore it's necessary to delay the enemy advance by fighting." Pflanze-Baltin wanted to keep tight control, and sought to restore the will to resist of his exhausted troops with the sharpest measures. After the harsh lessons of the recent actions, he instructed his divisions to avoid occupying the foremost positions in strength; instead the first line should consist only of outposts. In each group the main body would be held in reserve so that they could respond to an enemy assault with a counter-thrust.

GdK Korda was reminded of the great importance of Czernowitz and ordered not to divert units to guard his lines of communication. It seemed feasible to hold the line of the Pruth downstream from Hlinitza because of the heights on the southern bank; they would make it very difficult for the enemy to cross the river, and provided a good view of the terrain to the north. Another apparent advantage for the defenders was that the level of the river, which normally could be forded in many places, had risen due to recent rainstorms.

The next few hours brought the commander of 7th Army some fresh disappointments. Despite the high waters in the Pruth, in the night of 14-15 June small Russian detachments crossed over at Neumamajestie, in the sector of 40 Hon ID. Soon afterwards the enemy was preparing to build a bridge. When morning dawned, observers on the heights at Czernowitz spotted many Russian battalions, with guns and bridging equipment, coming from the northwest and marching through Walawa. Airmen reported numerous troop concentrations in the areas of Oschechlib, Kotzmann, Walawa and Nowosielica. Strong enemy forces were also identified at Sniatyn, opposite Cavalry Corps Brudermann. Near this town Russian patrols also crossed the river. There was no doubt that Letschitzky was making all his preparations to capture Czernowitz and push Group Korda into the Carpathians.

Early on the 15th, GO Pflanze-Baltin learned from a deciphered Russian radio message that Group Korda was opposed by XI and XII Russian Corps plus the divisions formerly in the Combined Corps; Groups Benigni and Hadfy were being pursued by at most two corps (XXIII and XLI) plus a strong force of cavalry. The latter enemy group was moving very cautiously to the west between the Pruth and Dniester. Groups Hadfy and Benigni weren't under attack. In

the morning GO Pflanze-Baltin moved his HQ from Kolomea to Podhoroczany. GM Seeckt arrived to take over the duties of Chief of Staff to the k.u.k. 7th Army. Col. Zeynek went on leave, but (as narrated farther below) he would be called back to his post after a short time.

Disposition of the German 105 and k.u.k. 48 ID

Meanwhile Falkenhayn was having serious second thoughts about sending the German 105 ID to Stanislau; because Groups Benigni and Hadfy had such little will to resist, the Germans might be sucked into their retreat without altering the situation. On the other hand, perhaps a thrust by Bothmer could bring the left wing of Pflanze-Baltin's Army quick and effective relief. Therefore on the 14th Falkenhayn suggested to Conrad that the German 105 ID, as well as the k.u.k. 48 ID, should be diverted to Podhajce. Conrad, however, doubted whether these two divisions would be sufficient for a successful offensive by South Army. He told Falkenhayn that the trains carrying 105 ID, as originally planned, should roll ahead through Stryj to 7th Army; this would make it possible to build a position strong enough to fend off the threat to the rest of the east Galician front from the south until enough reinforcements were available for a counterattack at a later date. Falkenhayn still didn't believe that having the German 105 and k.u.k. 48 ID support the left wing of 7th Army south of the Dniester would be of any help; they wouldn't be able to keep the center and left wing of Pflanze-Baltin's Army from falling back. On the other hand, Falkenhayn again insisted in his telegram responding to Conrad, it was probable that the entire front would benefit from a thrust by South Army toward the southeast.

It wasn't easy for GO Conrad to take away the reinforcements which he'd already promised GO Pflanze-Baltin, but he had to bow to the wishes of his allies since he needed the help of their troops. Early on the 15th it was decided that the German 105 as well as the k.u.k. 48 ID would move to Podhajce. At the same time Pflanze-Baltin was ordered to restrict 7th Army's activity. The eastern wing would guard Bukovina and the line of the Pruth; the weak north wing would remain in contact with South Army and would pull back to the west if subjected to heavy enemy pressure. If the Russians drove up the Dniester to the west, they would give Bothmer an opportunity to strike their flank from the north.

b. New Russian attacks against the center of South Army

Now, however, the Russians spared the sector on both sides of the Dniester from further attacks for the time being. General Letschitzky halted his right wing so that his left could first take Czernowitz. The advance of the 7th Russian Army came to a complete stop on the 12th. The casualties of the Russian II and especially XVI Corps had been very great in the actions to date. For good or ill, General Shcherbatchev had to bring up replacement troops and artillery ammunition to prepare for his attack against the positions of the k.u.k. XIII Corps on the Baryszbach with his customary thoroughness. Meanwhile the Russian XXII Corps was supposed to push back their opponents who were still on the western bank of the Strypa downstream from Sapowa.

The k.u.k. VI Corps is defeated

In the afternoon of the 12th, GdI Bothmer had once more ordered the k.u.k. VI Corps to stand firm. His order meant - no steps backward! The commander of South Army anticipated further Russian attacks the next day on the Buczacz-Monasterzyska road, and wanted to respond to the enemy assaults with a counter-attack. However, if the Russians stayed in their own trenches on the 13th, then GdI Arz wasn't supposed to continue the counter-offensive toward Buczacz which Division Oppeln had begun until the six battalions which had been detached were returned to him from XIII Corps.

Already before dawn on 13 June the 39 Hon ID was assaulted between Hajworonka and Sapowa by the 3 Finn Rif Div of XXII Russian Corps. The Russians established themselves firmly on the west bank of the Strypa south of Wisniowczyk. Corps Hofmann, which had stretched their right wing as far as Hajworonka, sent some of their reserves (three battalions, the divisional cavalry and one battery) under Col Bolzano from Dobrowody toward the south. This battle group was led to the area between Kotuzow and Wisniowczyk. Meanwhile two German battalions, which hurried to the scene from Division Oppeln, managed to restore the situation on the north wing of 39 Hon ID. Around noon the Russians opened a strong new attack. The left wing of 39 Hon ID suffered heavy losses and was thrown back north toward Kotuzow. Enemy detachments entered Kurdwanowka. Oppeln's reserve, LW IR # 19, was sent to counterattack through Kurdwanowka toward Bobulince, but was hit in the flank by the Russians. A bitter battle developed. Aus-Hung. and German battalions were confusingly

intermingled. VI Corps HQ received a report that 39 Hon ID had been destroyed, and around 3:00 PM ordered the confused troops back to the third position. By pulling back the left wing of VI Corps to Olsza and to the heights west of Kurdwanowka and east of Gnilawody, and bending the right wing of Corps Hofmann to Kotuzow, it would be possible to construct a new front. At 5:00 PM GdI Arz learned that reports of the damage to 39 Hon ID were exaggerated; he therefore wanted to stop the retreat and restore the front on the western bank of the Strypa with his northern wing. However, it was too late to halt the withdrawal, which had already begun. Toward evening the enemy also broke off the fighting; the exhausted Russians stayed in the area they had already won on the western bank of the Strypa.

On the 14th the only fighting on the entire front of South Army involved isolated scouting thrusts by the Russians. On the northern wing of Bothmer's Army the battalions of 32 ID, weakened in the hard fighting at Worobijowka, were relieved in the forward line by troops from 38 Hon ID and by three battalions of 19 ID. Two regiments from IV Corps made up the reserve behind the northern wing of the k.u.k. IX Corps. Despite the pause in the action, the situation of South Army remained tense, as indicated by the fact that in the center there was just a single regiment of the German 48 Res ID in reserve. Corps Hofmann held the sector from Kupczynce to Wisniowczyk, more than 20 km long, with thin lines. By now ten battalions had been pulled from this defensive sector to be sent to the battlefield of VI Corps. The battalions of 39 Hon ID and of G.Lt Oppeln's Division, which were greatly weakened and intermingled due to the recent fighting, were again ordered to pull reserves from their thin front and to hold them ready behind the northern wing of VI Corps. It was expected that the Russians would renew their attempt to break through to Podhajce.

The situation of VI Corps finally is stabilized

In fact the Russian 7th Army, based on Brussilov's order of the 12th, was already supposed to have resumed their attack toward the west on the 14th. The objectives were Pomorzany, Brzezany, Halicz and Stanislau. However, the two corps on the left wing of Shcherbatchev's Army still didn't feel strong enough to assault their opponents in the positions on the Baryszbach. Therefore on the 15th General Shcherbatchev sent just his northern wing to strike a new blow against the k.u.k. VI Corps. Early in the day the 3 Finn Rif Div, and apparently also 41 ID and parts of 3 Turkestan Rif Div (which had come up from Trybuchowka) tried to break through the Aus-Hung. positions between Olesza and Kotuzow.

In the first onslaught the enemy broke into the trenches of 39 Hon ID south of Kotuzow, but were thrown out again by quick counter-thrusts. Later in the morning the Finnish and Turkestan rifle regiments again struck 39 Hon ID, as well as Division Oppeln. Once again the defenders warded off the enemy, who suffered frightful losses. The rolling hills around Kurdwanowka and Kotuzow were covered by hundreds of dead and wounded men. Around noon the Russians broke off the fruitless struggle. Their shattered formations fled away from the trenches of the k.u.k. VI Corps and back toward the Strypa. GdI Arz, who had hurried to the battlefield, believed that the attack was over; full of confidence, in the afternoon he returned to his HQ at Podhajce.³⁸⁸

Toward 6:00 PM the exhausted battalions of 39 Hon ID at Kotuzow were suddenly overrun by mounted Cossacks; behind the Russian cavalry waves of infantry were approaching. They broke through the left wing of VI Corps. Overcome by panic, the troops of 39 Hon ID streamed to the rear. A single German battalion bravely opposed the attackers at Kotuzow, but had to give way to superior numbers. The Russians captured Kotuzow. Other enemy troops pushed ahead to the eastern edge of Gnilovody.³⁸⁹ At the other end of the town Col. Daubner, commanding 78 Hon Inf Bde, was trying to assemble the remnants of 39 Hon ID. A gap developed between them and Oppeln's Division. However, the Russians didn't exploit their success; as darkness fell their spearhead didn't advance any further.

Although Oppeln's Division had been outflanked by the headlong retreat of the Honved, they stayed in their trenches by Kurdwanowka, and maintained touch with Col. Daubner's group by bending back their left wing. In the night 3 ½ weakened German battalions were pulled from G.Lt Oppeln's thin front and thrown behind the broken 39 Hon ID. Thus it was possible to rebuild a continuous line on the northern wing of the k.u.k. VI Corps and to seal off the area which the enemy had taken.

Early on the 16th Col Daubner, acting on instructions from GM Blasius Dani, led the Aus-Hung. and German battalions assembled at Gnilowody in a counterattack. The advance was joined on the right by troops from Corps Hofmann and on the left by parts of Division Oppeln. After a hard action the Russians were pushed back to the heights east of Gnilowody and Kotuzow. GdI Arz had

388Arz, p. 100

389For defending the east edge of Gnilovody, Lt Col. Emmerich Horvath of Hon IR # 11 was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order.

to stop the counterattack around noon because of heavy casualties. But VI Corps was now standing fast, and there was no further danger of a breakthrough. And Bothmer could count on some welcome assistance. The first trains carrying the German 105 ID from Macedonia were arriving at Podhajce, behind the southern wing of South Army.

3. Evaluation of the operations on both sides of the Dniester

When the Aus-Hung. front south of the Dniester suddenly collapsed on 10 June, the allied high commands were just making preparations to overcome the severe crisis in Volhynia. The new blow, which struck the Aus-Hung. front at the most unfavorable moment, was more dangerous than the one at Olyka-Luck. Not only was the loss of terrain harder to bear in east Galicia and Bukovina than in Volhynia, but the stunning setback to 7th Army might have momentous political consequences. It was feared that Romania would now utilize a Russian advance to the Carpathian passes to enter the war on the side of the Entente, and would invade Transylvania. This would add more than half a million troops to the enemy side on the Eastern front, and menace Hungary from two sides; measures would have to be taken for action against a new enemy at a most unfavorable time.

The k.u.k. high command watched the success of the Russian offensive in east Galicia and Bukovina with very great concern. Barely two weeks had gone by since the Russian campaign opened, and on both sides of the Dniester Pflanzler-Baltin's Army had lost a stretch of terrain 10 to 60 kilometers wide and 90 km long. The Army had also lost a total of 133,600 men and 52 guns, which was more than 50% of its original strength. According to Russian reports, 150,000 of the 204,800 men lost by 4th and 7th Armies had been taken prisoner; thus about 54,000 had been killed and wounded.

The psychological and tactical reasons for the collapse of 7th Army's front were identical to those which we've considered in summarizing the breakthrough at Olyka. At Olyka, however, the Russians had torn apart 4th Army's line with one blow, while at Okna they didn't win a decision until after a bitter struggle that lasted many days. On the first day of the battle FZM Benigni was able to seal off the enemy penetration with the reserves which had been held ready behind his group. In the following days the Russians carried out a series of local thrusts

that didn't lead to success. However, the enemy attacks consumed the reinforcements with which GO Pflanzler-Baltin had hoped to recover the lost position in the Samuszyn bend of the Dniester. Moreover, Group Benigni had to give up substantial forces to help XIII Corps after the breakthrough at Jazlowiec.

Meanwhile the Russians had brought fresh troops to the front at Okna. On 10 June Group Benigni's four infantry and two cavalry divisions were opposed by the enemy's seven infantry and two cavalry divisions. The renewed mass assault hit the mostly Romanian troops of Hon IR # 305 at Okna, a key point in the line of the Group's left wing. When the front collapsed here, the gallant north Moravian, Magyar and Croatian battalions under FML Snjaric's command, already weakened by the battle, were rolled up from the north.³⁹⁰ The renowned IR # 1, Benigni's last reserve, was stationed so far from the left wing that it didn't arrive on the scene until the action had already been decided.

After the Russians broke through on the lower Strypa at Jazlowiec, it was no longer possible to stabilize the situation because there were no reserves stationed behind XIII Corps. The shaken 15 ID shirked renewing the battle in the second prepared position. Now the other divisions of XIII Corps were pulled back from their strongly-constructed first-line positions before they were seriously attacked. Attacks by Russian horsemen were enough to disperse the k.u.k. 2 CD (fighting dismounted) and to force their neighbors on the left, 36 ID, to retreat further. Breakdown and panics also occurred in 12 ID, which was composed mainly of Polish regiments and had hitherto fought steadfastly at Buczacz, and even in 39 Hon ID, which had stood its ground against strong assaults during the New Year's Battle.

The long period of positional warfare had a baleful effect. Even good troops had become very sensitive to the danger of being outflanked. Fear of a breakthrough became an epidemic on the lower Strypa. Even when the enemy broke into just a small part of the front, our troops in neighboring sectors often pulled back without being seriously attacked merely because they had lost contact. Several high-ranking commanders made over-hasty decisions to retreat while under the impression that their

³⁹⁰TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - The original refers to "German Moravian" battalions, but in fact the units in question were composed of roughly equal numbers of Germans and Czechs (IR # 54 was 60% Czech, # 93 was 60% German). Moreover, Hon IR # 305 apparently contained a sizeable Magyar contingent in addition to the Romanians.

position could no longer be held with shaken troops. Both officers and men had become too accustomed to positional warfare, based on a continuous, cohesive line. Their entire strength had been exhausted in months of labor to construct the first position; the second line, however, couldn't be so carefully constructed because there was a lack of laborers. Most of the third position consisted of sketchily-prepared trenches and a line on the maps at staff HQ. The system of positions as a whole was like an armored gun turret with a strong exterior and a hollow interior. After the enemy broke through the strong wall (the first line), the defenders had little belief that they could hold the positions farther to the rear, which had been insufficiently constructed. The leadership witnessed how the entire defensive system unraveled after the catastrophic collapse of the line, and the troops had lost the habit of fighting in the open field between positions.

In these days of crisis, if Shcherbatchev and Letschitzky had continued to push with all their strength against their unnerved opponents by advancing west on both sides of the Dniester, perhaps the entire battle-line in east Galicia might have become untenable. Instead the Russians widened the area they'd occupied rather than increasing its depth. Contrary to our expectations, they spared the areas south and north of the Dniester from attack for the time being. Shcherbatchev decided to do this because the striking power of his left wing was fully expended after reaching the Baryszbach. Now he sought, in his systematic way, to first attack with the center and northern wing of his 7th Russian Army, so that he could push his opponents' front back step-by-step. The situation of South Army became tense after the breakdowns in the k.u.k. VI Corps. However, Bothmer was able to quickly pull units from the center of his Army, which was weak but not seriously attacked, and threw them to his right wing. In stubborn fighting the dangerous Russian thrust against the flank of South Army was brought to a halt. This was due to the great mobility of the Aus-Hung. and German battalions, which together achieved great things under energetic and skilled leadership.

The Russians triumphantly announced that their 9th Army on just one day (10 June) had taken more than 18,000 prisoners and 10 machine guns.³⁹¹ However, General Letschitzky didn't know how to utilize this success. Instead of completing his victory with the destruction of Group Benigni, weakened after the breakthrough at Okna, he decided to capture Czernowitz. He wanted to drive his opponents from the flank of his 9th Army before continuing the

391Litvinov, p. 66

thrust to the west. Letschitzky's idea of undertaking a raid to Czernowitz with II Cavalry Corps, however, didn't achieve its goal. Just the fire of the artillery and machine guns of Brigade Papp were sufficient to keep the Russian horsemen from crossing the Pruth. If all the cavalry of Letschitzky's Army (four divisions) had been ready on 10 June with rested horses behind the breakthrough group, they probably could have advanced west, deep into the wide gap which was torn between Groups Benigni and Hadfy; they could have sown great confusion along the rearward liens of communication of Pflanzer-Baltin's Army.³⁹² The slowness of the Russian commanders had saved the k.u.k. 7th Army from an even greater disaster than that which they actually suffered.

4. The pause before the allied counterattack in Volhynia (10 to 15 June)

a. Puhallo's Army withdraws behind the line Plaszewka-Styr-Lipa (10-13 June)

When GO Linsingen received the order at noon on 9 June to conduct a counterattack, the situation led him to believe that the enemy were pursuing from Luck with their main body headed northwest. Therefore an assault by Puhallo's Army from the south could be very effective, or at least could ensure that the Russians pursued the disorganized 4th Army with only weak forces. In any event, if Puhallo struck energetically he would increase the success of the counter-offensive from Kovel toward the southeast. At the moment Linsingen wanted 4th Army to draw the largest possible number of enemy units directly to the west and pin them down, which would weaken the flanks of the pursuing force where the allies wanted to make their thrusts.

The orders which Linsingen issued at night on the 9th also had to reflect the situation on the battlefield, which had been further clarified during the day. The HQ at Jablon had the impression that the enemy was no longer following Corps Szurmay south of the Polonka and that they were pursuing X Corps to the west with only weak forces. However, it appeared that the Russians were getting ready to attack on both sides of the Luck-Perespa road with two corps (XL and XXXIX) against Corps Bernhardi, which was not yet fully assembled. Linsingen ordered Bernhardi not to seek a decision before his three divisions were all in place. Instead

³⁹²Diakow, "Brussilow und seine Reiter im Juni 1916" (in Mil. wiss. Mittl., Vienna; 1933 edition, pp. 9 ff.)

he should slow down the Russian advance toward Kovel, while staying linked up with II Corps on his left. The latter Corps would bend back their right wing if necessary to stay in touch with Bernhardt. However, sustained resistance was to be offered behind the Stokhod (at the latest), to cover the unloading of troops on the Vladimir Volynsky-Kovel-Powursk rail line. As soon as Bernhardt's three divisions were ready, they'd go over to the offensive. Until then, 4th Army would pull back toward the northwest, staying in close contact with Bernhardt: X Corps would withdraw to Nw. Dwor and Corps Szurmay to Odziutyczy. At the same time, Army Group Böhm-Ermolli again was offering to mount an effective offensive from the south against the rear of the advancing Russians, whose main force was farther to the northeast; this plan, however, was crossed up by the measures of the enemy.

As already noted, Brussilov had no intention of rushing into the trap which Linsingen was preparing for him. He preferred to first bring forward both wings of 8th Russian Army. At the moment this Army, far forward to the west, overlapped their opponents' front and offered an opportunity to thrust to the south, thus widening the area of penetration. Such a thrust would threaten the rear of the defenders of Dubno and thus could also assist the advance of 11th Russian Army, hitherto stuck fast on the Ikwa.

10 June

Early on 10 June the XXXII Russian Corps attacked with their three divisions in deeply deployed waves between Krasnoye and Wojnica; the targets were 71 Inf Bde (on the right of 7 ID) and the extreme left wing of GM von Urbanski's widely-stretched 46 LW ID. The first assaults collapsed under the defenders' fire. Then, however, the enemy established themselves in Krasnoye. Two battalions and three batteries of GM Haas' Group intervened on the flank, but were ineffective because soon afterwards (still in the morning) the entire 71 Inf Bde was driven back. Around noon the Russians stormed into Bokuzhma and widened their penetration toward the southeast, into the gap which had opened between 46 LW and 7 ID. Haas' entire Group attempted to prevent defeat by counterattacking through Malewo toward the east, as did parts of the left wing of 46 LW ID by striking from Smordwa to the west, but their efforts had to be abandoned. No other reserves were available, so 21 Cav Bde - which was supposed to deploy in the open gap between 1st and 4th Armies - was sent instead to guard the road to Beresteczko at Demidowka; this allowed Group Haas to take up a covering position immediately to the west on the

heights between Demidowka and Lopawsze. 14 Inf Bde of 7 ID, stationed west of the Styr, was less troubled by the enemy; they were supposed to hold on as long as possible and if forced to retreat would then prolong the line of Group Haas farther west.

Meanwhile new orders were issued from Teschen, instructing Army Group Böhm-Ermolli to defend the routes to the Lemberg area at Sokal and Stojanow. Reinforcements were to be sent to 1st Army to enable them to cooperate with Linsingen's counterattack. The first trains carrying these troops would be moving through Lemberg on the 14th; in the meantime any enemy advance should be held up for as long as possible. The high command wanted 1st Army to fall back "only if absolutely necessary and only for the purpose of freeing reserves for the left wing of 1st Army. Otherwise measures would have to be prepared for the withdrawal of the entire Army Group."

In the afternoon 1st Army's situation gave rise to the most serious concern. The Russians had hammered 71 Inf Bde of 7 ID, and also dealt roughly with the left wing of 46 LW ID; their units which had torn a hole in the front and advanced to the south - about two divisions - couldn't be halted. The parts of 46 LW ID fighting in the bend in the Ikwa and facing east might be caught between two fires. Furthermore, in the afternoon the enemy again began to vigorously attack XVIII Corps at Sapanow. GO Puhallo therefore felt obliged to make use of the authority given him by Conrad by pulling back his front. XVIII Corps was to withdraw to the line Berezcy-Kozin, 46 LW ID (including Group Haas, which was returned to its command) to the sector Kozin-Demidowka-Lopawsze, and 7 ID to Michalowka-Zabcze. The 7 CD and Landsturm Hussar Brigade of XVIII Corps left the front to form a reserve. 1st Army HQ moved from Beresteczko to Radziechow. Weak line of communications companies were temporarily guarding the Michalowka-Gorochow-Poryck swamp, and thus the route toward Lemberg; 2nd Army was similarly covering the line of the Bug upstream from Dobrotwor.

So that the troops of 1st Army wouldn't suffer further heavy damage in the next few days, Böhm-Ermolli ordered in the night of the 10th that the Army shouldn't engage in serious fighting along the new front, which wasn't favorable for prolonged resistance; instead they should take up a defensive position behind the Plaszewka, Styr and Lipa. The Army Group commander scraped together some units to protect the open north flank - a March battalion for the Sokal-Krystinopol sector, Lt Col. Khayll's detachment (2 ½ battalions, 1 squadron, 1 battery) for the Stojanow area where 61 ID would detrain upon its arrival, and

finally half of 4 CD (mounted) which had been stationed in Group Kosak. The Army Group's reserve - two battalions of IR # 85 from 27 ID - were shifted behind XVIII Corps, which in turn sent IR # 42 to 46 LW ID.

Large cavalry units were assigned to cover the gap between 1st and 4th Armies, which on 10 and 11 June widened from 35 to 45 km. FML Ritter von Micewski's 7 CD, along with the Landsturm Hussar Brigade, mounted up behind the front of XVIII Corps and were supposed to reach Gorochow by the 13th. Böhm-Ermolli especially insisted that 21 Cav Bde of 4 CD should be given back their original assignment and proceed immediately on the 11th to the north wing of 1st Army at Holatyn. FML Ostermuth's 4 CD HQ with the other brigade (the 18th) would follow them in a few days' marching.

11-13 June

On 11 June the 1st Army initially assembled, without interference from the enemy, on their assigned line between Berezcy and Zabcze. In the night of 11-12 June GO Puhallo led his left wing back behind the protection of the rivers. XVIII Corps didn't need to pull back any farther, since their northern wing was already on the Plaszewka; next to them the 46 LW ID occupied the southern edge of the swampy Plaszewka-Styr valley as far as the mouth of the Lipa³⁹³; the much-weakened 7 ID held the southern bank of the Lipa as far as Holatyn. The troops prepared to defend themselves.

After 4th Army had already suffered a costly defeat, the fighting strength of 1st Army had now also been badly damaged before Linsingen's planned counterattack; this must have caused concern at Teschen. The AOK pointed out to Böhm-Ermolli's Army Group HQ that if the Russians again struck a heavy blow against Puhallo, the line could be bent back from the boundary with Group Kosak (at Lopuszno) through Radziwilow to Stojanow rather than permit 1st Army to succumb to an overwhelming assault.

The HQ of 1st Army was fully confident that they could hold their positions, because the enemy barely followed the center and left wing. An operation by the left wing of 25 ID over the the source of the Plaszewka brook resulted in just an insignificant skirmish with some cavalry. The enemy artillery didn't open fire against

393TRANSLATOR's NOTE - As written, the sentence confuses the geographical situation. Actually the Lipa and Plaszewka come together to form the Styr River (south of Werben).

the center and southern wing of XVIII Corps until evening; then 25 ID was able to easily fend off the advancing Russian infantry.³⁹⁴ The efforts of the attackers were also fruitless on the next day (13 June); they entrenched in front of our barriers. 46 LW ID was engaged in light skirmishing, while 7 ID passed the entire day in quiet.

21 Cav Bde, which moved on the 12th upstream along the Lipa toward the west, was heading as ordered to Swiniuchy, where they were to operate together with 4th Army's 10 CD against the Russian 12 CD. This town, however, was occupied by the enemy and so 21 Cav Bde pulled back to Gorochow. Here the reinforced 7 CD had meanwhile also arrived; Khayll's group was attached to this Division. 4 CD spent the night around Cholojow.

From 10 to 13 June the 2nd Army wasn't troubled by either the artillery fire on the lines of V Corps or by the diversionary assaults against Group Kosak. By incorporating replacement troops it was possible to build a reserve under V Corps; this unit, a combined regiment of 3 battalions under Major Trupkovic, left V Corps and by the 13th had been moved to Leszniow behind 1st Army. IR # 76 had been attached to South Army on the 10th.

b. Retreat of the k.u.k. 4th Army from 10 to 13 June

GO Tersztjanszky took command over 4th Army on 10 June. Szurmay was undisturbed by the enemy as he led his corps back from the Leniewka after rear guards blew up the bridges; he withdrew to Szelwow and Zaturcy. GM Bauer's 10 CD covered this operation between the Sierna and Korczeska and in the evening followed Szurmay to the heights east of Zaturcy. In the morning X Corps was disturbed by unclear and contradictory reports about the fate of 37 Hon ID. A rumor that the divisional commander had been captured proved to be untrue, but damage was being done by attacking Russian horsemen; they broke through as far as Boratyn and reached the Division's artillery, so that a battery had to be destroyed. Corps HQ were concerned that the march could no longer succeed in its original direction, sharply to the northwest; they ordered 13 LW ID to first clarify the situation of the Honved. Linsingen and 4th Army HQ, however, still insisted on a retreat to the northwest so that the connection with Bernhardt wouldn't be lost; it must be feasible to march in this direction, since only Russian horsemen were pursuing. Once

394Hoen, Waldstätten-Zipperer and Seifert, pp. 642 ff. Michel and Wohl, pp. 172 ff.

more they ordered that sustained resistance should be prepared against the enemy.

In any event, not much was expected of the fully exhausted troops. The new commander of X Corps, FML Csanady, had found his three divisional commanders "very depressed" after living through a week of overwhelming events; he said that "all were tired and over-taxed." The troops had just "minimal combat value." After 37 Hon ID shook off their pursuers, the Corps marched west and in the evening reached the line Zubilno-Kol. Makowa.

In order to deploy as ordered by Linsingen, it was necessary to shift 4th Army farther north on the next day (11 June). Szurmay guarded the Luck-Vladimir Volynsky road, and took up a position through Cholopieczy to Kisielin. Csanady likewise shifted north; he sent 13 LW ID to Beresk and 37 Hon ID to Wiczyny; GM von Iwanski's 2 ID went to Woronczyn as a reserve. As will shortly be related, Bernhardt's neighboring Corps went back with its main body behind the Stokhod during the day, so the north wing of 4th Army was bent back toward Trysten; however, outposts were still stationed on the eastern branch of the river by the crossing points at Wiczyny and Kijaz. The connection with Bernhardt was maintained by 2 Gd Cav Bde at Trysten.

Thus X Corps had broken away from the enemy. An exact tally of its personnel revealed a total rifle strength of 4570 men. 2 ID was moved behind the Stokhod to Nw. Dwor on the 12th.

On 11 June the 10 CD in front of Zaturcy had covered Corps Szurmay's march to the flank. In the evening they were instructed to maintain their contact with Szurmay while securing the southern wing of 4th Army as far as Koniuchy, and to link up with 1st Army at Gorochow (where they would meet that Army's 7 CD). Reconnaissance south of the Korczeska was an especially important assignment, because according to an intercepted Russian broadcast the enemy's 12 CD was supposed to advance through Swiniuchy toward Poryck. A scouting detachment believed they had already spotted a mounted Russian brigade riding west along both banks of the Korczeska. Therefore during the night the 10 CD moved to Lokaczy, so that they could either prevent the enemy from advancing past the line Lokaczy-Koniuchy or cut them off from the rear.

Until the 13th the gap between 4th and 1st Armies was lightly covered by three cavalry units (7 and 10 CD plus 21 Cav Bde); with their united force they were supposed to hinder any breakthrough by enemy horsemen and throw them back. Moreover, GM

Bauer was supposed to protect the south wing of his Army and try to get information about the Zaturcy-Torczyn area. Two German cavalry regiments which had come from Warsaw under Col. Freih. von Könneritz were placed in Bauer's command.

Meanwhile the Russians had established a thick screen of cavalry in front of 4th Army, which our scouts weren't able to penetrate. On the 10th and 11th Kaledin once more received orders to immediately halt his advanced center. The reinforcements arriving on the opposing side made caution necessary. Kaledin was told to send his horsemen in pursuit of his opponents: V Cavalry Corps toward Kovel, 12 CD toward Vladimir-Volynsky, and 7 CD (which arrived at Luck on the 11th) toward Swiniuchy.³⁹⁵

The short breathing spell which 4th Army thus received was used to bring order to the units. Casualties had been so heavy that even after the corps received their available replacement troops the number of riflemen in each one was only equivalent to those in a normal division.³⁹⁶ Therefore the high command sent to each infantry regiment, as extra replacements, one or two March companies of trained men who thus could be employed immediately. Two German Landsturm battalions and a garrison battery, which had been sent from the Warsaw General Government, were a welcome reinforcement for use as security guards on the lines of communication.

c. Actions of Group Bernhardi and of Linsingen's northern wing from 10 to 13 June

In Corps Bernhardi, 4th Army's neighbor to the north, Brigade Jachmann of Division Rusche was taken by surprise in the morning of 10 June by Russian armored cars, and their line was broken. Since both wings of GdK Bernhardi's force were threatened with envelopment, he decided to pull his troops back. Roziszczce, which meanwhile had been evacuated, was completely given up; just a rear guard position was held along the line Dorosino-Perespa-

³⁹⁵Zayontschovsky, p. 35. Baluiev, pp. 55 ff.

³⁹⁶On 13 June the 4th Army had 24,240 foot, 1400 horse, 89 MG and 204 guns:

. X Corps = 13,000 foot, 26 MG, 115 guns (2 ID = 5200 foot, 8 MG, 14 guns; 13 LW ID = 4000 foot, 9 MG, 37 guns; 37 Hon ID = 3800 foot, 9 MG, 64 guns)

. Corps Szurmay = 10,300 foot, 47 MG, 80 guns (11 ID = 4700 foot, 21 MG, 30 guns; 70 Hon ID = 5600 foot, 26 MG, 50 guns

. 10 CD = 940 foot, 1400 horse, 16 MG, 9 guns

Pozarki, since the terrain was unfavorable for prolonged resistance. Bernhardt, however, was sure he could hold the Stokhod sector for about five days, so GO Linsingen approved his suggestion that the troops should halt behind the Stokhod.³⁹⁷ The leading battalions of G.Lt Beckmann's German 108 ID were arriving, along with those of FML Schön's k.u.k. 29 ID (the latter detained at Powursk); they helped cover the retreat, while the main body of Bernhardt's Corps deployed on the new front in the night of 10-11 June. At the same time the k.u.k. II Corps pulled back the right wing of 41 Hon ID from the Styr to Porskaja Wolka-Mylsk-Sokul. The Russians immediately began to follow the Honved, crossing to the west bank of the Styr at Topulno. 4 ID repulsed an assault at Kopyli; however, because of the continuing tense situation on the Styr between Godomicze and Kolki it was impossible to return LW IR # 34 of 90 Bde to the command of GdI Fath, as he had repeatedly and urgently requested.

Kaledin, whose XXXIX Corps had taken Roziszczce, brought to this area the V Cavalry Corps from his northern wing plus V Siberian Corps which he had received from Brussilov. The fruitless attempts by IV Cavalry Corps to break through Corps Hauer were abandoned; only in the direction of Kaszowka would XXX Corps continue attacking.³⁹⁸

Thus on the 11th, while both of Bernhardt's German divisions and the k.u.k. 29 ID were deploying behind the Stokhod between Witoniez and Porskaja Wolka³⁹⁹, a new storm hit 4 ID of Corps Kaiser. The Russian 71 ID took advantage of the fact that the defensive line of LW IR "Jaroslau" # 34 between Tuman and Kopyli didn't run along the swampy banks of the Styr where the river formed a bend, but rather along the chord of the arc. Therefore the Russians were able to cross the water unhindered; at dawn they fell upon the over-tired Landwehr in their hastily dug trenches. The defenders offered little resistance. The immediately-available reserves were used up in efforts to prevent the enemy from advancing any further in terrain covered mostly with swamps and woods that made visibility and movement difficult. Linsingen ordered Corps Fath to immediately spring to the aid of their neighbor. When FML Kaiser heard that the Russians had broken the line on a breadth of 2 kilometers, he had

397Bernhardt, "Eine Weltreise 1911-12 und der Zusammenbruch Deutschlands" (Leipzig, 1920), Vol. III, pp. 185 ff. By the same author, "Denkwürdigkeiten", pp. 433 ff.

398Baluiev, p. 90. Klembovsky, pp. 46 ff. Zayontschovsky, p. 15.

399Schön, "Die 29. ID am Stochod", pp. 29 ff.

29 ID (which had joined II Corps) relieve the right wing of 41 Hon ID, which thus had a shorter line (extending only to Mylsk). This freed 40 Hon Inf Bde for other uses. Col. Steinitz, commanding 7 Inf Bde, created a group of 18 companies which had been drawn the day before from the line at Raznyczi [Raznycze] and opposite Siemki; he led them in a counterattack which reached the area northeast of Tuman in the evening. However, there was still a gap in the center of 4 ID, because their western group (8 Inf Bde, reinforced by 2 ½ Honved battalions) hadn't been able to hold its ground and had to withdraw to a prepared switch position on the line Nawoz-Gruziatyn-Ugly. Strong Russian thrusts against Kopyli increased the tension until night fell. On the 12th the commander of 41 Hon ID, GM Schamschula, took over the 40 Hon Inf Bde (now ready to intervene) and the western group of 4 ID. With help from Steinitz's Brigade, which had received reinforcements from Corps Fath, the enemy was thrown back to the southern bank of the Styr.⁴⁰⁰

The fighting of the past few days had proven that the defenses of the stretch of the river on both sides of Kolki and as far as Kopyli had to be placed under a unified command. GO Linsingen therefore shifted the western border of Corps Fath to Tuman. 4 ID's sector was restricted to the area as far as Nawoz; IR # 99 with 7 Inf Bde HQ were pulled from the line to serve as II Corps' reserve. However, several days passed before the situation was quiet enough to bring order to the badly intermingled units of five different divisions (4 ID, parts of 53 ID, parts of 26 LW ID, 41 Hon ID, and 90 LW Bde from 45 LW ID) by shifting troops and restoring the normal chains of command. Meanwhile the Russians advanced only cautiously toward Bernhardi's front on the Stokhod. Division Rusche fought on the 12th southwest of the Kovel highway⁴⁰¹; in the narrow area between the Stokhod and Styr the 41 Hon ID fended off 3 Orenburg Coss Div of V Cavalry Corps. The defeat at Siemki markedly reduced the aggressiveness of the Russians in front of Corps Fath, which therefore was left undisturbed at Kopyli. Also on Hauer's front the advanced positions which had been lost in the recent actions were re-occupied by the 14th.

The actions involving Gronau's German group were restricted to the usual skirmishing between the two fortified lines.

400"Ehrenbuch der Hesser", Vol. II, pp. 118 ff. Wisshaupt, "Die 52. Landwehr Infanterie Brigade", pp. 383 ff.

401Bernhardi, "Denkwürdigkeiten", p. 434

d. Linsingen's plan of attack and Brussilov's intentions

On 12 June GO Linsingen had revealed his plan of attack to the high command at Teschen. It wasn't possible to clearly discern the enemy's intention based on their activity to date - they were advancing west only hesitantly while trying to cross the Styr on both sides of Kolki. However, it could be inferred that the Russians would carry out "their attack to roll up our positions in a northerly direction, perhaps toward Kovel. The further they move west, the weaker their front will become and they will be closer to the area where our reinforcements are detraining west and south of Kovel." Linsingen hoped to hurl back the Russians with a strong attacking group directed against their left flank. Prussian GdK von der Marwitz⁴⁰² would lead this spearhead (X German Corps plus two divisions from Group Bernhardi) toward Luck, with his right wing along the Turya; Bernhardi would merely hold his positions. The k.u.k. 4th Army would shift to the south in the night of 14-15 June, thus leaving room for Group Marwitz; subsequently they would accompany the offensive in echelon from the right. If the attacking group encountered stiff resistance, "the 4th Army, supported by the k.u.k. 1st Army" would advance "against the flank and rear of the enemy." GO Puhallo was to have his northern wing prepared on the 17th to strike toward Luck with 30 battalions and 20 batteries (plus two cavalry divisions); the main body of his Army would accompany the advance of the northern wing.

To ensure that there was a united command over all the allied units available for the counter-offensive, GO Conrad adopted a suggestion from Falkenhayn and extended Linsingen's authority on the 15th to also include 1st Army. GO Böhm-Ermolli was thus restricted to command of his own (2nd) Army. Linsingen now ordered Puhallo to merely hold his position; only Puhallo's northern wing would advance from Stojanow. Meanwhile Linsingen had to postpone the start of the counterattack until 16 June because of delays in sending the heavy artillery to Kovel by rail.

In these days, however, Brussilov was also deciding on plans for an attack that would fully overthrow the Aus-Hung. and German troops standing against him.⁴⁰³ He was influenced by the notable successes of his 9th Army in their fighting against Pflanzer-

402GdK von der Marwitz had hitherto commanded VI German Corps on the Western front.

403Zayontschovsky, pp. 36 ff. Cherkasov, p. 166

Baltin's Army, and by the impression that GdI Evert's West Front was finally going to seriously set to work. Brussilov had emphatically requested support from a major offensive operation by Evert toward Vilna; he had also demanded that GdI Letsch, who commanded 3rd Army neighboring the Southwest Front, should attack toward Pinsk.⁴⁰⁴ But Evert continued to raise new concerns with the Stavka; he postponed the start of his offensive first to the 14th, and then to the 17th of June.⁴⁰⁵ There was a fight on the 13th at Baranowicze, in which the Grenadier Corps of 3rd Russian Army vainly attacked the positions of the German Landwehr Corps while suffering heavy casualties; it remained just a short and isolated episode.⁴⁰⁶ The repulse of this attack also involved the extreme southern wing of the k.u.k. XII Corps, which was to the left of the German 4 LW ID; their own front was subjected only to strong artillery fire, but the batteries of 16 ID assisted the German Landwehr with effective flanking fire.

Now on the 14th Brussilov again instructed all his four armies to push on to the west; in particular 8th Army should strike with its wings toward Kovel and Milatyn (18 km west of Gorochow) and the 11th toward Druzskopol and Pomorzany.⁴⁰⁷ Kaledin had already been planning to meet the wishes of his superior on his own initiative; he wanted to use V Sib Corps (which had taken the place of V Cavalry Corps on the western bank of the Styr) and 4 Finn Rif Div to deliver a strong surprise thrust to Kovel. Therefore he ordered his north wing (IV Cavalry and XLVI Corps) to pin down the enemy and XXX Corps to attack with Kaszowka as its principal target. V Sib Corps should cross the Stokhod and advance toward Mielnica and Holoby. The center (XXXIX, XL and VIII Corps) would have their advanced troops pursue the allies to the line Majdan-Kisielin-Zaturcy-Sadow-Szclin. V Cavalry Corps, 12 CD and 7 CD would continue to scout ahead in the directions they were already heading.⁴⁰⁸

To the left of the Russian 8th Army, the northern wing of GdK Sakharov's 11th Army was deploying opposite that of the k.u.k. 1st Army (7 ID). Kaledin had transferred the strong XXXII Corps to his southern neighbor; two of its divisions (2 Finn Rif Div and 126 ID) now made up XLV Corps on 11th Army's right. On the 14th

404Klembovsky, p. 45

405Zayontschovsky, pp. 32 ff. Klembovsky, pp. 45 and 52

406Vogel, "Die Kämpfe um Baranowitschi im Sommer 1916"

(Schlachten des Weltkrieges, Heft 7; Oldenburg, 1921), pp. 11 ff.

407Klembovsky, p. 49

408Baluiev, pp. 57 ff. and Appendix 5.

Sakharov ordered a concentric assault by his center (XXXII and XVII Corps plus the northern/right wing of VII Corps) against the Aus-Hung. positions which made up an arc on the lower reaches of the Plaszewka and Ikwa; both wings of the Army (XLV and the southern part of VII Corps) would stay in place.⁴⁰⁹

e. Activities of Army Group Linsingen on 14-15 June

While Sakharov's assault barely affected the northern wing of the k.u.k. 2nd Army (Group Kosak) on the 14th or 15th, its entire weight bore down upon 1st Army.

A new setback for 1st Army

On the 14th the Russians worked their way up to the front of Puhallo's Army and searched for crossing points over the swampy Plaszewka.⁴¹⁰ In the afternoon, artillery fire intensified against FML Czibulka's XVIII Corps, especially against GM von Boog's 25 ID. In the next morning (the 15th) the 101 ID of XXXII Russian Corps at Tarnwaka assaulted the left wing of the Vienna Division; they broke into the position of the attached LW IR # 16, which had already collapsed before at Sapanow. A counter-thrust by the Corps' reserves, two battalions of IR # 85 was ineffective, as was a second effort mounted by the reserves of 46 LW ID after the right wing of that Division was also attacked. The right of the 46th and all of 25 ID pulled back to a position on the Sitenka on both sides of the Kozin-Sitno road; two battalions of Deutschmeister with some artillery covered the retreat. Now the Russians sent the Trans-Amur Cavalry Division to pursue into the gap in the front between Kozin and Tarnawka; our infantry and artillery had to repulse this furious mounted attack in the open field, an occurrence that by now had become quite rare.⁴¹¹

The enemy began to press against the entire XVIII Corps and 46 LW ID. To prevent the setback from having an impact on other parts of the front, and to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, GO Puhallo decided to make use of the authority granted him by the high command on the 12th to pull his right wing back to the Austro-Russian border at Radziwilow. This would also force Group Kosak to move back. Conrad and Linsingen approved this measure, although Linsingen added a serious warning: "I expect the Army

409Cherkasov, pp. 165 ff.

410Cherkasov, pp. 168 ff. Ryedkin-Rimashevsky, pp. 27 ff.

411Hoen, Waldstätten-Zipperer and Seifert, pp. 648 ff.

Giltshevsky, p. 108

to now hold its position, since the enemy force is only slightly larger."

In the night of 15-16 June the XVIII Corps stayed in the intermediate position Berezcy-Sitno; using Ostrow as a pivot, the 46 LW ID had withdrawn to the Sitenka to retain their connection with 25 ID. Preparations were under way to march back on the 16th to a prepared position on the line Lopuszno-Radziwilow-Korsow-Ostrow along the Austro-Russian border. When the enemy found out that 1st Army had withdrawn, in the night they also attacked the adjacent wing of Group Kosak, but received a sharp rebuff.

The events of the 15th had greatly disturbed the grouping of forces for the offensive thrust of 1st Army's northern wing; the spearhead would have to be weaker than originally intended. Except for the 4 and 7 CD, it would consist of just the twelve battalions and eight batteries of FML Winkler's 61 ID, which had arrived from the Isonzo; in the evening his troops deployed on the right of the two cavalry divisions, moving through Gorochow to the Jelizarow-Jeziercy front. Khayll's Detachment wouldn't take part in the attack, but on the 16th would secure the area between 61 and 7 ID (the latter was deployed where the Styr branches off at Lipa). Major Trupkovic's Regiment had to be sent to 46 LW ID.

The gap between 1st and 4th Armies was to be guarded by 7, 4 and 10 CD. Their effectiveness suffered from lack of a united command. On the 14th the cavalry of 1st Army (7 and 4 CD) were supposed to advance north and drive the enemy out of Swiniuchy. The cooperation of 10 CD, whose extreme southern wing was at Koniuchy, was requested. GM Bauer had indeed promised his help; however, when Corps Szurmaj was forced to retreat on the 14th Bauer moved the bulk of his men to his northern wing. Thus although a regiment of 4 CD did reach Swiniuchy, it couldn't hold the town after Koniuchy was lost in the evening. Meanwhile Linsingen had strengthened the command structure by combining 7 and 4 CD under a Cavalry Corps led by FML Ostermuth. This Corps was supposed to prevent the enemy from crossing the line Choloniew-Koniuchy, while staying in touch with 10 CD. However, on the 15th the Russians pushed ahead from Swiniuchy and Koniuchy against Ostermuth's thin front until evening, when the cavalry received support from the arriving 61 ID. 7 CD spent the night north of Gorochow, and 4 CD on the upper reaches of the southern Luga.

Actions of 4th Army

GO Tersztyanszky had made appropriate preparations to shift his Army, as required by Linsingen's plans, to a front south of the Turya from Str. Zagorow through Lokaczy and Wojmica to Odziutyczy. To cover this movement, as well as the deployment of Group Marwitz, toward the south the current outposts would continue to be held. Air scouts observed large Russian columns moving north and northwest in the early morning of the 14th. Linsingen was asked whether 4th Army, while covering the assembly of the attacking group, should continue to fall back to the originally ordered line (Odziutyczy-Nw. Dwor), or west toward Vladimir-Volynsky. Linsingen decided that 4th Army would only fall back toward Vladimir-Volynsky if pressed by the enemy, and stay in close contact with the Russians; thus they would open the front for X German Corps. Therefore Tersztyanszky ordered that if the retreat continued Corps Szurmay would occupy the sector Wujkowiczy (on the northern Luga)-Chorostow (on the Rylowica), and Corps Csanady the adjacent area as far as the Turya. 10 CD would prevent the enemy from advancing to the Lokaczy area for as long as possible; only after Szurmay had finished retreating would the Division pull back on the Army's southern wing. The Russians didn't pause for long, and strongly assaulted Corps Szurmay, especially 70 Hon ID, at Cholopieczy and Kisielin. GM Bauer extended the left wing of his 10 CD, using Col. Könneritz's attached German Cavalry Brigade to take up a covering position at Wojmica which blocked the road. Under this protection the 70 Hon ID deployed on the line Wujkowiczy-Jakowiczy in the evening, while 11 ID, retreating through Odziutyczy, reached the Chorostow area.

Under X Corps the 2 ID, in reserve, moved to Tumin. When the enemy threatened to outflank 37 Hon ID at Szczuryn, the Honved retreated to Nw. Dwor while suffering only minor losses. 13 LW ID moved back to the area north of the Turya without any enemy interference. During the night parts of both divisions, united with the arriving troops of X German Corps, guarded the sector from Kol. Lezachow through Makowiczy to Nw. Dwor; the area south of the Turya to Chorostow was now defended by GM Ritter von Jemrich's 2 ID.

On the Russian side Kaledin's three southern corps (XXXIX, XL and VIII) reached their assigned goals. Sakharov's right wing was at Zwiniacze in the evening of the 14th.

For the 15th, Linsingen ordered 4th Army to hold the line Lokaczy-Tumin-Czesnowka, and X Corps the line Czesnowka-Nw. Dwor. It was emphasized that on the 16th Tersztyanszky's main body should be

available in the open terrain between the northern Luga and the Rylowica. During the 15th Lüttwitz's X German Corps (19 and 20 ID) completed its deployment north of the Turya. The two Aus-Hung. divisions here shifted to the southern bank - 13 LW ID took up the front between Tumin and Kol. Lezachow from 2 ID, and 37 Hon ID went to Swiczow in the Army's reserve. Szurmay's divisions generally stayed in the areas they'd reached the day before, and the reinforced 10 CD was south of Lokaczy.

The enemy didn't push ahead any further because Brussilov was directing his attention to his opponents' concentration southeast of Kovel, which wasn't concealed from him. He discontinued the pursuit toward Vladimir-Volynsky; instead, Kaledin was supposed to create a strong reserve of at least four divisions to attack toward Kovel on the 17th.⁴¹²

Actions on Linsingen's northern wing

To reinforce GdK Marwitz's group for the counterattack, GdK Bernhardi gave up the German 108 and k.u.k. 29 ID and sent them to the Nw. Dwor-Majdan area. To replace 108 ID, which hitherto had made up the right wing at Witoniez, Division Rusche had to extend its line to this area on the 14th; 89 LW Bde (half of 45 LW ID), which was still attached to Rusche and had been brought up to a strength of 3800 riflemen, would take over the sector Ml. Porsk-Porskaja Wolka. Defense of the strip of land between the Stokhod and Styr was assigned to 41 Hon ID. Increased artillery fire and other evidence indicated that the Russians were preparing to attack between Swidniki and Sokul; to counter this build-up, the relief of 29 ID was postponed until night. The relief had just been finished and the troops were marching away when the enemy broke into the lines of 89 LW Bde shortly after midnight. FML Schön, commanding the north Bohemian 29 ID, had correctly observed that the two Ruthenian Landwehr regiments of this Bde had little combat value; they were over-tired and had been sent into an unfamiliar sector in the darkness. Schön had foreseen that they would be defeated. Therefore on the 15th the IR # 94 was ready to quickly intervene; supported by small parts of IR # 74, the 94th struck the Russians, who had already reached Bol. Porsk, and with a sharp counter-thrust hurled them back and out of the captured position.⁴¹³ II Corps sent their reserves, IR 99, to Kuchary along with Col. Steinitz (the commander of 7 Inf

412Zayontschovsky, p. 37. Klembovsky, pp. 52 ff.

413Schön, "Die 29. ID. am Stochod", pp. 35 ff. "Infanterie-Regiment 94 im Weltkrieg" (Reichenberg, 1929), pp. 475 and 485 ff. Bernhardi, "Denkwürdigkeiten", pp. 434 ff.

Bde); together with the western wing of 41 Hon ID the Regiment also restored the situation at Porskaja Wolka. All the troops stationed by Ml. Porsk were then organized as "Group Steinitz", which was placed under II Corps.

Simultaneously with the assault on 89 LW Bde, the V Sib Corps also sought to advance over the Stokhod on the Kovel highway and farther east, since Kaledin had to first possess the crossing points in order to carry out his assignment.⁴¹⁴ 41 Hon ID was attacked at Mylsk and Sokul; as previously, the Russians were trying to gain the north bank of the Styr at the Godomicze bridge, and to rip apart the restored defensive lines of 4 ID (now led by GM Pfeffer) and 26 LW ID. Meanwhile by evening on the 15th almost all of the troops of II Corps stationed east of Tuman were replaced by men from Corps Fath; the movement took place despite great difficulties and many delays.⁴¹⁵ The enemy made hardly any efforts against Hauer; however, their artillery was active against Group Gronau, especially against their position on the Oginiski Canal.

Brussilov's attempt on the 14th to regain the initiative caused considerable nervousness for the commanders of the Central Powers, who had thus been disturbed in the middle of their final preparations for the counter-offensive. The setbacks to 1st and 4th Armies, however, weren't serious enough to deter GO Linsingen from his firm decision to attack. In order to be closer to the scene of action, he moved his Army Group HQ from Jablon to Kovel.

414Baluiev, p. 59

415"Ehrenbuch der Hesser", Vol. II, p. 122. Wisshaupt, "Die 52. Landwehr Brigade im Weltkrieg", pp. 286 ff.

5. Conferences and decisions of the commanders

a. Negotiations between Conrad and Falkenhayn

As the German presence increased in the area of operations south of the Pripyat, the German OHL also sought to increase their influence on the leadership. Therefore Falkenhayn didn't agree with a suggestion by Conrad (dated 11 June) that the Eastern front should be divided into an "Army Group Volhynia" under GO Linsingen, an "Army Group East Galicia" under GO Böhm-Ermolli (2nd and South Armies), and the 7th Army which would be directly under the k.u.k. high command. On the 12th Falkenhayn proposed, through GM Cramon at Teschen, that GFM Mackensen should take over command of the entire front between the Pripyat and the Romanian border. Conrad, however, turned this down with the remark that "thus the k.u.k. AOK would be limited in deploying and organizing its forces not only upon the Russian front, but also in its dealings with the other theaters of operation; this would make it very difficult to address the current situation on all fronts." Moreover, in Conrad's opinion the employment of one commander, no matter how distinguished, wouldn't be decisive; to overcome the great crisis in the northeast it was necessary that "the greatest possible number of troops should be deployed here."

However, Conrad was also ready to accommodate the wish for increased German influence on the conduct of the fighting, which he did recognize as justified. He proposed "to unite the South and 7th Armies, simultaneously with the arrival of German reinforcements, as an Army Group commanded by GFM Mackensen." In case this suggestion was unacceptable, the Army Group might be commanded by GO Böhm-Ermolli with Seeckt as Chief of Staff.

Falkenhayn on the other hand wasn't satisfied with either of Conrad's counter-proposals; he asserted that if Mackensen didn't receive command over the entire area south of the Pripyat "the recall of the General-Feldmarschall from his activity in the Balkans couldn't be justified." On the 14th, Falkenhayn stated (with regret over Conrad's refusal) that "the only attempt being made to ward off further catastrophes is inadequate - [the appointment of] General von Seeckt." As already related, Seeckt became the primary Chief of Staff of 7th Army on this same day. Thus the question of united command over the Aus-Hung. Eastern front was temporarily shelved, but was by no means settled.

Naturally the atmosphere at Teschen was very depressing around mid-month. FML Ritter von Marterer of the Military Chancellery appeared at HQ on the 13th with a commission from the Emperor to study the causes of the catastrophe and the current situation. GO Conrad didn't hesitate to declare that he had considered the positions on the Eastern front impregnable and that for him the failure of 4th and 7th Armies came as "a complete surprise." However, he also asserted his hope that with the measures already initiated it would be possible to restore the situation as long as the government had "strong nerves and 10 to 14 days of patience." With reference to the general situation, the Chief of Staff didn't neglect to add "that the diplomats should finally gain a clear picture of our goals and methods and that they shouldn't believe it was possible to bring Russia to exhaustion." This appeal to restrict the war aims was directed also at Germany, as Conrad explicitly stated.

On 15 June a deceptive calm had settled over the Eastern front. Between the Pruth and Dniester the Russians had suspended their efforts after the unsuccessful *coup de main* against Czernowitz. North of the Dniester it had been possible - although only after great efforts - to restore a continuous front. In Volhynia Linsingen's divisions were prepared to begin their counterattack on the 16th. However, Conrad remained pessimistic; his foreboding was increased by the hopelessness of further attacks on the plateau of the Sieben Gemeinde and by unsettling reports about the future attitude of Romania.

In his spiritual distress, Conrad turned once again in the evening of 15 June to his Reich-German colleague; he sent Falkenhayn his analysis of the situation with the remark that they were "surely in the greatest crisis of the World War." Conrad believed that the Russians would now seek a decision on the Aus-Hung. front. They wouldn't repeat their error of fall 1914, when Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaievitch had left the Aus-Hung. Army alone after partially defeating it; after the complete overthrow of the k.u.k. Army they would turn against Germany. His conviction was strengthened by reports that Russian forces hitherto north of the Pripyat (V Sib, III and XXXIV Corps) were shifting to the area west of Luck, and that Russian troops were concentrating by Czorktow and Buczacz.

Conrad now suggested to Falkenhayn that in order to cross up the Russians' attempt to win the war, all available units should be sent to the area between the line Brest Litovsk-Rovno on the north and the San and Dniester on the south. The allies themselves should seek to win a decision on the Eastern front

with "a powerful offensive at an appropriate point." For this purpose Conrad wanted to pull two more divisions from the Italian front, but added that "then 300 battalions would be opposing 620 Italian battalions; this is the absolute minimum amount of strength that can prevent an advance by the Italians into the interior of the Monarchy, which also would decide the war."

Falkenhayn wanted to wait to respond to Conrad's telegram until the 16th or 17th, because Linsingen's counter-offensive started on the 16th. The outcome of this operation would clarify the situation and affect the further decisions of the German Chief of Staff.

During the same days when Conrad and Falkenhayn were involved in anxious plans for restoring the situation in the East, the Russian high command was also devising new schemes.

b. A new decision by the Stavka

GdI Evert, the commander of the Russian West Front, had managed to get the Stavka to postpone the start of his main assault on Vilna (which was to be accompanied by a subsidiary operation against Pinsk) until 17 June.⁴¹⁶ For this reason Brussilov, who had constantly demanded that West Front should attack, had ordered Kaledin's 8th Army to thrust toward Kovel on the same day. Meanwhile, however, Evert had brought before the Stavka his reservations about the direction chosen for the offensive; because of the extraordinary counter-measures taken by the Germans he was certain that he would be defeated. However, he was able to advise an attack on Baranowicze, where there was a possibility of success. Here, moreover, it would be easier to cooperate with the Southwest Front, which would soon be able to reach Kovel and Vladimir-Volynsky. However, to prepare the offensive would require two to three weeks.⁴¹⁷

Alexeiev took up this suggestion. He seems to have had little inclination to send West Front into another defeat after the lessons learned in the spring at Lake Narotch. It did seem that the new direction of attack toward Baranowicze, 180 km farther south than the original plan and thus nearer to the operational goals of Southwest Front, would increase the possibilities of success. The prospects of decisively beating the Aus-Hung. Army

416Klembovsky, p. 45

417Broussilov, p. 210. Klembovsky, pp. 51 ff. Zayontschovsky, pp. 32 ff.

west of Luck were constantly decreasing. Up to this time Brussilov had been unable to cross the Stokhod-Styr barrier; resistance was increasing in the half-circle around Luck. The Russian espionage service was well informed about the reinforcements already received by the Central Powers, including the German troops from the French theater of operations and the other units still *en route*.

Therefore the Stavka changed their plans based on the enemy's situation and Evert's suggestion; Lemberg was abandoned as an objective and the decision would again be sought north of the zone of the Pripyat swamps. The decision resulted in Alexeiev's order of 16 June, which called for a unified assault toward the area Brest Litovsk-Kobrin.⁴¹⁸ The West Front would launch its main effort 18 days later, not toward Vilna, but rather on the south bank of the Niemen through Nowogrodek and Baranowicze toward Slonim. To assist Southwest Front, 3rd Army would be reinforced by two corps and would thrust on 19 June through Pinsk to Kobrin-Pruzany. Brussilov would attack through Kovel toward Brest-Litovsk. In particular he was ordered to immediately assemble sufficient forces to widen the area of his offensive and to occupy the Kovel area. Only in this manner would it be possible to bring into motion the corps which had hitherto been pinned down (IV Cavalry, XXX and XLVI). As a supplement, Alexeiev instructed that a new Army of Guard troops was to be formed in the sector of West Front and placed under its command in order to add more strength to the offensive toward Kobrin-Pruzany.

Evert began to regroup his units for the attack on Baranowicze, which he would entrust to the commander of 4th Army, General Ragosa, who was particularly eager to attack. Meanwhile, however, Brussilov was severely disappointed by the Stavka's order. On the 17th he phoned Alexeiev and sought to have him approach the Tsar with a request "that Evert should immediately order an offensive in the area where he had been making preparations for such a long time."⁴¹⁹ Alexeiev refused on the grounds that it would be impossible to alter the instructions already issued by the Tsar. On the 18th Brussilov wrote to the Tsar's Chief of Staff that "The troops don't understand the silence of the other Fronts, and speak harshly about this fact." He also depicted the overall prospects of Southwest Front in a negative fashion.⁴²⁰ His successes to date would lead at best to

418Klembovsky, p. 52

419Broussilov, p. 210

420Klembovsky, Appendix 6

a tactical victory, but couldn't possibly influence the outcome of the war if his neighbors remained totally inactive. Evert's offensive had been postponed until such a late date (it wouldn't start until 29 June) that it would provide no help to Southwest Front. By that time Brussilov might be defeated by his opponents, who'd be able to direct all their reserves against him. Finally he asked for ammunition. Alexeiev did promise to send ammunition as well as two corps (I and I Turkestan) as reinforcements; otherwise he remained deaf to Brussilov's complaints.⁴²¹ Actually the Stavka's orders of the 16th didn't provide a new goal for Southwest Front, since neither Brussilov nor the commander of 8th Army (Kaledin) had ever shifted their gaze away from the Kovel area.

D. The Counter-Offensive of the Central Powers

1. Initial successes in Volhynia on 16 June

The plan

GO Linsingen issued the following order on the 15th:

"The Army Group attacks on 16 June on the entire front from the left wing of the k.u.k. 1st Army through Kolki on the Styr. Main effort between the line northern Luga-Korczeska and the line Kol. Ostrow (6 km east of Nw. Dwor)-Ulaniki.

The right wing of 1st Army holds the position currently occupied, with a firm connection to the left wing of 2nd Army; left wing of 1st Army (7 ID) advances in the direction Dubowyja-Korczy. Left flank guarded by Group Khayll. 61 ID (with divisional HQ at Gorochow) will be placed under 1st Army and attacks in the direction of Bludow.

Cavalry Corps Ostermuth (7 and 4 CD) advances in the direction of Watyn, throws back the enemy cavalry it finds ahead of its front, and along with 10 CD hinders any enemy march south of the Korczeska. 10 CD with [Könneritz's] German Cav Bde opens the front for 4th Army and thrusts south of the northern Luga in the direction of Szelwow. If beset by the enemy, the cavalry divisions go back step by step. The task of Cavalry Corps Ostermuth would then be to

⁴²¹Baluiev, p. 76. Klembovsky, pp. 54 and 56. Zayontschovsky, p. 38

secure the left flank of 1st Army (61 ID). The task of the reinforced 10 CD would be to secure the southern flank of 4th Army. The junction between the Armies is to be continuously maintained.

4th Army advances east with the main body between the northern Luga and the Ryłowica. Weaker units maintain contact with the right wing of GdK von der Marwitz's spearhead, advancing on the Turya.

GdK von der Marwitz's Group (German X Corps, 108 ID and k.u.k. 29 ID minus a regiment⁴²²) attacks with the right wing on the Turya, with the left wing over the line Kol. Ostrow (6 km northeast of Nw. Dwor)-Wiczyny-Kol. Kutry-Ulaniki, and with a strong echelon behind the left wing.

Group Bernhardi attacks the enemy in front of their line. The right wing keeps pace with the left wing of Marwitz's spearhead so as to secure the latter's left flank. When the advance begins the 2 Gd Cav Bde is sent behind the front toward Vladimir-Volynsky; on the 17th they will join 9 CD. [The latter Division was heading by train from Lake Narotch to Kovel.]

4th Army and Marwitz's Group crosses the line Wujkowiczy-Chorostow-Kol. Lezachow-Makowiczy-Ostrow at 9:00 AM. The offensive begins along the other fronts at the same time."

Thus, as the current situation made necessary, GO Linsingen had decided to make a concentric assault with his main body on the enemy units west of the Styr River, deployed in a half circle around Luck. The Army Group's northern wing (from Corps Fath to Group Gronau) would remain in their permanent positions. The allies hoped through this counter-offensive to make good the defeat suffered in the first half of the month and to change the direction of the campaign in Volhynia as they were so eagerly expecting. Stimulating appeals were addressed to the troops' sense of honor and confidence. Between the attacking group of 1st Army and Group Bernhardi (*i.e.* not counting the k.u.k. II Corps) Linsingen had 12 ½ divisions, 4 of which were German; six of the divisions had recently joined him although two (Rusche's and the 29th) had already been drawn into combat before the 16th. Since Brussilov had brought XXIII Corps (20 and 53 ID) up through

422Actually 29 ID at the time had just two regiments (IR 74 and 92); IR 42 had stayed with 1st Army, and IR 94 was detained at Ml. Porsk.

Luck as a fresh reserve, the Russians had 12 divisions to oppose Linsingen. With the exception of XXIII Corps, all the Russian units had already fought in the battle, but their spirits were greatly raised by their successes to date. The Aus-Hung. 4th Army, on the other hand, had been badly damaged during the costly retreat. Their human losses hadn't been fully replaced (both corps together had just 28,000 riflemen), although the strength of their artillery had increased to 218 guns.

Actually Linsingen would soon be able to count on 14 ½ divisions, because Falkenhayn - as he reported to Teschen on the 14th - was sending two more German divisions (11 Bavarian and 43 Res ID) from the French theater of operations. Even so, the balance of forces wouldn't be substantially altered in favor of the allies, since the Russians had much larger reserves available on their North and Northwest Fronts. Finally it shouldn't be forgotten that a Russian division still contained 16 battalions; the average strength of an Aus-Hung. division was just 12, and of a German division just 9, battalions.

Thus the Central Powers didn't have a numerical advantage in the upcoming trial of strength. (It seems that at first the high command in Teschen wasn't aware of the arrival of XXIII Russian Corps.) Only superior leadership and better morale could turn the scales.

Setbacks to Puhallo's 1st Army

The blow which 1st Army had suffered on 15 June forced the majority of Puhallo's troops on the 16th to continue the retreat they had already initiated, even though this was the first day of the offensive by Army Group Linsingen. XVIII Corps in conjunction with their neighbor on the right - Group Kosak - fell back to a prepared position on the Austro-Russian border and dug in behind the western bank of the Siestratyn between Radziwilow and Korsow. The adjacent 46 LW ID moved through Redkow to reach the lower course of the Plaszewka, and set up a line by Ostrow. The defeat on the day before had cost substantial casualties: 10,500 men. Also 4 field and 2 trench guns of older models had been lost.⁴²³ The attackers, who'd also suffered significant casualties, didn't disturb the retreat; they followed us only with their usual caution over the Sitenka. Some Cossacks rode into Radziwilow.⁴²⁴

Meanwhile Puhallo's left wing began to attack as ordered. GM Baumgartner's 7 ID, which had received IR # 42 from 46 LW ID as a reserve, captured the row of hills north of the Lipa and held them despite all enemy counterattacks. 61 ID worked their way forward for about 6 km. Then, however, their right wing was enveloped at Zwiniacze, suffering moderate casualties, and the enemy exerted strong pressure against other parts of the front. After darkness fell the Division had to give up all the terrain that had cost so much to win and returned to their starting position (Choloniew-Bozew-Jeziery). Thus the two attacking divisions hadn't achieved their goals - to push toward the north (7 ID) and northeast (61 ID) and to join hands around Gubin.

The cavalry units between 1st and 4th Armies were also supposed to attack according to Linsingen's order. This, however, proved impossible. Russian horsemen from Koniuchy, reinforced by infantry, inserted themselves between Corps Ostermuth and GM Bauer's 10 CD, and pushed apart the inner wings of these mounted formations (which anyway hadn't been firmly joined together). Communications between Ostermuth and Bauer had never been successfully established or maintained, which hindered quick

42325 ID (including IR 85 plus two cavalry rifle bns from 7 CD and one from the Lst Huss Bde) had lost 7000 men; 1 Lst Inf Bde had lost 500, and 46 LW ID about 3000. According to Russian sources, they took 112 officers and 5000 men prisoner along with 5 guns. (Ryedkin-Rymashevsky, p. 29; Giltshevsky, p. 97.)

424Giltshevsky, p. 108. Cherkasov, p. 171.

cooperation between the two commanders.

10 CD, which had to secure an extended area, used one of its regiments to open the approaches to Markowiczy for Corps Szurmay; only after Szurmay's advance relieved the horsemen on the northern Luga was GM Bauer able to finally reinforce his right wing north of Rykowiczy with Könnertitz's German Cavalry Brigade, which became available at Wojmica. Bauer was only able to hold onto Zagorow with difficulty. Similarly Ostermuth had to restrict his efforts to holding the line Jeziercy-Kolpitolow and the heights on the southern Luga as far as Bielopol. To aid the cavalry in their work, in the evening GO Linsingen assigned GM von Heuduck's 9 German CD (which was arriving through Vladimir-Volynsky) to 4th Army and ordered this unit to advance toward Rykowiczy on the 17th. Könnertitz's Brigade and the 2 Gd Cav Bde (which had been released by Bernhardt) were attached to 9 CD⁴²⁵, which in conjunction with the k.u.k. 10 CD was to protect the south flank of 4th Army and maintain contact with Ostermuth's Cavalry Corps.

Actions in the center of the Army Group

On the 16th the developments in the center of Army Group Linsingen (4th Army and Group Marwitz) seemed more promising. Meeting relatively light opposition from the enemy, 4th Army gained 8 to 10 km of ground toward the east; in the evening the 70 Hon ID, 11 ID (now led by GM Edl. von Obauer), 2 ID and 13 LW ID were on the line Markowiczy-Rudnia.⁴²⁶ The Army's reserve (37 Hon ID) shifted south behind Corps Szurmay to the Berezowiczy area. Thunder storms made conditions difficult for the troops as they advanced through terrain covered with woods and swamps. The left wing of Marwitz's spearhead group at first had to defend their bridgehead position at Kol. Ostrow during the night, with 2 Gd Cav Bde and parts of 108 ID against 125 ID of the Russian XXXIX Corps; during the day the X German Corps pushed the enemy back about 7 km to the line Rudnia-Twerdyni-Osmigowiczy, where the action grew hot. 108 ID crossed the Stokhod toward the southeast and stormed Babie; behind them 29 ID stayed north of the river as a reserve.

425Thus the German 9 CD reached a strength of 4 brigades (9 mounted regiments), with a total of 34 squadrons and a horse artillery battery.

426TRANSLATOR's NOTE - Confusingly, the village of Markowiczy lay in the sector of 70 Hon ID while Makowiczy was nearby but farther north, in the sector of X German Corps.

Bernhardi was to attack with Division Rusche over the Stokhod on both sides of the road to Perespa; he expected worth-while help from the k.u.k. II Corps if Group Steinitz, as well as 41 Hon ID (which was already on the southern bank), thrust from the line Ml. Porsk-Mylsk toward the south. But the efforts of the allies were in vain because they collided with Kaledin's own stubborn attempt to break open the way to Kovel with V Sib Corps by establishing a strong foothold on the north bank of the Stokhod. In the evening the advanced position of Division Rusche on the highway was even lost, and Bernhardi was only able to hold the line of the river with difficulty.⁴²⁷

Thus the result of the fighting on this day was hardly satisfactory, and demonstrated that a lengthy and bitter struggle lay ahead before the stubborn enemy could be checked in their victorious course and before we could hope for a successful outcome to the campaign that was being initiated. The k.u.k. high command also exhorted the commanders of the 1st, 2nd and 7th Armies: "In order by committing further units to not only restore the entire situation, but to achieve a positive success, it is necessary that officers and men exert all efforts to hold the battle fronts currently occupied. They should not pull back because of local enemy successes or even because of operational considerations."

2. The allied attack continues, 17 June to the morning of 19 June

1st Army

Linsingen let the attack proceed on the 17th. The orders of the day before remained in effect for 1st Army. An intercepted radio message had again given us a glimpse into the enemy's dispositions: Sakharov ordered XXXII and XVII Corps to move their leading units west toward Brody and Suchowola, and thus over the current Aus-Hung. line⁴²⁸; thus 1st and 2nd Armies were able to arm their inner wings against this threat. GO Puhallo transferred the troops recently sent to his aid from the neighboring Army (the two battalions of IR # 85 plus two batteries) to Brody; moreover, XVIII Corps deployed their reserve of three battalions behind the endangered wing of GM Edl. von Severus' 1 Lst Inf Bde. On the next day the Landsturm soldiers, supported by Group Kosak, were in fact able to repulse Russian attacks south of Radziwilow.

427Bernhardi, "Denkwürdigkeiten", p. 435

428Cherkasov, pp. 170 ff.

The situation of 46 LW ID was more serious, because in the evening of the 17th the Russians attacked the Division on the front between Korsow and Ostrow, which had no natural protection, and drove them back through Redkow. It was possible to take measures against the enemy pressure on the 18th by committing reserves; however, 1st Army HQ felt compelled to call back 7 ID, which had already advanced five kilometers north of the Luga. As ordered, GM Baumgartner left just some security outposts on the northern bank, and assembled his main body by Smolowa and Beresteczko. Thus on the next day a force would be available in case 46 LW ID should need them to help with a relief thrust to the southeast.

The northern wing of 1st Army was generally not favored with good fortune. On the 17th Linsingen criticized the withdrawal of 61 ID on the day before as "incomprehensible", since the Division along with Corps Ostermuth wasn't outnumbered by the widely deployed left wing of VIII Russian Corps. Therefore in the afternoon Puhallo had both units advance once more.

The cooperation and achievements of the cavalry units between 1st and 4th Armies didn't fully meet desires and expectations. Ostermuth's advance took place separately from Bauer's, and *vice versa*. GO Tersztyanszky, who had a cavalry background himself, finally appealed personally to Puhallo, asking him to have Ostermuth set to work with more energy.⁴²⁹ Similarly, GM Bauer received a demand to intervene "with ruthless energy in the leadership of the cavalry" and to exert all his efforts so that Corps Szurmay "could move forward in echelon." Linsingen ordered in the evening that Ostermuth should attack the next day with all his strength toward Watyn, while Bauer attacked toward Wojnin and Szelwow.

After advancing, the 61 ID once again had reached a line between Zwiniacze and the southern edge of Pustomyty by evening. On their left, Ostermuth had also moved forward, but in the afternoon already had to once more give up Korytnica and Swiniuchy. The town of Koniuchy, hitherto held by Aus-Hung. troops, was now occupied by the German 9 CD. Soon 61 ID was assaulted by superior forces (according to an exaggerated

⁴²⁹The Cavalry Corps, which was covering a front 12 km wide, hardly had the necessary strength to mount a real attack. Their rifle battalions had stayed with 1st and 2nd Armies, and the total of their dismounted horsemen was only equivalent to two battalions at most.

estimate the Russians had 20 to 25 battalions and the same number of batteries), suffered heavy casualties, and in the evening was forced to retreat to the Bezimiennaja. Thereupon Ostermuth was ordered by 1st Army HQ to take his entire force back to the area west of Gorochow; from here they could hinder the enemy drive against the 61 ID by intervening on the flank, and could block the way to Sokal. In the next morning the 61 ID, reduced to 3000 riflemen, took up a position behind the Bezimiennaja from Choloniew to Mirkow; some Russians pursuing from Gorochow were hurled back. Under Corps Ostermuth the 4 CD assembled around Podberezie, 7 CD around Pieczochwosty.

Army Group HQ was now concerned that the enemy might overrun the thin line of 7 ID north of the Lipa and then fall on the rear of 46 LW ID. GO Linsingen therefore demanded that the front of 7 ID should be strengthened so that they could hold out under any circumstances and there would be no chance that 46 LW ID might be rolled up from the north. 61 ID and Ostermuth had to cover the arrival by train of new troops in the area Stojanow-Sokal and their march to the Strib.

4th Army

The 17th of June was quite eventful for 4th Army. A battalion guarding the flank of 70 Hon ID on the southern bank of the Luga took Kozlow in the morning. Corps Szurmay attacked through Markowiczy east toward Kol. Dubrowa. X Corps advanced to an adjacent line as far as Cholopieczy. Linsingen asserted that the Army was opposed by just a "weaker" enemy, and demanded a ruthless advance against the southern flank of the Russians who were holding on in front of Group Marwitz. At noon, however, Kozlow had to be given up, and soon the southern wing of 70 Hon ID at Markowiczy was threatened; therefore 74 Hon Inf Bde of the Army's reserve was sent to Lokaczy. Shortly thereafter the remaining half of 37 Hon ID had to be deployed behind X Corps, because counterattacks by the Russian 14 ID and 4 Rif Div led to several setbacks along the Army's entire front up to Cholopieczy. Linsingen again insisted that 4th Army's narrow front was just dealing with smaller enemy forces; he expected not only that the Russian thrusts would be halted, but that further ground would be gained. The Corps' reserves had just restored the situation when in the evening 13 LW ID was defeated, suffering heavy losses and falling into sad confusion.

On the 18th GM Bauer, who had waited the day before for the arrival of 9 German CD which had been placed under his command, advanced with his group through the low ground along the Lugi

Brook to Koniuchy and Kremasz, and toward Tworeniczy. FML Szurmay succeeded, despite all enemy opposition, in making progress north of the Luga with GM Goldbach's 70 Hon ID; besides several hundred prisoners a battery was captured, although just one gun was hauled away intact. During the night FML Csanady had ordered X Corps to assist the distressed 13 LW ID once more with 73 Hon Inf Bde. After reaching their old position, the completely exhausted and badly weakened Viennese Landwehr Division was pulled back behind the front as the Army's reserve; the entire 37 Hon ID took their place. Early on the 19th the 70 Hon ID had once more pulled back to its starting points of the day before, just east of Markowicz. FML Szurmay was informed by Army HQ that he would have to hold on using his own resources, since 13 LW ID couldn't be counted on to help in its current condition.

On getting a report that the northern group of 1st Army had been forced to pull back considerably, Linsingen had already ordered in the night of 18-19 June that Bauer's cavalry group should move to the southeast to prevent a further enemy advance. At this time, however, GM Bauer found himself pinned down by Russian units of equal strength; because of the situation of 70 Hon ID he couldn't weaken his front on the 19th. Therefore to support Ostermuth the 2 Gd Cav Bde, which had been held back temporarily behind X Corps on the 18th as a last reserve, was shifted to the extreme right wing.

Group Marwitz

The right wing of Group Marwitz encountered stubborn resistance from the rifle regiments of XL Russian Corps in strong positions west of Kisielin; by the evening of the 18th the German 20 ID could gain just a small amount of ground toward Cholopiecz and Kisielin in heavy fighting.⁴³⁰ The center and left wing of the German spearhead was more successful. 19 ID was at Siniawka; on the other side of the Stokhod their northern wing, in cooperation with 108 ID, pushed the enemy XXXIX Corps back through Woronczyn and Trysten.⁴³¹ On the next day the course of the offensive was supposed to continue toward Beresk and Wiczyny, to expel the Russians from their position in front of Kisielin. The k.u.k. 29 ID, which had deployed directly to the left of 108 ID on the 17th, stormed Szczuryn and on the 18th pushed through Jasienowka

430Sobbe, "Geschichte des Braunschweigischen Infanterie-Regiments Nr. 92 im Weltkriege 1914-1918" (Berlin, 1929), pp. 275 ff.

431Harms, "Geschichte des Oldenburgischen Infanterie-Regiments Nr. 91" (Berlin-Oldenburg, 1930), pp. 227 ff.

to Rajmiesto; they also sought to work their way to the northeast in support of Bernhardi.⁴³² One battalion of 29 ID was attached to their neighbor, Division Rusche on Bernhardi's right; Rusche recovered the lost strong points on the northern bank of the Stokhod and between the two arms of the river on the highway.⁴³³

The constant German pressure forced the Russians to support their front on the Stokhod, and in particular XXXIX Corps, with V Cavalry Corps (11 CD and 3 Orenburg Coss Div) and with parts of 4 Finn Rifle Div. Brussilov placed XXIII Corps under 8th Army.⁴³⁴

3. Actions of the stationary north wing of Army Group Linsingen (16 June to the morning of 19 June)

16-17 June

Linsingen's order of 16 June for the offensive provided for the cooperation of all of Group Bernhardi, and even of the adjacent wing of Corps Fath; most of Fath's troops, as well as Corps Hauer and Group Gronau, would continue to hold their permanent positions.⁴³⁵ At this time, however, Kaledin wanted to force his way over the Stokhod with V Sib Corps, and on the 16th also sent XXX Corps to attack the line of the Styr between Kolki and Borowicy. Therefore Bernhardi and the Aus-Hung. generals on the Styr front lost their freedom of operation; here they were forced onto the defensive for the foreseeable future. During the 16th the Russians made substantial progress on the northern bank of the river toward the junction of Kaiser's and Fath's Corps. Their artillery unleashed a storm of shells on the neighboring 52 LW Bde east of Tuman, and also harassed Fath's and Gronau's lines.

Around midnight of 17 June the inner wings of Kaiser's and Fath's Corps (4 ID and 52 LW Bde) were pushed in. The reserve unit of 4 ID, the Lower Austrian IR # 49, was immediately sent to counter-attack.⁴³⁶ This made the situation of both corps more difficult, since neither of them had any other reserve troops on hand. On

432Schön, "Die 29. ID am Stochod", pp. 40 ff. "IR 94 im Weltkrieg", pp. 476 and 501 ff.

433"IR 94 im Weltkrieg", pp. 495 ff. Bernhardi, "Denkwürdigkeiten", p. 436

434Baluiev, pp. 63 ff.

435TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - In these chapters the phrase "permanent positions" (*Dauer-stellungen*) refers to the lines which had been held since fall 1915.

436"Ehrenbuch der Hesser", Vol. II, pp. 122 ff.

the day before, II Corps had shifted their strength to the western wing to support Division Rusche, where IR # 99 of 4 ID was stationed in Group Steinitz. For the time being just one battalion of the 99th could be set in motion to the threatened wing. In Corps Fath the sector reserves which had been available near the point of the Russian advance had already been used up during the night of confusing fighting.⁴³⁷ However, the enemy remained completely inactive in front of Cavalry Corps Hauer, which thus could help out with their mounted reserve; they started in the morning by sending four squadrons from Maniewiczzy [Maniewcize] toward the south. Meanwhile the already weakened troops which had been thrown together on Fath's right wing (16 companies)⁴³⁸ strove in vain to win back the old trenches in terrain covered with woods and swamps. 4 ID also had to give up its central position (at Borowicy) and drew back their entire front from Nawoz in the direction of the bend in the Stokhod east of Ugly; 52 LW Bde east of Tuman built a switch position toward the north. The Russians spread out into the Tuman-Gruziatyn area.

Therefore GdK Bernhardi informed II Corps that on the 17th he was stopping the attacks which had started the day before in the sector between the Stokhod and Styr, and pulling units back into reserve; his artillery would check any Russian thrusts. Army Group HQ ordered II Corps to use all the reserve troops to throw the enemy at Gruziatyn back over the Styr. Fath was supposed to provide powerful help, and Hauer to send all available troops to his neighbor on the right. During the day Hauer did send Fath two Polish Legion battalions, eight squadrons and a battery, all under Col. von Janky. Two more Polish battalions came behind the left wing of 53 ID. II Corps wanted to pull all the detachments of 4 and 29 ID from Steinitz's sector; to relieve them 41 Hon ID would stretch their line to the west. However, since enemy assaults in the land between the Stokhod and Styr had to be repulsed all through the day, only some parts of IR # 99 had been relieved by evening.

By the time darkness fell GM Pfeffer's 4 ID, with help from the battalions which had been committed from the Corps' reserve, was able to push the enemy back through Gruziatyn. Corps Fath had prevented any further Russian advance; with Group Janky they had

437Wisshaupt, "Die 52. Landwehr-Brigade im Weltkrieg", pp. 386 ff.

438The units were led by Col. Hospodarz of IR 8; from 4 ID there were two weak battalions of IR 8 and two and a half of IR 49; some small groups were from 52 LW Bde.

blocked the paths that led into the rear of the bend in the Styr at Czartorijsk. However, Janky's men were only in loose contact with 52 LW Bde (to their left) and hadn't yet made contact with 4 ID (to their right). Thus the situation at Tuman remained very precarious overnight.

Since the troops in this area were under great strain after almost two weeks of fighting, GdI Fath and FML Kaiser requested fresh units so they could be sure of holding the front; however, neither Bernhardi nor Linsingen could help them. Linsingen forwarded the reports of both corps commanders to the high command at Teschen; he also alluded to the limited effectiveness of 4th Army and to the defeat of 61 ID. Despite the employment of seven German divisions, he said, he couldn't carry out his mission unless he quickly received fresh Aus-Hung. troops. Conrad responded that for the moment no reinforcements were available; holding the bend in the Styr wasn't as important as the offensive farther west. If necessary units could be found by pulling back from the Styr to a position on the Stokhod.

18-19 June

For the 18th, Linsingen ordered both k.u.k. corps commanders to employ all their units simultaneously rather than carry out isolated advances; they were supposed to completely throw the enemy back over the Styr. The divisions of the Russian XXX and XLVI Corps had already been defeated several times, so it should be possible to handle them, especially since this was a purely defensive action and parts of the Aus-Hung. positions were strong. To ensure that the new counterattack succeeded, the units which would stay in place on the Styr front should also exert a maximum effort as required by the overall situation.

The enemy meanwhile was striving to expand the area they occupied on the northern bank. 12 battalions were transferred from XLVI to XXX Corps.⁴³⁹ On the 18th Russian artillery hammered the opposing front between Siemki and Tuman, and for a while also the sector as far as Gruziatyn. Russian infantry repeatedly attacked between Kopyli and Tuman. Therefore GdI Fath had to withhold his right wing from the planned counterattack, even though he had made LW IR # 11 available by extending the line of 53 ID; the 52 LW Bde and Group Janky would defend against the enemy. During the day Col. Janky, whose Group received a mounted regiment from GdK Hauer, was able to establish a firm junction with II Corps. To support the neighboring corps, 4 ID had meanwhile assembled on their left wing a group of nine companies along with several batteries; the reduced size of the Division made it necessary to rely on some very small units.

Early in the morning of the 19th, the enemy furiously attacked the western wing of Corps Fath. Hauer helped again by sending the last available Polish battalions, along with the HQ of the 2nd Brigade of the Polish Legion (under Col. Küttner), to Fath. FML Smekal, who'd returned from 4th Army, was given the staff of 45 LW ID (no longer needed by Bernhardt); he took command over the sector of 52 LW Bde. Before counterattacking, Smekal intended to restore order to the confusingly intermingled units and to bring up the detached 89 LW Bde. Therefore GdI Fath postponed the counterattack until 20 June.

The Russian plans for the attack on Pinsk, which originally was supposed to start on the 17th and then on the 19th, were already affecting Group Gronau; on the 17th the enemy tried in vain to set foot on the western bank of the Wiesolucha. On the 18th the Russian artillery directed heavy fire on the positions of 81 Res

439Baluiev, p. 63

ID on the Jasiolda and the Oginski Canal; the next day the fire increased for a while to the intensity of a barrage. Linsingen asked that Woyrsch's Army, his neighbor to the north, should have reserves ready behind their right wing.⁴⁴⁰

4. Linsingen's altered plan of attack, and actions through 20 June

The plans

The three days of Linsingen's offensive hadn't led to any impressive result. The weak northern wing of 1st Army, whose divisions had thrust ahead in isolation without any overall leadership, had suffered substantial casualties and pulled back behind their starting positions of the 16th. The 4th Army was forced back onto the defensive. Marwitz's spearhead hadn't, as hoped, struck a sensitive enemy flank while the Russian main body was aiming at Kovel; instead they encountered a stubbornly defended front. Bernhardi's right wing had only been able to hold onto the line of the Stokhod, and hadn't been able to join in the advance of their neighbors farther to the right. However, now it seemed that this might still come to pass, since Marwitz's center and left wing were wheeling toward the southeast, and Rusche's Division had crossed the Stokhod bridges over the southern arm of the river. The Aus-Hung. corps on the Styr and Group Gronau continued to be busy defending against the enemy.

Both of the German divisions sent as reinforcements arrived on time and in places there they were most needed - GM von Runckel's 43 Res ID behind Puhallo's left wing and G.Lt Ritt. von Kneussl's 11 Bav ID with Bernhardi. Thus GO Linsingen could add to the striking power of both of the groups on the edge of the attack, neither of which had hitherto gained a meaningful advantage; the plan for a concentric attack toward Luck was enhanced. On the 19th Linsingen decided to organize the units between 1st and 4th Armies as a new attack group commanded by the Prussian GdK Eugen von Falkenhayn⁴⁴¹, and to have them strike in a northeastern direction toward Luck. Marwitz would continue to attack with his right wing toward Zaturcy, while Bernhardi thrust from the line Porskaja Wolka-Mylsk toward Perespa. The 1st and 4th Armies, as well as Bernhardi's remaining units, would at first hold their

440Vogel, pp. 33 ff.

441GdK Falkenhayn, a brother of the German Chief of the General Staff, had hitherto led the XXII Res Corps on the Western Front.

positions but later would join the advance of the attacking groups. By the 21st Falkenhayn was to have his troops (43 Res ID, 61 ID, Cavalry Corps Ostermuth, German 9 CD) ready so that the infantry could break through with their right wing through Oszczew and their left through Korytnica; Ostermuth would cover the infantry's right flank, and GM Heuduck (of 9 CD) the left. Until Falkenhayn arrived, GM Runckel would make the necessary arrangements. Bernhardi, to whom 11 Bav ID was assigned, was to also be ready on the 21st.

It was clear to GO Conrad that the new attacking group, striking in the direction Stojanow-Luck, was still relatively weak and hardly likely to succeed. On the 19th he sent a wire to GdI Falkenhayn: "Unless new units aren't committed at once in the direction Stojanow-Sokal, overwhelming Russian pressure in this sector toward Lemberg could make the entire east Galician front untenable." For the moment the "most" he could do as a counter-measure was to immediately send the k.u.k. 48 ID, which was coming from south Tyrol to join South Army, farther on to 1st Army through Lemberg and Kamionka-Strumilowa. Conrad estimated enemy strength in the Gorochow area as two divisions plus a strong force of cavalry, and that they would probably be joined by XXIII Russian Corps, whose presence had been betrayed by a radio message on the 18th. GdI Falkenhayn agreed with this measure of his Aus-Hung. colleague; he believed that the new group could at least halt the enemy and pin down so many units that Linsingen's thrust from the northeast would be easier. If this thrust was successful, any danger to the front east of Lemberg would dissipate.

Linsingen's new order went out to his subordinate commanders before noon on the 19th. Meanwhile the situation of 1st Army's 46 LW ID had improved so much that intervention by 7 ID through Beresteczko was no longer necessary. Therefore the 7 ID left just one regiment in this area, and took up a defensive position on the southern bank of the Lipa; scouting detachments and outposts were once again placed on the other side of the river. Since Group Khayll was too weak to guard the right (eastern) flank of 61 ID, the 7 CD was sent behind this wing. 4 CD covered the left wing of 61 ID and was joined at Dereczyn to the German 9 CD. Since both of Ostermuth's divisions had been given separate assignments, his Corps command was abolished on the next day. The German 43 Res ID detrained at Sokal and began to march to the upper reaches of the Strib.

As FML Gabriel's 48 ID arrived on the 20th in the Radziechow-Stojanow area, Linsingen immediately sent them to reinforce Group

Falkenhayn; therefore the Group's attack was postponed by one day (from the 21st to the 22nd). However, Falkenhayn wouldn't wait for all elements of the new unit to be present, but would assemble the parts of the Division that arrived later as a reserve behind his right wing. The enemy in front of 1st Army was digging in.

The actions

On the 19th the thinned ranks of 4th Army held their ground against all further Russian blows. The southern wing of Group Marwitz wrested Kisielin from the enemy, while the rest of their front fought ahead only with difficulty and didn't reach their objectives (Beresk and Wiczyny). 29 ID was pinned down in front of Niemir, and only their left wing a little farther north advanced somewhat. However, Army Group HQ concluded, based on fires which were raging in the area east of Kisielin and on reports from air reconnaissance, that despite the Russians' stubborn resistance to Marwitz and 4th Army they were planning to retreat to a position which had been built approximately from Perespa through Torczyn and Szklin to Michajlowka. The corps were therefore advised to watch carefully, so that they'd be able if necessary to immediately start a pursuit. On the other hand, air observers also reported that troops continued to arrive at Luck and from there were marching to the west and southwest. Lively train traffic from the rail junction at Luniniec on the line toward the south, which had already been noted for days, signified that new reinforcements were on their way.

At first the enemy continued to mostly stand fast on the 20th. The center of Group Marwitz was still bogged down in front of Studyny, Beresk and Wiczyny; 29 ID waited for the arrival of their detachments which had been released by Bernhardt, so that they could advance around Niemir on the 21st with stronger forces. Meanwhile it was learned through an intercepted radio message that the HQ of XL Russian Corps was moving back. Linsingen now believed that the enemy front west of Zaturcy was turning brittle. Marwitz and 4th Army were to push ahead without halting.

The inner wings of GM Haber's 37 Hon ID and of 20 German ID were in fact able to capture Cholopieczy; by evening they threw the enemy back to the line Semerynki-Zaturcy. Marwitz intended to thrust ahead to Zaturcy on the next day. The altered situation now demanded that the 4th Army should intervene decisively in the fighting. On the next day the northern wing of X Corps was supposed to keep pace with their German neighbors without fail; south of the Luga valley 10 CD, reinforced by some infantry from 70 Hon ID, would accompany Szurmay's attack.

GdK Bernhardt intended that the thrust he had been instructed to mount on the 21st between Porskaja Wolka and Mylsk should be a breakthrough; therefore he was assembling many guns and trench mortars. During the 19th the 11 Bav ID took over the line as far

as a point east of Mylsk, freeing up a regiment of 41 Hon ID. The right wing of the Honved Division, along with the combined heavy batteries of II Corps, would support the Bavarians.⁴⁴² 89 LW Bde, stationed west of Porskaja Wolka, came under the control of GM Rusche; the battalions of 29 ID, as well as Col. Steinitz with IR # 99, returned to their own divisions.

The enemy prevented Division Rusche from crossing the road and railway bridges over the Stokhod in front of Swidniki; in the afternoon they launched their own new attack between Gruziatyn and Tuman. Deeply deployed waves of attackers from the Russian 71 ID and a brigade of 4 Finn Rif Div assaulted 4 ID and Fath's western wing until late in the night. In the early morning hours of the 20th the 4 ID was pushed back at Gruziatyn; the few companies stationed in reserve weren't able to stand up to the pressure. GM Pfeffer had to bring his troops back to the northwest while staying in touch with the prepared switch position between Nawoz and Ugly. Once again a wide gap developed between 4 ID and Corps Fath. Here the determined Col. Janky, aided by the timely arrival of a battalion from the Corps reserve, was able to overcome all the crises which beset the flank and center of his group until Fath's extreme west wing was able to bend back at a right angle toward the north and was reinforced by three battalions under Col. Küttner.⁴⁴³

Linsingen ordered that the enemy should be driven back over the Styr. II Corps, whose main effort would still be made on the right because of Bernhardi's preparations to attack, would now have to also remain strong on the left. Immediately after the defeat of 4 ID, Col. Steinitz had been sent toward the scene with IR # 99; he was followed by a battalion from Hon IR # 31. Now four batteries were also sent. While 41 Hon ID secured the flank position from Nawoz toward Ugly, the entire 4 ID, reinforced by Hon IR # 31 and half a battalion of the Polish Legion, would counterattack from the area of Ugly toward Gruziatyn with a total of ten battalions. Fath's bent-back wing would join the attack as it developed. A wild battle developed around Gruziatyn until late in the evening, when the attackers established a cohesive front along the southern edge of the flaming village. 4 ID and the neighboring groups to the left would continue their operation

442Bernhardi, "Denkwürdigkeiten", pp. 436 ff.

443Col. Gotthard Janky von Bulcs, the commander of HR # 4, received the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order for the initiative he displayed while leading his group during these days. See also Wisshaupt, "Die 52. Landwehr-Brigade im Weltkrieg", pp. 391 ff.

on the following day.⁴⁴⁴

As previously, the enemy remained inactive at the bend in the Styr at Czartorijsk, and in front of Hauer's Cavalry Corps. The northern wing of Group Gronau was ready for the Russians to attack. In the afternoon of the 19th they did make a massed assault on 81 Res ID, but it was broken up by the German defenders.⁴⁴⁵ Strong Russian artillery fire against the parts of the front that had been unsuccessfully attacked continued during the night and, with hardly a break, also on 20 June.

5. The fighting in Bukovina and east Galicia through 20 June

a. The loss of Czernowitz, 16-18 June

At the same time when the allied high commands were preparing to change their fortune in Volhynia through Linsingen's counter-offensive, they were deluged by new reports of misfortune from 7th Army. On 16 June, six days after the breakthrough at Okna, Russian cavalry regiments attacked FML Hadfy's Group at Dzurkow. Fighting also developed at Harasimow and Gwozdziec. After pausing for too long, GdI Letschitzky was trying to break through to the west between the Pruth and Dniester with the Caucasian Native Cav Div and III Cavalry Corps (10 CD, 1 Don Coss Div).⁴⁴⁶ The Russian cavalry regiments were defeated by Groups Benigni and Hadfy, and pulled back behind their infantry (XXXIII and XLI Corps).

General Letschitzky had turned against the Bukovina with the majority of his troops. Between Bojan and Wolczkowce on the northern bank of the Pruth he grouped XII Corps (12 and 19 ID) and XI Corps (11 and 32 ID) plus 82 and 103 ID from the former Combined Corps as well as the 1 Terek Coss Div, opposite the right wing of Pflanzer-Baltin's Army.

After some preparations, on 16 June the Russian artillery began to bombard the trenches of the k.u.k. XI Corps with guns of heavy caliber. As on previous days, Russian infantry felt their way ahead against the Czernowitz bridgehead, enemy scouting detachments sought to cross the Pruth at Neumamajestie and south of Duboutz, and stronger forces advanced against Sniatyn; Russian

444"Ehrenbuch der Hesser", Vol. II, pp. 123 ff.

445Vogel, p. 34

446Litvinov, p. 58

infantry, along with vehicles carrying bridging equipment, also appeared at Wolczkowce. GO Pflanzler-Baltin expected the strongest Russian thrusts through Duboutz and Sniatyn. GdK Korda held his Corps' reserve (parts of 40 Hon ID and of Brigade Papp) in readiness south of Duboutz. Farther up the Pruth, in the 30 km wide sector as far as Wolczkowce, was FML Brudermann's Cavalry Corps with just 2400 combatants. Half of 24 ID guarded the Pruth at Rudniki, and Col. Kranz's Cav Bde was assembled behind the left wing of Cavalry Corps Brudermann at Russisch Banilla.

In the midst of this oppressive and very tense situation, there arrived the general order, issued in the evening of the 16th, which announced Linsingen's attack and the arrival of reinforcements (105 German and 48 k.u.k. ID) by South Army. The order also emphasized how important it now was that the southern wing of the front should stand firm.

As the storm was already threatening to break along the Pruth, the prospects for the k.u.k. 7th Army were gloomy. Even though the divisions had incorporated March units, Pflanzler-Baltin's Army had just 80,000 riflemen. The combat strength of 9th Russian Army had to be reckoned as around 160,000 men. The 10th Army on the Carinthian front was sending the Styrian 1st Inf Bns 150 and 153 to Pflanzler-Baltin. These two Landsturm battalions were the only reinforcements which could be expected in the next few days.

GM Seeckt, Pflanzler-Baltin's newly-appointed Chief of Staff, felt obliged to write as follows to GO Conrad:

"If it's not possible to send two divisions (German 105 and k.u.k. 48 ID), I am seriously convinced that we must receive some heavy artillery as soon as possible. Our infantry's declining power of resistance can only be increased by improving the artillery support. The feeling that we are confronted by an overwhelming [amount of artillery] is widespread here, and must be depressing the troops...It's doubtful to me that all of the position now held can withstand a strong and well-prepared attack...I fear that the assignment of the Army - to cover the area between the Pruth and Dniester with the main body while guarding Bukovina with the other group - will cause it to break apart in the center."

Soon the upcoming events would unfortunately prove that GM Seeckt's fears were correct.

Defeat and withdrawal of XI Corps

On the 17th the intensity of the fighting along the Pruth at the gates of Czernowitz increased. After three hours of artillery fire, infantry of the XI Russian Corps drove into the Czernowitz bridgehead around 4:00 PM. The Cracow IR # 13, which in the preceding days had gallantly repulsed all the Russian attacks, now had to evacuate their badly damaged positions and withdraw over the Pruth to the northern edge of Czernowitz in costly rear-guard actions. The bridges were destroyed before the enemy could seize them and use them to cross the river.

The Russian XII Corps came over the Pruth at Zawale with only some weak units. This was the sector of 3 CD, which was defended with great skill. The Kaiser Hussars (HR # 1) hurled themselves on the enemy and pinned them down at the crossing points. However, in the night of 17-18 June troops from Russian XI Corps crossed the highly-swollen river on boats at Neumamajestie and downstream from Czernowitz. East of the city they broke through the lines of Brigade Papp, which pulled back. Before daybreak the Russians pushed into the suburb of Kaliczanka. GdK Korda wasn't in a position to halt the enemy. Since no reserves were available by Czernowitz, it was decided to break off the action. By Pflanzner-Baltin's instructions the Corps' reserves had been assembled south of Duboutz, 15 km from Czernowitz. No attempt was made to retrieve the situation, since GdK Korda believed he didn't have the right to give orders to these reserves. Thus he had been forced to fight with four infantry brigades, mostly composed of Landsturm, against a superior force of six infantry and one cavalry divisions. Perhaps as events rapidly succeeded each other the leadership also lost their nerves for a moment. Gd Korda had already issued an order to all his troops to retreat around 3:00 AM. Without offering resistance along the way, XI Corps was to go back to the Sereth, with their left wing even to the Little Sereth. Cavalry Corps Brudermann would first take up a position along the line Lukawetz-Tuczapy, and then on the line Berhometh-Kuty-Kosow.

Brigade Papp and 10 Inf Bde were able to disengage from the enemy only after suffering great losses. The supply trains, jammed together in the streets of Czernowitz, moved slowly; two batteries couldn't make their way through this traffic jam and fell into the hands of the Russians. The enemy pushed into the city from the east. 10 Inf Bde, which bravely defended the northern edge of Czernowitz until the last moment, was fortunately able to avoid encirclement; however, just like Brigade Papp it was hard pressed by pursuing enemy cavalry.

When GdK Korda's Group fell back from the Pruth to the south and southwest, Pflanzner-Baltin was greatly concerned that the center of 7th Army's front might be torn apart. Therefore at 8:30 AM he ordered GdK Korda to exert all his strength to have XI Corps hold the Sereth, while concentrating his resistance on the left wing. 10 Inf and 202 Hon Inf Bdes should be directed into the defensive sector on both sides of Storzynetz, and 80 Hon Inf Bde into the sector by Zadowa. Cavalry Corps Brudermann would hold the new front to which they were assigned (Lukawetz-Tuczapy); they should only withdraw up the Czeremosz valley toward Wiznitz-Kuty if absolutely necessary. Col. Kranz's Cav Bde would guard the

approaches to Kosow and Pistyn. The parts of 24 ID south of the Pruth were to always stay in contact with Group Korda as they fought.

After costly actions the k.u.k. XI Corps made their way to the Sereth on 18 June in exhausting forced marches. Brigade Papp reached Oprischny. Closely pursued by 1 Terek Coss Div on roads that were softened by rainstorms, they lost their entire supply train. Papp's Landsturm battalions had also lost 3000 men and were badly shaken. 10 Inf Bde, after losing 2000 troops, reached the Sereth at Karapcziu in the evening; farther up the river were the tired troops of the brigades of 40 Hon ID. Cavalry Corps Brudermann pulled back to their assigned sector in good order and weren't pursued by the enemy; in the afternoon they encountered advanced Russian patrols, which established themselves firmly in front of 8 CD in the area southwest of Waschkoutz. Strong forces of enemy infantry crossed the Pruth at Neumamajestie and Sniatyn.

b. The situation of the center of the Aus-Hung. Eastern front, 16-20 June

The left wing of 7th Army

On 18 June, already influenced by the fall of Czernowitz, GO Conrad responded to GM Seeckt's letter of the 16th by issuing a new general order to the new Chief of Staff of Pflanzer-Baltin's Army. GM Seeckt was informed that heavy artillery would be sent to 7th Army, but that the other reinforcements intended for the Army (the German 105 and k.u.k. 48 ID) were being transferred to South Army as demanded by Falkenhayn. Therefore 7th Army's mission would be merely to cover the right wing of the front between the Dniester and Pruth, and the routes toward Körösmezö. GdK Korda's Group in Bukovina could only delay the Russian advance toward the Carpathian passes. Thus the strength of this Group would be limited.

GO Pflanzer-Baltin now intended to thrust with Group Benigni against the flank and rear of the Russians who were advancing over the Pruth. He had placed Group Hadfy under FZM Benigni and instructed them already on the 17th to assemble strong reserves at Zablutow and Gwozdziec. However, including the reserves as well as the troops in the positions there were scarcely 40,000 riflemen in Groups Benigni and Hadfy; they were opposed by two Russian Corps (XXXIII and XLI) whose strength was estimated to be more than 60,000 men. So at this time a thrust by the left wing

of Pflanzner-Baltin's army had no chance of success; they would have to wait until South Army started to attack with its right wing.

South Army

The German 105 and k.u.k. 48 ID had been transferred to Bothmer's Army so that with a reinforced right wing he could advance southeast from the area around and southwest of Podhajce. However, this attack also never took place because the k.u.k. 48 ID, whose trains reached Halicz, had to be diverted on 19 June to the northern wing of the hard-pressed 1st Army.

The offensive of 7th Russian Army against South Army had in general died out since 16 June. At dawn and again in late evening of the 17th the inner wings of the Russian XVI and XXII Corps tried in vain to push back G.Lt Oppeln's Division and 39 Hon ID toward Gnilowody and Kotuzow. The attack was checked by our artillery alone.

Bitter fighting flared up on the same day on the northern wing of the k.u.k. IX Corps. IR # 12 of 33 ID wanted to reconquer the part of the position north of Worobijowka which had been lost to VI Russian Corps, but after bloody fighting in the trenches had to abandon the attempt.

2nd Army

Under the k.u.k. 2nd Army, in the night of 15-16 June the northern wing of V Corps and FML Kosak's Group had to pull back because of the misfortune of the neighboring XVIII Corps; they withdrew from the Ikwa to a prepared position on the Austro-Russian frontier between a point west of Lopuszno and the area south of Radziwilow. General Sakharov cautiously led the center of 11th Russian Army (the Trans-Amur Cavalry Division and XXXII Corps) after his opponents. He occupied Radziwilow and Nw. Poczajew, and simultaneously sought to push with VII Corps along the upper Ikwa and through Gontowa toward the west.

GO Böhm-Ermolli, who on the 16th had moved his headquarters from Brody to Lemberg, directed his attention toward further strengthening his northern wing. He requested the return of IR # 76, which he had sent from 14 ID to South Army; at the same time he asked the high command to send reinforcements to Brody to prevent the Russians from breaking through in the direction of Lemberg. 2nd Army, which had just four divisions, had already sent four regiments to the neighboring armies. Although the four

divisions had absorbed the XXIst series of March Battalions, together they had just 63,000 riflemen to hold a front of more than 60 kilometers. If XVIII Corps of 1st Army once again gave way to enemy pressure, 2nd Army couldn't send them any further troops.

On the 17th the Russians made scouting probes, covered by lively artillery fire, against the northern wing of 2nd Army. A larger offensive between Lopuszno and Radziwilow seemed imminent. In fact the 31 ID, stationed on the left wing of V Corps, was heavily attacked toward noon. At the same time fighting developed along the entire front of Group Kosak. The Russian 13 ID sought to drive into the woods west of Lopuszno. Here, however, the Hungarian IR # 44 bravely stood their ground and repulsed the Russian storm. The enemy attempts against the other parts of Group Kosak were equally unsuccessful. Meanwhile GO Böhm-Ermolli had once more asked the high command to reinforce his northern wing. From Teschen came the reply that no units were currently available to be sent to Brody, and that 2nd Army must make troops available from their own right wing. But GO Böhm-Ermolli was already sending men to the northern wing: IR # 76 (returned from South Army) to Podkamien and IR # 83 of 33 ID to Brody, where IR # 85 (of 27 ID) and four cavalry rifle battalions were also assembling.

Fighting continued between Lopuszno and Radziwilow on 19 and 20 June; however, the Russians restricted themselves to isolated thrusts and couldn't win success against the k.u.k. 2nd Army. Therefore the Russian commander had been unable to carry out Brussilov's order of 14 June, which had envisioned a simultaneous advance of 11th, 7th and 9th Armies to Druszkopol, Pomorzany, Brzezany, Stanislau, Kolomea and Kutly. The 11th and 7th Armies were standing far from these objectives; they were still at the gates of Brody and Zalosce, in front of Jezierna on the Sereth, and on the Strypa. General Shcherbatchev, the commander of 7th Army, was still preparing to resume his interrupted offensive against the k.u.k. XIII Corps on the Baryszbach, and was waiting for support from the thrust to the west by 9th Army (his neighbor on the left) between the Dniester and the Pruth.

c. The Russians advance in Bukovina to the Suczawa, 19-20 June

After the unsuccessful breakthrough attempt at Gwozdziec, General Letschitzky had shifted the III Russian Cavalry Corps to his left

wing. GdI Alexeiev suggested that he push his opponents from Czernowitz east onto Romanian soil. General Letschitzky didn't agree with this idea; mainly he wished to conquer all of Bukovina. For this purpose, immediately after the capture of Czernowitz he built a new attack group under General Promptov; it had 82 and 103 ID as well as III Cavalry Corps (10 CD and 1 Terek Coss Div). Promptov was to pursue the Austrians to the south; the cavalry would move toward the Carpathian passes and the infantry to the Suczawa. Because of logistical difficulties, General Letschitzky held XI and XII Corps back on the Pruth.⁴⁴⁷ The interrupted railroad traffic between Nowosielica to Zuczka would first have to resume before the entire 9th Russian Army could continue its attack to the southwest and west.

⁴⁴⁷Litvinov, pp. 58 ff. Klembovsky, p. 51

19 June

In the morning of 19 June the last rear guards of the k.u.k. XI Corps reached the Sereth. Lt Col. Papp's Brigade had still been unable to shake off its pursuers, and crossed the Sereth near the Romanian border while fighting lively actions. The 10 Inf and 202 Hon Inf Bdes had meanwhile taken up positions on the slopes south of the river, from Kamenka upstream to Storozynetz. 80 Hon Inf Bde assembled at Zadowa, whence they could hinder a possible Russian advance through Lukawetz to Berhometh with a counter-thrust. In the morning aerial reconnaissance of 7th Army observed strong Russian cavalry, as well as some infantry and guns, advancing on the roads leading south from the Pruth.

General Promptov and his group were already moving ahead to conquer Bukovina. Around noon the Russians appeared in front of Kamenka, Karapcziu and Ropcze. At this point GdK Korda was still determined to hold onto the Sereth. In case, however, the Russians did break through GdK Korda wanted his Corps to pivot back to the west, using the right wing of Cavalry Corps Brudermann as a fulcrum, to Kimpolung, Straza and Moldauisch Banilla. GO Pflanzler-Baltin concurred, but preferred that the right wing of XI Corps should halt on the Suczawa.

Around 2:00 PM Russian cavalry crossed the Sereth at Ropcze and Karapcziu and attacked 10 Inf Bde. Although the Brigade fought gallantly, the Russians broke into their thin lines. GdK Korda had no reserves to throw against the enemy on the river, so the retreat had to resume on the 19th. To Korda it seemed advantageous to have the right wing of XI Corps immediately pull back to the edge of the mountains south of the Suczawa. Papp's greatly reduced Brigade should deploy at Arbora and Glitt, where they could cover the approaches to Gurahumora. 10 Inf Bde would withdraw to Mardzina. 40 Hon ID was split into groups which would be stationed between Oberwikow and Straza, at Czudyn and Davideni, and on the forested heights between these towns and Lukawetz; they would defend the mountain routes through the valleys of the upper Suczawa and Sereth which led to Seletin, and through the valley of the upper Czeremosz. A connection was to be maintained at Lukawetz with Cavalry Corps Brudermann, which held the heights between Lukawetz and Tuczapy. Opposite Brudermann there were Russian skirmishing lines ready to attack, and stronger units were assembling and moving ahead in the Czeremosz valley. In the evening enemy pressure increased at Tuczapy, where 8 CD and 24 ID came together. The Russian 1 Coss Div, advancing in the Czeremosz valley, soon forced 8 CD to retreat to Ispas.

GO Pflanze-Baltin made efforts to stiffen the crumbling front between Groups Korda and Benigni. The k.k. 1st Inf Bn 153, which was arriving by train through Körösmező, would be used for this purpose. All troops of 24 ID were to be united on the southern bank of the Pruth. Col. Kranz's Cav Bde was reassigned to Benigni's southern wing. The Czeremosz was designated as the border between Group Benigni and Cavalry Corps Brudermann.

At the same time GO Pflanze-Baltin was also seeking reinforcements for XI Corps as it fell back in Bukovina. As the trains carrying the k.k. 1st Inf Bn 150 came to Körösmező they were sent ahead through Borso to Jacobeny; also the troops of Lt Col. Bozo's combined Hon IR, which was still with Group Benigni, were to rejoin their parent 202 Hon Inf Bde. On the 19th the high command ordered GdI Bothmer to pull 79 Hon Inf Bde from the front of XIII Corps so that they could also be sent to XI Corps. Finally three Hungarian Landsturm battalions in the Balkans were made available for Bukovina.

20 June

On the 20th Russian General Promtov and his tired horsemen pushed over the Sereth toward the northern edge of the Carpathians. On this day Lt Col. Papp's Brigade, still closely pursued by 1 Terek Coss Div, withdrew over the Suczawa to their assigned sector on both sides of Arbora. The exhausted battalions of 10 Inf Bde reached Mardzina in the evening. 40 Hon ID, deployed in groups of two to five battalions, was stationed between Straza and Berhometh. Brudermann's Cavalry Corps, which had pulled their right wing back from the heights north of Lukawetz to the road leading to Wiznitz, guarded the area east and northeast of Kutly. From Roznow to the Pruth 24 ID, with Col. Kranz's attached Cav Bde, covered the way to Kosow. Groups Benigni and Hadfy had dug in deeply behind the Czerniawa and farther north to Niezwiska on the Dniester. The opposing Russians were still biding their time. However, they might be quickly able to tear apart the wide-meshed net which GdK Korda had created with his covering troops in front of the routes from the Sereth and Czeremosz valleys to the Carpathian passes, and then threaten the flank and rear of Groups Benigni and Hadfy!

The Terek Cossacks were already sweeping through Radautz toward the south; the Russian 82 and 103 ID were moving threateningly toward Hadikfalva, Altfratautz, Petrutz and Czudyn. To 7th Army HQ it seemed that two Russian Corps (XI and Combined) were advancing over the Sereth toward the Carpathian passes along with

strong cavalry. A third Russian Corps (XII) and a cavalry division seemed to be planning to advance from Sniatyn up the Czeremosz valley to Kutty-Wiznitz. By GO Pflanze-Baltin's reckoning he had just 32,000 troops in the k.u.k. XI Corps and Cavalry Corps Brudermann to oppose these Russian masses.

In this very serious situation, in the afternoon of the 20th GO Pflanze-Baltin was reminded by Teschen that the Russian advance in Bukovina could have very serious impact on the behavior of the Romanians. Again, however, the high command stated that XI Corps should restrict its efforts to delaying the enemy advance through Jacobeny-Kirlibaba, and to halting them in the mountains. Mountain artillery would soon be sent to Group Korda. Above all the Russians should be kept from advancing through Kosow and then farther west against the Worochta-Delatyn railroad line, because "thus they would unhinge the southern wing of Group Benigni and along with it the entire front in east Galicia." To meet this danger, 7th Army would first receive a division from the Tyrolean front (through Körösmezö), although it wouldn't start to arrive until 26 June. A second division would follow.

6. The major command decisions at the start of the second half of June

a. Conrad decides to halt the offensive against Italy

Although the events on the battlefields of the Italian theater of operations had already been unsatisfactory for some time, it was still quite difficult for the k.u.k. high command in the third week of June when they were forced by the anxious situation in Russia to halt the offensive in the southwest.

The first time that the developments on the Russian front influenced the course of the fighting in Italy, although on a small scale, was on 6 June when a division intended for Tyrol was held back in the northeast. Two days later Archduke Eugen had to give up 61 ID, which was already coming to him on the railroad from the Isonzo, for the sake of the Russian front. This was a concession by Conrad to Falkenhayn, who had responded to the first reports about Luck with a demand that Conrad should immediately order his troops to halt at Asiago. On the other hand, measures were taken to avoid further weakening the divisions fighting in Tyrol. Individual battalions were pulled from the line in various sectors of the southwest front, so that

in case of need they could be rushed to the Russian theater of operations.

On 11 June, after the catastrophic Russian breakthrough at Okna, which was accompanied by a major crisis for 1st Army, GO Conrad felt compelled to pull one division (48 ID) from the south Tyrol attack group along with some heavy artillery. Now Teschen was also considering an eventual halt to the offensive; the staff preferred to limit the wide-ranging goals of the operation rather than to cancel it altogether, but then there would have been little reason to continue to attack. Obviously the idea was to still secure the edge of the heights at Thiene, which would thus be available later as a sally port into the plains.

In the days which followed, the situation in Bukovina became more threatening from hour to hour; from all parts of the battlefields in the northeast came cries for reinforcement. At the same time the offensive in the southwest became ever more difficult; hope disappeared that any significant ground could be gained without fresh troops. Now the high command could hesitate no longer; they halted the offensive. In the evening of the 16th Archduke Eugen received this order: "Because of agreements with the German OHL necessitated by the situation in the Russian theater of operations, we must take away from the Army Group two more divisions (not including the 9, 10 or 43 ID) and some heavy artillery. For this reason, and because the hopes expressed by Army Group HQ on 14 June cannot be realized in the foreseeable future, we are forced to call a halt to the Army Group's offensive. Group HQ will select a defensive line, name the units to be taken, and report the earliest possible date at which they can begin to entrain. Since 3rd Army is still engaged in battle and a counterattack is expected, the AOK believes it would be preferable to take units away from 11th Army. Another order will discuss the artillery which is to be delivered."

Archduke Eugen hadn't been expecting this order from the high command, which finally buried his great and reasonable hopes and transferred the main effort of the Aus-Hung. forces to the northeast front. For the future defenses, the Archduke intended to use the line Mattassone (9 km south of Rovereto)-Valmorbia-Mt Testo-Borcola Pass-Mt Cimone-Casteletto-Roana-Mt Interrotto-C. Dieci-Civarone-Salubio-Setole. The areas that had been captured south and east of this line, including the cities of Arsiero and Asiago, were to be given up. The retreat should begin on 24 June. A few weeks earlier it hadn't been envisioned that the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Custoza would be observed in such a fashion.

To reinforce the northeast front, the Archduke selected 44 LW ID (from the German hereditary lands) and 59 ID (consisting of 6 and 18 Mtn Bdes, and completed by the addition of 10 FA Bde).⁴⁴⁸ 44 LW ID could begin their rail movement on the 21st, and 59 ID on June 25. The transfer of both divisions to the Eastern front wouldn't be complete until the start of July.

The high command was happy to approve the measures of Army Group HQ, since the line which they'd chosen could be held with far smaller forces than defensive positions farther to the south; thus at least three divisions would become available immediately. This was all the more desirable since Italian attacks could soon be expected against the extraordinarily weak Isonzo front. For this reason, GO Conrad informed Archduke Eugen on the 18th that next only a few heavy batteries would be needed for Russia, but that a division and further heavy artillery should be quickly sent to 5th Army. The Archduke selected 9 ID, and reported on the 22nd that in addition the entire I Corps (10 and 34 ID, 43 LW ID) would be pulled from the front.

b. Plans for a counter-thrust on both sides of the Dniester

Meanwhile in the third week of June the situation on the Eastern front continued to worsen.

Czernowitz fell into Russian hands early on 18 June. On the next day the enemy already appeared on the Little Sereth. With increased attention the Romanians on the nearby border saw that the Aus-Hung. defenses here also were collapsing. At the same time, the limited power of resistance of Groups Hadfy and Benigni led to fears for the retention of Lemberg. The menace to this city was further increased by the setback to the northern wing of 1st Army, which meant that the Russians might be able to successfully continue their pressure in the direction of Sokal.

Moreover, on the 19th it became evident that Linsingen's offensive could hardly succeed without committing new units.

448The AOK's wish that Archduke Eugen shouldn't send either the 9, 10 or 43 ID to the Russian theater was based on the national composition of these units. The regiments of 9 ID and of 20 Inf Bde in 10 ID were made up primarily of Czechs, while the majority of the troops in 21 Inf Bde and 43 LW ID were Ruthenes.

Therefore the Army Group commander found himself forced to postpone continuation of the attack until the arrival of the promised reinforcements (43 Res ID, 11 Bav ID, 48 k.u.k. ID); he intended to resume his advance on the 21st.

On top of everything else, as Conrad noted in a telegram to Falkenhayn on 18 June, intercepted Russian radio messages left no doubt that the enemy intended to transfer further substantial forces from their North and West Fronts to the Southwest Front. This report, along with the non-appearance of the "anticipated major offensive by the [North and West] Fronts" supported the conclusion that the Russians had given up the idea of "achieving a success [on these Fronts] in order to exploit to the maximum the successes already achieved" by their Southwest Front.

In a second message the next day, Conrad again referred to the tense overall situation; he asked Falkenhayn "to consider further joint measures" and to inform the k.u.k. high command of the decisions that he had already made.

Growing tension between Conrad and Falkenhayn

This second message crossed on the wires with Falkenhayn's response to Conrad's ideas of 18 June. Falkenhayn agreed with his Austrian colleague that the Russians were trying to secure and exploit Brussilov's "so easily won" success; however, he saw no grounds to believe that they were already capable of "deciding the campaign by fighting" here. On the contrary, he was still convinced that the Aus-Hung. Eastern front, with reinforcements already present or on their way (7 ½ German and 4 Aus-Hung. divisions), could bring the onslaught to a halt "if everyone does their duty." He had proposed putting the front between the Dniester and Pripyat under a man such as GFM Mackensen, "who is in a position to exert his weighty personal influence on troops and commanders." Meanwhile the Aus-Hung. high command "should find it possible to bring further substantial and immediate reinforcements from the Italian front, where the defenses should be restricted to the shortest possible line." The German side would also seek reinforcements. A decision could be made later regarding "where and how the units thus assembled should be employed." The Aus-Hung. general commanding south of the Dniester should in any case receive just the minimum units he needed to defend the Carpathians; above all he must hold onto the line connecting the mountains to the Dniester. Finally, Falkenhayn wanted the Aus-Hung. high command to speed up the commitment of their 44 and 59 ID.

In a return telegram, Conrad responded that Falkenhayn's final wish was already being implemented, and that even before the arrival of the German's demands GO Pflanzner-Baltin had issued orders along the same lines. As for the two divisions coming by train from Tyrol, the Aus-Hung. high command must certainly "select a place for their deployment...based on how the situation develops."

The k.u.k. AOK had already ordered that the Italian front should be shortened. However, it would be contrary to the common interest of the allies to weaken the units which were still fighting against Italy to such an extent that the enemy was given an opportunity for a decisive counterattack.

Conrad declared that he could only propose Mackensen's nomination to Emperor Franz Joseph "if further substantial German reinforcements - *i.e.* a strong German army - are to be sent for a decisive battle against the Russian Southwest Front."

This exchange of correspondence didn't reflect the long-standing

irritation between Conrad and Falkenhayn which was surfacing again. However, the new reply from Falkenhayn which now followed was quite sharp; it included open as well as implicit critical side remarks about the k.u.k. troops, which always struck the Aus-Hung. Chief of Staff at his most sensitive spot. First Falkenhayn declared that after he had sent such a strong German force to the Aus-Hung. front, he was not prepared "under any circumstances" to allow the Austrians to ignore his opinions regarding the employment of the divisions coming from Tyrol. He must request to be informed "about all important decisions affecting operations." Then he addressed Mackensen's nomination which he had advocated to meet "urgent, especially Aus-Hung., requirements." Falkenhayn stated that "I therefore cannot concede that Your Excellency is justified in raising objections to this appointment." Moreover, he "permitted" himself to remark that now there was already a strong German army of 8 ½ infantry and 1 cavalry divisions serving as "elite troops on the Aus-Hung. front" and that two more divisions were on their way.⁴⁴⁹

The decoded copy of this telegram in the archives bears a remark in the handwriting of General Staff Colonel Slameczka of the Operations Detachment: "Discussed with GM von Cramon per the oral instructions of his Excellency the Chief [of Staff] (the Chief didn't like the tone)." The next written evidence of the discussion between the two Chiefs of Staff appears in the archives for two days later. Meanwhile two intercepted wireless messages from the enemy camp made the seriousness of the crisis in the campaign especially clear. On the 20th the Italian ambassador to St Petersburg, Carlotti, reported to his government that he had reason to believe the Russians would soon approach Rome with a request to exploit the "favorable circumstances" by striking a decisive blow; Alexeiev would write to Cadorna in a similar vein. And on the next day the Italian Foreign Minister Sonnino informed his ambassador to St Petersburg that the King of Romania had asserted to a leading member of the Romanian parliament that the moment seemed near for their country to intervene (naturally on the side of the Entente).

Discussion of a possible Dniester operation

The latter of these wireless messages strengthened Conrad's commitment to his plan, whose hour of birth can no longer be determined, but which first appears in a report of the Chief of the General Staff to his Supreme Warlord on 21 June. It remains important above all, states Conrad in this report, that Linsingen

449Falkenhayn was referring to 43 Res and 11 Bav ID.

finally wins success. Meanwhile the task of the units fighting farther south as far as the Carpathians is to hold the front; GdK Korda's Group, which by the way was going to be reinforced, could only be able at best to delay the Russian advance. Although the situation on the right wing of the Eastern front is currently "less important", in the foreseeable future - after the situation is restored by Luck - efforts will be made to shift units from Linsingen to 7th Army and also "limit the gains of the Russians here."

Conrad speaks more clearly in a message to Falkenhayn which was prepared on the same day and sent off (at the latest) in the next morning. In this memorandum, he states that the two wireless messages strengthened his conviction "that Russia and Italy now will seek to decide the war with simultaneous attacks on both of the Monarchy's fronts." This would involve "a strong advance by the southern Russian wing" as well as an assault by Romania. Austria-Hungary had "committed everything to the defense" of the two fronts, and had no units available in the event of a surprise Romanian offensive. Therefore it was all the more important "to seek a quick and decisive change of fortune by committing strong German units against the Russian Southwest Front, where no doubt the campaign will be settled." This aim will best be achieved, Conrad says in conclusion, by an "attack of strong German and Aus-Hung. units on both sides of the Dniester."

In some respects, this suggestion was a return to the Gorlice idea - a counterattack from a re-entering angle, which would threaten the rear of the advancing Russian front in the Carpathians and force its withdrawal.

In Falkenhayn's response in the morning of the 22nd to Conrad's "recommended operation" at first he displayed his usual caution. He must first know "which fresh and strong Aus-Hung. units would be used for the attack on both sides of the Dniester", and also whether special measures were being initiated against a Russian invasion of Hungary and Transylvania.

Conrad's answer of the same day stated that in any event it would be impossible before the start of July to decide whether divisions in addition to the two already being taken from the Italian front (44 and 59 ID) would follow them. This was due to caution regarding the Italian counterattack which was sure to come, as well as to the great strain on the railroads of Tyrol. "Unfortunately I'm not in a position", Conrad continued "to simultaneously prepare units to attack on both sides of the Dniester while preventing a Russian advance into Hungary and

holding the Italian front." Therefore, if Falkenhayn were willing to join the thrust down the Dniester, Conrad would certainly be willing to take a chance by also committing the two divisions from Tyrol to the operation; he would put up with a temporary Russian incursion into Hungary and Transylvania. On the other hand, if Falkenhayn didn't agree to the offensive the Aus-Hung. high command would restrict their efforts to throwing both divisions into the Carpathians; it was questionable whether such a patchwork solution would really be able to keep the Russians out of Hungary and the Romanians out of the war.

The Berlin conference of 23 June

The questions raised by Conrad were discussed face to face by the two Chiefs of Staff in Berlin on the next day (23 June). This meeting seems to have resulted in agreement regarding the most important issues along the lines of Conrad's suggestions. The question of the exact point at which to launch a counterattack in east Galicia remained open. Falkenhayn preferred a thrust from the front of the German South Army, perhaps because it would then be easier to direct it according to his wishes. Conrad may have advocated an operation somewhat farther south. In a telegram to Falkenhayn dated 25 June, he stated that "the lines of communication of the Russian group in the Bukovina [could be] more effectively severed by a thrust between the Dniester and the Pruth" than by one north of the Dniester. Also in this message he expressed doubt about the possibility, raised by Falkenhayn in Berlin, that units could be added to the attacking group from the k.u.k. 2nd Army, which already had to defend the 50 km front covering Lemberg with four divisions.

It can no longer be determined whether Falkenhayn gave his Austrian colleague information in Berlin about the important decision which he was taking in these days for carrying on the war on the Western front: he was on the point of halting the costly offensive against Verdun. Orders to this effect were issued on the morning following the Berlin conference.⁴⁵⁰ All indications are that the topic wasn't discussed. The Aus-Hung. high command was very seldom in the know about operations in the West, and on this occasion Falkenhayn had a reason for keeping silence: he didn't want Conrad to have an excuse to request still more German troops for the Eastern front. Units which could be made available at Verdun would be needed above all for the creation of a defensive front on the Somme, where the Western powers were making enormous preparations for an attack.

450Wendt, "Verdun 1916" (Berlin, 1931), p. 170

Very concerned about the Romanian danger, GO Conrad also hadn't fail to call upon the diplomats. In a letter sent to Foreign Minister Burian on the 19th, he suggested that an attempt should be made through pressure from Bulgaria to force Romania to join the Central Powers at the eleventh hour. Burian, however, didn't consider Romania's attitude to be so critical for the moment; also he didn't think it was advisable to initiate steps in Sofia, where they might be considered signs of the weakness of the Habsburg Monarchy. On the 24th Burian, somewhat concerned, did ask Teschen how good were the prospects of limiting the Russian advance. On the same day he received a report, dated the same day, from the k.u.k. ambassador at Bucharest, Graf Ottokar Czernin; it stated that "further Russian victories will make the situation here very critical."⁴⁵¹

c. The Russian leadership plans to continue their offensive

The counteroffensive of Linsingen's Army Group was having an effect on the Russian commanders, particularly those of the Southwest Front. Brussilov's eagerness to act was also considerably reduced by the fact that the North and West Fronts did nothing to relieve the 8th Russian Army in its difficult fighting in the area of Luck; the operation of 3rd Army against Pinsk, scheduled for 19 June, had been postponed at the last moment to a date yet to be determined. On the same day, Brussilov asked the commander of 8th Army, General Kaledin, to decide whether he wanted to continue the offensive toward Kovel, or wait until the arrival of the two promised corps (I Turkestan and I).⁴⁵²

So that the operation at Pinsk would finally get going, on 24 June the Stavka placed the southern wing of 3rd Army (the 3 infantry divisions of XLI Corps plus 4 cavalry divisions), along with General Letsch's Army HQ, under Southwest Front. The other former parts of 3rd Army opposite Baranowicze plus significant reinforcements in the area south of 10th Army were organized as a new 4th Army under General Ragosa. The sector held by the old 4th was divided between 2nd and 10th Armies.

451Öst-ung. Rotbuch, "Diplomatische Aktenstücke betreffend die Beziehungen Österreich-Ungarns zu Rumänien in der Zeit vom 22. Juli 1914 bis 27. August 1916" (Vienna, 1916), p. 34

452Zayontschovsky, p. 35

The area of Southwest Front's authority now stretched north past Pinsk as far as Lake Wygonowskoj. Brussilov, whose attention remained riveted on Kovel, immediately decided to use the units he had gained to further his plans for an offensive. Already on the 24th he wrote to 3rd Army, stating that their next task was to take the area around Gorodok on the western bank of the Styr with their southern wing. A smaller group would assault the Germans at Pinsk. Orders to the other Armies were issued the next day; all of them were to resume the offensive at the start of July.

The commander of West Front, GdI Evert, was preparing to open the attack at Baranowicze, which he'd suggested to the Stavka, around the same time. General Ragosa's 4th Army, inserted between the 3rd and 10th, was assigned a large body of troops drawn from the West and North Fronts (a total of 8 corps plus 4 ½ independent infantry and 5 cavalry divisions); they would attack from the Slonim-Nowo Grudok area, break through the opposing front, and throw the Germans over the Szczara and Niemen. Simultaneous short thrusts by 10th and 2nd Armies toward Vilna would divert attention from the main battle at Baranowicze.⁴⁵³

The plans for continuing the Russian summer offensive, as well as its goals, were now firm. Decisive operations south as well as north of the Pripyat would open at the start of July. Meanwhile however the bitter fighting in Volhynia continued, as Linsingen resumed his onslaught on the 21st; the Russian advance in Bukovina also continued without intermission.

7. Linsingen continues his offensive toward Luck, 21-29 June

a. Actions in the period 21-24 June

On the 21st the allies resumed their counteroffensive against the enemy drawn up in a half circle around Luck; for this purpose the two wings (Groups Falkenhayn and Bernhardi) had been strengthened. Moreover it was intended to further reinforce these groups with units arriving by rail: the German 22 ID was to join Falkenhayn and 107 ID to join Bernhardi.

1st Army was to stay on the defensive; since the Russian also held their ground, 21 June passed without event. On the next day, however, the enemy struck XVIII Corps, especially 1 Lst Inf Bde at Radziwilow, with powerful artillery fire. Simultaneously

453Zayontschovsky, pp. 39 ff.

their infantry thrust hard against 46 LW ID west of the Plaszewka; these attacks, which were repeated against 46 LW ID on the next day, were defeated with heavy losses.⁴⁵⁴

Group Falkenhayn

In Falkenhayn's attack group, GM Runckel made the last preparations on the 21st.⁴⁵⁵ In the morning 61 ID was already able to advance its left wing west of Gorochow to Wierchostaw without fighting. 43 Res ID now joined the advance as far as Koniuchy; some of its troops engaged in light skirmishes. This permitted 4 CD to move behind the front to the eastern wing of Group Falkenhayn. The German 9 CD felt their way forward from the line Koniuchy-Kremasz toward the east. The plan for the 22nd was for the eastern wing to feign an attack between Haliczany and Gorochow, while the main effort would be made by the western wing in the direction of Watyn. VIII Russian Corps - after their neighbor on the right, XL Corps, was thrown back on the 20th - had pulled back their main body to the line Watyn-Bludow-Szklin. Therefore on the 22nd Falkenhayn's attacking group initially met little resistance. (The General took command over the group in the afternoon.) 7 CD⁴⁵⁶, followed in the evening by a brigade of 4 CD, advanced toward Zwiniacze. FML Winkler's 61 ID was reinforced by five battalions from 48 ID which had already arrived, and advanced toward Tereszkowiec. The German 43 Res ID gained ground toward Pustomyty and through Korytnica; the German 9 CD took Swiniuchy and thrust along with the k.u.k. 10 CD toward Bubnow and Liniew. FML Winkler was instructed that while employing the parts of 48 ID placed under his command he should remember that Falkenhayn intended to deploy the 48th (when complete) to the right of 61 ID. In the evening FML Gabriel's 48 ID was assigned the part of the front between Oszczew and Tereszkowiec; 61 ID was responsible for the segment lying north of the latter town as far as Pustomyty.

On the 23rd Falkenhayn intended to continue the attack of his entire group up to the line Michlin-Skurcze; the two divisions on the wings (48 ID and 43 Res ID) were to deploy in deep echelon to

454Cherkassov, pp. 173 ff.

455TRANSLATOR's NOTE - As mentioned previously, Runckel (commander of 43 Res ID) was temporarily leading the Group until Falkenhayn's arrival.

456On 22 June the two cavalry rifle bns of 7 CD, which had been left with 1st Army, returned to the Division. The horsemen of the 1st Huss Bde, combined into one regiment of four squadrons, remained attached to 7 CD.

avoid danger to their flanks. 48 ID followed this instruction by using the battalions which had been last to detrain. The two cavalry units on Falkenhayn's eastern wing (4 and 7 CD) were once more organized as a corps, under FML Leonhardi. (He was the former commander of the k.u.k. 9 CD, who had replaced FML Ostermuth as leader of 4 CD.)⁴⁵⁷ On the 23rd the 7 CD and 21 Cav Bde drove a weaker enemy force out of Zwiniacze. Then reconnaissance was carried out on the northern bank of the Lipa, as well as farther east; the corps' remaining unit, 18 Cav Bde, was sent northeast through Ulgowka. Falkenhayn's center - all three infantry divisions - also fought their way forward. However, after taking Pustomyty they came up against a strong position along the valley of the Leniewka south of Bludow; this position extended through Watyn to the north and also barred the way of 9 German CD east of Bludow. 61 ID was unable to capture Bludow; 43 Res ID south of Watyn was only able to temporarily enter the Russian trenches.⁴⁵⁸ In the evening GO Linsingen ordered that, as soon as the enemy was thrown out of the Bludow-Watyn position, Falkenhayn's right infantry wing would thrust toward Michlin. Leonhardi's Cavalry Corps would advance in the direction of Gubin and carry out wide-ranging reconnaissance between the Lipa, Leniewka and Styr Rivers. 1st Army would hold 7 ID ready to break through over the Lipa.

Now, however, the security outposts of 7 ID on the northern bank had been pushed back into very small bridgeheads. To improve conditions for the Division's upcoming assignment, in the early morning of the 24th the IR # 68 stormed the ridge of hills north of Nowostaw and Holatyn. The Division's right wing, on the other hand, lost the bridge at the town of Lipa and was driven entirely to the southern bank.

On the 24th the 20 and 21 Bdes of the Cavalry Corps cleared the enemy from all of the area north of the Lipa and east of Zwiniacze, and established a connection with the western wing of 7 ID; 11 and 8 Cav Bdes covered the right flank of 48 ID northeast of Ulgowka. The enemy had made several counterattacks during the night against the inner wings of 61 ID and 43 Res ID at Pustomyty. After another assault on the Bludow-Watyn position failed in the afternoon of the 24th, Falkenhayn ordered his infantry to fortify the lines they'd reached and wait to renew

457GM Ritter von Le Gay replaced FML Leonhardi as commander of 9 CD in Cavalry Corps Hauer.

458Bergeder, "Das Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 202" (Berlin, 1927), pp. 94 ff. Schwedt, "Das Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 204" (Zeulenroda, 1929), pp. 175 ff.

the offensive until the arrival of heavy artillery which had been promised by Linsingen.

4th Army

Already in the evening of the 20th it was determined that the enemy in front of the inner wings of 4th Army and Group Marwitz was shaken. Kaledin not only had to pull XL Corps back to the line Semerynki-Zaturcy, but also had to reinforce the front by committing the fresh XXIII Corps.⁴⁵⁹ In the morning of the 21st, when X Corps and soon afterwards Corps Szurmay found the opposing trenches empty, GO Tersztyanszky immediately began the pursuit. Driving enemy rear guards before them, by evening the 4th Army reached the line Wojnin-Szelwow with 10 CD and the adjacent line as far as Zaturcy with the two infantry corps. The right wing of Group Marwitz also carried out a significant thrust. However, the allies were once again in front of Russian positions which would have to be attacked the next day. Tersztyanszky assigned the main effort to X Corps; Szurmay would support them with his northern wing, while at first his southern wing would pin down the enemy east of Szelwow. Bauer's cavalry would again cover the Army's southern flank.

In the morning of the 22nd, the General-Oberst announced that the upcoming fighting - especially Falkenhayn's attack - might force parts of the Russian front into a disorderly retreat. Such a situation should be promptly recognized so that a vigorous pursuit could be organized; the enemy shouldn't be left untroubled. A cautious, groping advance was not acceptable. In particular, Szurmay was advised not to bother sending troops throughout the extended zone of thick woods which lay before him; he should utilize the roads and clearings to quickly send a strong column through Liniew to Sadow [Sadowo]. To bolster the confidence of the men and inspire them to the greatest exertions, the Army commander was not sparing in praise of their accomplishments in the offensive to date.

On the 22nd the 10 CD, in close contact with both of their neighbors, reached the area west of Liniew. Szurmay shifted a strong advanced detachment of 70 Hon ID through the forested area toward Sadow, while 11 ID advanced in step with X Corps. The latter pounded the enemy with several hours of artillery preparation in which 37 Hon ID also used the batteries of the Army's reserve (13 LW ID). Then X Corps stormed the position along its entire length, which triggered strong enemy

459Baluiev, p. 64

counterattacks. At the inner wings of the two corps the Russian operation was thwarted by a combined effort from 2 and 11 ID. The northern wing of 37 Hon ID was held up at Zaturcy, which was stubbornly defended by the Russians; FML Csanady reinforced the Honved, primarily with 26 LW Inf Bde which had been placed under him from the Army's reserve in the morning. Late in the evening an enemy thrust from the western edge of Zaturcy, which was like a thorn in the allied lines, threatened the junction between the Aus-Hung. and adjacent German troops. Therefore Army HQ brought up the remaining half of 13 LW ID (25 LW Bde) along the road from Wojmica. Meanwhile, however, the crisis had been surmounted with help from the German 20 ID. Overall, 4th Army had advanced their right wing about 2 km toward the east; in heavy fighting the X Corps on the left had only moved several hundred meters forward.

On the 23rd the enemy kept X Corps under continuous heavy fire from their guns; the Russian infantry also tried to thrust ahead. For FML Csanady it was extremely desirable that the Germans should first advance to the east, which would end the troublesome threat to his left flank from Zaturcy and free up the units committed there. However, the German 20 ID was heavily committed farther north in fighting around Zubilno. GO Tersztyanszky therefore let the k.u.k. X Corps hold its present line, while Szurmay tried to move forward in cooperation with Group Falkenhayn. In the afternoon, however, Linsingen insisted that 4th Army shouldn't wait for their neighbor to provide support by gaining ground, but should themselves resume the offensive. GO Tersztyanszky, after consultation with both his corps commanders, chose to attack in the Army's center with 11 and 2 ID (reinforced by one regiment apiece from 13 LW ID and 37 Hon ID). The main body of 37 Hon ID would join the advance of 2 ID and carry out a coordinated operation against Zaturcy with 20 German ID. In the evening Marwitz asked for one or two battalions from X Corps as reinforcements; however, Csanady had already assembled all his available infantry on the right wing, and could only promise support from some artillery. Szurmay, who during the day had reached the eastern edge of the forest in front of Sadow with the main body of 70 Hon ID, would along with 10 CD be engaged with the enemy here on the 24th.

Because of the current brittle condition of the infantry, the Army commander explicitly ordered that in all situations the artillery must first prepare the way for the attack, and that officers shouldn't be afraid of losing some guns. Nevertheless, the attacks on the 24th didn't meet with much success. The Russians stood stoutly on the defensive; according to prisoners, regiments from VIII, XXXIII and XL Corps were involved.

Therefore FML Szurmay was able only to bring his front slightly ahead toward the enemy position to the northeast. 11 ID was also hindered by counterattacks in the woods. X Corps bore the main burden of the costly fighting. In the evening the right wing of 2 ID suffered a setback, and IR # 82 and FJB # 29 had to drive back pursuing Russians with the bayonet; thus the ground which had been gained with so much trouble was lost once more, and the Division had to go back to the line it had held in the morning. The Army's reserve, 25 LW Inf Bde, was placed behind the Corps' endangered wing. Only 37 Hon ID was able to capture and retain the nearest enemy trenches.

The northern parts of Linsingen's front

The northern wing of German 20 ID followed the withdrawing Russians as far as the outskirts of Zubilno on the 21st. On the other hand, 19 ID of Group Marwitz didn't gain any ground worth mentioning past Kisielin, and 108 ID had to fend off repeated enemy thrusts. The Aus-Hung. 29 ID's assault on Niemir, launched in the early morning, ended in a costly defeat.⁴⁶⁰ Only 20 ID continued to attack on the 22nd. Bitter fighting raged, especially around Zubilno. On the 24th the 20 ID took several trenches of the defensive positions, which were arranged in several rows, and finally captured the western edge of Zaturcy, but still couldn't break through the Russian front.⁴⁶¹ The allied line now ran right through the middle of the extended town. The other divisions of Group Marwitz had meanwhile come completely to a halt.

In Bernhardi's Group, on the 21st the attack of 11 Bav ID, in which the right wing of 41 Hon ID also took part, wrested the first line away from the Russians in the area between the Styr and Stokhod.⁴⁶² Division Rusche, however, wasn't as fortunate. Overall the V Sib Corps proved to be a stubborn opponent. On the 22nd Bernhardi was instructed by Linsingen to postpone the thrust west of the Styr River until GM Hahndorff's 107 German ID could intervene (on the 25th). This new until relieved the battalions of 41 Hon ID in the sector west of Sokul on the 24th.⁴⁶³

460Schön, "Die 29. ID am Stochod", p. 46. "IR 94 im Weltkrieg", pp. 505 ff.

461Sobbe, pp. 283 ff.

462Stengel, "Das k. bayr. 3. Infanterie-Regiment" (Munich, 1924), pp. 67 44. Mayer, "Das k. bayr. 22 .Infanterie-Regiment" (Munich, 1923), p. 58

463Bernhardi, "Denkwürdigkeiten", p. 437

II Corps, aiming to drive the enemy from the left bank of the Styr, attacked on the 21st with the reinforced 4 ID from Gruziatyn toward Borowicy. The Russians themselves repeatedly counterattacked. The progress which 4 ID made, along with the right wing of Corps Fath, was restricted to a few points where the position of the front was improved. Thereafter both sides on the Styr front, equally exhausted, fell back into positional warfare. 89 LW Bde was given back by Bernhardi to Corps Fath, and rejoined its own division.

Once again there was no fighting on the front of Cavalry Corps Hauer. On the 21st the Russians continued to attack Group Gronau in the Jasiolda and canal sector, but on the next day their impetus was already spent. On the 23rd Group Gronau was removed from GO Linsingen's command and placed under Army Group Prince Leopold.

b. Further modifications to Linsingen's counter-offensive, 25-29 June

According to the agreements between the two Chiefs of Staff at Berlin on 23 June, GO Linsingen's assignment was to finally bring the Russians to a halt west of Luck. Meanwhile the Army Group commander became aware of the fact that his original spearhead - Marwitz's force, which was supposed to be accompanied on the right by 4th Army and on the left by Bernhardi - was stuck fast. Nevertheless, in the eight days since the counter-offensive started it had been possible to push the large bulge in the front back toward the east and to flatten it. If the operation continued, it would entail a frontal assault toward Luck through strongly fortified lines; to try to break through here seemed pointless. There were many arguments against this course, especially the fact that the allies lacked the necessary superiority in strength. 8th Russian Army, having received many reinforcements, was deployed in thick masses and was stubbornly contesting the advance. However, the position of the enemy in front of the extreme right wing of Linsingen's attacking group was relatively weak. Here there were only about three divisions of the Russian VIII and XLV Corps plus cavalry between the Styr and the Korczeska. If Group Falkenhayn received substantial reinforcements they might launch a successful flank attack northeast toward Luck. Such an operation seemed to be the best way to force back the Russians who were firmly entrenched in front of the center of the Army Group.

Creation of a new group for GdK von der Marwitz

Therefore on 24 June GO Linsingen decided to switch the main effort, from which he expected decisive success, to the group which was led until now by Falkenhayn. The units already involved were to be joined by the German 22 ID (arriving by train) and by the k.u.k. 7 ID from 1st Army; moreover 108 ID would come over by foot marches. On the 27th GdK Marwitz would take command over the new spearhead; GdK Falkenhayn would be placed under him as a corps commander. Lack of heavy artillery was blamed for the fact that Falkenhayn's units had gained little ground since the 21st. Therefore on the 23rd the Army Group HQ ordered German heavy batteries (howitzers and mortars) to be brought up, and demanded that Teschen supply similar batteries for the Aus-Hung. divisions. GO Conrad responded that four heavy batteries were already coming from Tyrol to 48 ID, and that three 30.5 cm batteries would follow to be placed at Linsingen's

disposal. A further request for a fresh Aus-Hung. corps to reinforce the southern wing - since, Linsingen reported, the enemy's I Corps was arriving at Luck - couldn't be met.

Linsingen's instructions of 25 June ordered the new Group Marwitz to resume the attack toward Luck on the 30th with the main effort on the southern wing between Lipa (town)-Radomysl and Watyn-Bielostok. The left wing of 1st Army would join them. 4th Army and the German X Corps (the latter reinforced by the k.u.k. 29 ID) would push the enemy toward the east. Bernhardi was instructed to thrust west from the Styr with his main force (the three German divisions); on the other hand, the northern wing (Corps Fath and Hauer) would just hold their ground.

The next days were devoted to preparations for resuming the offensive; however, the guns weren't silent during this period. 1st Army's activity was limited to positional fighting. Their left wing established a firm front joined to Cavalry Corps Leonhardi north of the Lipa on the 24th; therefore Khayll's mixed detachment, which had been guarding the southern bank, was broken up on the 27th.

Under Group Falkenhayn, 43 Res ID was still repelling Russian thrusts north of Pustomyty early on the 25th; then both sides were occupied mainly with fortifying the ground they already occupied. On the 27th GdK von Marwitz took over the new Armeegruppe bearing his name, with HQ at Tartakow. The two German divisions assigned as reinforcements assembled first behind the center of the front - 22 ID southeast and 108 ID northwest of Gorochow. Marwitz organized his forces so that the main effort would be made by the right wing under his direct command; it had four divisions (k.u.k. 7, German 22 and 108, and k.u.k. 48 ID); they would advance toward the line Zabrze-Gubin. Corps Falkenhayn (k.u.k. 61 ID, German 43 Res ID and 9 CD) would carry out a secondary assault north of Pustomyty. Cavalry Corps Leonhardi would cover the sector between the two attacking groups and guard their flanks. To surprise the enemy, the necessary troop movements took place under cover of darkness, and the foremost line of the Cavalry Corps wasn't relieved by three attacking divisions (22, 108 and k.u.k. 48 ID) until the night of 29-30 June. Then Leonhardi shifted to the sector north of Ulgowka as far as Pustomyty. From the 30th Leonhardi was placed under GdK Falkenhayn, whose two infantry divisions were deployed in the adjacent sector Pustomyty-Watyn. When GO Puhallo learned the plan of attack of the neighboring group he decided to support 7 ID (which now belonged to Marwitz) with the extreme northern wing of his 1st Army (46 LW ID), which thus would gain the

eastern bank of the Styr between Werben and Tolpuzyn. 46 LW ID was reinforced for this task by IR # 42 (which had been stationed at Beresteczko as the Army's reserve), and prepared to cross the river.

Preparations to attack by Tersztyanszky's Army

The attack which 4th Army initiated on 24 June declined the next day into a lively cannonade carried out by both sides. On the 26th, Linsingen demanded that 4th Army, supported by their strong artillery, should make offensive thrusts to keep the enemy from entrenching firmly, and should try to gain more ground. GO Tersztyanszky reported back that he'd passed the order on to his corps commanders, but ammunition for the high-trajectory guns was in short supply and had to be conserved so that a sufficient quantity would be available for the next major action. Also he'd granted his Army, which had suffered heavy casualties since the 16th, a brief period of rest so that their ability to attack wouldn't fully disappear. The high command at Teschen reported to the General-Oberst that the arriving replacement troops weren't sufficient to fill the gaps in the ranks. "To radically help 4th Army it would be necessary to insert into each corps a fresh and aggressive division, which with its spirit would have a positive influence on the troops already present and stimulate a healthy rivalry." However, Conrad was unable to send such reinforcements. Therefore Linsingen ordered GO Tersztyanszky to initiate measures to restore 4th Army's sunken combativeness; he inferred that the Army commander had completely failed in exerting his influence for this task since he'd taken over.

Meanwhile the troops were digging defensible entrenchments along the lines they'd reached. Under X Corps the burnt-out 2 ID was pulled out of the front in the evening of the 26th to serve as the Army's reserve, and was replaced by 13 LW ID, now commanded by FML Edl. von Kalser. On the next day Kalser shattered a Russian attack.

4th Army once more initiated preparations for an offensive on the 27th. After carefully observing the terrain and consulting with the corps commanders, Army HQ believed that a thrust by the corps' inner wings toward the northeast was the most promising plan. Thus they could utilize a salient which already existed in the front, while the attackers could deploy in depth under shelter of forests. If they broke into the enemy lines they would envelop the flank of the Russian position which ran south from Zaturcy. The attack was scheduled for the 30th and was to be led by FML Csanady; he would control 11 ID and a strong artillery group from Corps Szurmay as well as his own X Corps troops. The Army's southern wing (10 CD and 70 Hon ID) would hold their ground; the northern wing (37 Hon ID) would advance in conjunction with Csanady's spearhead on their right and the neighboring Germans on their left. The Army's reserve (2 ID) was

to encamp, ready for action, behind the right wing of X Corps early on the 30th. All preparations were to be complete by the evening of the 29th; as ordered, 11 ID did the necessary work in the jump-off positions.

The northern units of Army Group Linsingen

When GdK von der Marwitz left to take over the attacking group south of 4th Army, control of his former sector was given to the commander of X German Corps, G.Lt Lüttwitz. On 25 June the 20 ID, supported by artillery fire from 37 Hon ID, sought to forge ahead toward Zaturcy-Zubilno, but couldn't hold onto the trenches that were briefly taken. 108 ID, ordered to move to Marwitz's new group, had already left the line in the night of 24-25 June, when 19 ID stretched their left wing to Trysten where they linked up with the k.u.k. 29 ID. On the 26th the latter unit was placed under X German Corps. Although G.Lt Lüttwitz had been told to push the enemy toward the east, his three divisions held a wide sector; therefore he would be able only to exploit favorable opportunities with local successes. He planned to have 20 ID break through between Zaturcy and Zubilno on the 30th, while the k.u.k. 29 ID took a hill lying in front of its southern wing west of Kijaz, which would serve as a strong point during a future advance.

Bernhardi attacked as instructed on the 25th with 11 Bav ID and 107 ID in the direction of Perespa. The Bavarians stormed the enemy position on a front of three kilometers; 107 ID, fighting southwest of Sokul, wasn't successful until the 26th. V Sib Corps fought back with counterattacks and powerful artillery fire against the lines of Division Rusche, especially on the highway to Kovel. Bernhardi even had to move his HQ and the railroad unloading equipment back from Holoby, because the town was in range of heavy caliber guns. Through the 29th the Bavarians and the left wing of Division Rusche were able to advance just slightly forward; from prisoners taken that day they learned that they were now opposed by I Russian Corps instead of V Sib Corps. Nevertheless, Bernhardi stubbornly planned to move closer to his goal (Perespa) and ordered that 107 ID should again advance on the 30th.⁴⁶⁴ Throughout this period the next unit on the left, 41

464Bernhardi, "Denkwürdigkeiten", pp. 437 ff. Stengel, pp. 68 ff. Mayer, pp. 58 ff. Ulrich, "Res.-Inf.-Regiment 52 im Weltkrieg" (Oldenburg & Berlin, 1925), pp. 322 ff. Bartenwerffer and Herrmann, "Das Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 232 in Ost und West" (Oldenburg & Berlin, 1927), Vol. II, pp. 30 ff. Bartel, "Das Landwehr-Infanterie Regiment Nr. 57"

Hon ID of II Corps, shielded the flank of the Germans attacking to the south by neutralizing the Russian batteries on the eastern bank of the Styr with artillery fire; moreover, they had contributed a regiment to Bernhardi's Group reserve.

Only the guns and trench mortars of 4 ID and of Corps Fath and Hauer were active during these days. From the enemy's troop movements, which were carefully noted, it was soon determined that the Russian infantry was arriving opposite Hauer's front, where previously only cavalry had been stationed. Since GdI Fath had by now received the 89 LW Bde, GO Linsingen ordered on the 29th that he should now return the troops which had been lent him by his neighbor Hauer. On the same day, at Hauer's request, the 2nd Polish Legion Brigade and two cavalry regiments began to move back to him. HR # 4, stationed on the western flank of Corps Fath, would stay there, as would Col. Janky as commander of the sub-sector at Tuman.

c. Brussilov's orders to resume the attack, 25-29 June

For the time being, the Russians found that their freedom of action was considerably lessened by the allied advance toward Luck. In the urgency of the moment, Kaledin had to use for defensive purposes the reserves who were supposed to bring fresh strength to the thrust on Kovel. Indeed, on the 24th he felt that his 8th Army was in such peril that he considered pulling back the forward arc of the front to the line Kol. Gulinowka-Kozin-Berezolupy-Boratyn-Gorodok-Kol. Anatolia, which was already fortified.⁴⁶⁵ On the same day Sakharov's 11th Army had to abandon their attacks toward the Slonowka and at Radziwilow due to their opponents' resistance.⁴⁶⁶ However, Brussilov hoped all the more that as part of the large-scale assault scheduled by the Stavka for the start of July he'd be able in cooperation with the West Front, his neighbor on the right, to once more seize the initiative and to play a decisive role with his armies. On the 24th, when he received authority to command GdI Letsch's 3rd Army, he reassigned XLVI Corps and IV Cavalry Corps from Kaledin's northern sector to Letsch. Thus 3rd Army, whose southern wing now overlapped the Aus-Hung. position which jutted forward to Czartorijsk at the bend in the Styr, could prepare to attack these lines which hitherto had stood fast, and to break through in the direction of Gorodok. The adjacent Germans could be

(Berlin, 1928), pp. 139 ff.

465Baluiev, p. 65

466Klembovsky, p. 58. Cherkasov, pp. 173 ff.

pinned down by an advance toward Pinsk.

Brussilov issued orders to the other armies of Southwest Front on the 25th. The principal task of Kaledin's 8th Army remained the attack on Kovel, which would be guarded toward the north by 3rd Army; a smaller group was to be sent toward Vladimir-Volynsky. In the Army's reserve were I Corps and parts of 4 Finn Rif Div, plus the I Turkestan Corps which was still detraining. 11th Army would send their main body toward Brody and weaker elements toward Poryck. 7th Army should attack the Brzezany-Monasterzyska area and 9th Army the area Halicz-Stanislau.⁴⁶⁷

Unlike Brussilov, who intended 8th Army to thrust along the Roziszcz-Kovel highway, Kaledin planned to attack with his extreme right wing, next to 3rd Army, in the Nowosielki-Kolki sector. This was because Aus-Hung. troops were stationed there. Since he wasn't convinced that 3rd Army's advance would succeed, by attacking on the right Kaledin would also be doing his best to avoid any surprises on his northern flank, thus reducing damage in case of a defeat. He felt that an offensive by his troops against the firm German line in front of Kovel had little chance of success. Brussilov had a heated face-to-face discussion with Kaledin, and often expressed his displeasure, but was unable to change his subordinate's mind.⁴⁶⁸

Brussilov's armies now armed and re-grouped for the new trial of arms. By the end of the month General Letsch, commanding 3rd Army, had just a weak force on his left (XXXI Corps with 75 and 83 ID, plus 5 Don and 1 Kuban Coss Divs), while he assembled four infantry and five cavalry divisions in the south where he would attack.⁴⁶⁹ XLVI Corps (77 and 100 ID) and IV Cavalry Corps (16 CD, 2 Comb Coss Div, 3 Cauc Coss Div) were already stationed in this area; now they were joined by the Army's 27 ID, 3 CD and

467Zayontschovsky, pp. 39 ff.

468Broussilov, p. 215. Klembovsky, pp. 57 ff. Klembovsky, who at this time was Chief of Staff to Southwest Front, here criticizes the widespread feeling in the Russian Army (which he felt was unjustified) that nothing could be gained by attacking Germans. "The commanders always doubted they could succeed when opposed by German troops, and only counted on success when it had been documented that they would be fighting Austrian troops. It was like they were hypnotized! And yet the Tyrolean riflemen, all the Hungarian regiments and all the cavalry regiments had often proved that they were by no means inferior to the Germans."

469Knox, Vol. II, p. 446. Klembovsky, p. 57

Trans-Baikal Coss Div. Also 78 ID came by train from the North Front.

By the 25th Kaledin had already pulled V Cavalry Corps from the center of 8th Army and shifted it to the eastern bank of the Styr in the sector by Kolki. By the 29th the worn-out V Sib Corps was relieved by I Corps; to the left of XXXIX Corps the XXIIIrd took over the front Kijaz-Zubilno. Meanwhile XL Corps (with the attached 12 CD) extended their southern wing to Watyn to give some relief to the over-extended VIII Corps. I Turkestan Corps, which arrived in the Army's area on the 24th, got off their trains around Rovno; they were held in readiness east of Kolki for the planned attack toward Okonsk. As reserves the Army had available V Sib Corps in the Klepaczew-Zydyczyn-Szepiel-Usiczny area and 4 Finn Rif Div around Roziszcze-Susk.⁴⁷⁰

Falkenhayn's thrust showed the Russian commander that his opponent had found a weak spot at the inner wings of 8th and 11th Armies. Counter-measures were taken. VIII Corps was reassigned on 29 June to Sakharov's 11th Army and its sector was restricted to a deep position on the line Watyn-Szklin. XLV Corps was also concentrated more closely between Szklin and Tolpyzyn. 7 CD moved to the eastern bank of the Styr and was guarding the junction between XLV and XXXII Corps at Ostrow. The Trans-Amur and Combined Cavalry Divisions were assembled as reserves behind XXXII Corps. Moreover Brussilov could count on V Corps, which had been taken from West Front and was arriving at Rovno.⁴⁷¹

These preparations by the enemy didn't remain concealed from the allies. Pilots reported the lively train traffic, the long columns marching along the roads, and the large troop encampments behind the Russian front. As always, intercepted wireless messages quickly and accurately confirmed the picture of the enemy units. The knowledge that a fresh corps had been deployed in front of Bernhardi, and that even stronger forces were apparently being shifted from the north to face Falkenhayn, caused GO Linsingen to address a fresh appeal to his troops in a short order on the 29th: "There will be a general attack along the Army Group's entire front on 30 June, that must be carried through everywhere with full force. The enemy must no longer be permitted to move men from one part of the front to the other!"

470Baluiev, pp. 65 ff.

471Cherkasov, pp. 174 ff.

8. The thrust of Armee-Gruppe Marwitz on the flank; Linsingen's counter-offensive dies out, 30 June-3 July

30 June and 1 July - 1st Army and AG Marwitz

On 30 June the allies opened the third phase of the counter-offensive toward Luck. In Puhallo's 1st Army the 46 LW ID (GM Urbanski) had already opened surprise artillery fire in the night and the early morning hours in an attempt to divert the enemy's attention away from the front between Korsow and Ostrow. Meanwhile IR # 42 crossed the Styr at points which had been prepared at Peremyl and established themselves on the eastern bank.⁴⁷² An attempt to expand the narrow bridgehead, however, was immediately opposed by the Russians, whose batteries several times broke up the bridges. The divisional reserve, which GM Urbanski sent in the evening of 1 July, arrived only in time to help the hard-pressed IR # 42 defend themselves.

GdK von der Marwitz had received the heavy guns he wanted.⁴⁷³ On 30 June the artillery fired for effect, although the impact was diminished by prevailing rains, and then the attacking group of four divisions moved ahead. The k.u.k. 7 ID stormed the heights north of Lipa town with their right wing, but then encountered a strong Russian position along the entire front and suffered substantial losses. The Germans' 22 ID also soon encountered resistance; their 108 ID and the Aus-Hung. 48 ID were somewhat more fortunate. The right wing of Cavalry Corps Leonhardi (4 CD) had relieved the last battalions of 48 ID and covered the left flank of the attack. 7 CD held the low ground in front of Bludow. Falkenhayn's infantry fought with little success. 43 Res ID did penetrate the Russian trenches south of Watyn, but was defeated by counter-thrusts although the German 9 CD helped limit the damage; the attackers were forced to pull back to their starting points.⁴⁷⁴ Similarly the troops of 61 ID, who had worked their way forward to within striking distance, also were pulled back.

472Karshulin, 'Erinnerungen an die Kämpfe am Styr zwischen Peremyl-Werben' in "Der Heimat Söhne im Weltkrieg", 1933, Issues 2 and 3

473The 30.5 cm mortars couldn't be brought to their firing stations because they got stuck on the bad roads; in the next few days they were sent away on the railroad from Stojanow.

474"Ein Schlachten-Misserfolg 1916 und seine Lehren" (Militär-Wochenblatt, Berlin; 1928, Issue 23). Bergeder, pp. 96 ff. Schwedt, "Das Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 204" (Zeulenroda, 1929), pp. 177 ff.

Nevertheless, in the evening it still seemed possible that the enemy might give way before the eastern wing, so Marwitz ordered his attack group to proceed with all energy on the next day. Falkenhayn would just pretend to attack, and otherwise hold his ground. A greater success was in fact won on 1 July - the four assault divisions secured a line running from the western bank of the Styr opposite Tolpyzyn through Zabcze and Kolodiez; their front linked up with Falkenhayn's stationary line south of Szklin. Thus in two days the offensive had penetrated up to five kilometers toward the northeast on a front of 20 km.

30 June and 1 July - 4th Army

Under 4th Army, the artillery initiated the planned attack of the k.u.k. X Corps with a bombardment after 5:00 PM on 30 June. FML Csanady and G.Lt Lüttwitz of X German Corps had agreed to strike at the same time, so that the enemy would be pinned down on their entire front. While 10 CD and Szurmay's 70 Hon ID sought to hold the Russians in place in light fighting, the assault divisions of FML Kalser (11 ID and 13 LW ID) made the main effort. However, their advance suffered from fire on the flank, and unfolded only hesitantly. It didn't help when Go Tersztyanszky told the attackers reproachfully that two divisions should certainly be able to drive the enemy from such a relatively narrow area as long as they maintained their pressure on the entrenchments. The foremost waves couldn't get past the Russian barricades. The fighting strength of the troops was sapped by enormous casualties, which were especially painful because the units were already under-strength (particularly in officers), and by the pouring rain and wooded terrain. Also the northern wing of 37 Hon ID, which together with their German neighbors was supposed to wrest the eastern part of Zaturcy from the enemy, had to abandon the attempt when the German mortars halted their preliminary fire due to the bad weather.

In the evening FML Csanady forwarded to Army HQ a suggestion of 11 ID that they should just leave patrols in the foremost line while moving the exhausted battalions back so that they could be brought into order and fed. GO Tersztyanszky didn't agree at all; he forbade giving up any of the ground that had been gained. FML Csanady thereupon ordered that the assault should continue on the next day. However, he reported to Army HQ that the troops had shown no *elan* in the fighting on the 30th; they hadn't been able to free themselves from the effects of the prior unsuccessful battles. He had to describe their psychological state as "apathy."

Early on 1 July GM Obauer, supported by the assertions of his brigadiers, reported that the weakened regiments of 11 ID had been in constant motion since 29 June without regular rations; they urgently needed to eat and to have order restored to their ranks. In their current condition they couldn't be used for an attack. FML Kalser declared that after receiving such descriptions he couldn't hope for success, but that the situation demanded that the enemy should at least be pinned down. The Corps commander now would stake everything on getting the Division back into battle-ready condition quickly. GO Tersztyanszky intervened sharply by ordering FML Szurmay, from whose corps the 11 ID had been attached, to become personally involved.

At noon the HQ of X Corps was able to report that FML Kalser had grouped both of his divisions to again thrust against the assigned target area, and that the northern wing of 37 Hon ID was ready to complete the conquest of Zaturcy along with the Germans. The two operations would open simultaneously in the afternoon. Meanwhile Tersztyanszky had decided to give the renewed assault greater strength by committing the Army reserve, 2 ID. They were deployed at the junction between 13 LW and 37 Hon ID and instructed to help the inner wings of both these divisions forward by breaking through the line. By evening the attackers were either just about to open their assault or, in some places, had already penetrated the Russian trenches. However, strong enemy counterattacks prevented a decisive breakthrough. The fighting around Zaturcy also remained undecided.

30 June and 1 July - the remainder of the Army Group

In G.Lt Lüttwitz's adjacent sector, the German 20 ID pushed back the Russian line of resistance north of Zaturcy on 30 June and finally captured Zubilno.⁴⁷⁵ The Aus-Hung. 29 ID, supported by several batteries of the German 19 ID, stormed the heights in front of their southern wing; however, a further advance toward Wiczyny was thwarted by the enemy defenses.⁴⁷⁶

A successful action carried out on 30 June by 107 ID led GdK Bernardi to intensify his operation, which hitherto had gone forward only in certain sectors; on 2 July he would unleash a general thrust by his three German divisions. The preparations

⁴⁷⁵Harms, pp. 231 ff. Sobbe, pp. 291 ff.

⁴⁷⁶Schön, "Die 29. ID am Stochod", p. 48. "IR 94 im Weltkrieg," pp. 520 ff.

lasted throughout 1 July.⁴⁷⁷ 41 Hon ID of II Corps would continue to cover the flank of 107 ID; as their German neighbors advanced they would extend their right wing from Sokul toward the south. The enemy was mostly inactive on the Styr front (in front of Fath and Hauer); however, the increasing evidence that the Russians intended to fall upon this northern wing of the Army Group caused GO Linsingen on 1 July to instruct the corps to have sufficient reserves in readiness. Hauer prepared a combat group of all arms which he placed at the Army Group HQ's disposal at the Maniewiczze railroad station; this mixed brigade under Col. Küttner was made up of units which had returned from Corps Fath (one regiment of the Polish Legion, an Aus-Hung. cavalry regiment, and a horse artillery battery).

Reaction of the commanders on both sides

When the counterattack of the Central Powers resumed on 30 June against 8th and 11th Russian Armies after a pause of several days, striking with particular force on the front Zaturcy-Michajlowka, General Sakharov found that his right wing was endangered. Following Brussilov's orders of the 25th, the XVII Corps had been earmarked for the main attack on Brody while VIII Corps would make a subsidiary thrust toward Poryck. Vadbolsky's Cavalry Corps (Combined CD and Trans-Amur CD) would carry out a wide-ranging operation in the Austrian rear. Now, however, the north wing would first have to be propped up and the allied thrusts checked before these plans could be realized. Sakharov shifted the reserves of XXXII and XVII Corps toward the north and sent the Cavalry Corps to Radomysl on 1 July. The arriving V Corps was assigned by Brussilov to 11th Army and sent ahead by rail from Rovno to Dubno; its leading regiment then moved by truck to Demidowka.⁴⁷⁸

Under the impact of the new fighting, Kaledin decided to shift the direction of attack for the July offensive more to the west; for this purpose he selected the sector between Kolki and Sokul. His orders on 30 June, with which Brussilov agreed, provided that V Cavalry Corps would occupy the front from Nowosielki to Kolki, I Turkestan Corps from Kolki to Tuman, and XXX Corps from Tuman to Sokul. These corps would launch the first thrust through Gruziatyn toward Kaszowka.⁴⁷⁹

In the evening of 1 July Linsingen outlined his intentions for

477Bernhardi, "Denkwürdigkeiten", p. 438

478Cherkasov, pp. 174 ff.

479Baluiev, pp. 67 ff. Klembovsky, p. 59

the high commands, based on his evaluation of the situation. He believed that the enemy plans were clearly revealed by the concentration of units, including the fresh I Turkestan Corps, near the bend in the Styr: they intended to seize the railroad center of Kovel with a thrust to the northwest. Army Group HQ anticipated an attack in several days against the line Cminy-Czartorijsk-Kolki-Borowicy; as a counter-measure he wanted a German division from Group Bernhardi to be ready at Maniewiczze. On the other hand, the Russians didn't seem to be moving any substantial reinforcements against Group Marwitz. If Marwitz was successful in the direction of Luck, the enemy would be forced to remove units from another part of the front to oppose his Group. Therefore Linsingen intended to "continue the offensive in its present form; this is the quickest way to influence the entire situation around Luck." Prospects were good for a rapid advance by Marwitz's spearhead, although Army Group HQ was unfortunately not able to provide him further troops from their own front as reinforcements.

2-3 July: 1st Army and AG Marwitz

Therefore Linsingen's offensive continued on 2 July. Information from prisoners had already alerted the Aus-Hung. leadership about the upcoming attack on Brody. This information seemed to be confirmed by reports from 1st Army's aerial observers during 2 July; they noted that large numbers of troops were detraining at Dubno and that a column of about division strength was marching to the southeast. The high command at Teschen therefore wanted 2nd Army to assemble a strong force behind their northern wing. Linsingen suggested that measures should be taken beforehand to ensure there was a unified command structure to deal with an enemy blow. Conrad decided that if the main effort was directed against 25 ID, the XVIII Corps would be in charge of the defenses including all reserves; if 1 Lst Inf Bde and the front farther south was endangered, then FML Kosak would lead the defenders.

On 1 July a battalion from 46 LW ID had already followed the right wing of 7 ID across the Lipa. On the next day the entire 46th Division was supposed to advance over the Styr toward Tolpyzyn and to make contact with the group which had crossed east of Peremyl. However, this attempt to widen the small bridgehead at the bend in the Styr, and to provide effective flank support for 7 ID, was shattered on the 3rd by the resistance of the Russian 7 CD, reinforced by infantry from the neighboring corps.

The gains made by Armeegruppe Marwitz on 1 July aroused hope that

even greater rewards could be reaped in the bloody operation. Therefore Marwitz ordered his storm divisions that on the 2nd they should press against the already shaken enemy "without pausing." 7 ID drove the 2 Finn Rif Div back through Michajlowka, the two German divisions broke through XLV Russian Corps at Dubowyja Korczmy, and the k.u.k. 48 ID captured Gubin. Sakharov had to exert all his strength to survive this dangerous crisis. Vadbolsky's Cavalry Corps was thrown against the attackers; defying death, individual brigades or regiments launched mounted attacks against the Germans and 48 ID to hold up their pursuit.⁴⁸⁰ Reserves from VIII Corps intervened, and the first available regiment from V Corps was sent to help 2 Finn Rif Div.

The Russian Army commander even contemplated withdrawing his entire northern wing behind the Leniewka, a measure which would have also had a severe impact on the adjacent wing of 8th Army and upset the plans of Southwest Front for the offensive. Brussilov opposed General Sakharov's concept as self-centered, and ordered Kaledin to have 6 Sib Rif Div and 12 CD help his neighbor's defense.⁴⁸¹ In the afternoon strong counterattacks were already being launched against the 108 and k.u.k. 48 ID; they continued into the night, but were repulsed by the allies. Yet Sakharov now only had to bend back the left wing of XLV Corps to Zloczewka and Lopawsze; from here the 7 CD maintained the link through Werben with XXXII Corps.⁴⁸² In the evening the front of the Central Powers ran east from Michajlowka through Dubowyja Korczmy and Gubin to Falkenhayn's positions, which were unaltered.

In the morning Linsingen had already ordered 4th Army to extend their southern wing to a point opposite Watyn. Thus Marwitz could have Falkenhayn hold the front down to Pustomyty with just the German 9 CD and 43 Res ID, freeing 61 ID for use elsewhere. Initially four battalions from the latter Division shifted behind the junction between Cavalry Corps Leonhardi and 48 ID; they assisted the 48th by backing them up during the Russian counter-thrust. In the night the entire 61 ID assembled left of the 48th so that they could attack the next day toward the line Ugrinow-Szklin. Thus Marwitz hoped to bring forward the left wing of his

480Schmidt and Ahlhorn, "2. Kur-Hessisches Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 82" (Oldenburg-Berlin, 1922), p. 80. Clausius, "Infanterie-Regiment von Wittich (3. Kur-Hessisches) Nr. 83" (Oldenburg-Berlin, 1926), pp. 92 ff.

481Klembovsky, p. 60

482Cherkasov, pp. 178 ff.

attacking group, which hitherto had encountered the greatest resistance and achieved the smallest advance. However, he would win a major success only if his group penetrated like a wedge into the enemy front and toward Luck.

On 3 July Marwitz thus advanced with five divisions. But Sakharov opposed them with all his strength. The k.u.k. 7 ID was mainly supposed to cover the allied right wing; by evening they reached a line which extended in an arc from the Styr at Michajlowka to a point in front of Zloczewka. The German 22 ID also gained just a little ground, because they were forced over to the defensive by counterattacks. The Russians especially renewed their assaults, in deeply deployed masses, against 108 ID. They had brought up 6 Sib Rif Div through Czarukow; the Siberians were thrown into the fight at Ugrinow and Dubowyja Korczmy. Troops from VIII Russian Corps struck hard against the Aus-Hung. 48 ID at Gubin; the attacking waves came forward eleven times, but always were repulsed.⁴⁸³ Both of our mountain brigades suffered heavy casualties. Marwitz ordered FML Gabriel to hold out regardless of the cost, since the security of the entire eastern wing of the offensive depended upon the steadiness of his soldiers. The allies brilliantly withstood the test of this difficult defensive fighting. However, under these conditions the 61 ID was unable to move forward in their new position.

The enemy's enormous efforts to halt Group Marwitz spurred the allied commanders all the more to bring as much strength as possible to the Group's victorious wing. To make this possible, in the evening of 3 July GO Linsingen ordered 4th Army to take over the positions of Corps Falkenhayn as far as the Pustomyty area. Then Falkenhayn would pull 43 Res ID from the front and send them marching toward Ulgowka. The stationary sector in front of Bludow was to be secured by the German 9 and Aus-Hung. 7 CD. During the night FML Leonhardi went to the eastern wing of the Armeegruppe along with 4 CD; 11 Cav Bde of 7 CD was to follow the next day. On 4 July Leonhardi then would relieve 7 ID of its responsibility for guarding the flank on the bank of the Styr. This mission had to be undertaken by GM Baumgartner's 7 ID because 46 LW ID had failed to make any progress in the area between Werben and Tolpyzyn; now all of 7 ID could become involved in the offensive. Marwitz didn't want the enemy to have a chance to rest on 4 July, and ordered his infantry (including 61 ID of Group Falkenhayn) to continue to attack.

⁴⁸³*Ibid.*, p. 180

2-3 July: 4th Army

On 2 July the 4th Army tried to carry on the attack initiated the day before to a successful conclusion, but the enemy wouldn't permit this. The left wing of 13 LW ID, the 2 ID and 37 Hon ID could hold onto the lines they'd reached. However, already during the night and into the morning the 11 ID was pushed back; in the afternoon they were thrown back further by a second Russian counterattack. Since the Corps' reserves were also unable to retrieve the situation, the Division had to withdraw to the position - covered by barbed wire - which they'd occupied on 1 July. Army Group HQ didn't hide their displeasure over this development; they demanded that 4th Army should at least hold onto their positions and support 20 German ID in the fighting around Zaturcy. Tersztyanszky issued orders in this sense to his corps. FML Csanady was told to prepare some reserves so that more units, especially batteries, could be sent to the northern wing. The Army responded to Linsingen's order to reduce the length of Armeegruppe Marwitz's front by having the k.u.k. 10 CD relieve German 9 CD in the night of 2-3 July, while 70 Hon ID extended themselves toward the south.

On 3 July GO Tersztyanszky set about regrouping his Army to resume their attack, which he had wanted to just temporarily interrupt because of the misfortune of 11 ID. His instructions, however, were countermanded because of an important order from Army Group HQ which arrived in the evening. Linsingen wanted to give Armeegruppe Marwitz an opportunity to greatly reinforce their left wing, and the entire center of his Army Group to go over to the defensive. 4th Army and X German Corps were now to convert the line they occupied "into permanent positions"; they would just pin down the enemy with artillery fire and small-scale infantry thrusts. At the same time 4th Army had to stretch still further to the south. Corps Szurmay's sector now began 3 km south of Watyn and extended to the center of the forest west of Sadow. 11 ID returned to its parent corps (Szurmay's), which also took over 10 CD. In the northern sector, held by X Corps, a brigade of 13 LW ID was held back as the Army's reserve. The latest fighting had greatly weakened 4th Army, which now had a total of 17,500 riflemen.

2-3 July: Linsingen's other units

Troops of X Corps were still trying in vain until 3 July to clear the enemy out of the eastern part of Zaturcy. On 2 July the 29 ID had already lost to the Russians the area gained by their

southern wing with such great sacrifices.⁴⁸⁴ Because of the encouraging progress of Bernhardi's neighboring group, G.Lt Lüttwitz ordered FML Schön to direct the main effort of 29 ID more toward the left wing on the next day. In the evening, however, preparations for the offensive were abandoned because Lüttwitz's sector hereafter would remain on the defensive.⁴⁸⁵

Bernhardi's 11 Bav and 107 ID had been doing so well that they could launch a decisive attack on 2 July.⁴⁸⁶ The left wing of Division Rusche directed the main effort south toward the highway at Perespa; the Divisions of Kneussl and Hahndorff joined in. The enemy was thrown back and lost heavily, so prospects were favorable for continuing the thrust on the 3rd. The attackers from the north almost reached the highway, while the center of Division Rusche took the bridges on the Stokhod; Perespa lay nearby. GdK Bernhardi hoped that now his right wing could also advance southwest of the railroad in close cooperation with Corps Lüttwitz. Then the promising operation was broken off just before its completion.

The entire northern front on the Styr as far as Corps Hauer was subjected to enemy artillery fire during the day; it was easy to tell that this was just trial fire. Heavy batteries were targeted on the sector of 41 Hon ID, and then the area Gruziatyn-Tuman-Kopyli. Pilots reported that the Russians had built plank bridges to cross the river between Kolki and Borowicy. All indications were that an enemy blow against the Army Group's northern wing was imminent. Linsingen had Group Bernhardi stop their advance and ordered 11 Bav ID to leave the front.

The outcome of Linsingen's counter-offensive

In the evening of 3 July, when the Army Group commander ordered permanent positions to be constructed along the center of his front, he didn't yet consider the counteroffensive which he'd opened on 16 June to be over. However, he had to submit to the fact that the attacks of 4th Army and Corps Lüttwitz had no chance of success. Moreover, he had to prepare to meet an assault against his own northern wing, and the quickest way to provide a reserve for the threatened area at the bend in the Styr was to take troops from Bernhardi's successful western wing. Since GO Linsingen also had to be sparing in the use of his forces, the only course open to him was to continue the flank

484"IR 94 im Weltkrieg", pp. 527 ff.

485Schön, "Die 29. ID am Stokhod", pp. 48 ff.

486Bernhardi, "Denkwürdigkeiten", pp. 437 ff.

thrust by Armeegruppe Marwitz, which apparently was having an impact on the enemy, so that advantages could be gained at least on this portion of the front. Otherwise the situation created by the enemy had forced the operation to end prematurely.

The results of the counter-offensive were perhaps less than had been hoped for, but also shouldn't be underestimated. The allied units deployed in a half-circle in front of Luck had put an end to the victorious advance of 8th Russian Army to the west and pushed them back about 10 to 12 km toward the east. Brussilov therefore had to give up his own intentions of using his reinforcements to continue in the same direction; they had to be used for defensive purposes. The allies had closed the broad gap in the front which had opened between the 1st and 4th Aus-Hung. Armies in the first half of June and left the route to Lemberg open. For the moment Armeegruppe Marwitz was still effectively assaulting the Russians there. The immediate impact of the defeat at Luck thus had been partially mitigated on the battlefield. Not so quickly to be healed was the damage inflicted on the k.u.k. 4th Army in its combat strength and above all in the psychological condition of its surviving soldiers, the foundation of any military success. The divisions had neither been brought back to full strength nor received all their necessary equipment. The fighting which continued through the end of the month had caused further significant losses. The strength of 4th Army would remain diminished for a long time; it was no longer a large, cohesive force with confidence in victory.

9. The further advance of the Russians in Bukovina, 21-24 June

With their eyes fixed on the Carpathian passes, the Russian cavalry (1 Terek Coss Div, 10 CD) of the group which General Promtov was leading in the conquest of Bukovina continued to drive back Korda's right wing from the Suczawa through Gurahumora and into the upper Moldawa valley.

21 June

By nightfall on 20 June, Lt Col. Papp's retreating Brigade reached Ludihumora, Arbora and Glitt; 10 Inf Bde, tired but in good condition, was in the Mardzina area in the evening. Both brigades continued their retreat the next day. 1 Terek Coss Div made an early thrust along the railroad through Unterpertestie, while a stronger enemy column advanced toward Solka. Threatened with envelopment from two sides, Lt Col. Papp's Brigade was

unable, as ordered by GO Pflanzner-Baltin, to halt on the Par Humora; they pulled back into the Moldawa valley to Wama. 10 Inf Bde withdrew from Mardzina to the mountain ridge northeast of Russ. Moldawitza. Meanwhile the two infantry divisions of General Promtov's Group (82 and 103 ID) appeared opposite 40 Hon ID, which was guarding the route through Straza with 202 Hon Inf Bde and the valleys at Moldauisch Banilla and at Berhometh with 80 Hon Inf Bde. 1 Don Coss Div advanced to Ispas, against the left wing of Cavalry Corps Brudermann. However, the Russians were pressing most strongly against the easternmost groups of the k.u.k. XI Corps.

To be able to support Lt Col. Papp's badly weakened Brigade and occupy the Carpathian passes in southern Bukovina with fresh troops, GO Pflanzner-Baltin asked the high command to send a mountain brigade to Jacobeny. The AOK replied that they were unable to comply with his wish; they emphasized, however, that it seemed as if the Russians wanted to break into Transylvania with cavalry and perhaps also with infantry. Thus 7th Army must themselves send units to Jacobeny and Kirlibaba. The first trains transporting the reinforcements from the Tyrol front - initially one division (44 LW ID) - could arrive at Borsa, o.Radna and Borgo Prund (stations in north Transylvania) on 27 June. Naturally GO Pflanzner-Baltin desired that the reinforcements expected in east Galicia from the Tyrol front would be deployed on the left wing of 7th Army, so that the flank and rear of the Russians advancing in Bukovina could be threatened from the west. Meanwhile the Styrian 1st Inf Bn 150 from the Carinthian front arrived at Borsa, and was being followed by Col. Rubint's 79 Hon Inf Bde (released by South Army). It was decided to bring these troops ahead on the narrow-gauge railway to Jacobeny; here also would be sent the three Hungarian Landsturm battalions which were supposed to be drawn from the Balkans.

22-23 June

The withdrawal of Korda's right wing in Bukovina was uncomfortably rapid. On 22 June the Landsturm battalions of Lt Col. Papp's Brigade covered the supply trains moving back through Wama; on the same day, because of the danger of being enveloped by the Terek Cossacks, they took up a blocking position east of Kimpolung. After Wama was abandoned by Brigade Papp, there seemed to be a danger that the Russians could advance northwest into the open valley of the Moldawitza and thus fall upon the rear of 10 Inf Bde, which was still stationed on the heights northeast of the town of Russ. Moldawitza. Anyway the 10 Bde

could no longer be supplied, since their only line of supply had disappeared when Wama was lost. Therefore GM Kaltenborn, who was supposed to protect the road Kimpolung-Pozoritta-Izwor, led his group from Russ. Moldawitza back to Breaza through the 1500 meter high mountain chain which lies east of the valley where the Moldawa has its source.

40 Hon ID stayed in their blocking positions at Straza and Berhometh. They weren't attacked in earnest by their opponents (82 ID and probably parts of 103 ID). Meanwhile more ominous developments were unfolding in the Czeremosz valley. On the 22nd the 8 CD had to give way through Ispas to the continuing pressure of 1 Don Coss Div. Around noon on the 23rd the Don Cossacks reached Kutu. A short thrust by the right wing of 24 ID from the Roznow area to the east forced the enemy to give up Kutu. Soon, however, the Russian cavalry were again in possession of the town. 8 CD withdrew fighting to the heights just west of Kutu. 3 CD was stationed south of the burning town of Wiznitz as far as Berhometh, where they were connected to 40 Hon ID. To the left of Cavalry Corps Brudermann the 24 ID (with Col. Franz's Cav Bde attached) held the line between Kutu Str., Roznow and the Pruth. On the extreme right wing of 24 ID the newly-arrived k.k. Landsturm Battalion 153 was inserted into the crumbling front.

Meanwhile, in accordance with orders from Pflanzner-Baltin, FZM Benigni had made available north of the Pruth the regiments of 5 ID (IR # 1, 54 and 93) plus five batteries. He also built up one brigade (201 Hon Inf Bde) from the remnants of 51 Hon ID, and was holding all these units in readiness in the area southeast of Kolomea. FML Habermann took command over the extended southern wing of Group FZM Benigni from the Pruth to Kutu Str. FML Snjaric led the troops which remained on the Czerniawa (30 ID without LW IR 5, remnants of 42 Hon ID, parts of 36 ID, and 202 Hon Inf Bde). To their north as far as Niezwiska was FML Hadfy's Group (GM Fluck's Cav Bde, 5 Hon CD, 21 LW ID, 6 CD, parts of 36 ID), which since 18 June was placed under FZM Benigni.

Based on information accumulated by 23 June, HQ of 7th Army correctly estimated the Russian situation to be as follows:

- . XXIII Corps south of the Dniester opposite FML Hadfy's Group;
- . XLI Corps on the northern bank of the Pruth opposite FML Snjaric's Group;
- . XII Corps, 1 Don Coss Div and 10 CD apparently intending to attack through Kutu toward Kosow-Pistyn;
- . XI Corps stationary in the Sereth valley at Storozynetz, from where it could resume its advance either west or south;
- . 82 ID completing their advance to Lukawetz, Moldauisch Banilla

and Oberwikow; and
. 103 ID and III Cavalry Corps apparently advancing through
Gurahumora toward Jacobeny.

Already in the afternoon of the 23rd Lt Col. Papp's Brigade in their new blocking position at Kimpolung were attacked by 1 Terek Coss Div. They defended themselves bravely, but in the evening the Cossacks broke through in the center, enveloped the Brigade's left wing, and forced Papp to retreat. In the night he and his badly-shaken troops reached Pozoritta, where they linked up with the units which had hurried forward from Jacobeny: k.k. Landsturm Battalion 150, the Romanian Volunteer Battalion, and the leading battalion of 79 Hon Inf Bde (the rest of which was still approaching by train).

The overall situation seemed critical to GdK Korda. He felt that the troops available at Pozoritta and Breaza weren't enough to hold a defensive sector of 45 km and that both their wings were threatened; he believed the Russian attack could lead to a complete catastrophe. Early on the 24th he reported by phone to his Army commander that Papp's Brigade no longer had any combat value. There was now a danger that the weak units which had just linked up with the Brigade at Pozoritta would also be beaten by the approaching Russians. In that case the prepared fortifications at Jacobeny (the Mestecanesti position) could no longer be defended, since the remaining troops of 79 Hon Inf Bde wouldn't arrive by train at Jacobeny until noon on the 25th. It seemed advisable to bring the group stationed at Pozoritta back to the prepared positions at Jacobeny. Then the adjacent 10 Inf Bde, still at Breaza, would have to take up a new position on the Orata mountain ridge. Col. Savoly's group at Straza (parts of 202 Hon Inf Bde) wasn't yet being attacked by the enemy; 80 Hon Inf Bde of 40 Hon ID⁴⁸⁷ was fighting with 82 Russian ID at Berhometh, and had already bent back their right wing. GdK Korda reported that 40 Hon ID would have to be pulled back so that they wouldn't be smashed, like Brigade Papp had been, before they reached the Seletin area. GO Pflanzler-Baltin responded that the Mestecanesti position should be held under all circumstances; he emphasized that as soon as 40 Hon ID reached the Seletin area they would also have to cover the road through Sergie to Uscie Putilla because 3 CD had been directed to move west toward Krzyworownia and could only take up a position between Wiznitz and Uscie Putilla.

487TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - The organic brigades of 40 Hon ID were # 79 and 80. Since 79th Bde was still detached, the Division HQ at this time commanded # 80 plus 202 Hon Inf Bde.

Now GdK Korda issued orders for the retreat. Brigade Papp and 10 Inf Bde would go back into the prepared positions on the mountain ridge east of the Golden Bistritz at Jacobeny. 40 Hon ID (80 Bde) would retreat on the 24th to Rusca [Ruska] and on the 25th (united with 202 Hon Inf Bde) to Izwor. On the 26th this group would occupy positions which had been erected on the heights at Kirlibaba. GO Pflanzner-Baltin, however, had desired that 40 Hon ID should halt their retreat at Seletin so that they could defend this road junction for as long as possible, blocking the route which led through Sergie to Uscie Putilla and the rear of Cavalry Corps Brudermann.

GdK Korda, however, wouldn't alter the directions already issued for the march of 40 Hon ID, and didn't stop at Seletin; it seemed important to him that this part of XI Corps should reach the Kirlibaba position before the Russians.

The reaction of the higher HQ

The Russian offensive in Bukovina, which was already approaching the northern approaches to Transylvania, caused great concern to the high command. Only very weak forces were available in Transylvania - gendarmerie detachments and replacement troops, from which the (XII) Military District HQ at Hermannstadt had created four "Alarm Battalions"; they guarded the upper Maros and Szamos valley at Maros Vasarhely, Des, Klausenburg and Borgo-Prund. The security troops at Borgo-Prund would occupy the Borgo Pass, in case the eastern groups of Corps Korda were thrown back through Jacobeny.

7th Army HQ was already reckoning on this possibility. GM Seeckt reported to the high command on the 23rd that new resistance would be offered on the Borgo, Rotondul and Prislop Passes if Jacobeny and Kirlibaba couldn't be held. Brigade Papp, k.k. Landsturm Battalion 150, and 10 Inf Bde would then be sent to the Borgo Pass; 40 Hon ID and the Hungarian Landsturm battalions coming by train from the Balkans (I and II/33, IV/8) would go to the Rotondul Pass. However, the defense of the Prislop Pass would have to be assigned to a brigade from either the division arriving from Tyrol or from the left wing of 7th Army.

The very dangerous Russian invasion of southern Bukovina had meanwhile compelled the high command to assign the divisions made available by Southwest Front (44 LW and 59 ID), along with VIII Corps HQ, to 7th Army. Since 24 June the 44 LW ID was already rolling toward east Galicia. Now it would be necessary to select

a point for the Division to detrain. At noon on the 24th the AOK ordered GO Pflanzler-Baltin to report where he preferred to deploy the units as they arrived. They must be used, this order continued, to ensure that "the advance of the Russians toward Transylvania and upper Hungary is halted - in the worst case scenario - at the Prislop, Rotondul and Borgo Passes over the mountains." At the same time the main body of 7th Army must stand up to the assault of 9th Russian Army between the Dniester and Pruth and in the area southeast of Kolomea. "This is necessary to gain time until it's possible to send further units to southeast Galicia." (The high command was thinking of the planned thrust along the Dniester.) However, it wouldn't be possible to count on these further reinforcements until the start of July. Referring to the political significance of the Russian offensive, the high command reminded the commander of 7th Army to urge his officers and men to hold out with all their energy. The Russians mustn't win a single foot of ground toward Transylvania and upper Hungary. "Every man in the Army must know that here he is fighting to decide the campaign and for the fate of the fatherland."

After receiving this urgent order, GO Pflanzler-Baltin reported on the same day his decision to send just one brigade (44 LW Bde of 44 LW ID) to the eastern wing of his 7th Army. More units couldn't be made available for the defense of the Carpathian crossings. The other troops of 44 LW ID, moving through Stanislau, would detrain at Kolomea. This would also be the destination of 59 ID. Pflanzler-Baltin intended to assemble these units behind the southern wing of Group Benigni to overcome the threat of a Russian envelopment there. At a later time he'd decide whether he'd be able to attack with the reinforcements, or use them just to support the front and to extend the southern wing.

10. The Armies of Bothmer and Böhm-Ermolli from 21 June to the start of July

While Letschitzky pushed back the right wing of Pflanzer-Baltin's Army in Bukovina, Shcherbachev brought 113 ID, which had been assigned to him from Brussilov's reserves, toward Burkanow and Zlotniki. Early on 21 June Shcherbachev had his artillery bombard the positions on the southern wing of Bothmer's Army on the Baryszbach and on the rolling plain at Olesza; at the same time strong forces (XXII Corps, 3 Turkestan Rif Div, 113 ID) assaulted the entire line between the towns of Gnilowody and Zlotniki. In this area he was trying to create a gap between the k.u.k. VI Corps and Hofmann's Corps. Deployed up to eight waves deep, the Finnish and Turkestan rifle regiments struck against the German 48 Res ID. Although the Russians also attacked Kotuzow, Oppeln's battalions stood unshaken. By evening all attacks had been repulsed, with heavy casualties for the enemy. The southern wing of Corps Hofmann had also held firm. After this new misfortune, General Shcherbachev felt he wouldn't be strong enough to resume the attack; he waited for reinforcements which were soon supposed to come from Bessarabia to the left wing of the Russian Eastern front.

Toward the end of June, air units of South Army reported lively railroad traffic behind the Russian front and troop concentrations in the Trembowla area. Apparently 37 ID of the Russian XVIII Corps was shifting from Shcherbachev's northern wing to Dobropole, and was entering the front between XXII and XVI Corps. A strong force of Russian cavalry was stationed at Budzanow. The prudent GdI Bothmer demonstrated by scouting operations on the road to Buczacz and at Bohatkowce that he wasn't surprised by the Russian preparations. At the request of GM Seeckt, on the 26th Bothmer sent a regiment and three batteries of German 105 ID (stationed in reserve at Kozowa) to support 7th Army; at the same time he prepared for the long-planned thrust on the Dniester. For this operation the German OHL, at the urging of Conrad, had selected two further German divisions - 119 ID from the Balkan front and 1 Res ID from the sector of their Eastern Command. Both divisions would be sent through Lemberg to South Army. Meanwhile a powerful Russian storm threatened to break loose on the Pruth. GO Conrad asked his ally for help. With a heavy heart, on the 27th GdI Falkenhayn reassigned 119 ID to the k.u.k. 7th Army.

Since 22 June the enemy had been generally quiet in front of

Bothmer's Army. During this pause in the fighting the burnt-out 39 Hon ID was taken from the front and sent back to Podhajce. 48 Res ID, which had been inserted in the Gnilowody defensive sector between VI Corps and Hofmann's Corps, was placed on 1 July under Bothmer's direct command. This Division had returned to Corps Hofmann the Aus-Hung. units which had been attached to it (LW IR 19 and Hon IR 309).

On Bothmer's northern wing, on 1 July the 32 ID was sent forward in a counterattack; after powerful artillery and trench mortar fire they took the important Heights # 309 at Worebijowka from the enemy. Possession of this area was important for the defense of the Division's entire sector. After a brilliant thrust the troops attacking under the leadership of GM Willerding - k.u.k. IR # 6 and the Prussian Reserve Jaeger Battalion 15 (from German 105 ID) - brought back more than 1100 prisoners; 13 machine guns and 2 trench mortars were seized in the conquered Russian fortifications. This success was due above all to effective preparatory artillery fire. After bloody trench fighting the front of the k.u.k. 32 ID was now firm.

As previously, the Russians were also tied down opposite the right wing of 2nd Army, between the Sereth and the Ikwa. On the northern wing of FML Kosak's Group, scouting thrusts by XVII Russian Corps led to fighting along the Austro-Russian border on 23 June. Sakharov halted the attack on the 24th. Brussilov agreed with this pause in operations, since he didn't want the center of his force to continue their offensive before the start of the West Front's long-postponed assault toward Pinsk, and the arrival of the reinforcements which the Stavka intended to bring from North Front.

11. First phase of the Battle of Kolomea

a. The fighting begins, 24-27 June

The Russian strategy

GdI Letschitzky had initially regarded the offensive through Bukovina as a secondary thrust. He wanted to drive his opponents from the Pruth so that they wouldn't be able to threaten the flank and rear of the 9th Russian Army during the offensive to the west. Now General Promptov's Group had conquered almost all of Bukovina in a few days and pushed the right wing of Pflanzer-

Baltin's Army back to the Golden Bistritz. After this surprising success, GdI Letschitzky was now tempted to advance through the Carpathian passes to Hungary. By threatening Hungary, which militarily and politically was such an important part of the Danube Monarchy, he would force the Austrians to take counter-measures and thus divide their strength by shifting troops. Letschitzky considered whether to switch the main effort of the attack to the south and the southwest, into the Carpathians.

On the other hand, on 22 June the Stavka had already ordered General Letschitzky through the commander of Southwest Front to attack with the main body of his 9th Army toward Halicz and Stanislau. General Alexeiev believed that a thrust along the Dniester could provide effective support to Shcherbachev's bogged-down 7th Army. He also was of the opinion that since the attacks in east Galicia and Volhynia had mostly died down the 9th Army shouldn't advance south in isolation into the Carpathians. He was considering a plan to invade the Hungarian plains up to Maramaros-Sziget with III Cavalry Corps. However, this wouldn't take place until 9th Army had reached the area around Stanislau.⁴⁸⁸

Both operations - the attack toward the west as well as the operation to the south - had their disadvantages. In the west the Austrians had once again entrenched opposite the stationary right wing of 9th Russian Army between the Dniester and Pruth. In the south the easily defended mountain chains of the Forest Carpathians barred the way to Hungary. There was an additional concern: Romania lay on the flank of the Russians' southern wing, and any offensive would be dangerous as long as Romania still hadn't joined the Entente side. Thus on 24 June General Brussilov had also asked GdI Letschitzky with concern why Promtov's Group had advanced so far to the south and thus exposed their rear.⁴⁸⁹ On the next day General Brussilov issued his overall instructions for resuming the interrupted general offensive. Now General Letschitzky decided to attack the Austrians stationed between the Dniester and the town of Kutuy. After the fall of Czernowitz he had already sent XII Corps into the sector south of Sniatyn and XI Corps southwest of Czernowitz so they could attack toward the west. Both of these corps would now advance west until they were in line with his Army's right wing (XLI and XXXIII Corps). At the same time 82 ID moved through Lukawetz to Kutuy.⁴⁹⁰

488Zayontschovsky, p. 39

489Litvinov, p. 61

490*Ibid.*, pp. 59 ff.

The operations

In front of 82 Russian ID, on the 24th the 40 Hon ID had left their blocking positions at Berhometh and marched to Seletin. Brudermann's right flank was now exposed, so 3 CD had to pull back their right wing from the area northwest of Berhometh to Rostoki. Weak guard detachments were sent to Uscie Putilla to provide makeshift protection for the crossing points over the uppermost reaches of the Sereth in the Czeremosz valley. Meanwhile 8 CD had hastily dug in along the heights west of Wiznitz-Kuty. Immediately north of Cavalry Corps Brudermann the 24 ID was stationed, along with Col. Kranz's attached Cav Bde and the newly-arrived k.k. Landsturm Battalion 153; their line ran along the heights north of Kuty Str. (on both sides of the Rybnica Brook), then directly west of Roznow and of Ilince on the Pruth. Behind the line FML Habermann had drawn the main body of 5 ID and the 51 Hon ID (201 Hon Inf Bde) nearer to the northern wing of 24 ID. The enemy was moving up toward 30 ID, the neighboring Division to the left, and occupied Kielichow (northeast of Zablotow). During the night Russian patrols felt their way over the Czerniawabach at several points against the positions of FML Snjaric's Group. Numerous thrusts by Russian scouts now were also evident to FML Hadfy's Group. More fighting developed on the extreme southern wing of XIII Corps. Detachments of 6 Don Coss Div swam over the Dniester at Piotrow and entrenched in front of GM Leide's Group.⁴⁹¹

On 25 June Russian cavalry from 1 Don Coss Div rode as scouts from Wiznitz toward Rostoki; on the next day the Cossacks appeared in strength before 3 CD, seeking to envelop the latter's left wing. At the same time lines of Russian riflemen advanced from Kuty against 8 CD. The southern wing of 24 ID on the Porab Heights directly north of Kuty Str. was repeatedly attacked by Russian infantry. Everything indicated that the Russians had reinforced their cavalry at Kuty with troops who'd been pulled from Bukovina. The 19 and 12 ID of the Russian XII Corps were identified opposite the northern wing of FML Habermann's Group. Airmen reported that behind the enemy front a division was marching from Russisch-Banilla to Ispas and a second division was approaching from Waschkoutz. A strong attack on Kosow was expected. FML Habermann placed his reserves in readiness - 5 ID (9 Inf Bde) on the Kuty Str.-Kosow road and 201 Hon Inf Bde at Chomczyn. GdI Bothmer gave three batteries and IR 129 of the German 105 ID (which was at Kozowa) to support 7th Army.

⁴⁹¹Bidou, "L'offensive de Broussilof" (Revue des Deux Mondes, Vol. LXXXVII, in March 1917), p. 164

On the 27th these German reinforcements were hastily brought by truck to Kolomea. Here also the first troops of 44 LW ID, approaching through Stanislau, were now arriving by train. Russian pressure was meanwhile increasing against Benigni's extended right wing south of the Pruth. In the afternoon of the 27th a heavy new attack developed against the Porab Heights. The German reinforcements were moved forward from Kolomea into the Pistynka valley. 24 ID meanwhile was able to hold their ground by counterattacking. Prisoners from 82 Russian ID were taken during this fighting. Thus it was confirmed that the Russians had taken units from Bukovina to attack the southern part of Group Benigni.

In Bukovina squadrons of Russian scouts rode forward on the 25th from Pozoritta toward Jacobeny. Before reaching the latter town they came upon their opponent's strong positions on the heights and pulled back. On the wide mountain chains lying along the Golden Bistritz the 79 Hon Inf Bde along with remnants of Papp's Brigade and 10 Inf Bde had meanwhile prepared new defenses. The Hungarian Landsturm battalions brought from the Balkans had already detrained at Borgo-Prund. After a quick march to the rear the regiments of 40 Hon ID took up a position north of Kirlibaba on the 26th. They weren't opposed by any Russians in this area. It now seemed that the Russian offensive against the northern gateways to Transylvania was of secondary importance.

By the 27th the AOK at Teschen had come to the correct conclusion that the bulk of the 9th Russian Army was deployed between the Dniester and the town of Kutuy opposite Group Benigni, while just the enemy III Cavalry Corps (1 Terek Coss Div, 10 CD) and 103 ID had penetrated southern Bukovina. In an order issued on the 27th the high command referred with understandable displeasure to the over-hasty retreat of 40 Hon ID, which had given up the mission of observing the Seletin area and completely lost contact with the enemy. Any further retreat by XI Corps, which still had 20,000 men, was out of the question. Instead Army HQ should report when the Corps would be ready to go over to the offensive. On the 27th GO Pflanzler-Baltin brought 44 LW Inf Bde, which was to support XI Corps, ahead through Körösmezö to Delatyn.

General Letschitzky meanwhile had made ready an attacking group of sixty battalions opposite the front between Niezwiska and Kutuy, which was more than 50 km long. On the 27th he ordered that the attack should commence at 4:00 AM the next day.⁴⁹² The

492Litvinov, p. 60

right wing would break through the Austrian positions with XXXIII Corps between Niezwiska and Dzurkow and XLI Corps between Dzurkow and Zamulince; on the left the XII and XI Corps would strike between Debeslawce and Kutuy. South of the Pruth the area between the towns of Debeslawce and Pistyn was to be already secured on the 28th regardless of circumstances. If their opponents were thrown back, then all four corps of 9th Russian Army would immediately pursue with their reserves. Meanwhile the attacking troops would organize and fortify the sectors they had captured. General Promptov's Group (III Cavalry Corps, 103 ID), which would cover the offensive toward the south, was instructed to have a brigade of 103 ID thrust to Jacobeny, where they would dig in and send scouting detachments into the northern valleys of Transylvania.⁴⁹³

b. The Russian breakthrough on the Pruth and at Kutuy, 28-30 June

The line is broken

In the evening of 27 June GO Pflanzner-Baltin learned that besides VIII Corps (44 LW and 59 ID) the German 119 ID was also to be sent to 7th Army. After these reinforcements arrived the offensive along the Dniester would begin, so that a success against the Russian southern wing would prevent Romania from intervening.

The anticipated Russian attacks began already in the next morning along the entire front between the Czeremosz and the Dniester. This thrust of Letschitzky's Army was directed primarily against 24 ID in the area east and northeast of Kosow, against 30 ID and 42 Hon ID on the Czerniawa, and against 21 LW ID on the hills east of Obertyn. Fighting was especially hot for the Bohemian 21 LW ID, which however succeeded in fending off all the Russian attacks. At the start the fighting also developed favorably in the south, by FML Habermann's Group. The Russians did storm the Porab Heights, which however were reconquered by the Kaiser IR # 1. The 24 ID was similarly able to halt the Russian thrust between Rozniow and Ilince. GO Pflanzner-Baltin supported this part of his front with the German IR 129, attached from South Army.

There were new Russian attacks in the afternoon. In the sector of Cavalry Corps Brudermann, the 1 Don Coss Div - reinforced by infantry from 82 Russian ID - pushed the weak outposts of the

493 *Ibid.*, p. 70

k.u.k. 3 CD between Uscie Putilla and Rostoki back over the Czeremosz and west toward Krzyworownia. At Kutu the enemy broke into the positions of 8 CD, and IR # 1 again lost the Porab Heights; the Russians were able to envelop the flank of 24 ID with a thrust from the south. At the same time the enemy attack gained ground toward Chomczyn, where troops from 51 Hon ID were inserted into the line as it fell back and fought very costly actions. The reinforcements which hastened to Habermann's right wing (IR # 93 and 54 of 5 ID) weren't able to stem the fury of the enemy attack despite all their bravery. In the evening Habermann's whole Group pulled back to Kosow and the heights farther north.

Meanwhile FML Snjaric's Group (30 ID, 42 Hon ID) was faring no better on the Czerniawa. In the afternoon their lines were broken by the impetuously attacking Russians. FML Snjaric threw his reserve, the "Varasdin" IR # 16, into the battle. This Regiment was hit in the flank and rear by the enemy and had to fall back with heavy losses. Since there was no chance that the current line could be held the next day against further assaults, in the night the Groups of Habermann and Snjaric had to be taken back behind the Pistynka Brook and into the Kolomea bridgehead on the Pruth. The troops of 44 LW ID who had already detrained were distributed throughout the bridgehead. Farther north the setback made it necessary to pull Group Hadfy back to Kamionka Wk., and to Obertyn.

On the 29th the k.u.k. 3 CD guarded the roads into the valleys of the Bilizh ("White") and Czarny ("Black") Czeremosz between Jablonica and Krzyworownia. To the left, the Russians once more pushed hard against the neighboring 8 CD and against the southern wing of FML Habermann's Group. The thinned ranks of 8 CD couldn't stand the pressure; they assembled east of Kosmacz under the protection of rear guards. The troops fighting at Pistyn (parts of 5 and 24 ID and of 51 Hon ID) were in dire straits in the afternoon. Once again the Kaiser IR # 1 threw themselves into the breach. However, the bravery of the Silesians was unable to restore the situation. In heavy and costly fighting Habermann's southern wing had to pull back to Jablonow.

Now the Russians were already standing deep in Benigni's right flank. In the evening he had to recommend to his Army commander a further withdrawal of the front to a line running through Berezow Wz., Peczenizyn, Iwanowce (west of Tlumacz) and a point east of Ottynia to the area south of Tlumacz, where a switch position was being hastily prepared. Here it would be possible for the first time to await the oncoming reinforcements and to

offer sustained resistance with the exhausted troops. GO Pflanze-Baltin found himself forced to order that Kolomea should be given up to the enemy, and that the front should be withdrawn of the line suggested by Benigni.

The withdrawal from Kolomea

The Groups of Habermann, Snjaric and Hadfy were already starting to retreat in the night of 29-30 June. Together these units, plus 8 CD, had lost almost 40,000 combatants in the last two days. In general Cavalry Corps Brudermann remained in their old areas. The 3 CD at Krzyworownia covered the route which led through Zabie to the Jablonica Pass; 8 CD took up a blocking position east of Kosmacz on the 30th. Col. Franz's Cav Bde, attached to 8 CD, maintained the connection with the neighboring unit to the left, 9 Inf Bde, which had to endure a heavy action as they marched back to Berezow. Opposite Cavalry Corps Brudermann only a weaker enemy force moved ahead to Jasienew Grn. and Kosmacz. South of the Pruth the Russian XII and XI Corps pushed hard through Jablonow and toward Peczenizyn, against Habermann's retreating Group. In the afternoon of the 30th, pursuing Russian troops were already developing an attack against the heights between Berezow Nz. and Rungory, and in front of Peczenizyn. Contact with the enemy had been broken off between the Pruth and Dniester. Here Letschitzky's leading troops reached the area west of Obertyn and of Chocimierz in the afternoon.

In the evening Cavalry Corps Brudermann stopped in the area Zabie-Krzyworownia-Kosmacz. FML Habermann's Group covered the Berezow-Delatyn road with 5 ID and half of 24 ID. The remnants of 51 Hon ID and the other parts of 24 ID were still holding the heights between Rungory and Peczenizyn, while the German IR 129 was stationed between them and the Pruth. Groups Snjaric and Hadfy had built a new front on the gently rolling heights south and east of Ottynia and south of Tlumacz.

In Bukovina, on 28 June GdK Korda sent three battalions of 40 Hon ID into the upper Moldawa valley and toward Seletin. In front of the towns of Moldawa and Izwor they came upon enemy units and weren't able to advance further. In the evening of the 29th the 10 Inf Bde was attacked on the heights east of the Golden Bistriz. Detachments of General Promtov's Russian group sought to break into Korda's positions on the heights; however, the Russians were soon put to flight by our artillery.

GO Pflanze-Baltin didn't attach any great significance to these

new actions in Bukovina. He correctly estimated that the k.u.k. XI Corps was opposed by just one infantry and two cavalry divisions. With the main body of their 9th Army the Russians were now primarily trying to achieve a breakthrough past Pistyn to Delatyn, apparently aiming to disperse the center of the k.u.k. 7th Army and to roll up the front in east Galicia from the southern wing.

Thus new tension had developed on the southern wing of the front. While the k.u.k. XI Corps was stationed far to the east on the Golden Bistritz, the main body of 7th Army had to fight between the Pruth and Dniester, and was being forced by constant attacks to give ground toward the west. Thus the front of Cavalry Corps Brudermann, which was responsible for maintaining a link with the units in Bukovina, had to be continuously extended. Behind the Cavalry Corps only some weak Landsturm formations were stationed in the Carpathian passes between Kirlibaba and Körösmező. The Jablonica Pass was endangered, as was (at a greater distance) Maramaros-Sziget. It would have been understandable if in the days of crisis during the fighting at Kolomea GO Pflanzler-Baltin had again mused whether things would have turned out better if he had been permitted to withdraw all of 7th Army behind the Pruth after the breakthrough at Okna. In any event, he was always conscious of the danger that would threaten Bothmer's Army if 7th Army withdrew.

GM Leide's Group (parts of 15 ID plus LW IR # 5 from 30 ID and k.u. Lst IR # 10) had endured heavy fighting in the last few days. Entrusted with keeping the Russians penned into the bend of the Dniester west of Piotrow, on 28 and 29 June they were assaulted by strong enemy forces which had crossed the Dniester during the great offensive against 7th Army. Although the Russians were defeated, because of the setbacks elsewhere in 7th Army GM Leide's Group had to withdraw in the night of 29-30 June to a position west of Olesza. On this new line they were attacked at noon on the 30th by Russian horsemen deployed in six waves. The onrushing cavalry - regiments from 6 Don Coss Div - were hit by well-aimed fire from the battalions of Group Leide as well as by artillery from FML Hadfy's Group, and were thrown back with heavy casualties.

While this was happening, German troops were already assembling behind the endangered junction of Pflanzler-Baltin's and Bothmer's Armies. GO Pflanzler-Baltin designated Tysmienica as the point where the German 119 ID would detrain after rolling through Lemberg and Halicz. Moreover the severe setback to 7th Army had compelled GdI Bothmer to shift the German 105 ID (which had just

two regiments available) from Koszowa to Nizniow. Thus the front between 7th and South Armies was bolstered, and the creation of a new Army was initiated.

Origins of the k.u.k. 12th Army

On 27 June GdI Falkenhayn had suggested that leadership of the planned offensive on the Dniester should be entrusted to FML Archduke Karl Franz Joseph, the Aus-Hung. heir apparent. He would command a newly-created 12th Army on the Dniester, as well as a "Dniester Army Group" which would consist of the 12th, 7th and South Armies. Falkenhayn proposed that the German GM Seeckt should be the Archduke's Chief of Staff. This idea was quite agreeable to GO Conrad, especially since he attached such great importance to the planned thrust on the Dniester in light of the Romanian danger. Conrad demanded, however, that Col. Alfred Waldstätten, hitherto Chief of Staff to the Archduke's XX Corps, should be assigned to HQ of 12th Army as a "General Staff Officer for Special Tasks." The two Emperors approved these suggestions.

On 1 July the appointment of Archduke Karl Franz Joseph as commander of 12th Army was announced. Col. Zeynek would be called back to his post as Chief of Staff to 7th Army. The HQ of 12th Army was established at Chodorow. Their first order, prepared jointly by Conrad and Falkenhayn, assigned them a major goal: "To break through the enemy front in southeast Galicia, thus opening the way to the flank and rear area lines of communication of the Russians advancing through Bukovina." All operational instructions sent to 12th Army HQ were to be issued through the Aus-Hung. high command after prior consultation with Falkenhayn.

The Archduke-Successor took up his new assignment in a very depressed mood. Besides the fact that he was leaving his "Edelweiss troops" with a heavy heart, he was aware that he was being thrust into an extremely difficult situation. In the General Staff and at the court the word "Solferino" was heard; not without reason there was speculation that the successor's ascent in the military hierarchy would be remembered in the same way as a similar unlucky event that had befallen the aged Emperor back on 24 June 1859. Also the Archduke took little pleasure in the composition of his new entourage, with a Reich-German general at its head. The knowledge that in the immediate future he would himself have to bear the burden of the increasing dependence on our stronger ally was another reason why the prince regarded the command he was assuming as a very heavy burden from the

beginning.⁴⁹⁴

c. The new crisis of 7th Army and the allied counterattacks, 1-3 July

Before 12th Army HQ could assume their responsibilities at Chodorow, new Russian attacks made it necessary to commit the troops who had gathered behind the left wing of 7th Army. The Stavka had turned their attention to the events in Bukovina and at Kolomea. To exploit the success of 9th Army, General Brussilov asked Alexeiev that a division should be transferred to this Army from the North Front. Therefore Alexeiev chose to send 108 ID and Ussuri Coss Div from North Front, plus 117 ID from Bessarabia, as reinforcements for Letschitzky. Until the intervention of these units, which could be expected around 8 July, the 7th Army would help the 9th with a division, since General Alexeiev believed that the fate of the operations would be decided by developments on the left wing of Southwest Front rather than in the sector of Shcherbachev's Army.⁴⁹⁵

General Shcherbachev pulled 47 ID from the front of XVI Corps and sent it by rail to Horodenka. 117 ID was directed to Czernowitz and the Ussuri Coss Div to Kamenets-Podolsk. 108 ID would follow later, and was assigned to replace 47 ID in 7th Army.

General Letschitzky, however, had no time to await the arrival of reinforcements. He had learned about the sudden appearance of German troops at Tlumacz. Therefore after a short pause for breath on 1 July he was already sending the center of his Army to again strike Group Benigni north and south of the Pruth.

After intense artillery fire, in FML Habermann's sector the Russians captured the heights southeast of Peczenizyn, defended by parts of 51 Hon and 24 ID, in see-saw fighting. Three Russian regiments, deployed in depth, reached the line Rungory-Kniadzdwor. On the northern bank of the Pruth, other Russian forces broke through 30 ID at Tlumaczyk and at the same time drove from the south into the Division's rear. In the evening our troops in the Pruth valley were falling back to the west. They had to be helped by 44 LW ID, assembled at Lanczyn. When the connection with FZM Benigni couldn't be restored in this critical hour, GO Pflanzler-Baltin placed FML Snjaric's Group

494See also Cramon, "Bundesgenosse" and Werkmann, "Deutschland als Verbündeter" (Berlin, 1931)

495Klembovsky, p. 60

(made up of 30 ID, 42 Hon ID and parts of 36 ID) under the HQ of Group Hadfy. FML Snjaric and Habermann received an emphatic order to stand firm. Powerful new Russian attacks in the direction of Delatyn were expected with certainty. There was an imminent danger that the groups stationed at Berezow and in the area between Kosmacz and Zabie would be cut off completely from the main body of 7th Army. To prevent this, GO Pflanzner-Baltin decided to have 44 LW ID now thrust immediately along the southern bank of the Pruth, rather than waiting for the arrival at Delatyn of 59 ID so that the two divisions could be employed together.

Also GdI Bothmer and GM Seeckt, with the agreement of the German OHL, decided on an attack to help out. G.Lt von Kraewel, commanding the German 105 ID, would attack with his own Division and 119 ID from Tlumacz southeast to Chocimierz. He would not be placed under Pflanzner-Baltin's authority. The enemy advance on the Pruth seemed vulnerable to a flank thrust.

Limited effectiveness of the allied counterattack

On 2 July Nemecek's 44 LW ID drove the Russians in the Pruth valley back through Sadzawka [Sedzawka]. The German striking group under G.Lt Kraewel gained ground southeast of Tlumacz and advanced toward Chocimierz. FML Hadfy's Group joined this advance south of Ottynia and simultaneously supported the thrust of 44 LW ID with flanking artillery fire. While this fighting continued, the 6 Don Coss Div again went over to the attack on the rolling plain at Olesza and fell upon the line held by GM Leide's Group. The attack of the Russian cavalry once more collapsed under the defenders' fire.

The thrusts by 44 LW ID on the Pruth and by Group Kraewel at Tlumacz threw the Russians onto the defensive on 2 July. Moreover, for some time it had been difficult to supply 9th Russian Army; Letschitzky would have to overcome this problem before the bulk of his soldiers could resume attacking with full impact. However, the aggressive Army commander still sent his leading divisions forward, striking toward the west. In the mountains he initiated an envelopment, aiming to secure the road and rail line which led through the Jablonica Pass into Hungary.

On 3 July, attacking groups from XI and XII Russian Corps drove the outposts of the k.u.k. 8 CD from the heights at Kosmacz back toward Tatarow and Mikuliczyn. Also the right wing of FML Habermann's badly-weakened Group had to give way to enemy pressure; they fell back from Berezow Wz. to the vicinity of

Oslawy Biale. At the same time Letschitzky mounted strong counter-thrusts on and north of the Pruth. 44 LW ID maintained themselves gallantly on the heights west of Mlodiacy, but their counterattack was stalled. The advance of Groups Hadfy and Kraewel also came to a halt.

Originally GO Pflanzner-Baltin wanted to deploy the entire 59 ID on the southern wing of Group Benigni. The retreat of 24 ID and the bitter combat at Sadzawka now forced him, however, to hold the first troops of 59 ID as they detrained at Delatyn, in readiness to either march to Oslawy Biale or to deploy in the threatened sector in the Pruth valley. On the other hand, his German Chief of Staff GM Seeckt held fast to the original plan for using the Division, and in this question didn't accommodate himself to the orders of the Army commander. Such quarrels, in which the ill-feeling of the strong willed commander of 7th Army regarding increased German influence played a part, impaired the smooth functioning of the command apparatus.

In the evening of the 3rd the Russians broke into the crumbling lines of 30 ID. Now 7th Army HQ was compelled to split up yet more units to patch up the front. Three battalions of 59 ID had to be thrown into the fighting. They were able to parry the dangerous Russian thrust. In the night the enemy was thrown back at Sadzawka.

Changes to the command structure of 7th Army

In the midst of these days of heavy fighting the chain of command and in some cases the interior alignment of the units of 7th Army underwent a reorganization. On 1 July the commander of VIII Corps, FZM Scheuchenstuel, arrived at Pflanzner-Baltin's HQ along with his Chief of Staff Col. Sündermann. Scheuchenstuel was supposed to take control of the units stationed on the southern wing of the current Group Benigni. The conditions which the commander of VIII Corps and his Chief of Staff discovered here revealed how difficult their task would be. They saw staffs which had lost their confidence, poor positions, hastily constructed lines of barbed wire, and burnt-out troops. Some of the men had lost courage and trust that they could stand up to Russian attacks. Since a large number of the newly-arrived units had already been used to plug gaps in the line, FZM Scheuchenstuel asked to be relieved of the command which 7th Army had intended to give him. Col. Sündermann joined this request. GO Pflanzner-Baltin valued FZM Benigni and his Chief of Staff, Lt Col. Max Freih. von Pitreich, because they had never shied away from the heavy burden of responsibility. Therefore they would

continue to exercise command over their own Group and over the recently-arrived reinforcements (44 LW and 59 ID). Benigni's reinforced Group was now designated the VIII Corps.

XI Corps got a new commander on the 3rd - FML Habermann, who took the place of GdK Korda. FML Snjaric's Group was assigned on the 4th to VIII Corps. Two divisions were built from Snjaric's men:

- . 42 Hon ID consisted of 83 Hon Inf and 72 Inf Bdes.
- . 30 ID consisted of 16 In Bde and the newly formed 215 Inf Bde (with IR # 97 plus Col. Bekesi's Hungarian Lst IR; the latter was created from the remnants of k.u. Lst IR # 20 and of three regiments of 51 Hon ID).

GM Foglar took over a "new" 51 Hon ID, made up of 79 Hon Inf Bde and Lt Col. Papp's Brigade. GO Conrad intended to assign the following units to the newly-formed 12th Army:

- . FML Hadfy's Group (21 LW ID, 5 Hon CD),
- . G.Lt Kraewel's Group (6 CD; German 119 and 105 ID; Group Leide),
- . XIII Corps, and
- . 1 German Res ID (which was arriving at Podhajce).

However, these troops wouldn't actually be placed under the new 12th Army QH at Chodorow until the conclusion of Group Kraewel's ongoing counterattack.

GO Conrad acquainted GdI Falkenhayn with his intentions on 2 July. The question of whether units could also be shifted to 12th Army from Army Group Linsingen hinged on the development of the situation in Volhynia. However, Conrad asked his ally to report whether it might not still be possible to bring to east Galicia new forces from France or from the front north of the Pripyat. It seemed to Conrad that 12th Army would have to be reinforced by about four more German divisions to successfully carry out the planned thrust along the Dniester, to win a decisive success over the southern wing of the Russian forces, and to prevent Romania from intervening.

In his answering telegram, GdI Falkenhayn expressed his agreement with the first part of these suggestions. However, he refused to send the German 1 Res ID to the Dniester, because a Russian attack on the Barysz Brook was anticipated as a certainty. Falkenhayn also let Conrad know that he couldn't provide the requested divisions from the West or from the front north of the Pripyat.

This was the situation when new Russian assaults were imminent on the 3rd, not just along the Baryszbach but also on the Pruth and on the Styr. These attacks would make the building of 12th Army

impossible, along with the allies' intended large-scale offensive on the Dniester.

At least the June battles had also cost the enemy heavy casualties; the Southwest Front had lost 300,000 men.⁴⁹⁶ However, the gigantic Russian Empire could make good such losses with relative ease from its resources. Now, as the Russian generals unleashed the powerful blow which they hoped would decisively hurt the encircled Central Powers, they would still be able to commit units which had yet to see action in 1916.

E. General Offensive of the Tsar's Armies in the First Half of July

1. Orders of battle on the Russian front for July 1916

The strengths shown for Aus-Hung. units are based on the records of the AOK; those shown for German units are only estimated averages.

a. Units fighting under the Aus-Hung. AOK on the Russian front as of 3 July 1916

7th Army

Commander = GO Freih. von Pflanzer-Baltin

C/Staff = Col. Ritter von Zeynek

XI Corps (24,500 foot; 126 guns)

Commander = FML Edler von Habermann

C/Staff = Lt Col. Otto von Redlich

. 51st Hon ID - GM Foglar (12,100 foot, 79 guns)

. Lt Col. Papp's Bde

. 79 Hon Inf Bde (from 40 Hon ID) - Col. Rubint

. 10 Inf Bde (from 5 ID, HQ of which was temporarily disbanded) - GM Adalbert von Kaltenborn (3200 foot, 4 guns)

. 40th Hon ID - GM Edler von Nagy (9200 foot, 43 guns)

. 202 Hon Inf Bde - Col. von Savoly

. 80 Hon Inf Bde - Col. von Sreter

Cavalry Corps Brudermann (3000 foot, 2100 horse, 36 guns)

Commander = FML Ritter von Brudermann

C/Staff = Lt Col. Edler von Dragoni

496Klembovsky, p. 58

- . 3rd CD - FML Ritter von Brudermann (1200 foot, 1100 horse, 12 guns)
 - . 10 Cav Bde - Col. Ritter von Szivo
 - . 12 Cav Bde - Col. Edler von Kirsch
- . 8th CD - GM von Fluck (temporary) (1800 foot, 1000 horse, 24 guns)
 - . 13 Cav Bde - GM von Fluck
 - . 15 Cav Bde - Col. Edler von Dokonal
 - . Col. Franz's Cav Bde

Group [Corps] Benigni (on 3 July became VIII Corps) (29,000 foot, 184 guns)

Commander = FZM Ritter von Benigni

C/Staff = Lt Col. Max Freiherr von Pitreich

- . 24th ID - GM Urbarz (6400 foot, 64 guns)
 - . 9 Inf Bde (from 5 ID) - Col. Rudolf Klein
 - . 47 Inf Bde - Col. Edler von Stransky
- . 59th ID - GM Kroupa (8500 foot, 60 guns)
 - . 18 Mtn Bde - GM Skvor
 - . 6 Mtn Bde - Col. von Hellebronth
- . 44th LW ID - FML Nemecek (11,000 foot, 60 guns)
 - . 87 LW Inf Bde - GM Jellenchich
 - . 44 LW Inf Bde - Col. Zawada
 - . 48 Inf Bde (from 24 ID) - GM von Kralowetz

Group [Corps] Hadfy (26,6000 foot, 1800 horse, 203 guns)

Commander = FML von Hadfy

C/Staff = Lt Col. Stromfeld

- . 30th ID⁴⁹⁷ - GM Jesser (3900 foot, 60 guns)
 - . 215 Inf Bde⁴⁹⁸ - Col. von Berzeviczy
 - . 16 Inf Bde - Col. Freiherr von Testa
- . 42nd Hon ID⁴⁹⁹ - FML Snjaric (8300 foot, 74 guns)
 - . 83 Hon Inf Bde - GM Bekic (included troops of the badly shrunken 84 Hon Inf Bde)
 - . 72 Inf Bde (from 36 ID) - Col. Budiner
- . 5th Hon CD - FML Freiherr von Apor (1400 foot, 1800 horse, 24 guns)
 - . 19 Hon Cav Bde - GM von Jony
 - . 23 Hon Cav Bde - Col. Graf Lubiencki

49730th ID and 42nd Hon ID made up FML Snjaric's Group, which on 4 July was again placed under Corps Benigni; on 7 July Snjaric's Group came directly under 7th Army HQ

498215 Inf Bde was formed with IR # 97 plus Col. Bekesi's k.u.

Lst IR; the latter had the remnants of k.u. Lst IR # 20 and of three regiments of 51st Hon ID.

499For 42nd Hon ID, see footnote to 30th ID above

- . 21st LW ID - GM Podhajsky (13,000 foot, 45 guns)
 - . 41 LW Inf Bde - Col. Schwanda
 - . 42 LW Inf Bde - Col. Chwostek (temporary)

GERMAN Group Kraewel (17,600 foot, 1400 horse, 131 guns)

Commander = Prussian G.Lt von Kraewel

C/Staff = Prussian Major Riedel

. Aus-Hung. 6th CD - GM Edler von Schwer (3600 foot, 1400 horse, 40 guns)

- . 5 Cav Bde - GM Kopecek
- . 14 Cav Bde - Col. Adler (temporary)
- . German 119 ID - GM von Behr (3600 foot, 38 guns)
- . German 105 ID - G.Lt von Kraewel (5400 foot, 24 guns)
- . Aus-Hung. Group of GM Leide (5000 foot, 29 guns) - Had 30 Inf Bde (from 15 ID) plus parts of 30 ID and of 39 Hon ID)

TOTALS for 7th Army = 97,600 foot; 5300 horse; 680 guns

GERMAN **South Army**

Commander = Bavarian GdI Graf von Bothmer

C/Staff = Bavarian Lt Col. Ritter von Hemmer

Aus-Hung. XIII Corps (18,600 foot; 1500 horse; 129 guns)

Commander = GdI Freiherr von Rhemen

C/Staff = Col. Csoban

- . 15th ID - GM Ritter von Weiss-Tihanyi (4000 foot, 47 guns)
 - . 29 Inf Bde (only) - Col. Pammer
- . 2nd CD - GM Freiherr von Abele (2000 foot, 1500 horse, 9 guns)
 - . 3 Cav Bde - Col. Freiherr von Spiegelfeld
 - . 16 Cav Bde - Col. Edler von Karapancza
- . 36th ID - Col. Edler von Löw (temporary) (11,400 foot; 62 guns)
 - . 75 Hon Inf Bde (from 38 Hon ID) - Col. Gombos
 - . 13 Inf Bde - Col. Edler von Löw
- . Directly under the Corps
 - . Hon IR # 302 (from 51 Hon ID) (1200 foot)
 - . Artillery - 6 guns

Aus-Hung. VI Corps (18,400 foot; 99 guns)

Commander = GdI von Arz

C/Staff = Col. Joseph Huber

- . 12th ID - FML Edler von Hinke (14,900 foot; 52 guns)
 - . 23 Inf Bde - GM Ritter von Metz
 - . 24 Inf Bde - Col. Johann Schubert
- . 39th Hon ID - GM Blasius von Dani (3500 foot, 47 guns)
 - . 77 Hon Inf Bde - Col. Lengerer
 - . 78 Hon Inf Bde - Col. Daubner
- . GERMAN 48th Res ID - G.Lt von Oppeln-Bronikowski (11,300 foot;

38 guns)

Aus-Hung. Corps Hofmann (33,000 foot; 110 guns)

Commander = FML Hofmann

C/Staff = Col. Pawlowsky

- . 54th ID - FML Daniel (16,00 foot; 52 guns)
 - . 132 Inf Bde - Col. Edler von Bolzano
 - . 131 Inf Bde - GM Blum
- . 55th ID - GM Ritter von Unschuld (17,000 foot; 44 guns)
 - . 129 Inf Bde - Col. Bankovac
 - . 130 Inf Bde - Col. von Stanoilovic
- . Corps artillery - 14 guns

Aus-Hung. IX Corps (40,600 foot; 175 guns)

Commander = FML Kralicek

C/Staff = Col. von Krammer

- . 38th Hon ID - GM von Molnar (10,100 foot; 52 guns)
 - . 76 Hon Inf Bde (only) - Col. Karleusa
- . 19th ID - FM Böltz (19,200 foot; 56 guns)
 - . 37 Inf Bde - Col. Augustin
 - . 38 Inf Bde - GM Steiger
- . 32nd ID - GM Ritter von Willerding (11,300 foot; 55 guns)
 - . 63 Inf Bde - Col. Brunader
 - . 64 Inf Bde - GM Grallert

Directly under South Army

- . German 1st Res ID - G.Lt Zietlow (7200 foot, 34 guns)
- . Army artillery - 58 guns

TOTALS for German South Army = 129,100 foot; 1500 horse; 643 guns)

2nd Army

Commander = GO von Böhm-Ermolli

C/Staff = GM Dr. Bardolff

IV Corps (26,100 foot; 102 guns)

Commander = GdI Schmidt von Georgenegg

C/Staff = Col. Edler von Merizzi

- . 14th ID - FML von Csicseric (15,100 foot; 50 guns)
 - . 27 Inf Bde - GM Horvath
 - . 28 Inf Bde - Col. Alfred von Zeidler
- . 33rd ID - FML Hordt (11,000 foot; 48 guns)
 - . 65 Inf Bde - Col. Friedrich Edler von Tomanek
 - . 66 Inf Bde - GM Brauner
- . Corps artillery - 4 guns

V Corps (16,200 foot; 50 guns)

Commander = FML Goglia

C/Staff = Col. Freiherr von Catinelli

- . 31st ID (only) - GM Lieb (16,200 foot; 46 guns)
 - . 61 Inf Bde - Col. Trajan Bacsila
 - . 62 Inf Bde - Col. Rehwold
- . Corps artillery - 4 guns

Group Kosak (30,400 foot; 86 guns)

Commander = FML Kosak

C/Staff = Major Ritter von Förtner-Strefflour

- . 27th ID - FML Kosak (22,000 foot; 50 guns)
 - . 53 Inf Bde - Col. Lederer
 - . 54 Inf Bde - Col. von Watterich
- . Directly under Group HQ (8400 foot, 36 guns) - IR # 85 (from 27 ID), IR # 76 (from 14 ID) and IR # 83 (from 33 ID) plus artillery

Directly under 2nd Army - IR # 12 (from 33 ID; 3100 foot)

TOTALS for 2nd Army = 75,800 foot and 238 guns

Army Group Linsingen

Commander = Prussian GdI von Linsingen (with the authority of a GO)

C/Staff = Prussian GM von Stolzmann

a) 1st Army

Commander = GO von Puhallo

C/Staff = GM Sallagar

XVIII Corps (19,200 foot; 88 guns)

Commander = FML Czibulka

C/Staff = Col. Larisch

- . k.k. 1st Lst Inf Bde - GM Edler von Severus (9500 foot, 42 guns)
- . 25th ID - GM von Boog (9700 foot, 46 guns)
 - . 49 Inf Bde - Col. Dr. Edler von Eccho
 - . 50 Inf Bde - GM von Stöhr

Independent 46th LW ID⁵⁰⁰ - GM von Urbanski (25,500 foot; 78 guns)

- . 91 LW Inf Bde - GM Frauenberger
- . 92 LW Inf Bde - GM Haas

TOTALS for 1st Army = 44,700 foot; 166 guns

500 Still attached to 46th LW ID were Major Trupkovic's Combined Regt, IR # 42 and the FJB # 17 and 25.

b) **Armeegruppe Marwitz**

Commander = Prussian GdK von der Marwitz

C/Staff = Prussian Col. Marquard

Directly under the Armeegruppe were...

- . Aus-Hung. 7th ID - GM Baumgartner (5400 foot, 50 guns)
 - . 14 Inf Bde - Col. von Falkhausen
 - . 71 Inf Bde - Col. Fleischmann
- . German 108th ID - G.Lt Beckmann (5400 foot, 32 guns)
- . German 22nd ID - G.Lt Dieffenbach (5400 foot, 50 guns)
- . Aus-Hung. 48th ID - FML Gabriel (6600 foot, 59 guns)
 - . 11 Mtn Bde - GM Edler von Luxardo
 - . 12 Mtn Bde - GM Prinz Schwarzenberg

Group Falkenhayn (15,800 foot; 6900 horse; 130 guns)

Commander = Prussian GdK Eugen von Falkenhayn

C/Staff = Württemberg Major Wöllwarth

- . Aus-Hung. 61st ID - FML Winkler (6400 foot, 52 guns)
 - . k.u. 16 Lst Inf Bde - Col. Bernatsky
 - . k.u. 19 Lst Inf Bde - Col. von Szabo
- . Aus-Hung. Cavalry Corps of FML Leonhardi
 - . 4th CD - FML Freiherr von Leonhardi (500 foot, 2000 horse, 16 guns)
 - . 18 Cav Bde - GM Leiter
 - . 21 Cav Bde - GM Graf Marenzi
 - . 7th CD - FML Ritter von Micewski (1700 foot, 1900 horse, 14 guns)
 - . 11 Cav Bde - GM Edler von Mold
 - . 20 Cav Bde - Col. Freiherr Regner von Bleyleben
- . German 43rd Res ID - GM von Runckel (7200 foot, 44 guns)
- . German 9th CD - GM von Heuduck (3000 horse, 4 guns)

TOTALS for Armeegruppe Marwitz = 38,600 foot; 6900 horse; 321 guns

c) **4th Army**

Commander = CO von Tersztyanszky

C/Staff = GM Berndt

Independent 10th CD - GM Viktor von Bauer (1100 foot, 1400 horse, 10 guns)

- . 4 Cav Bde - Col. Markowitz
- . 8 Cav Bde - GM von Mouillard

Corps Szurmay (7000 foot, 88 guns)

Commander = FML Szurmay

C/Staff = Col. Röder

- . 70th Hon ID - GM Goldbach (4400 foot, 32 guns)
 - . 207 Hon Inf Bde - Col. Andreas Berger
 - . 208 Hon Inf Bde - Col. Marton
- . 11th ID -GM Edler von Obauer (3100 foot, 35 guns)
 - . 4 Inf Bde - Col. Prey
 - . 22 Inf Bde - Col. Edler von Barza
- . Corps artillery - 21 guns

X Corps (9000 foot, 102 guns)

Commander = FML Csanady

C/Staff = Col. Rusky

- . 13th LW ID - FML Edler von Kalser (2500 foot, 33 guns)
 - . 25 LW Inf Bde - Col. Wurja
 - . 26 LW Inf Bde - Col. Ritter von Zygadlowicz
- . 2nd ID - GM Ritter von Jemrich (3100 foot, 16 guns)
 - . 3 Inf Bde - GM Anton Klein
 - . 19 Inf Bde - GM von Iwansko
- . 37th Hon ID - GM Haber (3400 foot, 46 guns)
 - . 73 Hon Inf Bde - Col. von Pillepic
 - . 74 Hon Inf Bde - Col. Pogany
- . Corps artillery - 12 guns

TOTALS for 4th Army = 17,500 foot; 1400 horse; 200 guns

d) German X Corps (21,200 foot; 149 guns)

Commander = Prussian G.Lt von Lüttwitz

C/Staff = Prussian Major Drechsel

- . 20th ID - G.Lt von Schöler (5400 foot, 50 guns)
- . 19th ID - G.Lt von Schmettau (5400 foot, 50 guns)
- . Aus-Hung. 29th ID - FML Schön (10,400 foot; 25 guns)
 - . 57 Inf Bde - Col. Barwik
 - . 58 Inf Bde - GM Langendorf
- . Corps artillery - 24 guns

e) **Armeegruppe Bernhardi**

Commander = Prussian GdK von Bernhardi

C/Staff = Prussian Major Klette

Directly under the Armeegruppe...

- . German Combined ID - GM Rusche (6600 foot, 53 guns)
- . 11th Bavarian ID - G.Lt Ritter von Kneussl (5400 foot, 40 guns)
- . German 107th ID - GM Hahndorff (5400 foot, 32 guns)
- . Artillery - 22 guns

Aus-Hung. II Corps (17,000 foot; 118 guns)

Commander = FML Kaiser

C/Staff = Col. Purtscher

- . 41st Hon ID - GM Schamschula (10,500 foot; 52 guns)
 - . 40 Hon Inf Bde - Col. Freiherr von Benz-Albkron
 - . 82 Hon Inf Bde - Col. Ritter von Sypniewski
- . 4th ID - GM Pfeffer (6500 foot, 62 guns)
 - . 7 Inf Bde - Col. Ritter von Steinitz
 - . 8 Inf Bde - Col. Köckh
- . II Corps artillery - 4 guns

TOTALS for Armeegruppe Bernhardi = 34,400 foot; 265 guns

f) Corps Fath (34,400 foot; 450 horse; 218 guns)

Commander = GdI Fath

C/Staff = Col. Ludvig

- . 45th LW ID - FML Smekal (10,900 foot; 450 horse; 51 guns)⁵⁰¹
 - . 89 LW Inf Bde - Col. von Habermann
 - . 90 LW Inf Bde - GM Karl Schwarz
- . 26th LW ID - FML Lischka (10,700 foot; 52 guns)
 - . 51 LW Inf Bde - Col. Rustler
 - . 52 LW Inf Bde - Col. Johann von Richter
- . 53rd ID - GM von Pongracz (12,800 foot; 109 guns)⁵⁰²
 - . k.u. 127 Lst Inf Bde - GM Tanarky
 - . 128 Lst Inf Bde - Col. Karpellus
- . Corps artillery - 6 guns

g) Cavalry Corps Hauer (11,950 foot; 4900 horse; 83 guns)

Commander = GdK Freiherr von Hauer

C/Staff = Lt Col. Ritter Fischer von Ledenice

- . Polish Legion (1 & 3 Bdes) - GM von Puchalski (4850 foot, 34 guns)
- . 1st CD - GM Chevalier de Ruiz (2600 foot, 1050 horse, 19 guns)
 - . 6 Cav Bde - Col. von Pongracz
 - . 7 Cav Bde - Col. Edler von Pollet
- . 11th Hon CD - GM Czito (2000 foot, 2400 horse, 15 guns)
 - . 22 Hon Cav Bde - Col. von Zech
 - . 24 Hon Cav Bde - Col. Hegedüs
- . 9th CD - GM von Le Gay (2500 foot, 1450 horse, 15 guns)
 - . 1 Cav Bde - Col. von Weisz
 - . 9 Cav Bde - GM Freiherr von Sessler

501TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The 450 horsemen in 45th LW ID were apparently the attached HR # 4. Also the text indicates later that the organization of Fath's units was by no means as tidy as it appears here.

502The total of 109 guns for 53rd ID includes 51 attached German pieces.

h) Army Group reserves - 2nd Bde and cavalry of the Polish Legion (Col. Küttner): 1350 foot, 450 horse, 4 guns

TOTALS for sections "d" through "h" above - 103,300 foot; 5800 horse; 719 guns

TOTALS for Army Group Linsingen = 204,100 foot; 14,100 horse, 1411 guns

TOTALS for units under the AOK on the Russian front = 506,600 foot; 20,900 horse; 2972 guns

2. Austrian troops under Woyrsch's GERMAN Army as of 3 July 1916

XII Corps (36,000 foot; 122 guns)

Commander = GdI Ritter von Henriquez

C/Staff = Col. Freiherr Zeidler Daubensky von Sterneck

- . 16th ID - FML von Schariczzer (17,100 foot; 64 guns)
 - . 31 Inf Bde - GM von Szende
 - . 32 Inf Bde - GM von Koschatzky
- . 35th ID - FML von Podhoranszky (18,900 foot; 68 guns)
 - . 69 Inf Bde - GM von Baitz
 - . 70 Inf Bde - Col. Funk

3. Russian Southwest Front as of 3 July 1916

Commander = GdK Brussilov

C/Staff = G.Lt Klembovsky

3rd Army - GdI Letsch (6 inf and 7 cav divs)

XXXI Corps [75, 83 ID], Bulatov's Combined Corps [27, 78 ID], XLVI Corps [77, 100 ID], IV Cav Corps [16 CD; 2 Comb Coss Div; 3 Cauc Coss Div]; 5 Don Coss Div, 1 Kuban Coss Div, 1 Trans-Baikal Coss Div, 3 Cav Div

8th Army - GdK Kaledin (15 inf and 3 cav divs)

V Cav Corps [11 CD; 3 Orenburg Coss Div], I Turkestan Corps [1 & 2 Turkestan Rif Divs], XXX Corps [71, 80 ID], I Corps [22, 24 ID], XXXIX Corps [102, 125 ID], XXIII Corps [20, 53 ID], XL Corps [2 & 4 Rif Divs]; independent 4 Finn Rif Div; V Sib Corps [50 ID; 6 Sib Rif Div]; 12 CD

11th Army - GdK Sakharov (12 ½ inf and 3 cav divs)

VIII Corps [14, 15 ID], XLV Corps [2 Finn Rif Div; 126 ID], XXXII Corps [101, 105 ID], XVII Corps [3, 35 ID], VII Corps [13, 34 ID; Inf Bde "Saratov"], V Corps [7, 10 ID], Prince Vadbolsky's Cav Corps [Combined CD; Trans-Amur Border CD]; independent 7 CD

7th Army - GdI Shcherbachev (13 inf and 2 cav divs)

VI Corps [4, 16 ID], XVIII Corps [23, 27 ID], XXII Corps [1 & 3 Finn Rif Divs], XVI Corps [41, 47 ID], II Corps [26, 43 ID], II Cav Corps [9 CD; 6 Don Coss Div]; 3 Turkestan Rif Div; 108 ID (arrived on 5 July front North Front), 113 ID

9th Army - GdI Letschitzky (11 inf and 5 cav divs)

XXIII Corps [1 & 2 Trans-Amur Border Divs], XLI Corps [74 ID; 3 Trans-Amur Border Div], XII Corps [12, 19 ID], XI Corps [11, 32 ID]; 82 ID & 103 ID (the 82nd and 103rd had been part of a combined corps, but now were independent); 117 ID (arrived on 5

July from Bessarabia); III Cav Corps [10 CD; 1 Don Coss Div, 1 Terek Coss Div]; Caucasian Native CD; Ussuri Coss Div (latter arrived on 8 July from North Front)

2. The general military situation at the start of the second half of 1916

The Great Powers united in the enemy alliance had persistently adhered to the military plans decided at Chantilly in December 1915 for the coming year. However, in the first half of 1916 they were unable to make their plans a reality. They had intended to simultaneously fall upon the Central Powers on all fronts in the spring - approximately in March - and thus rob their surrounded opponents of the advantage of operating on interior lines; however, England's armaments wouldn't be complete before summer. Therefore the Western powers had finally decided to schedule the start of their great combined offensive for 1 July.

Moreover, the Entente states had already lost the initiative in February because of the German offensive on the Meuse against Verdun. Falkenhayn had anticipated the efforts of the enemy. Thus the blow by the Russian West Front which Alexeiev had prepared for March, as well as Cadorna's attack in the Fifth Isonzo Battle in the same month, served only as relief offensives. Then Conrad had crossed up the Entente plans with the campaign he opened in south Tyrol in May. Again only one decision of the Entente military council could be implemented: that a member of the alliance could expect immediate help from one of its partners through a powerful diversionary operation. In this case the Tsar's Empire once more sprang to help an ally. The Russian spring offensive at Lake Narotch had not had the expected lasting effect, but the results of Brussilov's June offensive were very favorable, and successful far beyond expectations. The advance had badly shaken the Aus-Hung. Eastern armies, flung their southern wing back into the Carpathians, and driven a bulge 80 km deep into their northern wing in Volhynia. Conrad was compelled to break off his offensive against Italy, which anyway had already passed its high point, and to pull both the attacking armies back to a suitable and shorter defensive position. Since the start of June, Cadorna was preparing a counter-offensive.

In the fight around Verdun, Falkenhayn wanted to "bleed" the French Army with "the slightest possible expense to ourselves",

regardless of whether or not the objective itself was taken.⁵⁰³ For both contestants this became an extremely difficult trial of strength. The French government and people impatiently demanded that England should intervene immediately. At the front, some wanted to retreat to the west bank of the Meuse. However, General Joffre, with stubborn firmness, knew how to overcome the crisis which developed at the start of June. His compatriots held on until Albion could appear fully armed at their side. Verdun became the "symbol of France's power of resistance."⁵⁰⁴ Public opinion in the entire country was fully convinced that holding the fortress was an absolute necessity for maintaining national honor. On the other side, the commander of the attacking German troops - Crown Prince Wilhelm - already believed at the start of April that the sacrifices made were much greater than could be justified by the success achieved, and that it was hardly possible to win a decision with the methods being used.⁵⁰⁵

Meanwhile the English army had developed from a limited Expeditionary Corps into a large modern field force, thanks to the energy of the War Minister Field Marshal Kitchener.⁵⁰⁶ The Army commanders Haig and Joffre had made all their preparations for the offensive with extraordinary care and assembled enormous amounts of every type of military equipment. Trusting in their numerical and technical superiority, the Western powers eschewed surprise and preceded the Battle of the Somme, which was scheduled to start on 1 July as the opening move of the grandly-planned offensive, with seven days of artillery fire for effect. The raw power of the unleashed guns was supposed to destroy the Germans.⁵⁰⁷ At the same time the Russians, who had received technological military assistance from their allies, were now ready to send their hitherto backward forces to strike the

503Falkenhayn, "Die Oberste Heeresleitung", pp. 183 ff.; Kuhl, "Weltkrieg", Vol. I, p. 386 and 414. On 31 March the German Crown Prince still leaned to the opinion that "the fate of the French Army will be decided at Verdun and France's power to attack will be broken at Verdun." See Crown Prince Wilhelm, "Meine Erinnerungen", p. 187.

504Kuhl, "Weltkrieg", Vol. I, p. 423

505Crown Prince Wilhelm, "Meine Erinnerungen", pp. 193 and 201 ff.; Kuhl, "Weltkrieg", Vol. I, pp. 411 ff. Also see Wendt, "Verdun 1916"

506Kitchener didn't live to see the employment of the forces he'd created. On 6 June 1916, while the victor of Omdurman was on a voyage to Russia, he died at sea when the armored cruiser "Hampshire" was sunk.

507Schwarte, "Der deutsche Landkrieg", Vol. II, pp. 540 ff.

Central Powers along the entire Eastern front. Therefore the Entente states could envision the realization of their plans. The enemy coalition expected certain victory through this decisive battle of enormous extent, involving both the East and West of Europe. Moreover their diplomats, as well as military commanders like Joffre and lately also Alexeiev, were eagerly working to win the wavering Romanians as new allies.⁵⁰⁸ Fresh Romanian forces could further tighten the already choking grip on the principal opponent of the Entente.

Thus at the start of the second half of 1916, from the perspective of the Great Powers united in the multi-national coalition it seemed that prospects were very good for tipping the scales in the direction of victory for their superior force. Full of confidence, the Chief of England's Imperial General Staff (General Robertson) wrote on 30 June to the French commander-in-chief Joffre, "If we consider the situation, we both must agree that we wouldn't want to be in Falkenhayn's place."⁵⁰⁹

3. The Russian North Front. The offensive by the West Front (Battle of Baranowicze, 2-9 July)

The subsidiary attacks by North and West Fronts

According to the order issued by the Stavka on 16 June, the West and Southwest Fronts were responsible for the principal attacks. General Kuropatkin's North Front no longer had any major assignment. Thus while Evert opened his offensive on 2 July and Brussilov did the same with his northern wing on the 4th (Brussilov's southern wing had already been fighting without interruption), for the time being the only activity by North Front was a reconnaissance probe from the Riga bridgehead toward Mitau on 5 July. The regiments of 8th German Army stationed here soon drove the enemy back to their own lines.⁵¹⁰ However, because of the promising developments north and south of the Pripyat, Alexeiev felt justified on the 6th when he gave General Kuropatkin a specific order to assist in the overthrow of their opponents with his Front. This demand seemed all the more just because Kuropatkin's available force - even after many units had

508Diakow, "Rumäniens Eintritt in den Weltkrieg und der russische Generalstabschef Alexejew" (in "Mil. Wiss. Mitt."; Vienna, August 1933 edition)

509Kuhl, "Weltkrieg", Vol. I, p. 492

510Schwarte, "Der deutsche Landkrieg", Vol. II, p. 478

left to help other sectors - was still twice as large as the German force opposing him.⁵¹¹ Strong units, concentrated at one point for an energetically-led thrust deep into the enemy's line, should force the Germans to evacuate their position on the Dvina.⁵¹² As ordered, Kuropatkin prepared his own instructions aimed at opening an attack on 16 July.

General Evert's West Front struck on 2 July with two armies. The 10th, under General Radkievich, surprised the 14 LW ID of General Eichhorn's 10th German Army with a powerful mine explosion at Smorgony [Smorgon]. The first thrust into the German line succeeded. However, the defenders soon recovered from the shock of the surprise attack, and in hard fighting around the mine crater, that lasted until the 4th, they recovered the lost trenches. On the next day some new Russian assaults recoiled under the defenders' fire.⁵¹³

Plans and preparations for the Baranowicze battle

Simultaneously with this diversionary attempt at Smorgony the 4th Army launched the main Russian attack against Baranowicze.

General Ragosa's newly-assembled 4th Army took over the following units in this sector of the front from Letsch's Army:

- . IX, X, XXV and Grenadier Corps (the latter with 81 ID attached)

- . 112 ID, 7 Turkestan and 11 Siberian Rif Divs; a combined Border Guard Division, and the Polish Rifle Brigade.

III Corps was brought here from the Pinsk area. Also under Ragosa were the III Siberian and XXXV Corps (from the old attacking area of 4th Army), III Caucasian Corps and finally 5 CD. It was also expected that IV Sib Corps would join from 2nd Army by mid-July.

For the assault, General Ragosa had selected a small piece of the sector occupied by the Aus-Hung. XII Corps, between the bend in the Serwecz east of Prudy and Lake Koldyczewo. To form the striking group which was to break through to Gorodiszcze, the commander of IX Corps (General Dragomirov) would have his own divisions (5 and 42 ID) plus XXXV Corps (55 and 67 ID), which was deployed in readiness behind the front. III Sib Corps was also available as a reserve, while parts of the III and III Cauc Corps were still coming by rail. Securing the offensive toward the north was 46 ID of XXV Corps, which would thrust toward Cyryn.

511Klembovsky, p. 73; Knox, Vol. II, p. 456

512Zayontschovsky, p. 43

513Schwarte, "Der deutsche Landkrieg", Vol. II, p. 477

The units stationed south of the attacking group - the Grenadiers and X Corps - also were supposed to fall upon their opponents. The Army's heavy guns were still distributed rather evenly along the entire front, so that when the artillery fired for effect the point chosen for the main blow wouldn't be too obvious. Anyway the Russians believed they would win a decision by the weight of their massed infantry.⁵¹⁴

Since the last week of June it had been fully clear to the allies' command hierarchy that the Russians were preparing a powerful blow against GO Woyrsch's Army, under which GdI Ritter von Henriquez's XII Corps (16 and 35 ID) held a permanent position along the Serwecz River between Lake Koldyczewo and Serwecz town. The enemy's preparation of a thick maze of forward trenches, an activity that had also preceded Brussilov's offensive toward Luck, clearly revealed their intentions. Also there was no doubt about where the attack would take place. The picture was completed from statements by prisoners and deserters (as usual, there were many of the latter shortly before the day of the attack).

On 1 July, GdI Henriquez judged that he would have to deal with "serious, stubborn and well-prepared attacks" and that there would be "multiple days of fighting." To anticipate any possible Russian thrust, both the Army Group commander (Prince Leopold) and the Army commander (GO Woyrsch) had chosen some troops to be pulled from the line as reserves.⁵¹⁵ This was now carried out, and the chosen units were deployed.

The enemy artillery began their destructive work around 4:00 AM on 2 July, and during the entire day poured a rain of shells onto the defensive lines of XII Corps and of its neighbor to the south, GdK Freiherr von König's German Landwehr Corps. At this time the following units were standing behind the allied front, ready for action:

- . One German Landwehr regiment apiece as a Corps reserve behind 16 and 35 ID (respectively, LW IR 19 and 37);
- . GM Knoch's combined 9 Res Inf Bde behind the corps' center;⁵¹⁶

514Klembovsky, p. 64; Knox, Vol. II, pp. 450 ff.

515Vogel, pp 36 ff.; Schwarte, "Der deutsche Landkrieg", Vol. II, pp. 468 ff.

5169 Res Inf Bde was composed of parts of 5 Res ID (the main body of which was concentrated under Group Gronau west of Pinsk) and parts of 49 Res ID (which was stationed to the left of the k.u.k. 35 ID, and belonged to XXV Res Corps of 9th German

. Two regiments plus artillery under G.Lt Kramsta (the commander of 4 LW Bde) behind the southern wing of 16 ID; and finally

. Several battalions and batteries at and south of Baranowicze as reserves for the Landwehr Corps.

In the evening the Russians filled their trench labyrinth; the first, exploratory thrusts of the enemy were repulsed.

Army) .

3 July

After a short but heavy barrage, around 2:00 AM on 3 July the Russians (IX and XXXV Corps plus 46 ID of XXV Corps) struck the 7½ kilometer wide part of XII Corps' front between Wyzorok and Karczewa.⁵¹⁷ An hour later GdI Henriquez was already getting reports that the Russians had pushed back the center of 16 ID and the inner wings of both his divisions, and were advancing west in the Serwecz valley. 35 ID had sealed off the area of penetration north of Karczewa, and the commander of 70 Inf Bde (Col. Funk) had started to counterattack with the four battalions he'd assembled. The German LW IR 37 was quickly notified, and from Prudy they threw themselves against the attackers. GO Woysch ordered that "the situation at Karczewa should be restored by all available means", and made Knoch's Brigade available. XII Corps entrusted direction of the counterattack to the commander of 35 ID, FML von Podhoranszky, who was to lead all the units (LW IR 37, Knoch's Brigade and Funk's Group) in a concentric operation against the encroaching enemy. 16 ID would move a German battalion to support their northern wing in the direction of Prudy and would recapture the lost positions at Wyzorok.

While in general the allies had restored their original first line north of the Serwecz bend soon after the noon hour, the fighting in 16 ID's northern sector raged back and forth between the first and second positions. Neither the German LW IR 19, which had already intervened during the first Russian onslaught, nor battalions drawn from Kramsta's group were able to force the enemy back. Just as the crisis of the neighboring Division subsided, the Russians made a major new inroad through Skrobowa toward the west. The Corps commander now felt that the day's most important task was to drive the Russians out of this area. For this purpose, all of G.Lt Kramsta's available troops, plus a German Jaeger battalion which meanwhile had been brought to Gorodiszcze by truck, were to mount a coordinated counterattack around 6:00 PM. 35 ID had sent one regiment of Knoch's Brigade to the south. The deployment of these units, however, was delayed. Meanwhile the attacking enemy waves continued to press without pause against the badly weakened defenders of the Wyzorok-Skrobowa sector, so that by evening the entire k.u.k. 31 Inf Bde had pulled back to the second position. The counter-attack, rescheduled for 8:00 PM, had to be canceled because the units were needed for defensive purposes. The 32 Inf Bde had held onto all their trenches. The 69 Inf Bde, which made up the northern wing of 35 ID, had hardly been disturbed by the enemy.

517Klembovsky, pp. 64 ff.

The situation of Woyrsch's Army was serious. It was true that the Silesian Landwehr Corps had handed the oncoming Russian waves (Grenadier Corps and part of X Corps) a very bloody rebuff, and had lost hardly a sentry post. On the other hand, the enemy's powerful thrust against the k.u.k. XII Corps had been contained only with difficulty and after some ground had been lost, despite the intervention of all the reinforcing troops. All the evidence (including aerial reconnaissance and prisoners' statements) indicated that the enemy still had significant forces ready to carry on the fight with increased power starting in the next few days. However, GFM Prince Leopold, who'd visited the HQ of both Aus-Hung. divisions during the day, would have difficulty providing further reinforcements. Only limited help could be offered, because the outnumbered German Eastern front expected attacks everywhere. Thus the risk of pulling troops from a sector could only be justified if necessary to support an extremely endangered part of the front.⁵¹⁸

Toward evening GdI Henriquez was informed that the bulk of 5 Res ID (two regiments and four batteries) would arrive the next day along with two heavy batteries from XXV Res Corps. Also, three recruit battalions and three batteries would come from the area of Army Group Hindenburg. Everything hinged on whether XII Corps, supported by the German troops on hand, could hold their lines - especially opposite the bulge in the front - until the next effective units were in place. Therefore in the evening of the 3rd GdI Henriquez demanded that his soldiers offer stubborn resistance.

4-7 July

Fighting flared up repeatedly during the night and in the early morning hours of 4 July in 31 Inf Bde's sector, and also west of Karczewa; the Russian assaults were repulsed. Here the enemy brought III Cauc Corps (21 and 52 ID) up to the battle line under cover of artillery fire. The allies meanwhile made use of the time to prepare for the next collision. The bulk of the German reserves had been sent to the most endangered area, Wyzorok-Karczewa; the commander of 5 German Res ID, GM von Woyna, took control of this sector. The front of 32 Inf Bde remained under 16 ID headquarters. Order was restored to the intermingled units to the extent permitted by the enemy's reaction. Casualties had been heavy. 31 Inf Bde HQ reported a loss of about 5000 men;

518Ludendorff, "Meine Kriegs-Erinnerungen 1914-1918" (Berlin 1919-20), pp. 176 ff.

both regiments of this Brigade (IR # 2 and Res IR # 2) had suffered severely, as had a battalion of k.u. Lst IR # 34 on the southern wing of 35 ID.

In the afternoon the Russians again drove their infantry forward. Fighting engulfed not only the points around the area of the Russian penetration, which had been hotly-contested earlier, but also spread south to the adjacent wing of 32 Inf Bde (IR # 64) and north on 35 ID's front as far as Pietuchowka. This pinned the defenders down and forced them to divide their reserves carefully. At the same time the enemy storm struck the Landwehr Corps. Yet the deeply-deployed attacking masses bled to death along the entire front due to the allies' determined, powerful resistance. The Russians gained a greater success only against 3 LW ID, but even here it was already possible in the next morning to restore the situation with a counterattack. Early on 5 July the XII Corps fended off some small attacks, and then the fighting mostly trailed off into occasional infantry skirmishes or harassment fire by artillery.

6 July also passed rather quietly because GdI Evert, commander of the Russian West Front, ordered that the attack wouldn't resume until the 7th due to the need to regroup the units.⁵¹⁹ The allied generals regarded this short pause - which was helpful to the troops who'd been under strain for days - as just a break before a new storm and made their preparations accordingly. Efforts were made to repair the destroyed trenches and to close gaps in the obstacles during the night. The weak battalions of 31 Inf Bde were pulled from the front of 5 Res ID and united under IR # 2. The Reserve IR # 2 was dissolved. A newly-arrived German regiment was stationed in the Army's reserve behind the center of XII Corps; 49 Res ID shifted another regiment to the Army boundary as an Army Group reserve.

Early on the 7th, fire from the northern wing of 16 ID drove back a line of Russian skirmishers, behind whom some compact mounted detachments were spotted. Soon enemy batteries of all calibers up to 28 cm mortars again began their destructive bombardment of the front from Wyzorok to Cyryn. For a while the rain of iron against Woyna's Division escalated to drumfire.⁵²⁰ By their systematic firing to create openings in our barriers the Russians revealed the fact that this time they were also paying particular attention to the sector of 35 ID north of Karczewa. Their guns bombarded the first and second positions as well as the approach

519Klembovsky, p. 66

520*Ibid.*, p. 67

routes lying behind them. GO Woyrsch shifted his last reserve, a regiment, behind 5 Res ID; the troops at the disposal of the Army Group (the regiment detached from 49 Res ID) were ordered to Woroncza in the evening. The Russians tried to attack in the afternoon, but suffered bloody defeat throughout XII Corps' sector. The Russian Grenadiers and 11 Sib Rif Div likewise received a sharp setback at the hands of the German Landwehr Corps.

8-9 July

On 8 July the battle raged anew. The enemy had brought up 3 Gren Div (from XXV Res Corps) opposite the Aus-Hung. 35 ID, and the fresh III Sib Corps opposite Woyna's Division. Starting at 2:00 AM the Russians assaulted the allies' destroyed trenches, ruthlessly expending manpower. Advancing in ten to twelve rows, most of the attackers were soon broken up by the defenders' fire, suffering very severe losses. Some Russians entered the position of IR # 51 of 35 ID, but were thrown out in hand-to-hand combat. Both sides carried on the fighting with stubborn bitterness for the entire day, but the enemy couldn't enlarge the area they'd conquered on 3 July.

To make it easier for XII Corps to control the fight north of the bend in the Serwecz, at the orders of GO Woyrsch the Bavarian GM Zoellner (commanding 49 Res ID) took control of the sector as far as the Pietuchowka. In an analysis of the situation, GdI Henriquez stated that he anticipated further Russian attempts to advance through Gorodiszczce, accompanied by subsidiary attacks north of Karczewa. The available units were sufficient for defensive purposes and to achieve small-scale local successes. For now, however, it wasn't feasible to conduct a general and systematic counterattack in Woyna's sector to recover the lost first position. Meanwhile the German leadership was finding reinforcements. Early on the 8th a German Landwehr regiment was already stationed behind 5 Res ID; during the 9th the first echelons of G.Lt von Wernitz's 86 ID joined Woyrsch's Army.

The expected enemy assault didn't occur, and the battle died down on 9 July. Based on new orders from the Stavka, the commander of the West Front decided to halt the attack of Ragosa's Army until the arrival of IV Sib Corps. The results of the seven days of heavy fighting were quite meager. Despite a great numerical superiority, the Russians hadn't broken through toward Brest-Litovsk. The subsidiary operations of 10th and 2nd Armies (the 2nd Army had launched a thrust between Lakes Wiszniew and Narotch on

4 July) had completely failed to divert the Germans.⁵²¹ Also the fighting on the Szczara and the Serwecz had done nothing to assist the northern wing of Southwest Front. A small piece of ground had been far too dearly bought by casualties which were extraordinarily high even by Russian standards - 80,000 men.⁵²²

Because of the casualties and the Russians' failure to achieve their far-reaching goals, the July Battle of Baranowicze was a serious defeat for their high command. The long-prepared offensive of the West Front, which was supposed to win a decision for the Tsar's armies, had collapsed. The Central Powers could count this defensive battle as a great success.

4. The onslaught of the northern wing of the Russian Southwest Front

a. Linsingen loses the bend in the Styr at Czartorijsk and retreats behind the Stokhod, 4-9 July

After the Russian West Front started to attack on 2 July, Brussilov once more on 3 July called upon the five armies of his Southwest Front to strike out in accordance with the orders issued at the end of June.⁵²³ In the morning of the 4th, while Letsch's and Kaledin's Armies were already pounding with their guns on the sectors they'd selected to attack on the northern wing of Linsingen's Army Group, a report from GO Linsingen arrived at Teschen. It stated his intentions for the immediate future, based on the current situation. Linsingen was certain that the Russians would attack with significant force in the following days. For the moment the inner wings of Group Bernhardt and Corps Fath were in the greatest danger, since here the Russians were strong and the allies weak. The Army Group's center (4th Army and German X Corps) didn't seem to be threatened. The center units therefore could be weakened by extending their front; in the next few days their only mission was diversionary activity. On the other hand, the attacking wing

521 Schwarte, "Der deutsche Landkrieg", Vol. II, pp. 477 ff.

Klembovsky (pp. 62 ff.) especially bemoans the weak performance of 2nd Army, which failed to utilize their superior strength (140,000 men against 50,000 Germans).

522 Klembovsky, p. 66; Knox, Vol. II, pp. 451 ff.; Zayontschovsky, p. 42

523 Baluiev, p. 69

of Group Marwitz should be strengthened and - above all - Corps Fath should be supported. For this purpose Bernhardi was holding 11 Bav ID in readiness at the bend in the Stokhod near Ugly. Army Group HQ believed that the measures they'd initiated would first repulse the enemy, and later enable Marwitz's Armeegruppe to successfully resume their advance. At the same time, the Aus-Hung. high command learned that at the orders of GdI Falkenhayn, the German Chief of Staff, Linsingen was assembling a combined brigade to help Woysch's Army. This force was being taken from Lüttwitz's Corps and consisted of 37 German Inf Bde (of 6 battalions) plus 1 squadron and 8 batteries.

4 July

On 4 July the 3rd Russian Army struck the center and southern wing of Cavalry Corps Hauer (GM Czito's 11 Hon CD and GM von Puchalski's Polish Legion). In the morning Bulatov's Corps attacked with 27 ID mainly along the road which led to Galuzia, and established themselves firmly in the abandoned outpost positions. A Russian detachment that penetrated the main position was rendered harmless by evening, thanks to the sector reserves, and the first position was held against other thrusts. The Polish Legion was engaged by 100 Russian ID in a hot struggle around the Kostiuchnowka bridgehead.⁵²⁴ Toward evening, after a gap of 1½ km opened between the Poles and GM von Pongracz's adjacent k.u.k. 53 ID, the enemy pushed back the extreme southern wing of the 1st Polish Brigade. GdK Hauer ordered GM von Puchalski to help 53 ID with his free battalions. Moreover, Puchalski would be given two battalions of the Army Group's reserves, over which Hauer had already received authority around noon, and which he was moving to the Wolczek railroad station. They wouldn't arrive until midnight. Meanwhile a Polish counterattack relieved the neighboring division, and made it possible to re-occupy the strongly fortified "Polish Hill", which dominated the gap in the line. The Legion's 1st Brigade, on the other hand, had to give up the part of the bridgehead they still held, and to fall back into the second position. The adjacent 3rd Brigade held onto a switch position and abandoned just their outpost line to the Russians. Throughout the day the 1 CD, stationed to the left of 11 Hon CD, was bothered only by artillery fire. 9 CD, which made up the Cavalry Corps' northern wing, saw no action at all.

524Sadowski, "The Polish Legion in the actions at Kostiuchnowka on 4-6 July 1916" (in Polish; in Bellona, Dwieniesiecznik Wojskowy; Warsaw, May to August editions, 1931)

The day was much more unfavorable for Corps Fath. The units and their HQ had remained intermingled since the June fighting along the Styr. 53 ID made up the left wing. FML Lischka's 26 LW ID HQ commanded the central sector (51 and 90 LW Inf Bdes). FML Smekal's 45 LW ID HQ commanded the right (western) wing with 52 LW Inf Bde between Raznicze and Tuman, and Col. Janky's Group from Tuman to a point east of Gruziatyn. Lischka and Smekal each commanded some battalions from all three divisions of the Corps. With Janky were LW IR # 11, several other infantry companies, and HR # 4 (from Cavalry Corps Hauer). The three remaining battalions of 89 LW Inf Bde made up Fath's Corps reserve, stationed behind the right wing. Since the Russians already intended to attack the Tuman area, II Corps was asked to have 4 ID lend artillery support to their neighbor, 45 LW ID. LW IR # 30 (with two battalions) was held as a ready reserve behind the point where II and Fath's Corps came together. In the morning of 4 July GdK Bernhardi made 11 Bav ID available; their first troops were moving toward Ugly.

Since 8:00 AM the enemy artillery fire increased against the positions of 45 LW ID. The trenches on both sides of Tuman were demolished, and the number of defenders gravely diminished. The Turkestan Rifles and parts of XXX Russian Corps assaulted the inner wings of Group Janky and 52 LW Inf Bde.⁵²⁵ The Corps commander wanted to restore the lost battle line with a counterattack. The reserve troops (of 89 LW Inf Bde) would strike from the north while LW IR # 30 (which Bernhardi had placed under Col. Janky as ordered by GO Linsingen) struck from the west. But the reserves in 45 LW ID's sector were engulfed in the maelstrom of unfolding events. The enemy thrust to the north, drove Group Janky back to the northwest, and rolled up the defensive front east toward Kopyli. The counterattacks of several weak units broke down into confused, uncoordinated local actions in the forests and swamps. The available forces were rapidly melting without accomplishing anything. Since GdI Fath's reserves were already used up, at noon he turned to GdK Hauer, who instructed DR # 4 (from the Army group reserves) to ride to the assistance of 45 LW ID.

Meanwhile stragglers, batteries and vehicles streamed back on the routes to Gradie, which was already in the range of enemy fire. FML Smekal blocked the approaches to Gradie with divisional cavalry and the last companies of 89 LW Inf Bde. When Kopyli was lost soon after 12:00 noon, GdI Fath intended to have the

⁵²⁵Wisshaupt, "Die 52. Landwehr Brigade im Weltkrieg", pp. 394 ff.

defeated troops from the sector of 52 LW Inf Bde join several companies brought from 26 LW ID to create a new line of resistance on the Ranicze-Dolzyca road. Meanwhile the LW IR # 11 had guarded the connection with 4 ID, and after several unfortunate episodes established a hook-shaped line. Northeast of this Regiment, Col. Janky managed to assemble splinters from his Group; when he was joined by LW IR # 30, in the afternoon he re-entered the fighting. His thrust couldn't break through but seemed to have reduced the Russians' momentum; two guns of 4 ID, which had fallen into enemy hands, were recovered.

Around 3:00 PM Army Group HQ ordered that the gap in the front should be sealed by a counterattack involving all available reserves in II Corps. Fath's Corps would cooperate simultaneously. FML Kaiser was responsible for the unified and coordinated disposition of the units. He placed under 4 ID all the troops from the neighboring corps who'd been pushed to the west. The commander of 7 Inf Bde, Col. Steinitz, took over these units as well as LW IR # 30 and a battalion from 41 Hon ID to create the attacking group; two more battalions from the Honved Division were on their way. GM Pfeffer guarded the road leading to Ugly from the east with the last troops of 4 ID able to bear arms - the cavalry, a March company, pioneers and some men from the supply train. However, the counterattack by Steinitz's group didn't take place. This was due in part to the fact that GdI Fath couldn't participate since he had no more reserves, and in part to delays in the deployment of troops on the eastern wing of 4 ID. The 11 Bav ID reported to II Corps that their leading detachments, exhausted from marching in the scorching July sun, couldn't reach the area of the attack before evening.

By evening it was possible to view the situation more clearly and calmly. The enemy detachments which had pushed into the area of penetration had now pulled back somewhat. The bulge in the front had been contained in makeshift fashion by Col. Steinitz northeast of Gruziatyn, by the weak 89 LW Inf Bde (500 men and 2 batteries) southwest of Gradie, and by troops from Corps Fath along the road to Raznicze. However, all these battle groups were just loosely linked together. During the day the enemy had neutralized the center and left wing divisions of Corps Fath, as well as the front of Corps Kaiser, with artillery fire. As darkness gathered, the Russians fell upon 4 ID, but were driven back by IR # 8 and 49.

5 July

For the next day, GO Linsingen ordered a coordinated attack by

Kaiser's and Fath's Corps to throw the enemy back over the Styr. For this purpose most of the Bavarian Division was placed under FML Kaiser to join the group attacking from the west; the right wing of Corps Fath at Gradie was to make up the eastern group. A combined Bavarian regiment under Col. Grossmann, which had marched from Ugly to Dolzyca around 3:00 AM, was to give fresh energy to 45 LW ID.⁵²⁶ A Polish battalion from Corps Hauer was on their way to Gradie. Moreover, GdI Fath could expect a Bavarian Landsturm battalion to arrive at the Maniewicze railroad station around 5:00 AM.

On the 5th the Russians intensified their efforts to force the collapse of their opponents' brittle front.⁵²⁷ The main body of 3rd Army (XLVI and Bulatov's Corps) was sent against the inner wings of Hauer's and Fath's Corps. In the sector held by Hauer's cavalry regiments, powerful artillery fire pounded 11 Hon CD, 1 CD and for a time also 9 CD. The assaults toward Galuzia by the Russian 27 ID were broken by the resistance of GM Czito's Honved Hussars. In the sector of the Polish Legion, the strong point south of Kostiuchnowka was already lost again in the first hours of the morning. Then Puchalski shifted his last reserves south so that they could stay linked with the northern wing of 53 ID (which had also fallen back) in the second position. Now Col. Küttner (the commander of 2nd Polish Brigade), working with weak parts of 53 ID and with reinforcements forwarded by Fath (DR # 4 and the Bavarian Landsturm battalion), was supposed to redeem the perilous situation southwest of Kostiuchnowka where the fronts of 53 ID and the Legion came together. He would counterattack with the Legion's lengthened wing. Although the "Polish Hill" was recovered once again, Küttner's counterattack soon had to be given up. Because of the critical situation of 45 LW ID, Corps Fath once more called back the promised reinforcements at noon. In the afternoon Russians from Kostiuchnowka attacked 1st Polish Brigade with a powerful blow and threw them back to the west, inflicting heavy casualties. Küttner's Group, which suffered a similar assault, was reduced to just 1300 men (including the Bavarian Landsturm Battalion, which hadn't marched away). Over night Küttner set up a thin oblique defensive line between 53 ID and the Legion, which had been pushed back to Wolczek. North of this town the remnants of the battered 1st Brigade maintained a very tenuous link with the 3rd Brigade, whose left wing was still in the first line, adjacent to 11 Hon CD. GdI Fath ordered 53 ID to safeguard the Wolczek railroad station under all circumstances; as on the previous day, the center and southern wing of

526Mayer, p. 60

527Baluiev, p. 69

this Division had been able to hold their ground against weak Russian operations.

During the night of 4-5 July the enemy caused tension in 26 LW ID's sector with sudden burst of artillery fire. Their attack toward Raznicze was fended off by 45 LW ID in the early hours, and the bridge at Kolki was set afire. In the morning the Ist Turkestan Corps made a powerful assault from Kopyli against the left wing of 45 LW ID, and caused it to waver. GdI Fath didn't want to surrender the defensive line along the road toward Gradie which he'd just established, since he was expecting certain relief from the coordinated counterattack of II Corps scheduled for 5:00 PM. However, his shaken troops didn't have enough power of resistance. The Russian advance had also torn up the flank of 90 LW Inf Bde at Raznicze, and the attackers' strong pressure toward the northeast threatened to roll up the Styr front, which was still held by 26 LW ID. To avoid further disaster, the Corps commander had to decide to withdraw the western wing of this Division to the northeast, and to pull back the troops of 45 LW ID, including the disorganized units of 52 LW Inf Bde, to the line Komarow-Gradie. DR # 4, which had been marching to the Corps' northern wing, was diverted and took up their assigned covering position behind 90 LW Inf Bde. In the evening parts of 26 LW ID and the remnants of 52 LW Inf Bde deployed on the shorter front line.⁵²⁸ The northern wing of 26 LW ID was still in the permanent position on the Styr. The Russian thrust through Kopyli had shifted west in the afternoon; finally it was halted in front of Gradie by 89 LW Inf Bde, aided by Grossman's Bavarian Regiment. Thus, however, it became impossible for this western group of the Corps to cooperate in the planned general counterattack.

Early on the 5th, gradually increasing artillery fire was directed against Bernhardt's entire front, especially against II Corps. Although some of it was aimed at 41 Hon ID, it was clear that the enemy's intention here was merely to pin down the troops. I Russian Corps on the left bank of the Styr also was given the assignment of tying down their opponents with diversionary attacks, which however were easily repulsed by Hahndorff's and Rusche's German divisions.⁵²⁹ Serious assaults were aimed at GM Pfeffer's 4 ID. The attacks of XXX Russian Corps were shattered on the prepared positions of IR # 8, 49 and

528TRANSLATOR's NOTE - At this time 52 Bde was still not under 26 ID HQ, but attached to 45 ID; the 26 ID, as noted above, had the 51 and 90 Bdes.

529Baluiev, p. 69

99 in front of Gruziatyn. However, the somewhat brittle front of Group Steinitz (7 Inf Bde) suffered local setbacks. A dangerous crisis developed for LW IR # 11, but it was mastered by the commander of the neighboring Bohemian IR # 8 thanks to his decisive personal intervention.⁵³⁰ The main body of 11 Bav ID meanwhile arrived at Ugly after losing a large number of men during the march due to the oppressive summer heat. FML Kaiser was convinced that an attack with over-tired troops would have little prospect of success. For this reason, and due to enemy pressure (especially against Fath's neighboring Corps), in the afternoon Kaiser abandoned the plan for a counterattack; 7 Inf Bde was ordered to by all means hold their positions. Col. Steinitz was sent Bavarian detachments made up of troops still able to march, along with machine guns. After heavy fighting, he was able with these reinforcements plus his own reserves to stiffen his front as the sun went down, and to close all the gaps. The commander of the Bavarian Division, G.Lt Kneussl, took over 7 Inf Bde's sector; he was instructed to deploy one regiment behind Group Steinitz, to send another east through Ugly, and to guard against a possible envelopment of his northern wing from the Gradie-Dolzyca-Sofianowka area. In the evening, after the Bavarian Division had also entered the fighting, all danger to the left wing of II Corps had subsided.

The critical situation of Corps Fath had meanwhile prompted GO Linsingen to send Col. von Roeder's 37 German Inf Bde, originally intended for Woyrsch's Army, to Maniewicze as an Army Group reserve. Since this unit couldn't be employed until 7 July, the counterattack toward the Kolki area was postponed until that day. Meanwhile the two Aus-Hung. corps were supposed to hold on at all costs in the positions they occupied. On 7 July FML Kaiser would attack toward the east; the 37 Inf Bde would attack toward the south, bringing Fath's right wing with them.

6 July

Early on the 6th, the corps commanders Hauer and Fath were trying above all to strengthen the point where their two wings came together north of the railroad, by the battered Polish Legion. GM Pongracz of 53 ID took control over Group Küttner as far as the town of Wolczek. To support this Group, a battalion and a

530As commander of IR # 8, Col. Eduard Hospodarz was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order for his firm leadership of the unit on 4 and 5 June at Czernysz, and on 5 July here at Gruziatyn. Also, on 11 June he had fought at the head of a battle group at Tuman on his own initiative.

battery of the Army Group reserve were sent forward by train and deployed at Wolczek. Hauer reinforced the Legion with the cavalymen of HR # 7 and sent the remaining parts of his Corps reserve (two very weak Polish battalions and several foot squadrons) behind the southern wing of 11 Hon CD.

The Russians had a good knowledge of the damaged points on the opposing front, and didn't slacken the pressure against the Poles on one hand, and 45 LW ID on the other. After directing drumfire against the positions in front of Gradie at noon, the enemy broke through the right wing of Smekal's Division and pushed it back to Dolzyca. If the line Gradie-Komarow could no longer be held, Army Group HQ wanted Corps Fath to withdraw only to a line behind the Okonka between Kukli and Nowosielki. As they did so, the parts of 37 Inf Bde which had already arrived plus the combined Bavarian regiment would protect the Corps' right flank in the Dolzyca-Jablonka area. However, the discussions between the various headquarters regarding the feasibility of this measure were interrupted by additional bad news.

The Russians had meanwhile thrown the Polish Legion out of Wolczek; they pushed the Poles' southern wing northwest toward Maniewiczze, and the isolated northern wing of 53 ID back along the railroad to the west. Thus a gap of 4 km opened between the Corps of Fath and Hauer. Since both wings of Corps Fath had been beaten while the center still jutted forward in the bend of the Styr at Czartorijsk, there was a great danger that the Corps would be cut off from its neighbors and completely encircled. In the afternoon GO Linsingen reported to Conrad that because of the troops' sinking power of resistance and the lack of reserves he was left with just the "difficult decision" to gradually pull his northern wing, in cooperation with Group Gronau, back behind the Stokhod by 8 July. Hauer would bring 11 Hon CD back to Galuzia. Fath would restore his link with the Poles east of Maniewiczze town and withdraw his Corps past the Maniewiczze railroad station to Dolzyca, setting up a front that faced east.

When GdK Hauer had first learned of the Poles' misfortune he wanted to have their 3rd Brigade protect 11 Hon CD by taking up a new covering position. However, the entire Legion had been outflanked by the Russians north of the railroad and was already falling back. Hauer's order that the Legion's left wing would stay in step with the Honved Hussars didn't reach 3rd Brigade. Thus the sudden departure of the Poles uncovered the right flank of GM Czito's Division. The enemy thrust ahead with infantry and cavalry, occupied Galuzia, and forced the Honved Hussars to retreat with very heavy losses. 1 CD now had to pull back immediately to the second position, and 9 CD joined this movement. The supply trains moved to the west bank of the Stokhod. Overnight the remnants of 11 Hon CD assembled north of Maniewiczze; the town was guarded by the Polish Legion, deployed in a half-circle to the east as far as Perekrestie.

The retreat of Corps Fath, which had almost been placed in a sack, was difficult. On the northern wing of 53 ID, Group Küttner fell back when the Russians advanced toward the Maniewiczze railroad station. Therefore the German battery which had been sent forward here in the morning couldn't save their guns. In the afternoon the enemy also took Lisowo south of the railroad, so that now parts of 53 ID and of 26 LW ID had to set up a front facing north to cover the columns retreating to Okonsk. Some of the German positional batteries attached to 53 ID couldn't be brought to safety and had to be blown up.⁵³¹ Finally at night, after strenuous marches, the divisions reached

⁵³¹The positional batteries consisted of captured Russian guns without teams of horses.

the lines designated by their corps. The right wing of 45 LW ID had not only held onto Dolzyca, the pivotal point of the shifting front, as they'd been ordered; in the evening they even threw the enemy back through Gradie, thanks to a thrust by the Bavarians.

On the 6th FML Kaiser was trying to bring order to the units of his northern wing in preparation for the counterattack scheduled for the next day. However, he didn't make much progress, since new enemy thrusts forced 4 ID and the Bavarians onto the defensive. The retreat of the neighboring corps made it necessary toward evening to establish a continuous secure line north of Ugly and Kaszowka; this was set up by newly-arrived March battalions, and then by Bavarian and Aus-Hung. horsemen.

7 July

The further retreat of Corps Hauer and Fath to the west, which started soon after midnight on 7 July, also involved II Corps. FML Kaiser's troops were able to break free of the enemy without interference. By around 5:00 AM the 41 Hon ID had taken up a new position west of Gruziatyn, as had the neighboring 4 ID and 11 Bav ID on the left, in a half circle on the edge of the woods east of Ugly. A line of forward outposts extending north protected the Stokhod bridge at Kaszowka. XXX Russian Corps followed very slowly, and dug in west of Gruziatyn.⁵³²

Since the enemy had stopped pursuing Fath's troops in the evening of the 6th, his units were able to resume their rearward march at daybreak on the 7th without interference. 26 and 45 LW ID pulled back through the covering lines of Roeder's German Brigade at Sofianowka and Jablonka-Borowaja, the former to Iwanowka and the latter Division even further (to Hulewicze). The Germans then followed, on the same route, to Powursk.⁵³³ After destroying the railroad installations at Maniewicze, 53 ID withdrew from Okonsk to Trojanowka, which was also the destination of parts of the Polish Legion (placed under GdI Fath since morning). A larger group of Poles went back to Nowa Ruda. Russian horsemen had already occupied the Maniewicze railroad station soon after the departure of the Aus-Hung. troops. To keep the enemy cavalry from crossing the Stokhod, GO Linsingen ordered that Trojanowka should be strongly guarded toward the east, and that reliable detachments should occupy the river crossing points between Sitowicze and Stobychwa.

⁵³²Baluiev, p. 69; Klembovsky, pp. 68 ff.

⁵³³Ebeling, "Geschichte des Infanterie Regiments Nr. 78 im Weltkrieg" (Berlin-Oldenburg, 1924), p. 123

In Hauer's Cavalry Corps around 1000 hussars of 11 Hon CD assembled during the 7th on the west bank of the Stokhod at Bol. Obzyr; actions since the 4th had devoured more than 3000 men. 1 CD, undisturbed by the enemy, had pulled back overnight to the sector Nowa Ruda-Leszniewka. The left wing of 9 CD had maintained their connection with 82 Res ID of Group Gronau while the right withdrew toward Griwa without interference. The Corps commander ordered that on the 8th the Stokhod line should be occupied between Stobychwa and Siedliszczce. However, in the afternoon of the 7th some Russian cavalry struck 3rd Polish Brigade (which was supposed to hold onto Nowa Ruda) and drove them back to Bol. Obzyr. Hauer had the remnants of 11 Hon CD occupy the west bank of the river here. 1 CD, whose right flank was endangered by the abandonment of Nowa Ruda, also found themselves forced to retreat; after shaking off Russian pursuers at Leszniewka, in the evening the Division crossed the Stokhod at Borowno and Rudka-Czerwiszcze. Here and at Uhrynicze the 9 CD also finished crossing the river, although not until the morning hours of 8 July.

Already at noon on the 7th GO Linsingen informed the commanders of his northern wing that for some time to come their role on the Stokhod would be purely defensive. Also Group Bernhardt was ordered to take up a defensive position behind the river from Nw. Mosor through Porskaja Wolka and Kaszowka to Sitowicze during the night of 7-8 July. By 11 July the Bavarian Division was to be deployed around Mielnica as an Army Group reserve. GdK Bernhardt submitted to this order only with a heavy heart, since it robbed his undefeated, successful troops of the fruits of their exertions to date, all because of the setback at the bend in the Styr.⁵³⁴ He instructed II Corps, along with 11 Bav ID, to occupy a sector on the west bank of the Stokhod (between Nawoz and Arsenowicze) by early on the 8th; Hahndorff's and Rusche's German divisions would change their positions a day later. Because the Russian 80 ID had damaged Brigade Steinitz, stationed between 4 ID and the Bavarians, in the evening of the 7th GM Pfeffer and G.Lt Kneussl immediately began to lead their troops back to the lines they'd been assigned.

Kaledin's 8th Army reached the line Gruziatyn-Jablonka-Borowaja-Czerewacha with the main bodies of XXX, I Turkestan and V Cavalry Corps; some horsemen pushed ahead to Iwanowka. North of the Sarny-Kovel railroad the 3rd Army sent mainly their strong cavalry force toward Trojanowka. This Army pursued along all the

534Bernhardt, "Eine Weltreise 1911/12", Vol. III, p. 194

routes leading to the Stokhod and also pressed against the front of Group Gronau on the Wiesiolucha south of Nobel. Overnight Gronau moved his southern wing (82 Res ID) back to Siedliszcze.

8 July

On 8 July the northern part of Army Group Linsingen prepared their defenses behind the protective river barrier. In the front established by GdI Fath the 26 LW ID received the sector between Sitowicze and the railroad; from here to the north the line was temporarily guarded by some German companies along with parts of 45 LW ID, of 53 ID, and of the Polish Legion. A gap between Stobychwa and Bol. Obzyr was filled by two battalions of the German 37 Inf Bde, whose commander took control of this stretch of front the next day. The rest of his troops withdrew to Prowursk to back up the point where the wings of Corps Fath and Hauer came together. GO Linsingen and Conrad demanded that the allied units should hold their new line under all circumstances, and stated that sending fresh German troops was under consideration. Prince Leopold's Army Group was assembling reserves on their southern wing.⁵³⁵

The favorable course of the operation at the junction of 3rd and 8th Russian Armies contrasted with the difficult conditions on the Luck-Kovel road, where only a few narrow routes traversed the swampy terrain. Therefore on 7 July General Alexeiev had already directed Brussilov's attention to the area Ratno-Kamien Kaszyskij, and to Pinsk. If the defenders of the Stokhod were denied time to build positions, the Russians could move through Kamien Kaszyskij; from there they could envelop Kovel from the north and also strike the rear of the German position that jutted forward at Pinsk. Therefore early on the 8th Brussilov ordered Generals Letsch and Kaledin to attack Kovel in an envelopment from the north to the southeast involving the left wing of 3rd Army and the right and center of 8th Army. Brussilov didn't intend to thrust against Pinsk from behind until the West Front extended their southern wing and thus freed up XXXI Corps of 3rd Army on the Oginsky Canal.⁵³⁶

During the 8th, the marching columns of 3rd and 8th Armies followed the allied wing which Linsingen was pulling back; in places there were skirmishes with the foremost Russian scouts. There was lively enemy activity in front of the right of Bernhardt's front.

535Ludendorff (p. 177) wrote about the withdrawal to the Stokhod: "This was one of the greatest crises on the Eastern front. There was scant hope that the k.u.k. troops could hold the unfortified Stokhod line. We took a chance by further weakening our position, and General Field Marshal Prince Leopold of Bavaria did the same."

536Klembovsky, p. 69 and Appendix 8

9 July

So that the defense of the Stokhod position would take place under unified control, on 9 July GdK Bernhardt received authority to also command Corps Fath. Overnight Divisions Rusche and Hahndorff as well as 41 Hon ID evacuated the entrenchments south of the Stokhod as far as the Styr. The Germans deployed in the Nw. Mosor-Janowka sector; from here the new position of 41 Hon ID crossed the tongue of land within the bend in the Stokhod at Ugly. In the area that had been evacuated voluntarily the Russians soon assembled several battalions and thrust against the Honved, but were forced to go back. Division Rusche also saw some action during the day.⁵³⁷ Most of 11 Bavarian ID had already been relieved by 4 ID, which shifted upriver. In the following night the 4th Division would have to link up with 26 LW ID at Sitowicze and thus make the last Bavarian detachment available.

A Russian attack was expected soon against Corps Fath's weakened troops; since 4 July the Corps' 34,000 riflemen had been reduced to 16,000. GdK Bernhardt directed the assignment of sectors and organization of reserves. The stretch north of the railroad as far as Smolary was given to 45 LW ID with 90 LW Inf Bde (89 Bde stayed in the Corps' reserve); 53 ID was in the adjacent sector up to Stobychwa. 11 Bav ID, in the Army Group's reserve, came to Powursk; they sent one battalion as a backup to Smolary, and two more behind 26 LW ID, whose positions were already under heavy bombardment from Russian batteries. Enemy columns were observed marching to Hulewicze. The Polish Legion moved to Czeremoszno and was put at Bernhardt's disposal.

In the morning, Army Group HQ notified GdK Hauer that according to an intercepted radio message two enemy cavalry divisions were deploying opposite his front. At the same time, 11 Hon CD reported that Bol. Obzyr was already under artillery fire, and 9 CD that they were being attacked by infantry and cavalry. Linsingen informed the Corps commander that he could count on help from the Bavarian Cav Div, reinforced with infantry, which Prince Leopold had sent to the junction of the two Army Groups. Its leading brigade (the 4th) had arrived at Pniowno. This Uhlan brigade was sent ahead to Tobol, and in the evening joined the action that had been going on all day. In a combined effort with 9 CD they were able to prevent the enemy (who had some detachments established on the west bank) from making further progress, and to push them back to the edge of the river. Meanwhile the German OHL had again placed Group Gronau under GO

⁵³⁷Bernhardt, "Eine Weltreise 1911/12", Vol. III, p. 195

Linsingen, who had to worry that his barely cohesive front might again be broken by an impetuous Russian assault. Therefore he was trying to make Cavalry Corps Hauer as able as possible to keep up their resistance. In the late evening GdK Hauer was given command over the German 37 Inf Bde, G.Lt von Hellingrath's Bav CD, and the Polish Legion; his task was to hold the Stobychwa-Siedliszcze sector against all enemy attacks.

The Russians were bringing their units up along all of their opponents' Stokhod front. Kaledin had the I, XXX and I Turkestan Corps deploying between Swidniki and a point opposite Hulewicze, while Letsch's troops came up north of the railroad.⁵³⁸

b. The center of Army Group Linsingen is stationary; Armeegruppe Marwitz makes a final effort to attack (4-9 July)

Beginning on 4 July, trench warfare again prevailed along the center of Army Group Linsingen, since the General-Oberst had canceled offensive operations in his order the day before. The soldiers were building defensive installations and barriers. To make it easier for Lüttwitz's Corps to organize the combined 37 Inf Bde from parts of both of his German divisions, IR # 94 of the Aus-Hung. 29 ID deployed in the sector of German 19 ID between Woronczyn and Trysten. On the 4th Kaledin was supposed to initiate a subsidiary offensive toward Vladimir-Volynsky, which Brussilov intended to be simultaneous with the blow against the Styr front at Kolki. However, this operation hardly got started, because the Russian units had also suffered greatly in the actions to date; XL Corps had to be supported by 50 ID of V Sib Corps. Thus there was only a weak attack against the k.u.k. 4th Army, which 13 LW ID and the adjacent wing of 2 ID were able to fend off. The re-grouping of the troops which GO Tersztyanszky had initiated wasn't noticeably interrupted. By the 5th the extension of the Army's front was complete; on Szurmay's new southern wing he'd inserted 11 ID between 70 Hon ID and 10 CD. The 26 LW Inf Bde assembled on the 7th at Kol. Dubrowa as the Army's reserve. Because Kaledin had been ordered by his commander since the 8th to restrict operations in the direction of Vladimir-Volynsky to a defensive posture, both sides resorted only to surprise artillery fire and occasional infantry probes.

As long as 11th Russian Army couldn't finally hold their

538Baluiev, pp. 70 ff.

opponents' attack in check west of the Styr River, they couldn't mount their own major offensive toward Brody. Therefore on 4 July General Sakharov, after gradually inserting all of V Corps into the sector of XLV Corps, directed heavy counterattacks against 7 ID and especially against the two adjacent German divisions of Armeegruppe Marwitz.⁵³⁹ At the same time the two regiments of 46 LW ID stationed on the Styr across from Werben, which had already been under pressure during the night, were sharply attacked by 101 ID of XXXII Corps. The Landwehr troops, however, not only made a gallant stand but took 700 enemy prisoners. The Russians repeated their assaults on the battlefield north of the Lipa on the 5th. Thus for now the enemy thwarted GdK von der Marwitz's intention of continuing the advance of his attacking units without interruption. The Armeegruppe had to go over to the defensive. In the evening of the 5th, the 61 ID also had to stop their fruitless action in front of Szlkin and dig in. Meanwhile GdK Falkenhayn shifted 43 Res ID, which had been relieved in front of Pustomyty by 9 German CD, to the eastern wing; in the night of 5-6 July the 43rd was placed in line west of Dubowyja Korczmy, between the German 108 and Aus-Hung. 48 ID. Cavalry Corps Leonhardi, which with three brigades had arrived on the 4th behind the right wing of 7 ID, had here sent just a small portion of their troops to guard the Armeegruppe's flank on the Styr; the main body stayed in reserve. Now the Armeegruppe's strength was concentrated fully in the center and on the right wing.

Before GdK von der Marwitz started a new attack, which was scheduled for the 6th, he regulated the chain of command. He himself took charge of Leonhardi's Corps, the 7 k.u.k. ID, and the 22 and 108 German ID - as well as 9 German CD which was stationed on the extreme left wing. The German 43 Res ID, Aus-Hung. 48 and 61 ID, and finally the remaining half of 7 CD made up Corps Falkenhayn.⁵⁴⁰ Meanwhile the heat of summer was affecting the capability of the troops so badly that the attack had to be postponed until the 7th.

To lead off the operation, in the evening of the 6th FML Leonhardi thrust east from Michajlowka along the left bank of the Styr with two cavalry brigades plus a battalion of 7 ID. However, his attack didn't succeed; it soon came to a halt on the next day. Of the six infantry divisions which entered the fight

539Cherkasov, p. 180

540TRANSLATOR's NOTE - 11 Cav Bde of 7 CD was serving as the third brigade of Leonhardi's Corps, so 7 CD had just one brigade.

in the morning of the 7th, only the Germans in the center of the spearhead were able to push back V Russian Corps (which had taken the place of the worn out XLV Corps) and 6 Sib Rif Div west of Zloczowka and through Dubowyja Korczmy.⁵⁴¹ This opening success couldn't be exploited. GO Linsingen needed reserves for his northern wing, and in the evening ordered Armeegruppe Marwitz to break off their attack and go over to the defensive.

GdK von der Marwitz selected as his main line of resistance the jumping-off positions of the morning of the 7th. On the 8th he threatened the enemy with feint attacks. 11 Cav Bde returned to 7 CD (stationed at Bludow). Overnight the German 108 ID left the front and was sent to entrain at the Stojanow station; the neighboring divisions had to significantly extend their lines. A further re-grouping had to be undertaken the next day. The German 9 CD (without 2 Gd Cav Bde) was ordered by Linsingen to ride to Kovel. To relieve this Division, Marwitz used 18 Cav Bde of 4 CD, leaving just Col. Graf Spannochi's 21 Cav Bde to secure the flank on the Styr between 7 ID and 46 LW ID. All of the cavalry units on the Armeegruppe's left wing were placed under FML Leonhardi's Corps HQ on 11 July. Falkenhayn's adjacent Corps retained the three infantry divisions already assigned.

Because of the costly fighting General Sakharov also was compelled, by the advice of the Chief of Staff of Southwest Front, to refrain from attacking with his Army "until the arrival of a new corps." Besides XLV Corps, the severely weakened 6 Sib Rif Div also had to leave the firing line. Due to a lack of rifles and ammunition, the Siberians had to be rearmed with captured Aus-Hung. equipment. At the front they were relieved by 50 ID from 8th Army, so that now the entire V Sib Corps had come under 11th Army's control.⁵⁴²

4. New Russian attacks against the allied southern wing, 4-10 July

a. Second phase of the Battle of Kolomea, 4-6 July

4 July

In the afternoon of 4 July General Promtov's Group in Bukovina

541Klembovsky p. 67; Cherkasov, p. 180

542Klembovsky, pp. 67 and 69

once more tried to advance against XI Corps. On the heights east of Kirlibaba a combined cavalry storm group broke into the positions of 10 Inf Bde in the evening. Promtov's cavalry were thrown back by a timely counter-thrust by GM Kaltenborn's local reserves and had to abandon their attempt to advance into the valley of the Golden Bistritz.

On the 4th the 3 CD of Cavalry Corps Brudermann was still stationed in the area west and south of Krzyworownia and blocked the routes leading from the upper Czarny Czeremosz into Hungary. In this difficult terrain only weak enemy forces were feeling their way toward the Hungarian border. 8 CD had pulled back to Worochta, leaving outposts on the mountain paths and ridges between Zabie and Kosmacz. A small flank group of Benigni's Corps fell back before the advancing enemy from the forested heights west of Berezow Wz. in the direction of Dora. Russian cavalry accompanied by infantry broke into the open Polinica valley and captured the road and rail line which led to the Jablonica Pass before the gap between the Corps of Brudermann and Benigni was closed by 8 CD and 9 Inf Bde (the latter was sent from Corps Benigni to the south).

On the heights east of Oslawy Biale the Russians had moved up to Benigni's right wing during the 4th. Here GO Pflanzner-Baltin sent parts of the newly-arrived 59 ID to relieve the regiments of 24 ID, exhausted from costly actions, and the remnants of 51 Hon ID. The other troops of 59 ID were held in readiness at Delatyn in the Pruth valley. The center of Corps Benigni came under heavy new attacks northeast of Oslawy Biale and at Sadzawka. 44 LW ID defended themselves with noteworthy stubbornness. In the evening the Russians pushed into the positions of 30 ID. The k.u.k. FJB # 18 and parts of German IR 129 threw themselves into the breach and restored the situation.

While the XI and XII Russian Corps tried to advance through Oslawy Biale and along the Pruth to Delatyn, Kraewel's attack group (6 CD, German 119 and 105 ID, GM Leide's Group) once again struck Letschitzky's northern wing around noon on the 4th. Parts of 5 Hon CD and all of 21 LW ID (of FML Hadfy's Group) joined this advance and reached Chlebiczyn Lesny without encountering very strong resistance. The two German divisions pushed past Chocimierz and the area to the northeast in heavy fighting, while GM Leide's Group reconquered their old positions at Isakow.

5 July

Now Groups Hadfy and Kraewel were supposed to thrust ahead to the

line Majdan Graniczny-Korszow-Zukow-Niezwiska. However, this attack wasn't carried out. On the 5th Letschitzky powerfully assaulted the front of the k.u.k. 7th Army with the majority of his forces (XXXIII, XLI, XII and XI Corps). The Russian attack was directed at Tlumacz and Delatyn. At the same time Letschitzky wanted to envelop his opponents from the south, through Mikuliczyn.⁵⁴³

On the 5th the Russians' enveloping group (parts of 1 Don Coss Div plus infantry from XI Corps) collided with the k.u.k. 8 CD, deployed outside of Tatarow. The Austrians had to pull back a little from Mikuliczyn to the south, but then held on firmly south of that village and waited for the intervention of Col. Rudolf Klein's group (parts of 9 Inf Bde) from the north. Benigni's southern wing between Oslawy Biale and the Pruth was attacked early on the 5th, while it was still dark. This area was assigned to 44 LW ID, which was able to weather the new Russian storm in bitter fighting. In the morning the Russians opened hefty artillery fire against the left wing of Corps Benigni on the hilly field of Majdan Graniczny. Strong infantry attacks developed around this time against Groups Hadfy and Kraewel from the Korszow-Zukow-Niezwiska front. 21 LW ID relieved some of the pressure with a short thrust northeast of Chlebiczyn. The 119 German ID was heavily engaged around Chocimierz. They were able to stand up to the Russian pressure. Group Leide had to give way to the enemy, and fell back fighting from Isakow toward Olesza.

Thus Pflanzer-Baltin's units were in the midst of heavy fighting when the Archduke-Successor FML Karl Franz Joseph arrived at 11:00 AM on 5 July in Chodorow, the HQ of 12th Army. Under these circumstances the planned assignment of Group Kraewel and XIII Corps to the new Army, and the breakthrough on the Dniester, had to be temporarily postponed. Also the intended designation of "Army Group FML Archduke Karl" couldn't come into use for now. However, the new 12th Army HQ did take control over 7th and South Armies.

In an effort to prevent over-hasty commitment of the reserves, in his first order to GO Pflanzer-Baltin around noon the Archduke-Successor took over the reserves that were being held in the Pruth valley at Delatyn. Events, however, crossed up the intentions of the higher command echelons. In the afternoon the Russians drove a hole into the lines of 30 ID and 42 Hon ID at Majdan Graniczny. GO Pflanzer-Baltin instructed FZM Benigni that

543Bidou, pp. 164 ff.; Klembovsky, pp. 60 ff.

if Snjaric's Group couldn't drive back the encroaching Russians they should offer new resistance on the line Oslawy Biale-Lanczyn and on the heights east of Majdan Srd. Group Hadfy would bend back their right wing to stay linked with Corps Benigni. However, it seemed that this line was already being broken, since toward evening a report arrived from FML Snjaric, stating that the Russians were advancing over the heights to Majdan Srd. In this threatening situation Pflanze-Baltin and Benigni sent all available reserves in the Pruth valley at Delatyn, as well as those at Oslawy Biale, in exhausting marches to Group Snjaric. There were twelve battalions from four different divisions - IR # 9 from 24 ID, LW IR # 21 from 44 LW ID, IR # 97 from 36 ID, and parts of 59 ID. GM Jesser would build an attacking group from these units in the area north of Lanczyn, and on the 6th he would advance toward the northeast. Thus if the enemy did drive further west through Majdan Srd. it would be possible to strike them in the flank. Since the Russian gains seemed significant based on current reports, 12th Army HQ agreed with the operation as planned. If, however, it didn't succeed and Russian assaults made further retreat necessary, Pflanze-Baltin was to hold onto the towns of Delatyn and Nadworna as well as a position on the Worona Brook.

6 July

The Russians renewed the attack south of the Pruth early on the 6th. The Carinthian LW IR # 4 and Upper Austrian LW IR # 2 stood fast and repulsed all the assaults in heroic actions. Letschitzky's enveloping group tried in vain to advance through the mountains and into the rear of Benigni's southern wing, which was still holding on stubbornly between Oslawy Biale and Sadzawka. The Russians did break into Mikuliczyn and cut the important rail line through the Jablonica Pass, but on the 6th they were caught in a pincers between 8 CD from the south and 9 Inf Bde from the north. Since it was possible that the Russian group which had reached Mikuliczyn might be encircled, the k.u.k. high command followed the development of this action with great attention. In the afternoon it was reported that our troops had already occupied a ridge northeast of Mikuliczyn, so the high command demanded that the units should be coordinated for a quick advance to drive back the enemy. GO Pflanze-Baltin issued orders in this regard to Corps Brudermann and Benigni. But the fighting in the forested mountains slowed down, even though the exhausted troops of 8 CD and 9 Inf Bde did make some progress. At least the enemy at Mikuliczyn had been halted, and their attack toward the rear of Corps Benigni had been thwarted.

In the morning of the 6th FML Archduke Karl Franz Joseph drove with Col. Waldstätten to 7th Army HQ at Bohorodczany, to get orientation about the events since the fateful breakthrough at Okna. With GO Pflanzner-Baltin the Archduke-Successor visited the HQ of VIII Corps and of Group Snjaric. Around this time GM Jesser's attacking group had not yet finished putting their artillery in position. It turned out that the reports of the Russian advance at Majdan Graniczny had depicted the situation as more serious than it was in reality. The enemy had pulled back a bit from the northern wing of Group Snjaric. Russian pressure was also subsiding opposite Groups Hadfy and Kraewel. Thus Pflanzner-Baltin understandably questioned whether GM Jesser's attack might not become a blow into thin air. However, it was decided to carry out the operation.

Around 4:00 PM, when GM Jesser opened his attack from Benigni's northern wing after artillery preparation, something unexpected happened. A mass of Russians from the heights east of Oslawy Biale fell upon the tired 24 ID, broke through the positions of the Galician IR # 45, took prisoner the scanty remnants of Hon IR # 300 stationed nearby, and struck the neighboring 44 LW ID to the left. The 44th, which had been able to bravely repel all earlier assaults, now was beset from the flank and rear. In the evening the Russians smashed a hole in the sector of 30 ID at Sadzawka. Now all troops of Jesser's attacking group still stationed behind the firing line - a total of five battalions - hastened south to check the Russian onrush in the Pruth valley. The counterattack of this group was shattered in chaotic fighting. South of the Pruth the enemy meanwhile thrust past Oslawy Biale in the direction of Zarzycze. In this threatening situation FZM Benigni had no alternative but to break off the operation of Jesser's attacking group and have the thoroughly intermingled troops on his southwest wing disengage from the enemy and withdraw to the northern bank of the Pruth. As instructed by Pflanzner-Baltin, Benigni built up a defensive front between Lanczyn and Delatyn. IR # 93, which had been part of Col. Klein's group sent to the southern wing to support 8 CD at Mikuliczyn, now shifted to Zarzycze. IR # 1 at Dora courageously maintained the link with Cavalry Corps Brudermann.

In an order issued to 7th Army HQ later on the 6th, the high command noted that the setback at Oslawy Biale was caused by sending the reserves to Benigni's northern wing. Pflanzner-Baltin interpreted this statement as a heavy rebuke. He considered asking to be relieved from his post. On the next day he reported to Teschen that it had been necessary to send the reserves to Group Snjaric because of grave reports received in the evening of

the 5th, and that this measure was also approved by 12th Army HQ. At the same time Pflanzner asked the high command if they had lost confidence in his leadership of 7th Army. The AOK responded that their comment had merely been intended to point out how the exaggerated report of the unimportant Russian penetration at Majdan Graniczny had affected the decisions of the commanders. Decisive measures should be taken "to strengthen the wavering confidence of the lower-ranking generals after two years of war and the hard fighting of the last month." Also order should be restored to the badly-intermingled units.

b. Shcherbachev's attack at Barysz and Monasterzyska, 4-10 July

4-6 July

In the first days of July there were increasing signs that the long-expected Russian attack on the Barysz Brook was now about to break out. At Zubrzec enemy infantry had entrenched close to the positions of 2 CD. Around 4:00 AM on 4 July the artillery of II Russian Corps began to fire for effect against the center of the k.u.k. XIII Corps. The defenders' trenches were heavily damaged in many hours of steadily increasing bombardment. Around 2:00 PM the Russian 43 ID began to attack between Zubrzec and Barysz town, and succeeded in breaking through 2 CD west of Zubrzec. Soon thereafter the southern wing of 36 ID at Barysz was penetrated.⁵⁴⁴ The Russians pushed in the center of XIII Corps on the front between Porchowa and Wierzbiatyn. However, the battered 2 CD and the adjacent wings of 15 and 36 ID were able to hold onto a rearward position about a kilometer west of the first line. GdI Rhemen deployed his Corps' reserve, a total of six battalions, in the Puzniki area to prepare a counter-thrust. This group attacked toward evening in the direction of Zubrzec and recovered part of the lost trenches on the Baryszbach. Meanwhile new reserves were approaching. These were five battalions of 39 Hon ID which GdI Arz, instructed by Bothmer, had ordered to move from the area southeast of Podhajce to Bertniki. In the night these units grouped for a counterattack to Barysz. In the morning of the 5th they were heavily pounded by Russian artillery and were able to gain just a little ground.

In the afternoon of the 5th, the Russian cannonade at the scene of action south of the railroad to Monasterzyska swelled to a heavy barrage. Enemy infantry broke through 36 ID and the parts

544Klembovsky, p. 67

of 38 and 39 Hon ID fighting in its ranks on the heights west of Barysz. Thus the whole northern wing of Corps Rhemen had to waver and fell back with substantial casualties in the Koropiec sector, between Zalesie and Slobodka D1. Therefore GdI Arz was forced to bend back the right wing of 12 ID, north of the railroad, toward the west. The Russians pressed forward; after strong artillery fire, in the same evening they fell upon the right wing of Corps Arz which had already been pulled back. Mounted Russian cavalry also tried to advance, but their attacks were shattered under our artillery fire. Russian infantry penetrated parts of the new position of 12 ID, stretching toward the southeast, but in the night they were driven out.

On the 6th Shcherbachev tried to thrust forward at Kurdwanowka (where VI Corps and 48 German Res ID came together), at Bohatkowce against Corps Hofmann, and at Kozlow against IX Corps. All of these secondary attacks, obviously undertaken to tie down Bothmer's reserves, were repulsed just by the defenders' artillery fire. Meanwhile II Russian Corps moved slowly ahead toward the Koropiec Brook. Since 1 German Res ID had arrived at Monasterzyska, it was hoped that the defense of Bothmer's weak southern wing against any new Russian assault would be successful.

7-10 July

On 7 July Shcherbachev continued to attack on both sides of the Buczacz-Monasterzyska railroad. Weaker forces of the Russian 26 ID, under the protection of armored cars, advanced against the northern wing of XIII Corps. The Russian infantry were soon driven off by the fire of our guns. The attack of XVI Russian Corps against 12 ID began around 2:00 PM after artillery preparation. At Folw. Okopy (northeast of Monasterzyska) the Russians succeeded in driving IR # 20 out of their positions and inflicting heavy casualties.⁵⁴⁵ However, this setback was redeemed with a counterattack from the northeast by the German Reserve IR 3. This Regiment recovered the lost positions. The insertion of a further battalion of German 1 Res ID into a gap between Res IR 3 and the troops of 12 ID stationed on the left wing of Arz's Corps prevented any further Russian penetration during the night. In the Kurdwanowka-Kotuzow sector the German 48 Res ID and GM Blum's k.u.k. 131 Inf Bde repulsed thrusts by 3 Finnish Rif Div. In these actions, which lasted until late at night, the defenders were effectively supported by artillery.

On 8 July General Shcherbachev once again attacked the front of Arz's Corps where it ran southeast between the Koropiec and Strypa, as well as the fronts of 48 German Res ID and Blum's Brigade. Again he made no headway. Here and in XIII Corps' area the artillery fighting remained lively into the following days. Except for some meaningless actions, the situation was still quiet for Corps Hofmann and the southern wing of IX Corps. 32 ID was involved in costly mine fighting on the 7th and 8th at Hladki near the Sereth. Meanwhile signs seemed to indicate that a new enemy assault on the center of Bothmer's Army's front was probable. Aerial observers spotted troops marching from Buczacz to Jezierzany behind the Russian front. A total of nine Russian divisions were identified in a thick cluster between Barysz and Sokolow - II, XVI and XXII Corps plus 3 Turkestan Rif Div, 113 ID and apparently 37 ID from XVIII Corps.

It seemed that the Russians also wanted to attack between the Sereth and the Styr. Lively enemy troop movements occurred in front of the k.u.k. 2nd Army in the first days of July. Russian forces assembled at Rudnia, Werba, Dubno and Kremieniec. Available reports led to the conclusion that V Russian Corps had come to Dubno by rail and detrained on the stretch of track leading to Radziwilow. In expectation of a major impending attack on Brody, on the 2nd the high command ordered GO Böhm-

545Klembovsky, p. 67

Ermolli to make ready reserves in the strength of an infantry division behind the left wing of Group Kosak. So that 2nd and 1st Armies could work together to prevent the Russians from advancing through Brody to Lemberg, GO Böhm-Ermolli suggested to Teschen that 1st Army (with XVIII Corps and 46 LW ID) should again be placed under his control. The high command, however, didn't agree. In accordance with the wishes of GO Linsingen, the AOK announced on the 3rd that if the Russians attacked at Radziwilow the 1 Lst Inf Bde and all reserves behind the inner wings of 1st and 2nd Armies would be placed under FML Kosak. If the Russians attacked farther north - somewhere in 25 ID's sector - then Kosak would release all available reserves to XVIII Corps HQ, which would conduct the defense.

In the area around Brody and farther south, FML Kosak held ready IR # 76 and a new combined brigade under Col. von Watterich (with IR # 83 and 85, four squadrons and a field cannon battalion). As Böhm-Ermolli's Army reserve the IR # 12 was stationed at Podkamien. There was lively Russian activity in front of Group Kosak from 5 July. Enemy patrols tried to advance in many places. On the 7th the outpost positions of 27 ID at Leduchow were assaulted, although without success. However, the great offensive against Brody, which had seemed a certainty, didn't occur. Sakharov had to send the newly-arrived V Corps to his hard-pressed northern wing, as noted above.

c. Actions in the Carpathians, 7-10 July

Events south of the Dniester caused the allied high commands great concern. Until now Letschitzky's continuing attacks had made it impossible to carry out the plan of assembling a new army to break through on the Dniester. The German 105 and 119 ID had been thrown onto the defensive. 44 LW ID and 59 ID had been used to plug gaps in the line near the Pruth. It also seemed impossible to free troops from Linsingen's Army Group for the southern part of the front, since the Russians had begun a great offensive south and north of the Pripyat. All available German reinforcements would be sent to defend the Stokhod line, so that the German front north of the great zone of swamps wouldn't be rolled up from the south. Thus it was becoming very doubtful whether the situation on the southern wing could be improved in the foreseeable future. If 7th Army couldn't dam the Russian flood on the Pruth, then the still-intact lines north of the Dniester would also have to be given up.

The search for reinforcements

Pflanzer-Baltin's Army was drained from the positional warfare that raged back and forth; the ranks thinned out in ever shorter periods of time. The enemy already stood in front of Delatyn, threatened the Jablonica Pass from Mikuliczyn, and had driven deep into Bukovina. Thus the northernmost corner of Romania was encircled by Russian troops. Wasn't it likely that this country would soon carry out its long-threatened attachment to the Entente? In this dangerous situation, it was very welcome to GO Conrad when on 6 July Falkenhayn declared he was ready to ask Enver Pasha to take part in the fighting in Galicia with Turkish troops. Above all GdI Falkenhayn wanted to keep Russian forces from entering Hungary. Cavalry Corps Brudermann and the weak Landsturm formations stationed at the passes weren't sufficient to defend the routes leading over the heights on the Carpathian crest from the valleys of the Czarny- ("Black") and Bilizh- ("White") Czeremosz, as well as those from the valley where the Pruth has its source. Through the German plenipotentiary general at the Aus-Hung. AOK, Falkenhayn demanded that the Carpathian defenses should be reinforced by mountain troops drawn from Tyrol.

On 7 July FML Archduke Karl Franz Joseph also reported to the high command that the situation of 7th Army made the commitment of at least one more combat-ready division necessary. The arrival of two divisions (44 LW ID and 59 ID) hadn't been sufficient to make up for the casualties suffered in actions that had lasted more than four weeks. According to Russian sources, in the Battle of Kolomea Letschitzky's troops had taken more than 80,000 prisoners, 84 guns, 272 machine guns and 33 trench mortars.⁵⁴⁶ The 5, 24, 30, 42 and 51 Divisions each had no more than the combat strength of a weak regiment. The Archduke-Successor considered it necessary to pull these units from the front so they could again be made ready for action.

The high command decided to let 7th Army have another unit from Tyrol, 34 ID. Because of the setbacks on the Pruth, however, it seemed doubtful whether this reinforcement, which wouldn't start to move by train until 12 July, would arrive in time. It was also dubious whether Pflanzer-Baltin's Army could hold onto the line east of Nadworna-Stanislaw, in turn enabling the armies north of the Dniester to retain the positions they now occupied. For these reasons GO Conrad turned to the German OHL with a request for rapid commitment of German units. He wanted either 1

546Litvinov, p. 62

Res ID, or the entrained 5 Res ID, for 7th Army.

In an answering telegram, which arrived at Teschen already on the 7th, GdI Falkenhayn reported that the 5 German Res ID had to be deployed at Baranowicze to support the k.u.k. XII Corps. He understood the need to shift 1 Res ID to 7th Army, but Bothmer couldn't give up the Division because of new Russian attacks at Monasterzyska. Falkenhayn suggested that if necessary he would free a division from Group Kraewel for the southern wing of Pflanzer-Baltin's Army. At the same time he asked the k.u.k. high command to do everything possible to enhance the shaken troops' will to resist. With the units that had already arrived (44 and 59 Divisions) the 7th Army's defenses must prevail over the enemy. Falkenhayn added that he was confident the Army's commander could accomplish this.

A successful attack by k.u.k. XI Corps

Although for the time being nothing could be done for GO Pflanzer-Baltin's burnt-out Army, he meanwhile sought to help himself. He had XI Corps advance from the southern corner of Bukovina, even though it had little punch; in particular the Corps lacked a supply train sufficient to support a deep thrust through the difficult mountain terrain. This operation couldn't decisively improve 7th Army's miserable situation, and perhaps would also have little impact on Romania. However, by attacking the rear-area communications of the enemy who were advancing on Nadworna the XI Corps could draw Letschitzky's attention toward them and thus bring some relief to the Army's beleaguered left wing.

The troops of XI Corps, though tired from fighting in the mountains, had been able to recover somewhat thanks to successful defensive actions against General Promtov's Group (103 ID, 1 Terek Coss Div, 10 CD), which wasn't especially strong. Already on 4 July GO Pflanzer-Baltin had given XI Corps the assignment of advancing as soon as possible with their main body in the direction of Kutu, and with a smaller column through Gurahumora to Oberwikow. Early on the 6th FML Habermann, the new commander of XI Corps, ordered an attack by 79 Hon Inf Bde on the heights north of the road to Pozoritta, and by 40 Hon ID on the Moldawa. A side column of 40 Hon ID would advance along the valley of the Kirlibaba.

79 Hon Inf Bde was able to gain about three kilometers of ground. 10 Inf Bde was meanwhile held up on the heights south and southwest of Breaza. Here they launched a feint assault, seeking

to tie down enemy units opposite the left wing of XI Corps. 40 Hon ID encountered stubborn resistance south of the Luczina stud-farm; however, their column on the left advanced past the Capul Heights on the road to Izwor.

On 7 and 8 July the XI Corps continued to attack. The left wing of 79 Hon Inf Bde and parts of Col. Scholtz's Landsturm Group were engaged in action on the mountain ridge northwest of Valeputna. They couldn't move forward. Then 10 Inf Bde won the decision with a brilliant assault. The Poles of the Cracow IR # 13 stormed a forested mountain summit, over 1200 meters high, southwest of Breaza; they were able to take this town and drive into the enemy's rear, while some men wheeled to the east.⁵⁴⁷ As a result the Russians in front of 40 Hon ID also pulled back, over the Moldawa. The main body of the Honved Division pushed ahead to the heights on the other side of Moldawa town.

On the 9th fighting took place on the right wing of XI Corps, at Valeputna and Fundul Mondovi. IR # 13 was advancing east from Breaza. FML Habermann intended to envelop the enemy in the Pozoritta area and push them back onto Romanian territory. Parts of 40 Hon ID were already thrusting toward Izwor in the valley where the Suczawa has its source. After these successes, however, FML Habermann had to break off his promising offensive, since he'd have to give up units to help Brudermann's hard-pressed Cavalry Corps.

The need to assist Brudermann's cavalry

GO Pflanze-Baltin had entrusted this Corps with the defense of the routes out of the valleys where the Czeremosz has its sources and over the Jablonica Pass into Hungary. On the 7th Russian cavalry, along with some infantry and guns, broke into the valley of the White Czeremosz. 3 CD, which was guarding the Zabie area, moved the majority of their troops south through the valley of the Black Czeremosz to cover the road leading west from Hryniawa, and to drive back the advancing enemy.

8 CD had gained some ground on the ridges southeast of Mikuliczyn in the evening of the 6th. On the next day, however, this Division was assaulted from the north and east by overwhelming Russian forces - apparently the 32 and 82 ID. The enemy advance toward the Jablonica Pass caused great concern at 7th Army HQ.

⁵⁴⁷For gallant conduct on his own initiative in this attack, 1st Lt Karl Ruziczka of IR # 13 won the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order.

GO Pflanze-Baltin reported to 12th Army HQ that the 6000 troopers of Cavalry Corps Brudermann weren't strong enough to keep the Russians from breaking into Hungary. It was urgently necessary to reinforce Brudermann's cavalry with infantry. If this wasn't possible, 5000 men would have to be pulled from Bukovina.

Under irresistible pressure, 8 CD fell back on 8 July from Mikuliczyn to Tatarow. The situation had grown critical. FML Brudermann reported that the Russians intended to advance with strong forces to Körösmezö. To send help quickly to hold the Jablonica Pass, GO Pflanze-Baltin's only option was to bring 202 Hon Inf Bde out of Bukovina to Körösmezö. Nevertheless, he ordered FML Habermann to energetically continue his attack in the direction of Seletin and Schipoth with the significantly weakened left wing of XI Corps. This should thwart the enemy's advance against the northeastern entrances to Hungary. FML Brudermann was also given command over the Etappen battalions and Gendarmerie and Finance Watch detachments on the pass roads between Borsa and Körösmezö. Great achievements were demanded of the worn-out cavalry divisions.

On 9 July, while 202 Hon Inf Bde was taking the field rail line from Kirlibaba to Borsa, the 80 Hon Inf Bde - which had stayed with 40 Hon ID - thrust further ahead to Izwor. Meanwhile parts of 1 Don Coss Div, which had advanced through the valley of the White Czeremosz, were arriving at Izwor. In the rear of the Cossack troops, the main body of 3 CD crossed the mountains. At Jablonica they came up against a Russian force left behind as flank guards; these Russians were able to block the White Czeremosz valley. Under pressure from the Don Cossacks, 80 Hon Inf Bde fell back to the Luczina stud-farm and the heights farther north. The attack also stalled on the right wing of XI Corps. General Promtov's Russian Group had dug in anew on the heights east of the Moldawa and at Pozoritta, and brought up reserves.⁵⁴⁸ On the 9th Promtov began to counterattack. FML Habermann halted his offensive; during the 10th he had his troops withdraw to their starting points on the heights east of the Golden Bistritz.

The Russians enter Delatyn

While the Russians drove forward against the widely-spread front of Cavalry Corps Brudermann in the Carpathians, action flared up also on the left wing of 7th Army. Advanced troops of Russian XI

548Klembovsky, pp. 67 ff.

Corps entered Delatyn on 8 July, but the right wing of Letschitzky's Army was unable to thrust past Czeremchew, Chocimierz or Zywaczow. 9th Russian Army had lost 70,000 men in their attacks against the k.u.k. VIII Corps and Group Kraewel.⁵⁴⁹ Because of these losses and also an insufficient ammunition supply, Letschitzky had to grant his tired units a long period of rest. GO Pflanzler-Baltin used this time, in which just minor actions occurred at Delatyn and farther north, to bring order to his intermingled formations. Early on the 7th FML Snjaric's Group was placed directly under 7th Army HQ. Groups Hadfy and Kraewel were placed under 12th Army HQ. The burnt-out regiments of 24 and 5 ID - as well as German IR 129 - were pulled from the front. The parts of 59 ID that had served with FML Snjaric's Group were released to join their Divisions' main body near Delatyn.

549Litvinov, p. 62

On 7 July the southern wing of VIII Corps took up a position on the heights west of Delatyn. South of this town there was a gap of 20 km between VIII Corps and Brudermann's Cavalry Corps, covered only by weak units from 5 ID. Because of the political significance of the threatened Russian attack against the north-eastern gateway to Hungary, on the 9th the Archduke-Successor suggested to the high command that defense of the Carpathian front - spread out over a large area but not strong in troops - should be the sole assignment of GO Pflanzer-Baltin. Command over the troops already deployed between the Pruth and Dniester, as well as of those scheduled to arrive, should be given to either GO Kövess or GdK Kirchbach. The high command approved this suggestion; on 11 July they called GO Kövess' 3rd Army HQ from Tyrol to Galicia.

Meanwhile on the 9th GdI Falkenhayn informed GO Conrad that the Turkish high command would send two divisions to the Galician theater of operations in the next week. Since these troops weren't suited for mountain fighting, Falkenhayn wanted to assign them to Army Group Linsingen, to South Army, or to the northern wing of Pflanzer-Baltin's Army, where they would free up German divisions that could be used for an offensive.

6. The Russians finally shift their main effort to the area south of the Pripyat

If the Tsar's Chief of the General Staff, General Alexeiev, looked back over the course of the Russian July offensive to date, he must have said that the results were far less than had been anticipated. The main attack by the West Front, which was supposed to destroy the German positions in front of Brest-Litovsk, had almost completely broken down by 9 July. Because of the short time for preparation, the offensive at Baranowicze didn't have a firm foundation like the one that had been built up with careful work for the attack on Vilna (canceled in June). On the other hand, the enormity of Evert's numerical superiority had made it seem that the operation would succeed for this reason alone. But each of the repeated onslaughts by masses of soldiers had collapsed, with very heavy casualties. There was no more chance of a decisive success at Baranowicze.

All the large-scale strokes which Alexeiev had unleashed north of the Pripyat in the first half of 1916 had come to nothing because of the Germans' steadiness. The massive Russian offensive at

Lake Narotch had failed to break through in March. Later, in June, the Germans' defensive measures in response to the planned attack at Vilna had by themselves been enough to rob Evert of belief that he could succeed, and forced him to advise against a thrust in this direction. And finally the Russians had now failed again in front of Baranowicze, just as they had in June. Also in the Pinsk area the Russians hadn't been able to advance even a tiny bit.⁵⁵⁰ Like a nightmare, the feeling of their inferiority to the Germans weighed on officers and men. Any further attempt to force a breakthrough seemed hopeless.

The Southwest Front, on the other hand, had once again fared better. The 3rd and 8th Armies intended to next strike the Central Powers on the Stokhod line; 9th Army had reached Delatyn.

Such a breakthrough seemed impossible on the German front; a way had to be found to go around the German Eastern armies. Such an opportunity existed on the lower course of the Stokhod, where commitment of substantial forces could still accomplish something. The necessary units were available, above all the Guards who until now hadn't been engaged.

Therefore Alexeiev abandoned the concept of a threefold envelopment assault on the Brest-Litovsk area, which had led to the orders issued by the Stavka on 16 June. He decided to attack now in just one direction - through Kovel to Kobrin and Pruzany - in order to "deeply" envelop the German southern wing. The North Front rather than the West Front would also be involved in this general Russian offensive.

In this sense the Stavka issued orders to the commanders of the Fronts on 9 July.⁵⁵¹ North Front retained its assignment of 9 July: to attack in the direction of Bausk. West Front would themselves decide whether or not to continue the attack toward Baranowicze; in any event, however, they were supposed to keep their opponents under a constant and heavy threat. Southwest Front was to capture Kovel and thrust at Pinsk from behind. The Guard troops, who'd been held in reserve in case the Germans attacked toward Polotsk, now were sent to the Roziszcz-Luck area; from there they'd advance toward the line Brest Litovsk-Kobrin-Pruzany and thus envelop the Germans' southern wing.⁵⁵²

550Zayontschovsky, p. 42

551Klembovsky, p. 69; Zayontschovsky, p. 46; Knox, Vol. II, p. 459

552Zayontschovsky, p. 42

General Kuropatkin complied with the Stavka's orders by continuing to prepare for his 12th Army's attack, scheduled for 16 July. General Evert decided to pin down his opponents by threatening to attack and at the same time by engaging the Corps of 4th Army, sector by sector, in local operations. He also stated he was ready to transfer one or two corps to Southwest Front.⁵⁵³ For the time being Brussilov didn't have to change anything, since the order he issued on the 8th already complied with Alexeiev's views, and now just needed to be carried out. Brussilov hoped that 3rd and 8th Armies would be able to pursue over the Stokhod, and to fully smash the allies.

7. Events on the Eastern front from 10 to 15 July

a. Actions to hold the Stokhod line

10 July

Following Brussilov's orders of 8 July, Generals Letsch and Kaledin tried, if possible, to overrun the allied front on the western bank of the Stokhod while it was still under construction. To increase the striking power of the cavalry units fighting Corps Hauer, and to make a way for them over the river barrier, the regiments of 27 Russian ID were attached to the cavalry. However, all efforts to drive a hole in the Stokhod defenses of the Central Powers were completely shattered. Thus the attacks at Rudka-Czerwiszcze, which continued on the 10th into the night, were thwarted by the resistance of the k.u.k. 9 CD, which had a powerful back-up in the Bav CD which had arrived at Pniowno. 1 CD and 11 Hon CD drove small enemy detachments from the western bank. 53 ID and 45 LW ID dealt similarly with feeble attempts by the Russians to come nearer. More dangerous was a thrust by 2 Turkestan Rif Div, which drove from Hulewicze into the main position of 26 LW ID and was aiming for Powursk.⁵⁵⁴ First the Landwehr Division's reserves and a Bavarian battalion dammed the Russian flood. Then the allies launched a counterattack with nine battalions led by GdI Fath; they caused the enemy large casualties (including several hundred prisoners) and were able to throw them back over the Stokhod. The incompletely destroyed bridges were now blown up.

553Zayontschovsky, p. 47

554Wishaupt, "Die 52. Landwehr Brigade im Weltkrieg", pp. 403 ff.

An equally heavy battle raged on the stretch of front recently taken over by Group Bernhardi. Under II Corps the 41 Hon ID, effectively supported by batteries of Division Hahndorff, bloodily repulsed the onrushing 80 Russian ID. Enemy artillery hammered the German positions at Porskaja Wolka and Ml. Porsk. GM Rusche had to fend off attacks at Swidniki and west of the highway.⁵⁵⁵ Meanwhile during the same day the first echelons of G.Lt Clausius' German combined division (the reinforced 175 LW Inf Bde and 41 Cav Bde), which had come from Army Group Hindenburg, arrived at Kovel.⁵⁵⁶ This reinforcement, plus the German units taken from Armeegruppe Marwitz (108 ID and 9 CD) would provide GO Linsingen in the near future with a strong reserve to support his endangered northern wing.

11 July

On the 11th the Russians renewed their powerful efforts to cross the Stokhod. During the day the situation for the Aus-Hung. 9 CD was generally quiet; a Russian thrust at Rudka-Czerwiszcze didn't take place until night and then soon stalled. Since large parts of the Bav CD were already being employed at Tobol, GdK Hauer assigned the entire position from there up to the Corps' northern border to G.Lt Hellingrath. Early in the morning the southern wing of 1 CD was attacked by enemy infantry. Here the Corps commander brought up as a back-up two battalions of the German 37 Inf Bde, which had been supposed to relieve the weak remnants of 11 Hon CD at Bol. Obzyr. But the commander of 1 CD, GM Chevalier de Ruiz, was able to master the situation with his own cavalry and to drive the enemy back to the river bank. Thus the German reserves weren't needed, and in the evening took over the positions of the Honved Hussars as originally intended. South of Bol. Obzyr, Roeder's Brigade thwarted with artillery fire a Russian attempt to erect a bridge.

The success of Corps Fath at Hulewicze the day before had dampened for now the enemy's eagerness to attack. Overnight the Bavarians who'd entered the sector of 26 LW ID for the counter-attack were pulled from the front. GdK Bernhardi ordered Bav. G.Lt Kneussl to take command of the defenses in the sectors of 26 and 45 LW ID; the battalions of his own 11th Division were to be held in reserve, ready to counterattack.⁵⁵⁷ GO Linsingen gave

555Bernhardi, "Eine Weltreise 1911/12", Vol. III, pp. 195 ff.

556TRANSLATOR's NOTE: The 175 LW Inf Bde had three regiments; also, IR 150 was attached to the Division. However, 41 Cav Bde soon left the unit.

557TRANSLATOR's NOTE: This deployment provides a good

control of the Polish Legion, which Hauer didn't need, to Bernhardi's Armeegruppe HQ. During the day the Russians increased their artillery fire against 53 ID, thus revealing - the allies supposed - their intention of attacking. Therefore a group of three Bavarian battalions was assembled at Smolary.

The enemy's eagerness in front of II Corps declined markedly. On the other hand, the Russian I and XXXIX Corps hurled themselves with weight on both German divisions which made up Bernhardi's right wing. In the early morning the enemy even broke into the lines on the western bank of the Stokhod with a surprise assault. However, this partial success was canceled due to a counter-thrust by 107 ID, which mopped up the attackers and inflicted bloody casualties. There was bitter fighting around Division Rusche's positions at Swidniki and Nw. Mosor; the defenders held on.⁵⁵⁸

The sorry results of the fighting that had gone on since 8 July forced Brussilov to recognize that he had already missed the opportunity to effectuate his plan of staying on the heels of his opponents as they withdrew, while crossing the Stokhod. Now on the 11th he initiated measures to implement the latest instructions of the Stavka. The northern wing and center of his Southwest Front (3rd, 8th and 11th Armies) would resume the offensive on 14 July, after systematic artillery preparation. Kaledin would send five corps against Kovel. In order to separate the Central Powers' Army Groups fighting in the Kovel and Pinsk areas and to push them back along their respective lines of communication, Letsch would advance in full cooperation with Kaledin and send a strong mass of cavalry toward Kamien Kaszyrskij.⁵⁵⁹ General Sakharov seems to have been given the assignment of covering the southern flank of the thrust on Kovel. The 7th and 9th Armies, which had already been told to operate together based on the situation, were given a free hand. Kaledin and Letsch both found that they hadn't received enough time to make substantial preparations before the next attack. Brussilov, however, would allow a postponement only until 15 July.

illustration of the methods the Germans used to prop up their wavering ally (which, naturally enough, the authors of this history didn't like to dwell on). A reliable German general was in charge at the corps level; he had the Austrians man the trenches while his own troops were farther back to carry out a counter-attack as soon as his allies collapsed.

558 Bernhardi, "Eine Weltreise 1911/12", Vol. III, p. 197;

Klembovsky, p. 46

559 Klembovsky, pp. 72 ff.; Zayontschovsky, p. 46

12-15 July

Already on 12 July the situation seemed less tense on the northern wing of Linsingen's Army Group. In general the fighting tapered off into skirmishing by patrols, plus artillery duels. The troop movements within Corps Hauer could be implemented without interference. The battered regiments of 11 Hon CD assembled behind the front at Werchy. In the sector of Corps Fath the Zarecze area caused particular concern. The enemy held down 53 ID with well-aimed artillery fire and by evening had their 78 ID entrenched in a bridgehead on the western bank of the Stokhod. The wide river bed, in which mostly shallow water courses flowed between numerous islands, was no insurmountable barrier. Moreover, a thick growth of plants impaired visibility along the river bank, and thus hampered the defense. During the night GdI Fath had already placed his Corps' reserves, and Bernhardt a German battalion, at the disposal of 53 ID. On the 13th GM Pongracz attacked the enemy and drove them back. In the following days the Russians ceased their attempts to spread out on the western bank of the river.

Meanwhile on 12 July the 108 German ID arrived in the area Griwiatki-Mielnica and was placed under Armeegruppe Bernhardt. The HQ of Bernhardt's staff moved to Kovel. G.Lt Clausius had assembled his Division and the German 9 CD around Kamien Kaszyrskij-Nujno-Dorotyszczce as the Army Group's reserve. The German OHL ordered GO Linsingen to hold 108 ID and a second division in readiness to depart; this compelled him to alter the organization of his northern wing on the 13th. In the evening of the 15th, Division Clausius would take over the sector between Stobychwa and the Loknica and would come under the orders of GM Bernhardt. 37 Inf Bde was relieved and placed in the Army Group's reserve. Also in this reserve was GM Heuduck's 9 German CD on both sides of the Turya. 11 Hon CD left Corps Hauer and on the 15th were sent to Kovel, where they would receive replacements and again become a battle-worthy unit. GdI Fath was given the Polish Legion, which on the next day would relieve the right wing of 26 LW ID at Sitowicze.

During this time the enemy didn't make any serious attempts against Group Gronau.

b. Stalemate at the center and southern wing of Army Group Linsingen, 10-15 July

The portion of Army Group Linsingen's front from Corps Lüttwitz to the k.u.k. 1st Army stayed completely on the defensive. On the 14th GO Tersztyanszky replaced his Army's reserve - 26 LW Inf Bde stationed at Kol. Dubrowa - with 25 LW Bde, also from 13 LW ID. GdK Marwitz had gone over to the defensive on the 9th; to prevent the enemy from noticing this too quickly, on the 10th he had 43 Res ID and the Aus-Hung. 48 ID carry out a deception maneuver. On the 11th FML Leonhardi took over the sector assigned to him by the Armeegruppe on both sides of Pustomyty. On his right and adjacent to 61 ID was 7 CD; in the center was 2 Gd Cav Bde (which stayed in the sector when Heuduck's Cavalry Division departed); on the left, occupying the positions as far as the Corps boundary, was 18 Cav Bde from 4 CD. Together these cavalry units made up "Leonhardi's Cavalry Group."

Until the 15th, Marwitz's troops were involved only in patrol actions and cannonades, designed to disturb the enemy and prevent any surprise assaults. 1st Army had been in the same situation for weeks. Sakharov's opposing 11th Army also stayed on the defensive; they returned 12 CD to 8th Army.

On one hand, the quiet that more or less reigned over large parts of the front was to the advantage of our troops. On the other hand, the Russians' remarkable inactivity gave GO Linsingen something to ponder. Increased attention had already been paid to the rail traffic in the Sarny-Rovno-Dubno-Luck area since the start of the month. On the 12th Linsingen instructed his Armies and Armeegruppen to be especially active on reconnaissance, particularly with air units. Conclusions might be drawn regarding the next objectives of the Russian commanders from the enemy's behavior, troop movements and concentration of units at various points. However, observations made through the 15th were insufficient to determine enemy intentions. Army Group HQ asked the generals whether Russian attacks were to be expected, and if so against what part of the front. GO Tersztyanszky replied that for now there was no sign of an imminent assault. 4th Army could handle an attack that wasn't made with great strength or with extraordinary artillery support. GO Puhallo reported that the enemy didn't seem to be planning to attack at present, but that the next Russian thrust would take the route through Brody toward Lemberg.

Brussilov didn't open his offensive toward Kovel on the 15th. On

this day Alexeiev assigned to him both Guard Corps, which were approaching by rail, and instructed that this reinforcement should join parts of Southwest Front to create a new army. Moreover, General Evert would send III Corps and IV Sib Corps to Southwest Front. Brussilov now postponed the start of the offensive even further, to await the arrival of the Guards which was scheduled for around the 20th.⁵⁶⁰ Meanwhile only 9th Army would continue their hitherto successful attack, at first by pushing forward their left wing.⁵⁶¹

Rather surprisingly, Russian artillery opened fire in the evening of the 15th against the right wing of Tersztyanszky's Army (10 CD and 70 Hon ID). This was soon followed by an infantry thrust against the inner wings of 11 ID and 70 Hon ID, which was repulsed. The enemy had also been directing strong artillery fire against Armeegruppe Marwitz since 4:00 PM. This was preliminary to some lively events that unfolded in the coming days.

c. New Russian thrusts on the Koropiec, 10-15 July

Also there was no significant Russian attack against Böhm-Ermolli's Army in the second week of July. Enemy activity was restricted, as previously, to cannonades and isolated thrusts by scouting detachments against the defensive position of Group Kosak.

In these days of waiting, GdI Shcherbachev tried once again to break through South Army's switch position between the Koropiec and the Strypa. Already on 10 July, aerial observers from Bothmer's Army discovered the Russian preparations to attack by noting troop concentrations north of the Buczacz-Jezierzany railroad. Here opposite Hreherow and Olesza, and on the hilly fields at Kurdwanowka, General Shcherbachev was holding 3 Turkestan Rif Div and XVI Corps ready for a powerful blow.⁵⁶² Strong artillery fire from the northern wing of II Corps at Dubienko and the southern wing of XII Corps at Burkanow was supposed to divert the allies' attention from the places chosen for the breakthrough. On the 11th, Russian artillery fire also increased near the Sereth at Hladki, where FML Kralicek expected another thrust by VI Russian Corps. On the same day, storm troops of the k.u.k. 54 ID advanced into part of the enemy's forward trenches in the Burkanow woods. Thus lively actions had

⁵⁶⁰Klembovsky, pp. 76 ff.

⁵⁶¹Zayontschovsky, p. 46

⁵⁶²Klembovsky, pp. 73 ff.

to be monitored at many points along South Army's front.

In the morning of 12 June the XVI Russian Corps opened preparatory fire with guns of light and heavy caliber between Jezierzany and Kurdwanowka. Toward noon, Russian infantry tried to push through Hreherow, but couldn't move forward under strong fire from the German Res IR 3 that was stationed there, plus the artillery. In the afternoon the powerful and destructive fire of the Russian batteries rained down for three hours on the hill at Hreherow, north of Olesza. Around 4:00 PM the Russian XVI Corps started their general attack. The German Res IR 3 held firmly on to Hreherow, and the Russians couldn't take Olesza from the west Galician IR # 56 of 12 ID. North of this town, however, the attackers did break through the central Galician IR # 57 and pushed out of the area they'd penetrated, and toward Olesza. Thus they outflanked the 56th, which also had to pull back. The reserves of 12 ID were quickly thrown into the breach. Also there was a powerful counter-thrust, delivered from the south by two battalions of German 1 Res ID, and from the north by two battalions of 48 Res ID. The regiments of 12 ID that had pulled back now stormed ahead again. Olesza and all the lost positions were recovered in the night. XVI Russian Corps had suffered very heavy casualties; on the battlefield alone 1200 dead Russians were lying.

Early on the 13th it was determined that opposite the right wing of 12 ID the enemy had pulled back to their starting position. Once again, however, Russian artillerists struck the entire sector from Hreherow to Olesza with vigorous fire. Around noon the regiments of 12 ID and the German battalions inserted into their lines had to fend off new enemy thrusts. In the afternoon Russian infantry also advanced west of Kurdwanowka; however, the attackers stayed pinned down in front of 12 ID and 48 German Res ID under a barrage from the allied batteries. New attacks started toward evening. North of Olesza the Russians succeeded in entering the German trenches, and even dug in strongly once more in that hotly-contested town. G.Lt Zietlow, commanding 1 German Res ID, had taken over the entire sector from Hreherow to Olesza, and directed counterattacks with determination. In bitter hand-to-hand fighting his intermingled units (parts of the k.u.k. 12 ID and of 1 and 48 Res ID) succeeded by early on the 14th in fully recovering all the lost positions.

Thus the Russian attack by Monasterzyska had already run to ground. Due to the defeat of XVI Russian Corps, General Shcherbachev couldn't continue the fruitless attempt to break through between the Koropiec and the Strypa. Bothmer utilized

the decline in the fighting to relieve some troops. On the 15th, three worn-out regiments of 12 ID were relieved from the front by units of 1 German Res ID. The troops of 12 ID thus relieved were sent to Monasterzyska.

d. Fighting continues in the Carpathians, 10-15 July

The situation in the Delatyn area

While Shcherbachev attacked the center of South Army at Monasterzyska, GdI Letschitzky's right wing no longer had the strength to thrust toward Nadworna and Stanislau. However, Letschitzky did continue the war of movement in the Carpathians. New fighting already developed early on 10 July by Delatyn. It appeared that here the Russians wanted to advance from the Pruth valley at Dora to envelop the right wing of VIII Corps. As a reserve, 12th Army HQ assembled at Nadworna the badly-weakened regiments of 5 and 24 ID, that had finally been relieved from the front a short time before, and also 59 ID. Because of the danger which threatened south of Delatyn, these units were assigned to GO Pflanzler-Baltin. On the 10th he sent the remnants of 5 and 24 ID to protect Benigni's endangered flank on the heights northwest of Dora. On the 11th the 59 ID was held in readiness behind the right wing of VIII Corps, already lengthened by the troops of 5 and 24 ID. The HQ of 12th Army built up a new reserve at Nadworna; this was the combined German 209 Brigade, made up of their IR 129 plus other parts of 105 ID. On the 11th the 202 Hon Inf Bde, from XI Corps, reached Körösmezö by rail.

With these units GO Pflanzler-Baltin wished to carry on the defensive operation by counterattacking. He believed that simultaneous thrusts south of Delatyn and from Tatarow would substantially reduce the danger that menaced VIII Corps and the Jablonica Pass. The Russians would be driven from the road and rail line that led to Körösmezö, and the Kosmacz [Kosmasz] area would be re-conquered. However, 12th Army HQ didn't expect any great success from this attack with worn-out troops in difficult mountain terrain. They approved Pflanzler-Baltin's plan of attack, but only half-heartedly.

In the evening of the 11th, Pflanzler-Baltin issued an order for the concentric attack on the enemy south of Delatyn. It would be carried out on the 13th under FZM Benigni's command, with the right wing of his own VIII Corps (remnants of 5 and 24 ID) plus 8 CD which was reinforced by 202 Hon Inf Bde. The German 209 Inf

Bde at Nadworna was still being equipped for mountain warfare.

GO Pflanzner-Baltin was energetically preparing for the operation, and repeatedly visited VIII Corps HQ at Nadworna. Deployment of artillery in the mountains, which had few roads, was difficult and time-consuming. Moreover on the 12th it started to rain. In the afternoon FZM Benigni reported that it would be impossible to start the attack before the 14th. Because of Russian troop concentrations south of Delatyn, in the evening the HQ of 12th Army ordered that the operation should be canceled. In addition, the Russian assault on Monasterzyska was under way, which forced the Archduke-Successor in the evening of the 13th to shift 209 German Inf Bde from Nadworna to Nizniow in case Bothmer's Army needed rapid reinforcement.

Meanwhile the Russians didn't remain completely inactive at Delatyn. Here they had already fallen on the outposts of VIII Corps in the night of 11-12 July. In the next day Benigni's troops guarding the heights northwest of Dora had to repulse Russian thrusts. On the 14th artillery fighting broke out in the sector east of Nadworna. At the same time the Russians repeated their thrusts at Delatyn and also against the Pirs Dora. According to Pflanzner-Baltin's orders, this important mountain peak, a bulwark of the front, wasn't to be given up under any circumstances; otherwise VIII Corps could be rolled up and all positions as far as the Dniester would become untenable. 7th Army HQ meanwhile learned that the Russians were bringing a fresh unit, 117 ID, against Corps Benigni. In expectation of a larger Russian attack, Pflanzner-Baltin held 59 ID in readiness in the Luh area. This Division, however, didn't have to be deployed because 5 ID held onto the Pirs Dora.

The situation in the forest Carpathians

In the forest Carpathians the Russians meanwhile were coming nearer to the passes between Kirlibaba and Körösmezö. After the departure of 202 Hon Inf Bde, FML Habermann had first pulled his weakened left wing back to the fortified line Tatarka-Capul, and then also withdrew 10 Inf Bde to the main defensive position north of the Golden Bistritz. The casualties of 80 Hon Inf Bde during the thrust to Izwor had been considerable. FML Habermann now restricted himself to the defensive. GM Foglar, hitherto commander of 51 Hon ID, led the right wing of XI Corps; it consisted of the remnants of Papp's Group plus 10 Inf Bde (IR # 13 and Lt Col. Scholtz's Group). On 13 July the 79 Hon Inf Bde moved to the left wing to join 80 Hon Inf Bde. Thus both brigades of 40 Hon ID were reunited after a long separation. It

had become urgent to reinforce this Division.

Since 10 July the Russian 103 ID and 1 Don Coss Div had been pressing ahead from Izwor toward the Capul. Detachments from both Russian units penetrated deeper into the mountains in the vicinity of the White Czeremosz. It appeared that these enemy troops wanted to thrust to Borsa in the Visso valley. To the left of XI Corps, just two Etappen battalions stood behind the thin line of 8 CD on the crest of the Forest Carpathian Mountains as far as the Turkul. On the 11th FML Habermann asked GO Pflanze-Baltin for help.

To help quickly, FML Brudermann had to make available from 8 CD the Ist Battalion of Hon IR # 19 and Major Russ' Detachment.⁵⁶³ These weak units were sent by train to Borsa; toward mid-July they occupied the Prislop Ridge among the wild, forested mountains. Moreover around this time Col. Franz's Cav Bde, which had been attached to 8 CD, was dissolved; its squadrons were again assigned as divisional cavalry to their parent infantry divisions in 7th Army.

Brudermann's right wing, the 3 CD, had continued to attack the enemy at Jablonica on 10 and 11 July without a pause. The gallant squadrons did manage to advance into the town, but then had to withdraw under Russian pressure to Hryniawa in the Probihna valley. The enemy brought up reinforcements through Uscie Putilla. Fresh enemy units also advanced against the outposts which 3 CD had left in the Zabie area. Apparently these were troops of 82 Russian ID. In the Kosmasz area as far as a point north to Tatarow the widely-stretched 8 CD was also facing stronger forces from the Russian XI Corps.

The center of Cavalry Corps Brudermann received help from 202 Honved Brigade which detrained at Körösmezö. On the 13th they advanced from the valley where the Pruth has its source, and over the mountains in the direction of Kosmasz. The Honved reached the western slope of the wide Mt. Hordie, which is almost 1500 meters high. However, they couldn't hold off Russian thrusts.

⁵⁶³TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The composition of Russ' Group at this point is obscure. A reference farther below states that as of the 17th it contained three battalions and one battery, but it's unclear whether this was the Group's original strength. By the 20th it was reinforced by II Bn/IR 13, yet on the 21st its strength given as still just three battalions (II/13, II/Hon IR 19 and k.k. Lst Bn 150). The references cannot be completely reconciled.

On 15 July Col. Savoly pulled back most of his troops toward Ardzeluza, leaving behind some covering detachments. On the same day an advanced Russian group at Tatarow in the Pruth valley was brought under fire by an Aus-Hung. armored train and driven back.

So the war of small detachments in the Carpathians took its course. The overall impression was that Cavalry Corps Brudermann was opposed by two or three Russian infantry divisions and a cavalry division; the units were XI Russian Corps in the Zabie area (to a point north of Tatarow) and 1 Don Coss Div, reinforced by infantry, in the area where the Czeremosz has its source. FML Brudermann, ordered by 7th Army HQ to be extremely active, had in fact carried out the grueling actions in the Carpathians skillfully with his tired and hungry troops. However, their strength wasn't sufficient to guard all of the minor routes which led, as did the main passes, to the Hungarian border.

Discussions on the deployment of the k.u.k. 34 ID

Although the Russian activity in the Carpathians didn't give 12th Army HQ the impression that a large-scale offensive was imminent, nevertheless the troops who were coming by train from south Tyrol were eagerly awaited as a highly-welcome support for Cavalry Corps Brudermann. Already on 12 July the Archduke-Successor had asked Teschen whether the Division being made available from the Tyrolean front would be placed at the disposal of his 12th Army HQ. The high command informed FML Archduke Karl Franz Joseph that FML Rudolf Krauss' 34 ID would start their journey on 13 July, and that the first troop trains would reach Vienna on the 15th. By then 12th Army HQ, after clarifying the situation, could suggest whether the approaching reinforcements should be deployed under 12th Army or used for "active" defense in the Carpathians. Army HQ responded that only weak units were currently stationed at the passes between Kirlibaba and Körösmezö; therefore they intended to use 34 ID, when it arrived, on the left of XI Corps. They especially wanted to be ready in case Russian forces advanced toward Maramaros-Sziget.

GO Conrad agreed with this and on the 14th informed GdI Falkenhayn of the decision. He added that 34 ID by itself wouldn't be sufficient to enable 12th Army to carry out the proposed thrust on the Dniester. There were more reports about Romania's impending adherence to the Entente. So it seemed especially desirable to reinforce the Carpathian front; this would prevent a Russian advance over the Hungarian border and thus, possibly, might further delay Romania's entry into the war. Conrad's telegram to Falkenhayn continued, "Only a successful

counterattack that again throws back the Russian southern wing can prevent this [Romanian entry]. As long as sufficient units aren't available, we can only hold the front."

GdI Falkenhayn also hoped that the Carpathian front would be made secure by the arrival of 34 ID, especially since no German reinforcements could be sent from Volhynia to 7th Army. X Corps, originally scheduled to be shifted when the Turkish XV Corps came from Turkey around 20 July, was now intended to remain at the disposal of the German OHL.

Meanwhile in the morning of the 14th the k.u.k. high command let GO Pflanzler-Baltin know that Maramaros-Sziget had been selected as the place where 34 ID could detrain. 12th Army HQ intended to assemble one brigade of this Division at Leordina and the other at Raho; thus they could move in two columns through the Ruszkova and upper Tisza valleys into the forested mountains and then past Mounts Kopilas and Turkul. To GO Pflanzler-Baltin it didn't seem useful to bring up the newly-arrived troops from such widely separated areas behind the front. He preferred that 34 ID should travel ahead united to Körösmezö and from there thrust to Kosmacz while the reinforced right wing of VIII Corps simultaneously attacked from Delatyn.

Changes in the chain of command

The question of where to detrain and deploy 34 ID was thus still not decided when on 15 July the AOK initiated a new organization and command structure for the units in accordance with the earlier proposals of 12th Army HQ. For the "active" defense of the northeastern gateways to Hungary against the slowly advancing Russians, the AOK assigned to 7th Army the XI Corps, Brudermann's Cavalry Corps and the security troops at the passes, plus 34 ID which was still in transit. GO Pflanzler-Baltin was also given control of the Hermannstadt Military Command (peacetime HQ of XII Corps) so he could use the "Alarm Battalions" formed in Transylvania from replacement troops, and the Finance and Gendarmerie detachments guarding the Romanian border. 7th Army HQ was also responsible for building fortifications in Transylvania.

Command over the former northern wing of 7th Army (VIII Corps and Group Snjaric), and over Groups Hadfy and Kraewel which had been directly under 12th Army HQ, would be assumed early on 17 July by HQ of 3rd Army, coming by train from south Tyrol. The HQ of GO Kövess, commander of 3rd Army, would be established at Bohorodczany, while GO Pflanzler-Baltin shifted his HQ to

Maramaros-Sziget. GdK Kirchbach's I Corps HQ, also summoned from Tyrol, was originally supposed to take over a new group in the Carpathians, consisting of 34 ID, Cavalry Corps Brudermann and 202 Hon Inf Bde. Now, however, GdK Kirchbach would take over Group Snjaric as desired by the Archduke-Successor. 12th Army HQ would continue to operate as an Army Group HQ over 7th, new 3rd, and South Armies; they would choose the time at which 7th Army HQ should move from Bohorodczany to Maramaros-Sziget.

F. The Russian Offensive Flares Anew in the Second Half of July

1. Attacks by North and West Fronts, 16-29 July

a. Kuropatkin's thrust toward Bausk

The Stavka ordered that in the second half of July the Tsar's Army should again mount a major attack. The main task - to split the front of the Central Powers and separate the Aus-Hung. from the German armies - was assigned to Southwest Front. While Brussilov prepared a mighty stroke, General Kuropatkin (commanding the North Front) completed his preparations for the supporting attacks demanded by Alexeiev. It seemed that the easiest way to carry out the task of driving the Germans from the Dvina was to interrupt traffic on the Mitau-Jakobstadt rail line, which was the only supply route for the German troops. Therefore General Dimitriev's 12th Army attacked from Riga in the direction of Bausk, to occupy the line between Gr. Ekau and Neugut. Significant forces assembled opposite the sector to be attacked - 91 battalions, 30 light and 100 heavy guns. The spearhead of the offensive consisted of VI and VII Siberian Corps (67 battalions), with 24 more battalions directly behind them.

The infantry attack started on 16 July after three hours of artillery bombardment. The Russians were able to take the foremost trenches, damaged by their artillery; however, all assaults on the next positions, where the troops of 8th German Army stood fast, were shattered. The actions lasted until the 22nd, but the Russians won no success. Their casualties totaled about 15,000 men.⁵⁶⁴ A few divisions of Otto von Below's Army, in

564Klembovsky, p. 74; Zayontschovsky, pp. 43 ff.; Knox, Vol. II,

a thin defensive line, had thrown back a larger force and thus put an end to a menace which had threatened Hindenburg's northern wing.⁵⁶⁵

On 20 July Alexeiev had drawn the necessary conclusions from the puny progress achieved in the direction of Bausk. He concentrated on winning over Kuropatkin to the already much-discussed plan of landing troops on the western coast of the Bay of Riga with the support of naval forces, thus striking the German northern wing on the flank and from the rear. A report that the Tsar had also approved the proposal gave it added weight. Until now Kuropatkin had opposed the concept. On the 23rd Dimitriev called for a change in the direction of his attack; he wanted it to include a surprise thrust from Schlock along the seacoast toward Tuckum [Tukkum], combined with a simultaneous landing operation. Thus he adopted Alexeiev's pet idea, and finally caused Kuropatkin to consent. Ten days were set aside for preparation, and thus the month of July passed by. Meanwhile the Stavka switched their primary interest to events south of the Pripyat. The naval commanders had reservations about whether they could ensure the safety of the troops during the voyage. Then it was realized that preparations for an operation of this kind couldn't be concealed from the pro-German populations of Riga and Reval, and thus also from the Germans. Therefore implementation of the plan was given up.⁵⁶⁶

b. The end of the Battle of Baranowicze

For Woyrsch's Army, the days full of battle at the start of the month had been followed since 9 July by a slight easing of tension. However, the Army and corps commanders were convinced that the much larger enemy force hadn't given the bloody game up for lost, but would resume it again. Therefore the allies used the respite caused by the attackers' exhaustion to arm themselves against new assaults. In the southern sector of the k.u.k. XII Corps most of 16 ID was relieved on 12 July by G.Lt Wernitz's 86 ID; the extreme right wing by Lake Koldyczewo was still held by battalions of 32 Inf Bde. In addition to 35 ID, GdI Henriquez now commanded three German divisions in the first line. After

p. 455

565Schwarte, "Der deutsche Landkrieg", Vol. II, p. 478;

Ludendorff, p. 177

566Klembovsky, p. 75; Zayontschovsky, p. 44; Knox, Vol. II, p.

456; Gurko, "Russland 1914 bis 1917: Erinnerungen an Krieg und Revolution" (Berlin, 1921), p. 121

operations in Zoellner's and Podhoranszky's sectors, in which the Russians feigned attacks, the 5 Res ID stormed ahead on 14 July; they even re-conquered parts of the first position south of the Serweczbug, which had been lost at the start of the month.⁵⁶⁷ Through the 16th the enemy responded with counter-thrusts, which were directed also against neighboring divisions; all, however, were repulsed. Then until 20 July activity subsided on both sides into weak artillery fire and skirmishes in no-man's land. Reconnaissance, however, continued to indicate that the Russian front was occupied in strength, with a thick layer of troops behind it. The staff of Woyrsch's Army reckoned that the enemy were replenishing their units and preparing for a new attack on a broader front against all of XII Corps and the Landwehr Corps. The Russians also seemed to be reinforcing the area in front of the Beskid Corps, which extended south as far as Group Gronau. Here Prince Leopold held ready the 121 ID, which had come from the Western theater of operations.

Toward the end of the month the enemy once again launched a powerful attack against Gorodiszczce and Baranowicze, apparently to seriously pin down the German eastern armies just before Brussilov made the major effort south of the Pripyat. Early on 25 July the Russian batteries opened a bombardment of increasing strength. They first hit the right wing of Zoellner's Division and then turned their fire south, toward the area 3 km wide where they'd previously penetrated the lines of XII Corps. It was now held by Woyna's and Wernitz's divisions. Waves of infantry surged forward in the afternoon and until night. They were shattered by the strength of the unbending defenders on the blood-soaked battlefields at the bend in the Serwecz, at Skrobowa and at Wyzorok. In the morning hours of the 26th the attackers were again driven out of a 150 meter long stretch of 5 Res ID's trench. During the day the Russians assaulted the Landwehr Corps. The front of GdI Henriquez was subjected to only moderate fire. Several days earlier the 201 "Danzig" ID had started to relieve 86 ID, so that the latter unit would be made available for Linsingen's Army Group.⁵⁶⁸ GO Woyrsch had so much confidence in the staying power of his troops that he had already allowed six battalions of the 86th to leave by train despite the heavy fighting which had engulfed his Army. G.Lt von Dickhuth-Harrach, commander of 201 ID, took control of the southern sector of XII Corps. There was a bitter battle along the lines of Corps

567Vogel, pp. 60 ff.

568201 ID, formed only for positional warfare, had been sent to Woyrsch's Army in mid-July so that it could make a better division available as a reserve.

Henriquez and of the Silesian Landwehr on the 27th and especially on the 28th. Although the Russians allowed the preparatory artillery fire to swell to its greatest weight, and although they weren't shy about suffering casualties, the defenders stood up without flinching to the shock of the massed assaults. With counterattacks they always recovered any small parts of their positions that had been lost to the Russians. The gruesome melee died out on the 29th.

The new attempts by Ragosa's 4th Russian Army to break the German front remained in vain, despite the consumption of much larger resources. The results of the four days' fighting were even less favorable than those of the first July battle. Also the assigned goals of the operation - to tie down units of the German eastern armies and prevent troop transfers to the Aus-Hung. front - had only been achieved to a limited extent.

For the Central Powers, the second defensive victory won in July had great importance. It checked the enemy, who since June had tried with great stubbornness to advance by two routes (through Baranowicze and through Kovel) with the strategic goal of separating the German and Aus-hung. Armies. Now the allies defending the Kovel route could oppose the Tsar's armies with increased chances of success, since the assault on the Baranowicze route had been shattered.

2. Attacks by Sakharov's Army, 16-21 July

Since 9 July Linsingen's Army Group had stayed in their permanent positions. Between the 16th and 20th the enemy was more active in front of Group Gronau. Definite information that IV Sib Corps had shifted from Ragosa's army south toward the Logiszyn area, and other observations, seemed to point to an imminent attack toward the Oginsky Canal and Pinsk. Therefore in the night of 20-21 July GO Linsingen placed 9 German CD in the front on the left wing of Corps Hauer, which allowed GdA Gronau to shift his units more to the north. Hauer, Bernhardt and Lüttwitz were hardly forced to take any defensive measures by Letsch's Army or the main body of Kaledin's. Only the southern part of 8th Russian Army began to cause more trouble for both of Tersztyanszky's corps on the 16th.

When Kaledin's wireless messages indicated on the 18th that his HQ had moved forward to Luck, the AOK obtained definite proof that the Russians were planning a thrust from this area. There

was no doubt that the enemy was preparing a major operation. On the 20th the k.u.k. high command notified their generals in the East that the Russian Guard Corps had left their known concentration areas to move south, therefore presumably toward the Aus-Hung. front. Commanders were to immediately forward any breaking news about the location or movement of the Guards. The staff at Teschen had already intercepted a Russian radio message which discussed the creation of a Guard Army from parts of the 3rd and 8th Armies; however, they had been unable to draw the correct conclusion from the somewhat unclear text.

a. Armeegruppe Marwitz pulls behind the Lipa, 16-19 July

Since Brussilov had delayed the main offensive of Southwest Front until after 20 July, Letsch's and Kaledin's Armies were both still quiet. Therefore Sakharov thought this was a favorable opportunity to precede his planned assault on Brody by first recovering the ground he'd lost north of the Lipa at the start of July. This would again bring his 11th Army's right wing forward to the same extent as the left of Kaledin's 8th Army. XLV Corps, which had been worn out since the thrust by Armeegruppe Marwitz, was replaced by two other corps (V and V Siberian); along with the Combined Cav Div, XLV Corps could now serve as the Army's reserve. Meanwhile the Trans-Amur cavalry deployed on the Army's northern wing, by Sadow. Sakharov decided to wait no longer, and on the 16th began to attack with the northern part of 11th Army. V Sib Corps, on a narrow front between Bludow and Szklin, was supposed to break through south as far as the Lipa; V Corps, advancing with their left wing on the Styr and upstream on the Lipa, would hinder the allies from escaping toward the south. With this double envelopment Sakharov hoped to destroy the allies' advanced battle group. To cover the attackers' right flank, VIII Corps would advance to the line Pustomyty-Zwiniacze. XXXII Corps would merely pin down their opponents.⁵⁶⁹

16 July

Early on the 16th, Russian cannoneers on the front opposite the 4th Aus-Hung. Army brought Corps Szurmay under stronger fire, which they later turned also against X Corps. The increased activity here was apparently intended to divert the allies' attention from the neighboring area farther south. Shortly after midnight several companies of IR # 90 (11 ID) at Watyn were overrun by Russians who utilized a ruse. However, this episode had no unfavorable consequences, and the attackers were soon cleared out of our trenches.

As morning dawned on the 16th, Sakharov's troops moved to attack. The spearhead of V Sib Corps, 50 ID, was accompanied on the right by 15 ID of VIII Corps and on the left by 10 ID of V Corps.⁵⁷⁰

569Nadeshnizh, "The action of 10 Russian ID near Luck in July 1916" (in Russian; Moscow, 1916), pp. 6 ff.; Giltschevsky, p. 111

570Vinogradsky, p. 189. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: As mentioned earlier, the other assigned division of V Sib Corps (6 Sib Rif

The 50 ID overran the Hungarian Landsturm troops of the 61 ID, as well as parts of 7 CD, and quickly drove through Ulgowka toward the south. A broad gap opened between Leonhardi's units and the main body of Falkenhayn's. FML Leonhardi, supported by several German battalions, brought his right wing - mixed up with the remnants of 61 ID - to a halt on the line Pustomyty-Zwiniacze. The commander of Gd Cav Bde was supposed to counterattack with some assembled Aus-Hung. and German troops, but soon had to give up this idea because the enemy was reinforced north of Ulgowka. The left wing of 48 ID - the 11 Mtn Bde - was struck in the flank by the Russian onslaught and badly shaken. However, on the right the 12 Mtn Bde maintained their link to the Germans; by 6:00 AM the 48 ID was able with the divisional reserves to build up a thinly-held, hook-shaped position south of Grubin, facing to the northwest. They halted 10 Russian ID.⁵⁷¹ From the southern wing of this bent-back front, GM Runckel was supposed to lead a counterattack toward Ulgowka with units of his 43 Res ID and some from 22 ID. Runckel's group was able to keep the Russians from further widening their penetration, but late in the morning encountered heavy resistance.⁵⁷² The 5 km deep penetration by the enemy could no longer be reversed. V Sib Corps with the neighboring divisions were firmly dug into the Pustomyty-Zwiniacze-Gubin area.⁵⁷³

At mid-day GdK von der Marwitz reported that he still hoped to hold out until darkness fell; then under its cover he'd take the Armeegruppe back to the Lipa-Gorochow line. By thus shortening the front he'd free units to support the left wing. Since 61 ID, 11 Mtn Bde and 7 CD no longer had any combat value, it was possible that the enemy might break out further to the west.⁵⁷⁴ GO Linsingen immediately ordered that 108 ID, which the German

Div) had been badly damaged and was behind the front to rebuild.

571Nadeshnizh, pp. 19 ff. During the creation of this line of resistance the General Staff Corps officer of 11 Mtn Bde, Staff Captain Friedrich Krömer, proved willing to take the responsibility of issuing his own orders. Therefore he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order.

572"Artillerie: Verteidigung und Ruckzug im Waldgelände"
(Militär-Wochenblatt, Berlin, 1929; 12th Issue)

573Nadeshnizh, p. 22

574Russian 10 ID had taken more than 3100 prisoners, mainly from 48 and 61 ID (Nadeshnizh, p 27). FML Leonhardi reported a loss of more than 4500 from the troops under his command, including the Germans.

OHL had wanted to use elsewhere, should be called back from Griwiatki to Sokal. Then he instructed 1st and 4th Armies to shift units which could be used at their respective junctions with Armee-gruppe Marwitz. GO Tersztyanszky sent IR # 95 (Szurmay's Corps reserve) to Korytnica along with two regiments of 10 CD. LW IR # 24 of 4th Army's reserve, which had gone with two batteries in the same direction, was brought back overnight to Bubnow and attached to FML Szurmay, because the Russians had torn gaps in their barriers and assembled troops at Sadow [Sadowo], indicating they might be preparing a surprise assault. GO Puhallo had already on his own initiative sent one and a half battalions of 46 LW ID to guard the crossing-points on the Lipa west of Lobaczewka.

During the whole day, 7 ID of V Russian Corps had tried to push back the right wing of Armeegruppe Marwitz between the towns of Michajlowka and Zloczewka. However, their repeated heavy attacks shattered on the defenses of GM Baumgartner's 7 k.u.k. ID.⁵⁷⁵ Sakharov had instructed XXXII Corps to make it impossible for their opponents to shift forces to the battle zone north of the Lipa; therefore the Russian 101 ID had selected the Aus-Hung. bridgehead position east of Peremyl as a target. All day strong artillery fire pounded the left wing of 46 LW ID. The infantry assaults didn't begin until evening; by 11:00 PM they were defeated with heavy loss by the bridgehead garrison (Col. Freiherr von Scholten's group: IR # 42 and LW IR # 13).⁵⁷⁶

In the afternoon the remnants of 61 ID had already been unable to hold onto Szczew; in the evening Pustomyty was also lost to the enemy. The left wing of Armeegruppe Marwitz, completely broken up, slid further to the west; Leonhardi's cavalry group was now placed under Falkenhayn's orders. The half of 4 CD (the Division minus its 21 Bde), joined by the cavalry regiments which had hurried over from 4th Army's reserve, was still able to maintain the connection with Tersztyanszky's 10 CD on the left. Now Marwitz had to also begin the retreat of his eastern wing, as already planned. The divisions here had offered such stout resistance throughout the day that they were able under cover of the night to march back behind the Lipa in one bound. Rear guards concealed the departure of the main body until the next morning.

17 July

575Nadeshnizh, p. 20

576Giltshevsky, pp. 111 ff.

Once on the south bank of the Lipa, on 17 July the 7 ID (including 21 Cav Bde) took over the defenses upstream as far as Haliczany. The German divisions of GM Runckel and G.Lt Dieffenbach held the line farther west up to Boroczyce. The weak 48 ID assembled at Lobaczewka. After the rear guards crossed over, the bridges were blown up. Since GdK von der Marwitz felt that Group Scholten's advanced position on the right bank of the Styr no longer had any value, GO Puhallo had abandoned the bridgehead and destroyed the crossing-points. To defend the new line on the Lipa it was necessary to re-align the chain of command. 7 ID with the attached 21 Cav Bde was placed under 1st Army, which thus was responsible for the sector between the units that had just retreated and 46 LW ID. XVIII Corps was enduring occasional artillery fire; 46 LW ID was hit by lively fire, but repulsed advancing Russian scouting parties between Kossow and the Plaszewka. Only enemy patrols appeared on the north bank of the Lipa during the day.

Overnight, groups of men from Leonhardi's and Falkenhayn's badly-weakened units had occupied a line which reached from east of Kolpitolow through Bozew toward Choloniew. In the morning of the 17th the VIII Russian Corps attacked anew from Pustomyty. With help from the reserves of 4th Army (LW IR # 24 had also arrived at Korytnica around 3:00 AM), FML Leonhardi was able to fend off the assaults and to fortify his front. In the evening the 43 Res ID (which arrived at Choloniew) and 22 ID (which moved to Gorochow) provided stronger support for the weak southern wing. Both divisions had completed noteworthy marching achievements. 48 ID was pulled back to Boroczyce. GdK von der Marwitz now adjusted the chain of command. Corps Falkenhayn had the sector from Haliczany to a point west of Tereszkowiec, with 22 ID, 43 Res ID, and the remnants of k.u.k. 61 ID. Leonhardi's reinforced group held the adjacent area as far as 4th Army. The German 108 ID, whose first echelon got off their trains at Iwanicz and Sokal,⁵⁷⁷ was ordered to assemble on the upper reaches of the Southern Luga; their leading detachments were to reach Jeziery the next day, so that they could support Leonhardi's cavalry group if necessary.

18 July

577Raitzenhofer ("Das Rückgrat der Dauerfront im Osten", pp. 974 ff.) describes the decisive role played by the newly-constructed lines of communication behind and parallel to the Eastern front in halting the Russian thrusts and restoring equilibrium.

On the 18th Falkenhayn occupied his assigned front with his two German divisions. 48 ID stayed behind the southern wing at Dolgozhe, at the disposition of the Armeegruppe commander. The enemy in front of Marwitz remained rather inactive. By 1st Army, Russian artillery was already in action opposite 7 ID. The 46 LW ID stood under constant bombardment, especially at Lipa town. In like manner the southern wing of XVIII Corps at Radziwilow was often struck by suddenly concentrated bombardments. Actions in no-man's land against probing Russians increased on the front between Ostrow and Radziwilow. Army Group Linsingen asked 1st Army HQ if they considered the situation dangerous at the Lipa-Styr confluence and if it would be desirable to shift 48 ID nearer to this area. 1st Army responded with full confidence that they could hold the sector with their own units. At Beresteczko and Smolawa 4½ battalions (IR # 42 and LW IR # 16) were ready in the Army's reserve. For the same purpose, on 19 July the XVIII Corps would shift FJB # 31 - of eight companies - to Leszniow. The Corps' right wing was shortened so that it extended just to the rail line leading to Radziwilow, because overnight the 2nd Army relieved the parts of 1 Lst Inf Bde stationed south of the railroad.

19 July

On the 19th the enemy vigorously bombarded the area around Lipa town, and extended the radius of their batteries to also include the adjacent positions of 7 ID. Russian attempts to build a plank bridge over the Styr at Werben were thwarted by 46 LW ID. In light fighting Falkenhayn brought his corps forward to the line Jelizarow-Oszczew-Tereszkowiec, which was more suitable for the construction of permanent positions. The German 108 ID started to enter the front line to the left of 22 ID, so that Leonhardi's Cavalry Group could shift toward the north and bring men into reserve. At Conrad's instructions the remnants of 61 ID moved to the Stojanow-Sokal area to be brought back to order and to strength; they were placed under the direction of 1st Army.

The AOK at Teschen were observing the situation of 1st Army at the Styr-Lipa confluence with justified concern. They now learned that Puhallo intended to pull parts of Baumgartner's and Urbanski's Divisions back to a position less exposed to enemy gunfire; in the evening 1st Army HQ was informed by telephone that such a withdrawal might cause the entire Galician front to waver. The high command pointed out that the Russians had six infantry and two cavalry divisions opposite the two divisions holding the front around the point where it was bent at a right angle at Lipa. An attack by this much larger force was very

probable. Army HQ again asserted that they were quite confident; they stated that they had turned down the offer of 48 ID the day before because of Marwitz's situation at the time, when there was a danger that the enemy might advance in the direction Radziechow-Lemberg. Now Marwitz's front had solidified, as indicated by Falkenhayn's advance. If therefore the 1st Army could be given the available 48 ID, then Teschen should also banish any concern about the Lipa area.

While Sakharov was striking with power at Armeegruppe Marwitz and driving them over the Lipa, he also sought to pin down the units of 2nd Army. Beginning on 16 June, Group Kosak had to repulse repeated thrusts against their outposts. Simultaneously the Russian batteries increased their activity. In the midst of these days of increasing tension, at noon on the 19th GO Böhm-Ermolli received an order from Teschen to relieve the two regiments (IR # 19 and 26) of 33 ID on the left wing of IV Corps with IR # 76. The 19th and 26th were to unite with the other half of their division (IR # 12 and 83) at Brody. 2nd Army initiated the necessary troop movements.

The plan of attack which the commander of 11th Russian Army initiated on 16 July had been carried out within 24 hours, at least insofar as that the Russians had recovered the terrain they'd lost north of the Lipa. Allied casualties included a large number of troops and several guns, but the intended encirclement had failed. The allies had averted this great threatening danger by their timely retreat, and so on the 17th Sakharov had to abstain from continuing the attack.⁵⁷⁸

The troops of the northern wing of XXXII Corps were still supposed to force their way onto the left bank of the Styr, but they lacked equipment to cross the river; 101 ID had to be content with occupying the trenches on the right bank abandoned by Scholten's group.⁵⁷⁹ Sakharov still intended to envelop from two sides his opponents stationed in the bulge in the front by Lipa town. V Sib Corps and 7 ID would advance from the north over the Lipa River to Lobaczewka and Smolawa, while XXXIII Corps (reinforced with the strong first-line troops of 10 ID) attacked from the east over the Styr and advanced to the line Smolawa-Beresteczko-Merwa-Leszniow. Moreover, 126 ID of XLV Corps would fight on the southern wing. This time, however, XXXII Corps would strike the main blow; behind them two cavalry divisions (7 and Combined CD) were held in readiness. VIII Corps was assigned

578Nadeshnizh, pp. 23 ff.

579Giltshevsky, p. 113

back to Kaledin's Army.⁵⁸⁰ The deployment was completed on 19 July. Since at least a day was needed for reconnaissance and technical preparations for the river-crossing, the attack was postponed until the 20th.

b. Battle of Beresteczko, 20-21 July

20 July

The warning from the k.u.k. high command to 1st Army HQ led GO Puhallo on 20 July to ask Linsingen to give him 48 ID, which had already been brought up again to a strength of 7800 riflemen. The request was immediately approved. GM Prince Schwarzenberg, who now commanded the Division, was ordered to march his troops to Uwin.

The enemy began to fire for effect around 3:00 AM against the positions of 46 LW ID, chiefly between Lipa and Peremyl. Attempts by 10 Russian ID to cross the Styr with pontoons north of the latter town had already been thwarted in the bright moonlight by the alert Aus-Hung. garrison on the bank. In the early morning the enemy, having lost many troops as well as bridging equipment, had to completely abandon this effort.⁵⁸¹ Meanwhile a hail of shells from Russian batteries descended on the Lipa sector as far as Nowostaw, and on the Styr front south to Redkow. 46 LW ID responded with powerful defensive fire and tried to destroy the troop concentrations identified on the Plaszewka. Just after noon an attack developed south of Redkow against 91 LW Inf Bde. GM Urbanski asked for control over FJB # 31, which had arrived at Beresteczko in the morning. Army HQ made available to the defenders, if needed, all of their reserves (6½ battalions); they emphasized only that their subordinates should pay heed to the probable direction of the enemy's main assault. Meanwhile a hurricane bombardment opened on the area around Peremyl. Around 2:00 PM GO Puhallo received a report that the Russians had been repulsed at Redkow, but soon afterward bad news arrived. The southern wing of 92 LW Inf Bde had been squeezed in at the bend in the Styr between Peremyl and the mouth of the Plaszewka, and pushed back to the west. The Brigade reserve (a battalion of LW IR # 13) was committed, and the Army reserve was coming forward for a counterattack.

Around 2:00 PM the Russian 101 ID had managed to cross the Styr south of the town of Werben on makeshift plank bridges; then they

580Baluiev, p. 72

581Nadeshnizh, p. 40

broke through the defenders' lines. The Russians' main body thrust west toward Smolawa, while one regiment shifted north to Peremyl and reached out a helping hand to 10 ID. This enabled the second attacking division of XXXII Corps to cross the river.⁵⁸² From Beresteczko GM Urbanski threw IR # 42 and half of FJB # 31 to the northeast, against the enemy. (The other four companies of the Jaeger had been attached to 92 LW Inf Bde.) Urbanski wanted to shift his last reserve unit, LW IR # 16, ahead to Smolawa. Actually, however, this village had already long been in the hands of the Russians. The two regiments of the Army reserve weren't able to bring the attackers to a halt until after they were west of the Beresteczko-Lipa road. In the late afternoon the northern wing of 92 LW Inf Bde, under pressure from 10 Russian ID, had to also give up the bend in the river at Lipa. Withdrawing south from Nowostaw, they linked up with the line reached by the counterattacking group. In the evening GO Puhallo ordered 46 LW ID to hold onto their new front without flinching until the arrival of 48 ID. On the next day GM Schwarzenberg would send his batteries ahead to Beresteczko to support the shaken Landwehr division; his main body would start off for that town around 4:00 AM.

On the 20th, the 7 ID stood under strong artillery fire but wasn't attacked. After the Russian 105 ID had been quickly defeated, the enemy didn't take any further action against 91 LW Inf Bde. By XVIII Corps there were only the usual skirmishes. Late that night GO Linsingen announced that Marwitz was sending three battalions and some batteries of 43 Res ID to Lobaczewka.

Because of the Russian thrusts at Beresteczko, GO Böhm-Ermolli believed that now the long-expected attack from Radziwilow to Brody would break loose against 2nd Army. If any position at the boundaries between units was given up there could be very serious consequences. Therefore unified command was needed in this important sector; Böhm-Ermolli asked the high command to place under his authority 1 Lst Inf Bde, neighboring the left wing of his Army. Teschen concurred, and in the night of 20-21 July the Brigade was assigned to FML Kosak's group.

21 July

After midnight on the 21st, the Russian 7 ID crossed to the southern bank of the Lipa. As morning dawned they broke through the inner wings of the Divisions of Baumgartner [7th] and Urbanski [46th LW]. The enemy thus ruined the Army commander's

⁵⁸²Giltschevsky, pp. 116 ff.; Nadeshnizh, pp. 41 ff.

plan to hold the heights north of Smolawa and from there a line through Lobaczewka to the Lipa; the Russians quickly reached the woods west of Smolawa and threatened to envelop the left wing of 46 LW ID. Around 7:00 AM Puhallo had to order the northern half of his Army to retreat. 48 ID would set up a covering position on both sides of Dzikowiny. To their left GM Baumgartner's Division with the attached 21 Cav Bde filled the area as far as Haliczany. GM Urbanski would deploy both his brigades to the right of 48 ID, along the left banks of the Styr and Slonowka Rivers and to a point south of Korsow where they linked up with the still-intact line of XVIII Corps.

At Kovel and Teschen the HQ reacted to 1st Army's continuing setbacks with serious concern. After GO Linsingen learned of Puhallo's decision to retreat, his first reaction was to have GdK von der Marwitz send a regiment and three batteries of 22 ID to 1st Army's northern wing. Conrad was asked to shift a reliable division to Stojanow. The high command did seek to reinforce the threatened Army. The nearest effective unit was at Brody. At noon Böhm-Ermolli was instructed to immediately send half of FML von Hordt's 33 ID (65 Inf Bde with IR # 12 and 83 plus two batteries) through Lemberg to Stojanow; they could be expected to arrive on the 22nd. To replace these troops the other brigade of 33 ID was to assemble at Brody as soon as possible. From the sector of 1 Lst Inf Bde, which 2nd Army had just taken over, the k.k. Lst IR # 22 (which had been in reserve) was given to XVIII Corps. This enabled FML Czibulka to more easily extend his northern wing to the junction with the new position of 46 LW ID. 1st Army HQ was emphatically reminded that the stubborn defense of their battleground was decisive for the situation on the entire Galician front. Further reinforcements were under consideration.

The northern part of Puhallo's Army had been in retreat since the morning fighting. The enemy had also sought to thrust with 10 and 101 ID to Merwa and Smolawa, which caused 10 ID to deploy behind their 7 ID. Thus three infantry divisions were packed into the narrow area between the Lipa and Styr, where they were joined in the morning by the Combined CD. Before resuming the attack, these units would have to be brought in order. The troops, however, were exhausted from fighting and marching over ground soaked by many days of rain, and 101 ID had suffered very heavy casualties. Therefore a new attack couldn't be prepared. Only some scouts followed the withdrawing Austrians.⁵⁸³

583Giltschevsky, p. 120; Nadeshnizh, pp. 44 ff.

During the morning the k.u.k. 7 ID, joined by some German battalions, occupied their assigned sector.⁵⁸⁴ By noon most of the weakened 92 LW Inf Bde had also deployed, to the right of 48 ID. 91 LW Inf Bde withdrew by regiments in echelon from the left to the right; they were hit repeatedly by the enemy, who inflicted significant casualties.⁵⁸⁵ In the evening all the troops were in the new defensive line, although not yet settled in.

In the afternoon Linsingen placed the sector north of the Sydolowka under the orders of GdK von der Marwitz, who in turn divided his Armeegruppe into three sub-groups:

- . G.Lt Dieffenbach had the parts of 46 LW ID on the north side of the new boundary line plus 48 ID and some German detachments;
- . GdK Falkenhayn had in his Corps the Aus-Hung. 7 ID (with 21 Cav Bde) and the German 22 ID and 43 Res ID⁵⁸⁶; and
- . G.Lt Beckmann had his own 108 ID plus Leonhardi's Cavalry Group.

GO Böhm-Ermolli, who always kept his attention focused on the impending enemy offensive toward Brody, saw that his northern flank was threatened due to the withdrawal of 1st Army. On the 21st he countermanded the transfer of IR # 76 toward the south, which had already been initiated. Böhm-Ermolli as well as FML Kosak felt that the left wing of the neighboring XVIII Corps in front of Leszniow (where it joined the new position of 46 LW ID) was insufficiently secure. Therefore in the evening they asked Teschen to assign IR # 76 on the following day to 1st Army, with the explicit requirement that the Regiment should be placed in front of Leszniow. Conrad concurred, and this reinforcement was very welcome to GO Puhallo. The high command wanted to ensure the safety of the connections to Group Marwitz and to South Army in case the former couldn't hold their ground despite the reinforcements they'd received. If Puhallo fell back again, Böhm-Ermolli's Army, guarding the Sereth-Graberka-Luh position, would extend their line to the upper reaches of the Styr as far as Stanislawczyk. From that town Puhallo's Army would build a line through the low ground stretching from Lopatyn to Radziechow, and then past Stojanow to the Lipa at Boroczycze.

584Schwedt, pp. 184 ff.

585Prior to the fighting, 46 LW ID (with 22,700 riflemen) had been very strong thanks to replacement troops; by now they had lost more than 10,000 men plus several guns.

586Within Corps Falkenhayn the 7 ID, 21 Cav Bde and 43 Res ID made up Group Runckel.

3. The Russians are held fast in east Galicia; Letschitzky's continued advance in the Carpathians, 16-20 July

While a new battle flared out near the Styr and Lipa Rivers, farther south there were only local actions between the Ikwa and Sereth, on the upper Strypa, on the Koropiec, and between the Dniester and Pruth. This fighting was without significance. From mid-July there was a long pause in the activity of the 7th and 9th Russian Armies. After the defeat at Monasterzyska, General Shcherbachev was waiting for the moment when Letschitzky's northern wing could again move forward. However, 9th Russian Army had yet to recover from the heavy fighting at Kolomea. General Letschitzky intended to resume his stalled advance to Stanislau and Nadworna as soon as Brussilov's northern wing carried out their offensive toward Kovel. Brussilov, however, had once more postponed this decisive attack. In the meantime - as Brussilov had ordered on 5 July - the Russian units in the Forest Carpathians were to continue the action which they'd successfully initiated along the line of the passes.⁵⁸⁷

On 16 July a regiment of 103 Russian ID with the Ussuri Coss Div crossed the border ridge in the forested mountains, advancing toward Borsa. The enemy pushed back the forward outposts of the k.u.k. XI Corps north of Prislop Ridge, established themselves firmly on the Gura Rucada, and in the evening were appearing already in front of Borsabanya. On the 17th Major Russ deployed his weak force (three battalions, one battery) south of the Gura Rucada; they were prepared to keep the enemy from advancing to Borsa until reinforcements could hasten to the scene. Meanwhile FML Habermann had sent a battalion of IR # 13 on trucks from Jacobeny to Prislop Ridge.

During the threat to Borsa, Cavalry Corps Brudermann also got into trouble. In the morning of the 16th, troops from XI Russian Corps attacked the k.u.k. 8 CD and broke through their thin front on the heights northwest of Tatarow and in the Pruth valley. Tatarow was lost, but the Russian onslaught was brought to a halt south of the town. 202 Hon Inf Bde was still holding fast at and southeast of Worochta. 3 CD was about to succumb to enemy pressure at Zabie.

Continued discussion about the use of 34 ID

587Zayontschovsky, p. 46

Now FML Rudolf Krauss' 34 ID was already arriving by train at Maramaros-Sziget. Because of the situation, GO Pflanzner-Baltin decided to use the Division's IR # 101, plus part of the light artillery and the heavy batteries, to reinforce the hard-pressed 8 CD. The 68 Inf Bde, now with just four battalions and four batteries, would move ahead to F. Visso. The last unit to arrive, IR # 29 of 67 Inf Bde, would detrain at Raho as the Army's reserve. For good or ill the HQ of Army Group Archduke Karl Franz Joseph had to agree with these measures, although the staff at Chodorow had intended to send all of 34 ID together over the Kopilas Heights and through Zabie in a thrust toward Kosow.

On 17 July GO Pflanzner-Baltin reported that he would also bring IR # 29 to F. Visso, so that 34 ID would have the strongest possible force to turn back the enemy advancing on Borsa and to drive them through the forested mountains back to Jalowiczora in the valley of the White Czeremosz. Army Group HQ opposed this plan. In the first place, they didn't want 34 ID to deploy in a direction where it couldn't cooperate later with the eventual attack by the newly-gathered 3rd Army. The Army Group HQ also had a reasonable doubt whether 34 ID, which had no mountain artillery, would be successful in the pathless forests and hills. Moreover, it wasn't clear whether the Russians were mounting a serious attack toward Borsa. It seemed to Army Group HQ that the enemy's main effort was aimed at the Tartar Pass. Therefore the last component of 34 ID, the IR # 29, shouldn't be sent to Borsa.

On the other hand, GO Pflanzner-Baltin insisted that he was concerned for the safety of the Kirlibaba-Prislop Ridge-F. Visso road, a very important line of communication behind 7th Army's front. If the enemy broke through to Borsa they would threaten XI Corps and Cavalry Corps Brudermann from the flank and rear. However, if the enemy here was thrown back over the mountain wall the units diverted to Borsa could immediately be sent to the battlefield of Cavalry Corps Brudermann. IR # 29, which wasn't expected to arrive until the 20th, should be sent to Raho as he'd originally intended.

The planned thrust over the mountains north of the Prislop Ridge, which was intended as just a defensive measure using the smallest possible force, had meanwhile lost its urgency. It was discovered on the 18th that under cover from fog the enemy had evacuated the Gura Rucada and the adjacent heights. GO Pflanzner-Baltin quickly decided that the parts of 34 ID in XI Corps' sector, with the exception of one battalion, would move through F. Visso and Ruszpolyana and on the road through Kopilas to 3 CD.

Mountain actions on 18-20 July

After wearisome small-scale actions in difficult mountain terrain, the 3 CD had meanwhile succumbed to Russian pressure. Their left wing at Zabie was pushed back on the 18th, and their right wing also had to bend back to avoid envelopment. Leaving some sentries behind, on the 19th the badly-diminished cavalry regiments assembled on the line Hryniawa-Bystrzec and on the road to Kopilas. Meanwhile three battalions of 68 Inf Bde came up through the Ruszowka valley and scaled the mountain wall to give the worn-out 3 CD some badly-needed support. To the left of 3 CD the 202 Hon Inf Bde entrenched on the Kosztrycza, on the heights on both sides of Arzeluza, and east of Worochta; they were guarding the crossing-points to the valleys of the Black and White Tisza Rivers. 8 CD was still stationed on the heights south and west of Tatarow, though constantly pressed hard by the enemy. To relieve them, GO Pflanzler-Baltin wanted to send 6 Mtn Bde of 59 ID (the Division was held in readiness behind the right wing) through Pasiieczna and toward the southeast. However, the HQ of Army Group Archduke Karl Franz Joseph vetoed this plan, apparently because they didn't want parts of 59 ID to be diverted from the new army that was supposed to break through between the Pruth and Dniester.

The divisions of 7th Army were still rather intermingled. The Hungarian Defense Minister had already protested the incorporation of the remnants of 51 Hon ID into the other units of Group Snjaric. On the 17th GO Pflanzler-Baltin again received an order from the HQ of Army Group Archduke Karl Franz Joseph to restore the old divisional organization. Therefore 7th Army HQ decreed that 51 Hon ID should be reformed from its remnants plus replacement troops. GM Foglar would resume command of the Division; his place as commander of the right wing of XI Corps was taken by Col. von Berzeviczy, who was sent to Jacobeny with the HQ of his 215 Inf Bde. Moreover the HQ of 10 Inf Bde with IR # 13 left XI Corps for the south wing of VIII Corps, where they'd join the components of 5 ID already present to reunite that Division. GM von Felix now led 5 ID. To replace IR # 13, FML Snjaric's Group sent Hon IR # 20 to XI Corps.

Before carrying out this reorganization of 7th Army's units, GO Pflanzler-Baltin with the approval of Army Group HQ had the southern wing of VIII Corps carry out a short thrust against the Russians who'd advanced past the Pruth south of Delatyn, to drive them back over the river and to finally secure the tenuous link between Corps Benigni and Cavalry Corps Brudermann. 5 ID and 18 Mtn Bde attacked in the afternoon of the 18th. Difficult

mountain terrain, rain and fog hampered the operation. However, by the 19th the gallant attackers threw the enemy over the Pruth between Delatyn and Dora. More than 500 Russians couldn't find their way back over the highly-swollen river, and were taken prisoner. Two machine guns were also captured.

However, this local thrust couldn't bring relief to the constantly hard-pressed 8 CD. The left wing of this Division was pushed back on the 19th in the woods north of Jablonica. FML Rudolf Krauss, commanding 34 ID, brought up to this area the parts of 67 Inf Bde which had detrained in Lazescsina. In a counterattack, the enemy troops who'd driven to the Tartar Pass were halted. It was possible to gradually withdraw the badly-damaged 8 CD from the front and to assemble it at Körösmezö where, along with a battalion from 34 ID, it made up the Army's reserve.

Meanwhile XI Corps in southern Bukovina was mostly left alone. On the 20th, parts of 82 Russian ID attacked the Capul Heights near Kirlibaba, but were repulsed by troops from GM Nagy's 40 Hon ID. Russian units were still stationed in the mountains north of Prislop Ridge and at Borsabanya. Detachment Russ, meanwhile reinforced by a battalion from IR # 13, was told to thrust ahead if the enemy fell back and again to occupy the crest along the Hungarian border.

Such was the situation in the morning of the 20th when the HQ of GO Kövess' 3rd Army, coming from Tyrol, arrived at Bohorodczany. Now the reorganization ordered by the high command on 15 July became effective. GO Kövess took over the former northern wing of 7th Army (VIII Corps plus the new I Corps, rebuilt from Group Snjaric), as well as Groups Hadfy and Kraewel, as the new 3rd Army. GO Pflanzer-Baltin transferred his HQ to Maramaros-Sziget.

4. Command decisions by both sides, 19-21 July

The Russians

With the orders issued on 9 and 15 July, the Stavka entrusted the quest to win a decision in the summer campaign to the skillful generalship of Brussilov. In Alexeiev's opinion the German Eastern front couldn't be smashed by a frontal assault, and could only be forced to waver or collapse from the flank, through Kovel-Kobrin. The collapse of the German southern wing must also seal the fate of the Aus-Hung. Army. Any units available from

north of the Pripyat should also be employed toward this goal. Alexeiev believed that the addition of the Guards alone should already have provided the Southwest Front decisive superiority in numbers over the Central Powers. His staff, as well as Brussilov's, believed that the Front had 290,000 more riflemen than did the allies.⁵⁸⁸ This superiority would be increased still further by the addition of other available units, above all from the neighboring West Front. General Evert had already been informed on 12 July that he should return III Corps to General Letsch and deploy IV Sib Corps on the southern border of his Front.⁵⁸⁹

On 17 July General Bezobrazov, the commander of the Guard Army Detachment, reported to Brussilov's headquarters. It was now necessary to decide where the Guards would deploy for the attack on Kovel and thus how the entire Front would proceed. Because of the generally unfavorable terrain on both sides of the Rovno-Kovel railroad, after personal observation on the 19th Bezobrazov suggested that his Army should advance through Niemir-Razhmiesto in the direction of Ozierany. At the same time General Letsch also submitted his plan of attack. The Pinsk area should be cut off by thrusts from the north by IV Sib Corps (in case it was assigned to 3rd Army) and from the south by III Corps along with 83 ID. Cavalry should advance toward the line Ivanovo-Kobrin. Brussilov approved the proposals of both Army commanders and on the 19th issued the basic guidelines for the attack by his entire Front.

3rd Army, which on the next day also took over III Corps, I Turkestan Corps and 4 Finn Rif Div, was to attack Kovel from the

588Per Klembovsky (p. 80) the relative strengths were:

. 3 rd and 8 th Armies plus the Guards had	247,000 riflemen
against	114,000 allies
. 11 th Army	
had.....	163,000.....
.....	131,000 allies
. 7 th Army	
had.....	157,000.....
.....	87,000 allies
. 9 th Army	
had.....	<u>144,000</u>
.....	<u>89,000</u> allies
For a total	
of.....	711,000.....
.....	421,000 allies

589Klembovsky, p. 76; Zayontschovsky, p. 48

north and east. General Bezobrazov would attack the city from the south with his newly-formed "Special Army" (I and II Guard Corps, I and XXX Corps, plus the Guard Cavalry Corps - of three divisions - and V Cavalry Corps). General Letsch would moreover capture the crossing-points through the Pripyat Marshes at Newel and those over the lower Stokhod as far as Lubieszow, and thus thrust into the rear of the German group at Pinsk. 8th Army should take Vladimir-Volynsky with VIII Corps (again restored to their command). 11th Army should advance through Brody toward Lemberg. 7th and 9th Armies would continue the defensive operations they'd already initiated.⁵⁹⁰ On the next day Alexeiev, after a discussion with Brussilov's Chief of Staff, assigned IV Sib Corps to 3rd Army. On the 21st General Letsch received a supplementary order to employ these Siberians, as he'd intended, to support the operation against Pinsk in which III Corps would play the main role. The starting date remained open. The Guards hoped they'd be ready to attack on 23 July.

The allies

While Brussilov prepared in Volhynia for the general assault on Kovel, Conrad and Falkenhayn were paying increased attention to the southern wing of their front. GO Conrad was tired of patchwork solutions and longed to implement the long-planned thrust on the Dniester. This offensive seemed urgently necessary. The Russians already stood in front of the northeastern gateways to Hungary. The espionage service of the k.u.k. AOK had learned that Romania was preparing to attack, and that agreements were being worked out between the Entente and the Kingdom on the Moldau regarding the latter's entry into the war. Falkenhayn didn't think this would take place until the Romanians completed their harvest in September, and even then only if the situation of the k.u.k. Army on the southern part of the Eastern front continued to worsen.⁵⁹¹ Thus a victory over the 9th Russian Army might cause the Romanian government to waver once again and further postpone their country's entry into the war.

GO Conrad's wish to improve the situation on the southern wing because of Romania led him to request a face-to-face meeting with GdI Falkenhayn, which took place in Berlin on 18 July. At this conference Falkenhayn primarily demanded that all of the front between the Pripyat and the Dniester should be placed under the command of GFM Hindenburg. For the present there was still no

⁵⁹⁰Klembovsky, pp. 76 ff. and Appendix 9; Zayontschovsky, pp. 49 ff.

⁵⁹¹Falkenhayn, "Heeresleitung", p. 215

agreement about this issue. The question of how the necessary units could be found for an offensive south of the Dniester was also discussed. Because the incursion of even a small Russian force into Hungary could have great political significance, the security of the Carpathian front was of major interest to Falkenhayn. He declared himself ready to provide German units, specially prepared for mountain warfare, to reinforce the k.u.k. 7th Army.

On 19 July GO Conrad was informed by the German OHL that the 2nd Jaeger Brigade, from the the German Alpenkorps, was being sent by rail through Oderberg. On the next day he received the very welcome news that this brigade was being reinforced to create a "Carpathian Corps" of 10 battalions and 15 batteries (including 6 batteries of mountain cannon) under the command of G.Lt von Conta. The unit was being sent to 7th Army, and the first transports could already be expected at Maramaros-Sziget on the 23rd.

Simultaneously the German OHL sent Landsturm troops (9 Lst Bde) to South Army to free up their 1 Res ID for Kövess' Army. GO Conrad had meanwhile pulled the k.u.k. 106 Lst ID from the Isonzo front. Their transport trains were already rolling toward Oderberg; with Falkenhayn's agreement the Division would proceed to Army Group Hindenburg, where they would make another German division available for Kövess' Army. The 24 ID of the k.u.k. VIII Corps would also be sent to Army Group Hindenburg, which would allow Hindenburg to send yet another division to Kövess.

Now the k.u.k. high command initiated the first of the preparations necessary for the defense of Transylvania. On 20 July the AOK ordered 11 Hon CD, which was being rehabilitated near Kovel, to entrain for Transylvania. They would be followed by the badly-weakened 61 ID from Armeegruppe Marwitz. At the end of July five Etappen battalions from 4th Army's rear areas and four more from Carniola and south Tyrol were sent to Transylvania. FML Njegovan's Hermannstadt [XII] Military District, which was subordinate to GO Pflanzer-Baltin, would eventually assign these Etappen battalions to evacuation work. The troops already in Transylvania would first defend the fortified line Maros-Kokel; they consisted of Ersatz and March battalions, Landsturm units, Gendarmerie detachments, Ersatz batteries, and three battalions made up of workers from the Petroseny coal mines who would guard the mining installations.

The high command issued orders on 20 July to 12th Army HQ (Army Group Archduke Karl Franz Joseph) stating that "a positive

success against 9th Russian Army is of special importance for the overall situation." At the same time the staff at Teschen was planning the transport of three more German divisions to 3rd Army. The 7th Army, reinforced by the newly-arrived 34 ID and by the German Carpathian Corps which was still in transit, would join the attack by Kövess' Army. 12th Army HQ was asked to inform Teschen of their plans for deploying the promised reinforcements and for the blow against 9th Russian Army.

On the 21st the Archduke-Successor announced the guidelines of his 12th Army HQ for the intended offensive thrusts south of the Dniester and out of the Carpathians. The breakthrough group would be formed in the area southeast of Stanislau from the German 105 and 119 ID plus the three promised German divisions. They would attack from the Chebiczyn Lesny-Jezierzany front toward Kulaczkowce and Czerniatyn. GM Leide's Group, 5 Hon CD and 6 CD would guard the left (northern) flank of this primary attack group of five divisions; to the group's right the 21 LW ID, 42 Hon ID and 30 ID would advance toward the area north of Kolomea. On both sides of the Pruth a second attack group - 44 LW ID, 5 ID and 59 ID - would thrust in the direction of Myszyn and Kolomea. Pflanze-Baltin's Army would break over the Carpathian wall against the southern flank of 9th Russian Army. For this purpose 34 ID would attack from the Tatarow-Ardzeluza area, with their left wing through Mikuliczyn and Berezow Wz. to Jablonow and their right wing through Kosmacz to Pistyn. The Carpathian Corps would advance through Zabie and Jablonica to Kosow and Kutny. Finally, Cavalry Corps Brudermann would be shifted to southern Bukovina, so they could launch a coordinated thrust along with XI Corps toward the upper Sereth.

5. Relief thrusts by the center of Pflanze-Baltin's Army, 21-27 July

21-23 July

The plans for this great concentric attack against 9th Russian Army couldn't be carried out. Meanwhile the fighting in the Forest Carpathians continued without interruption. The following was the situation of 7th Army on 21 July, when GO Pflanze-Baltin moved his HQ from Bohorodczany to Maramaros-Sziget.

Habermann's XI Corps had in general been left alone by the enemy in the last few days. On their left wing Major Russ's

Group (II Battalion/IR 13, k.k. Landsturm Battalion 150, II Battalion/Hon IR 19) was stationed on the Gura Rucada. For the time being this weak Group couldn't advance any further through the barren forests and mountain toward Jalowiczora because of the increasing deterioration of the roads and because of logistical problems.

3 CD was guarding the uppermost reaches of the Black Czeremosz, but their power of resistance was ebbing. The exhausted Division reported that they wouldn't be able to make a stand until they reached the Kopilas, where 68 Inf Bde had meanwhile taken up a position. The condition of 202 Hon Inf Bde was also very questionable because of the grueling mountain fighting and bad weather. In the evening the Brigade's line was broken by the Russians, and the Honved withdrew behind the uppermost Pruth. 8 CD, which had been relieved from the front, reported that the clothing of the tired troops was ripped to shreds, the horses had lost their strength, and many weapons had become inoperable.

67 Inf Bde, which had taken the place of the worn-out 8 CD at the Tartar Pass, meanwhile recaptured the ridges of the 1270 meter high Magura. However, the Russians were advancing again on the 22nd. Surprising enemy thrusts through Worochta and from Arzeluza in the evening caused Col. Savoly's 202 Hon Inf Bde to waver. They were also unable to hold onto the Kiczera. At the same time 67 Inf Bde again lost the Magura. FML Rudolf Krauss, who'd taken command over the sector between the Bystrzyca valley and the Turkul, asked 7th Army HQ if he could pull 202 Hon Inf and 67 Inf Bdes back to the border crest and to the prepared positions on the Tartar Pass. GO Pflanzler-Baltin approved this request.

Meanwhile Army Group HQ decided that when the German Carpathian Corps arrived they would detrain at Ruszpolyana. On 23 July, just a day before the arrival of the first troop trains, GO Pflanzler-Baltin reported to Army Group HQ that reinforcing the front of FML Krauss was urgently necessary in order to hold onto the Tartar Pass. This could be achieved if 68 Inf Bde on the Kopilas was relieved by a regiment of the Carpathian Corps. The Brigade would then be free to move to the left wing. GO Pflanzler-Baltin wanted to move the other two regiments of the Carpathian Corps through Körösmezö to the Tartar Pass, which was the fastest way to get them into action. Army Group HQ, however,

wanted to keep the new German reinforcements together.⁵⁹² They insisted that these units should first assemble at Ruszpolyana, and then thrust past the Kopilas toward Zabie and Kosow. It appeared that the Russians only had weak forces here, while they were still deployed rather deeply in front of the Tartar Pass. However, the tense situation at the moment on the left wing of 7th Army made an early attack to relieve FML Krauss' Group necessary. Therefore Army Group HQ decided to have FML Brudermann's Group (68 Inf Bde and 3 CD) mount a short thrust from the Kopilas. With the cooperation of the Carpathian Corps this operation could later be expanded into a deep penetration of the Russian front.

Habermann's left wing in the mountains north of Prislop Ridge was attacked by the Russians on the 23rd. Parts of IR # 13 which were supposed to be transported to VIII Corps were called back again. However, Major Russ' battle group was able to hold onto the positions on the heights of the Gura Rucada.

Meanwhile Letschitzky's advance had come to an end on the routes leading past the Kopilas and through the Tartar Pass. The Russians entrenched in front of Group Brudermann on the mountain crests east of the Black Czeremosz. FML Rudolf Krauss' Group withdrew without interference to the fortifications on the Tartar Pass in the night of 22-23 July. Opposite them the enemy didn't advance over the peaks on both sides of Jablonica or over the Kiczera.

24-27 July

On 24 July GO Pflanzner-Baltin, who had visited the Kopilas, issued FML Brudermann orders for the attack. The main striking group was 68 Inf Bde (with just 4 battalions and 6 batteries); they would advance over the Ludowa Heights (# 1466) and the ridges east of the Black Czeremosz. The rifle battalions of 3 CD would thrust through the valley past Jawornik to Zabie. Two mounted cavalry regiments would cover the attack, one each on the right and the left.

68 Inf Bde and 3 CD advanced early on the 25th. The attackers were able to move forward from the Kopilas and the border crest to the east about three to four kilometers through the high

592TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - In this and other passages it must always be kept in mind that "Army Group HQ" in practice means mainly the Prussian Chief of Staff Seeckt, whose role was precisely to ensure that the Austrians bowed to German wants and needs.

forest. Storm troops were sent further ahead; they penetrated the Russian outpost line on the east bank of the Czeremosz, but were forced to return by an enemy counterattack.

FML Brudermann's Group resumed their advance early on the 26th; after a tiresome descent they reached the depths of the Czeremosz valley around noon. Because of the extreme exhaustion of the troops the attack of 68 Inf Bde could proceed no farther. Parts of 3 CD, however, fought a successful action with Russian advanced guards while climbing the steep slope of the Baba Ludowa Ridge. Toward evening the Russian tried to drive their opponents back into the Czeremosz valley. However, the gallant DR "Sachsen" # 3 were able to hold onto the terrain they had captured with so much toil.

Early on the 27th the 68 Inf Bde, supported by 3 CD, worked their way ahead on the ridge which extends from the Ludowa to the northeast. Brudermann's tired troops, however, weren't able to penetrate the main Russian positions. In the afternoon the outposts stationed on the heights north of Szybeny were thrown back. Artillery was ineffective because the forests made spotting difficult. Rain and fog also hampered visibility. The troops suffered greatly in this adverse weather. Moreover, logistical problems developed. FML Brudermann reported the difficult situation to his Army commander. GO Pflanzler-Baltin demanded that the Group remain in their current positions. They should either make a surprise bayonet assault on the main Russian position under cover of fog, or should wait for better weather so they could resume the attack with reinforced artillery. The last trains carrying the German Carpathian Corps were already unloading troops at Ruszpolyana. G.Lt Conta, the Corps commander, was readying his units for the march over the mountain wall.

Preparation of a breakthrough group on the Dniester is frustrated again

Protected by his left wing which had advanced deep into the Forest Carpathians, Letschitzky prepared in the last third of July for an attack on Stanislau and Nadworna, which would take place at the same time as Brussilov's decisive thrust toward Kovel. Meanwhile his right wing didn't stay completely inactive. On the 20th, Russian troops from Jaremcze tried to thrust into the flank of the k.u.k. VIII Corps. The enemy wasn't successful; they were repulsed by 9 Inf Bde, guarding the heights west of the Pruth. In the following days the stationary divisions of the k.u.k. 3rd Army had to repulse Russian scouting thrusts near Dora and at various points between the Pruth and Dniester. GO Kövess sent a new detachment under Col. Kranz (three battalions from

Group Hadfy) into the sector of 5 Hon CD⁵⁹³ and extended 30 ID (16 Inf Bde and IR # 97) and 44 LW ID to the right; therefore he was able to march 24 ID out of the line at Delatyn. At the same time GM Kroupa's 59 ID deployed in place of 5 ID on the heights west of Dora and Jamna; they extended their right wing far enough to protect the junction with 34 ID on the Jablonica Pass. A regiment was formed at Majdan Srd. from the remnants of the old 51 Hon ID, which was being rebuilt. XIII Corps, now commanded by FML von Csicseric, sent Hon IR # 302 back to join this Division, its parent. The troops of 24 and 5 ID, after leaving the front, moved to Nadworna during the 22nd and 23rd. On the 24th the k.u.k. 24 ID entrained for Army Group Hindenburg, where it would swap places with German units. Under Group Hadfy, GM Fluck's Cav Bde had already been dissolved at the start of July.

For South Army, the days since 21 July had been marked by sudden bursts of artillery fire on both sides. The Russians carried out reconnaissance thrusts, but so also did the allied German and Aus-Hung. troops on the Koropiec, on the hills between that river and the Strypa, at Kozlow, and on the rail line east of Jezierna. Mine warfare flared up at Worobijowka and at Hladki near the Sereth, where both sides were deployed in strength. As hitherto, the enemy was stationed *en masse* opposite the center of South Army. A new Russian attack on Monasterzyska was expected. On 20 July GdI Bothmer inserted 12 ID, which had been in reserve, into the front between XIII Corps and 1 Res ID. A regiment of this Division was stationed behind VI Corps at Monasterzyska, along with the critically weakened 39 Hon ID. By 24 July the 1 Res ID was supposed to have been relieved by German Landsturm battalions. However, until now these battalions had been used only on the lines of communication. They were imperfectly armed, and lacked artillery and supporting services. They would have to be equipped and trained for combat. Therefore 1 Res ID couldn't yet be relieved from the most-endangered sector of the front, at Hreherow, and their transfer to 3rd Army was delayed.

Also the German 10 LW ID, now instructed to take the place in 3rd Army of 24 ID (which had left Nadworna), couldn't be sent to Stanislau. Instead the Landwehr division had to be sent to Army Group Linsingen, while 106 Lst ID (which had been supposed to make German troops available for 3rd Army) had to be diverted through Lemberg to Brody. Here and on the Stokhod there was danger of an attack by powerful masses of Russians. Thus there

593TRANSLATOR's NOTE: Col. Moritz Kranz's combined cavalry brigade had been dissolved around 10 July; he now was given an infantry detachment.

was no prospect of German reinforcements arriving soon at Stanislau. Once again the k.u.k. high command was disappointed in their hopes that they could assemble an attacking group behind 3rd Army and improve the situation on the southern wing.

6. The Battle of Brody, 22-28 July

22-24 July

The enemy followed the allies south of the Lipa until 22 July, and established themselves firmly in front of Marwitz between Krasow and Merwa, linked up with the line Pustomyty-Zwiniacze. Opposite 1st Army's new position on the Styr, at first only some Russian spearhead groups were observed south of the Sydolowka in the morning. However, this picture soon changed. During the day it was already necessary to repulse enemy efforts to cross the river at Strzemilcze. Stronger Russian forces shifted toward Szczurowice, and others assembled in the Leszniow-Korsow area. 1st Army HQ had to recognize that Sakharov didn't want to allow their shaken northern wing to rest. Since GO Puhallo estimated that 46 LW ID had little combat value, he asked Teschen to give him the entire 33 ID. Conrad denied the request; he stated that after GM Urbanski transferred to XVIII Corps the part of his position running east on the other side of the Styr (south of the Slonowka and held by FJB # 25),⁵⁹⁴ he should be able to hold the shorter line between the mouth of the Rzeczkka and the Sydolowka, supported by the half of 33 ID already on hand. The detachments of FML Hordt's 33 ID which had arrived at Radziechow marched to Zawidcze. In the evening FML Czibulka strengthened the longer left wing of XVIII Corps, which faced south, when he inserted the three battalions of IR # 76 between FJB # 25 and 10 in front of Leszniow. The 61 ID, in reserve, was shifted from Sokal west to Betz.

GO Böhm-Ermolli continued to doubt whether the northern wing of XVIII Corps would be able to hold their ground; south of the Slonowka the Corps' front formed a right angle to the line of 46 LW ID on the Styr. After consulting with FML Czibulka, GO Puhallo declared that the position could be held with the units on hand. 2nd Army HQ was determined to defend the area around Brody to the last extremity. Since the 21st the troops were hastily entrenching and building switch positions between Lewiatyn and Koniuszkow, then between the Makutra Heights, Brody

594TRANSLATOR's NOTE: FJB # 25, though assigned to 25 ID, had been attached to Urbanski's 46 LW ID throughout June and July. The meaning of this convoluted sentence is rather obscure.

and the Boldurka. FML Kosak received IR # 19 of 33 ID to replace IR # 76 as his new reserve.

The enemy's intentions against 1st and 2nd Armies were already clear on the 23rd. Broadcasts by the busy Russian radio transmitters betrayed the fact that the HQ of XLV, XXXIII and XVII Corps had moved closer to the front. The Trans-Amur and Combined CD were reporting from the area Ostrow-Mytnica. There was also considerable movement behind Radziwilow. At noon GO Puhallo handed command of the Styr sector to FML Hordt, whose troops meanwhile had finished detraining and by 25 July had taken over the Strzemilcze-Szczurowice line from 46 LW ID. After an agreement with Marwitz, who was holding a German regiment of Group Dieffenbach in readiness on the north bank of the Sydolowka, IR # 83 was shifted to Mikolajow and Smarzew to counter a possible surprise assault by the enemy.

Early on the morning of the 24th, the Russians moved against Corps Falkenhayn south of the Lipa and broke into Haliczany. However, they were soon thrown out by 21 Cav Bde and some German detachments. Otherwise the activity during the day by Armeegruppe Marwitz and 1st and 2nd Armies was never livelier than usual. However, troop movements continued behind the enemy front. GO Böhm-Ermolli expected an attack against Brody at any hour, while Marwitz and Puhallo anticipated a thrust against the inner wings of their armies. 1st Army HQ demanded the return of 92 LW Inf Bde, which was still on the other side of the Sydolowka. Linsingen decided that the Brigade would have to stay there even after it was relieved by German units; however, he shifted two German battalions from Mikolajow over to the southern bank, so that they could offer help to 1st Army if necessary. Late in the evening Army Group HQ ordered that Marwitz should immediately take over a 4 km long sector with Group Dieffenbach so that the area around Strzemilcze, which was considered to be especially in danger, wouldn't be split by an army boundary.

Further dispositions by the opposing commanders

Because of the events by 1st Army, Conrad had already on 21 July postponed a final decision as to whether 106 Lst ID could be released to Hindenburg's Army Group. Due to the very serious situation, the Aus-Hung. Chief of Staff, in agreement with his German colleague, now decided to have the Division (which meanwhile had passed through Lemberg) detrain at Brody; from there it could be sent to either 2nd or 1st Army. In the evening GO Böhm-Ermolli was ordered that when this new unit arrived he should release to GO Puhallo the IR # 19 and the batteries and

supporting services of 33 ID that hitherto had stayed with 2nd Army.

The task assigned to General Sakharov on 19 July had meanwhile been somewhat limited. Brussilov took into consideration the costly fighting at Beresteczko, and on 21 July he told 11th Army HQ that the attack on Brody was no longer required. He wanted them to advance only if feasible, so that at least they would cause their opponents some heavy damage.⁵⁹⁵ Since 16 July Sakharov had succeeded by committing the part of his front that faced from the north to the south; the allies had been unable to withstand the two blows leveled against them. Because a long wait would only diminish his chances of further success, Sakharov decided to quickly deliver his powerful assault on the part of his opponents' front that had yet to be attacked. He had sufficient forces available. XVII Corps at Radziwilow was ready to strike with 3 and 35 ID. To their right the XXXII Corps had gotten ready with 101 ID in front of Klekotow and 105 ID in front of Leszniow.⁵⁹⁶ Behind them stood 7 CD. The XLV and V Corps held the front farther north as far as 8th Army.⁵⁹⁷ V Sib Corps had left the northern wing to deploy behind the attacking divisions, just as had a mass of cavalry (Combined and Trans-Amur CD) who were ready to fight. These troop movements delayed the attack, originally scheduled for the 24th, by one day.

25 July

On the 25th a large-scale battle broke out on the Slonowka and east of Brody. Under cover of the morning fog the Russian 105 ID, supported by parts of the 126th, crossed the low ground on the Slonowka at Leszniow and Korsow. On the northern wing of GM Boog's 25 ID they broke into the positions of IR "Salis-Soglio" # 76 and FJB "Kopal" # 10.⁵⁹⁸ Enemy pressure soon extended farther down the line against IR "Deutschmeister" # 4.⁵⁹⁹ The local reserves (parts of IR # 4 and 76 and of FJB # 10 and 25 plus a battalion of k.k. Lst IR # 22) struck back against the attackers. FML Czibulka sent his reserve (another Landsturm battalion) to help, and he asked his neighbor FML Kosak for IR # 19. GO Puhallo ordered that the first line should immediately be reconquered. Group Hordt was instructed to deliver flanking fire from their batteries in the Leszniow area. Since 65 Inf Bde had

595Klembovsky, p. 79

596Giltshevsky, pp. 121 ff.

597Nadeshnizh, p. 46

598Giltshevsky, pp. 123 ff.

599Hoen-Waldstätten-Zipperer and Seifert, pp. 625 ff.

occupied the Styr position overnight, 46 LW ID had troops available to take over the task of guarding the Rzeczkka as far as the mouth of the Boldurka.

However, despite a gallant defense the 25 ID could only stand up to the larger enemy force for a short time. After IR # 4 was also attacked from Bezodnia on the eastern front, in the morning FML Czibulka had to pull his northern wing (50 Inf Bde) back to a line running from the woods west of Klekotow to Boldury, then upstream on the Boldurka to the point where it flows into the Styr. Meanwhile the guns and trench mortars of Russian 101 ID were delivering a rain of projectiles on Klekotow. Kosak's adjacent sector to the south, held by 1 Lst Inf Bde, was heavily bombarded at the same time.

Because of the new setback, GO Böhm-Ermolli feared that the enemy could strike Group Kosak in the rear from the north. He asked the high command to place XVIII Corps, as well as 106 Lst ID (still arriving by train) under 2nd Army. Conrad approved the request, and ordered Böhm-Ermolli to bring the Russian advance to a halt so that the front south of Brody wouldn't also have to be given up.

When this order from Teschen arrived at 2nd Army HQ around 1:30 PM, at Radziwilow heavy fighting was in progress with the Russian 101 ID and XVII Corps. Since mid-day IR # 84 of the Vienna 25 ID had been holding out steadfastly against waves of attackers running against Klekotow.⁶⁰⁰ Under Kosak, GM Severus' 1 Lst Inf Bde and IR # 85 of the Hungarian 27 ID defended themselves gallantly on both sides of the railroad and repulsed the first onslaught. In the afternoon a second Russian attack broke into the foremost trenches, but a counterattack threw the enemy out. The worn-out defenders couldn't withstand the third assault, and fell back to a reserve position behind the Austro-Russian border. Since no forces were available to make good this loss, the right wing of 25 ID was threatened with envelopment. As darkness fell they also retreated, from Klekotow to a hastily-prepared switch position south of the village, running through Koniuszkow to the Boldurka. If this stretch of the trench, as well as the barriers erected west and southeast of Brody, failed to dam the Russian flood then Böhm-Ermolli wanted to take V Corps and Group Kosak back to the fortified Graberka-Luh sector. GdI Bothmer was informed of this possibility and at the same time was asked to close the gap between Nw. Aleksinieć and Ratyszczce - if 2nd Army did retreat - with troops from South Army, since IV Corps would

⁶⁰⁰Michel and Wohl, pp. 192 ff.

also be obliged to evacuate their positions and move back to the upper Sereth.

The Russian advance against Kosak's left wing gained only a little ground, and came to a halt in the evening of the 25th. The main body of XVIII Corps had established themselves on the Boldurka as far as Koniuszkow without being hampered by the enemy. IR # 84 didn't reach the area stretching from here to the east, which still had to be fortified, until 11:00 PM. FML Czibulka had been placed under GO Böhm-Ermolli since 6:00 PM. Two battalions of IR # 19 supported the new front; one was attached to each of the brigades of Boog's Division.

GO Linsingen saw that the withdrawal of XVIII Corps endangered the southern wing of Armeegruppe Marwitz, and therefore in the afternoon he extended the authority of G.Lt Dieffenbach as far as the mouth of the Boldurka, to include Hordt's Group. Dieffenbach's job was to erect a firm barrier to the enemy on the Styr and to maintain a secure link with 2nd Army. To back up and ensure the strength of the defenses, the main body of 22 German ID was brought up through Mikolajow. By evening GO Puhallo no longer commanded any troops. Conrad reported these events to the Emperor and added, "Until further notice 1st Army has dropped out of the picture." Thus was its dissolution announced.

26 July

On 26 July Sakharov continued the large-scale offensive between Gaje Lewiatynskie and the Styr, with Brody as the goal, using XLV, XXXII and XVII Corps. Parts of V Sib Corps reinforced XXXII Corps.⁶⁰¹ Late in the morning a secondary thrust developed against G.Lt Dieffenbach's front north of the Sydolowka. Here 48 ID repulsed the Russians at Dzikowiny.

The main attack led to heavy fighting, which lasted until evening on the northern wing of 2nd Army. Russian forces at Boldury had already broken into an advanced position of 25 ID early in the day. IR # 19 counterattacked and threw the enemy back. During the morning numerous Russian batteries bombarded the Austrian positions along the entire arc of the front from Gaje Lewiatynskie to the Styr. Masses of Russian infantry moved slowly forward through the woods south of the Slonowka valley toward 25 ID. As ordered by Böhm-Ermolli, FML Kosak sent five squadrons of divisional cavalry from his reserves to Jazlowczyk. Here the first batteries of 106 Lst ID were also hastily sent as

⁶⁰¹Klembovsky, p. 81; Giltsevsky, pp. 126 ff.

soon as they got off their trains. GM Kratky, the commander of this Division, took control over all troops stationed east of the Brody-Leszniow road (1 Lst Inf and 49 Inf Bdes); Kratky's group in turn was placed under FML Kosak.

After powerful artillery fire in the afternoon the Russian infantry east of Brody delivered blow upon blow. The attackers ran in vain against the positions on the road and rail line west of Radziwilow, then fell back under the fire of the steady defenders (troops from 27 ID and 1 Lst Inf Bde, plus IR # 84 of 25 ID). North of Brody, on both sides of the road to Leszniow and on the Boldurka, the enemy attacks never even fully developed.

The high command correctly estimated that between the Styr and Ikwa 2nd Army was opposed by three Russian corps with a total of six or seven infantry plus three cavalry divisions. Moreover, behind the Russian front the V Sib Corps was apparently assembling for a thrust past Brody. Conrad notified 2nd Army about this strong troop concentration and emphatically demanded that they should hold their current position; this would prevent an enemy breakthrough past Brody that could unhinge the adjacent front.

GO Böhm-Ermolli couldn't have had much hope that he would succeed. From the prisoners taken, it had been confirmed that Kosak and Czibulka were under attack by five Russian divisions, and would also have to reckon with V Sib Corps. On a front 30 km wide Group Kosak had 33,000 riflemen and 176 guns available (including the troops from 106 Lst ID who had already arrived); they were opposed by 50,000 to 80,000 Russians. XVIII Corps with 10,000 riflemen and 38 guns were also facing 2:1 odds. No further reinforcements could be brought over from the Army's right wing, since IV and V Corps (each just one division strong) had to defend a front of 50 km.

Therefore 2nd Army HQ sent urgent cries for help to the high command, to Marwitz and to Bothmer. However, South Army declared they couldn't give up any troops. GdK von der Marwitz, from whom GO Böhm-Ermolli had sought the return as soon as possible of the half of 33 ID that had been attached to Group Dieffenbach, sent two weak battalions from 46 LW ID in the night of 26-27 July. IR # 12 wouldn't be able to follow them to Bordulaki until the afternoon of the 27th, because the troops of 33 ID first would have to be relieved by units from 22 German ID. At the request of the k.u.k. high command, and with GdI Falkenhayn's agreement, GO Linsingen intended to have the trains carrying the main body

of 10 German LW ID roll ahead through Vladimir-Volynsky to Lemberg.

27-28 July

The Battle of Brody continued in the night of 26-27 July. Regiments of the XXXII Russian Corps, deployed in depth in tightly-packed waves, launched a new assault; east of Koniuszkow they broke into the positions of Group Kratky.⁶⁰² Six battalions of 106 Lst ID and IR # 84, fighting heroically, again threw the enemy out of the trenches.⁶⁰³ After very intensive artillery fire, there were new attacks on the front between Gaje Lewiatynskie and Koniuszkow at 4:00 AM, between 8:00 and 10:00 AM, and around noon. Russian cavalry in the woods south of Leszniow stood ready to strike. IR # 4, 19 and 84, as well as k.k. Lst IR # 1 and 32, fought with devotion. Using hand grenades and rifle butts, they drove out any enemy soldiers who broke into the line.

Until 4:00 PM all Russian attacks were shattered. Then a fresh mass assault on the Radziwilow-Brody road resulted in a decision. Here Group Kosak's defensive line was crushed. All attempts to restore the situation were in vain. The Russians widened the area of penetration. Despite a gallant defense, 49 Inf Bde was pushed to the south. The defeated troops had to give up Brody. In the evening Kosak's badly-damaged battalions fell back to a switch position on the line Makutra Heights-Gaje Starabrodzkie-Smolno; this forced the right wing of 25 ID to also withdraw behind the Boldurka.

Fighting died out in the night of 27-28 July. The Russians, who'd suffered thousands of casualties in their mass assaults, didn't push further ahead. However, a regiment of their XVII Corps entered Brody in the morning.⁶⁰⁴ During the day Russian infantry and cavalry moved up to the new front of Group Kosak. Fighting started again at Gaje Starabrodzkie. FML Kosak reported that his diminished regiments couldn't hold onto their hastily-constructed trenches. He suggested a retreat to the Graberka-Luh position, which Böhm-Ermolli ordered with the approval of the high command.

Thus in the night of 28-29 July the right wing and center of 2nd Army occupied a prepared defensive position that ran from

602Giltshevsky, pp. 128 ff.

603Michel and Wohl, pp. 197 ff.

604Klembovsky, p. 81

Horodyszczce behind the upper Sereth, and then along the line Jasionow-Boldury.

7. Build-up to the Battle of Kovel, 22-27 July

A heavy storm was gathering over the center of Army Group Linsingen. Since 21 July the allied staffs had already possessed firm information that the enemy were assembling their Guards in front of Kovel. The staffs knew that General Bezobrazov's headquarters were at Roziszczce; on the 23rd it was confirmed by taking prisoners that Guard troops were opposite Rusche's and Schön's divisions. Bernhardt shifted his reserve, the German 37 Inf Bde, from Mielnica to Gonczyj Brod behind the left wing of Lüttwitz's X Corps. GO Tersztyanszky meanwhile had received back the troops he'd sent to help Marwitz and was holding strong forces in his corps and Army reserves. Indicating that an overwhelming Russian attack on Kovel and Vladimir-Volynsky would be equally harmful to the Aus-Hung. and German fronts, on the 23rd Conrad urgently asked GdI Falkenhayn for German units to join Army Group Linsingen. That night the first trains carrying the k.u.k. 24 ID left Stanislau for Hindenburg's part of the Eastern front. On the next day Falkenhayn reassigned GM von Ditfurth's 121 German ID from Prince Leopold's Army Group to Linsingen's, and stated (as we noted earlier) that 10 German LW ID would also be sent as soon as 24 ID arrived in the north. The Aus-Hung. high command shipped the burnt-out 11 Hon CD from Kovel into the interior, to Transylvania.

Since the preparations of Bezobrazov's Army required time, Brussilov had scheduled the offensive to start on 28 July. To add to the impetus of this newly-deployed Army, Alexeiev ordered West Front's 2nd Army to send I Sib Corps.⁶⁰⁵ By the 27th the I and II Guard Corps were stationed west of the Rovno-Kovel railroad, between I and XXXIX Corps on the Stokhod front; behind them the Guard Cavalry Corps was southwest of Roziszczce. Brussilov had shifted V Cavalry Corps to 8th Army, on the upper course of the Korczeska.

Russian artillery fire increased since 24 July against Tersztyanszky and Lüttwitz, and against Bernhardt's right wing. Scouting detachments were active in no-man's land. On the 25th, Roeder's German brigade was placed under the k.u.k. 29 ID and deployed on their southern wing. Bernhardt reported that the

605Klembovsky, p. 80; Zayontschovsky, p. 50

enemy was openly preparing to cross the Stokhod in front of 4 ID and Corps Fath. On the 26th, Schön's Division of X German Corps had to repulse a powerful probing thrust at Niemir. As 121 ID arrived, Linsingen placed it under G.Lt Lüttwitz.

In Kovel and Teschen, the staffs were now fully convinced that a large-scale general offensive by the Russians was imminent, directed against Kovel and probably also Vladimir-Volynsky. Linsingen had wanted to deploy GM von Stocken's 10 German LW ID behind 4th Army. However, Böhm-Ermolli's call for help had caused Army Group HQ to detrain just one regiment at Vladimir-Volynsky, while the Division's main body rolled ahead to 2nd Army. The first trains carrying G.Lt Wernitz's 86 ID, which Falkenhayn had drawn from Woyrsch's Army, were arriving south of Kovel. Thus at least a reserve had been provided to support Lüttwitz's and Bernhardt's sectors, which apparently were the most endangered.

Therefore the Central Powers had done whatever possible to prepare for the gathering storm by shifting the units of their armies, which were under strong pressure on all fronts. Just the fact that the Russian high command was throwing their Guards, who'd been preserved for so long, into the fight at Kovel made it clear that the Tsar was following the example of earlier wars and committing his elite troops in a final high-stakes bid for victory. The k.u.k. commander-in-chief FM Archduke Friedrich issued a stirring appeal to the officers and men of Tersztyanszky's Army. Linsingen's Army Group HQ was confident that the difficult battle against superior numbers could be won thanks to their steadfast troops. Col. Hell, who'd been Army Group Chief of Staff since 20 July, was firmly convinced that even the Guard regiments of the Tsar of all the Russias, despite their ancient renown, would achieve nothing.

8. Observations on the Brussilov offensive of 1916

The offensive of the Russian Southwest Front developed from a relief operation to benefit the hard-pressed Italians into the most successful military campaign of the first half of 1916. Against all the principles of war, which dictate that strong forces should be concentrated in a decisive direction, on 4 June Brussilov let all four of his armies storm ahead on all parts of the front. Units which didn't break through at least, as had been hoped, tied down the Austrians' strong reserves. At two points, however, significant breakthroughs did take place. The

causes of this development were discussed in detail in earlier chapters.

On 10 June the Russians drove over the Styr and tore apart the connection between the k.u.k. 1st and 4th Armies. In the broad gap that developed, the route to Lemberg lay open. On the same day the 9th Russian Army achieved their breakthrough at Okna. If Letschitzky had taken advantage of the confusion that engulfed Pflanzner-Baltin's Army by thrusting ahead up the Dniester, he could have enveloped the part of the k.u.k. forces still holding the Strypa front from the south. Along with the advance of Kaledin's Army in the north, such a move could have led to an envelopment from two sides. Possibly the Russians could have reached Lemberg from both the northeast and southeast.

Brussilov's obsession with Kovel

The Stavka was also of this opinion; to exploit the success of the moment, on 9 June they ordered the Southwest Front to advance from Luck through Rawa Russka to Lemberg. At this point, as perhaps at no other time in the World War, there was an opportunity to exploit a completely successful breakthrough by easily plucking the fruits of victory; perhaps the war in the East could have been decided. But the genius of the commander of Southwest Front faltered. Instead of advancing into the still-widening gap between 1st and 4th Armies, Brussilov kept his gaze fastened on Kovel. Despite all the successes of his Front, he held to the opinion that his was just a secondary mission, while Evert's West Front had the primary assignment. He couldn't free himself of this conception. Brussilov clung stubbornly and without wavering to the choice of Kovel as his operational goal. To him it seemed that this road and rail hub was the key to supporting the Russian West Front. Also a factor was the caution of General Kaledin, commander of 8th Army; because of concern about a possible German flank attack, he moved his corps to the northwest with great prudence. Thus they collided head-on with the reinforcements which the allies rushed to the area. When the allies themselves started to counterattack on 16 June, the opportunity to exploit the breakthrough in Volhynia finally disappeared. Similarly, Letschitzky was concerned about his southern flank and was content with the capture of Czernowitz; he missed his chance to advance between the Dniester and the Pruth.

These two errors by Brussilov and his subordinates enabled the Chiefs of Staff of the Central Powers to initiate measures to support the badly-shaken Aus-Hung. Eastern front. Conrad planned to first throw the Russians in Volhynia back far enough to dispel any danger, and then to deliver a powerful blow that would free Bukovina. Only the first part of the plan materialized. Army Group Linsingen did suffer further setbacks later, and thus had to give up the bend in the Styr at Czartorijsk and (after the Battles of Beresteczko and Brody) to evacuate the area south of the Lipa as well as the city of Brody. However, the enemy failed to break through again.

The situation by the end of July

To fortify the front it had been necessary to send 12 infantry and 2 cavalry divisions (including 3 Aus-Hung. infantry divisions from the Italian front).⁶⁰⁶ However, as this battlefield assumed

606One cavalry division - 11 Hon CD - had become completely

ever greater importance the Russians also had to commit 11 more infantry divisions (not counting the Guards). The Russian West Front had been supposed to deliver the main thrust, initially toward Vilna and subsequently through Baranowicze; however, after the West and North Fronts had both suffered defeat all available units north of the Pripyat were shifted to Southwest Front, to which 3rd Army was also assigned. The principal objective of Brussilov's reinforced efforts was still Kovel; according to his latest orders on 19 July, it was to be taken by a two-pronged attack involving 3rd Army from the north and Bezobrazov's new Army from the southeast. Brussilov had his other armies attack in general toward the west. One reason why the Russian operations focused increasingly on Kovel was that Brussilov, as former commander of 8th Army, was primarily concerned about the northern wing of his Front and thus overlooked many favorable opportunities to exploit successes on both sides of the Dniester.

Actually the allies' situation on the southern wing of the Aus-Hung. eastern front was much more difficult than in Volhynia. After the fall of Czernowitz, when the right wing of the k.u.k. 7th Army had to pull back to the southern border of Bukovina, the scanty forces were hardly capable of blocking the roads leading to the Carpathian passes. The groups assigned this mission were always being enveloped by the Russians, and they could respond only with further withdrawals. Because of one such envelopment of 7th Army's southern wing, after almost 14 days of bloody battle Kolomea also had to be abandoned to the enemy.

Under such conditions the thrust on the Dniester, though continually advocated by Conrad, couldn't be implemented. Seven divisions, including three Aus-Hung. from the Sieben Gemeinde, were sent to 7th and South Armies; two new army HQ, one of which was upgraded to an army group, would provide leadership. However, these forces weren't sufficient. After Conrad had solidified the front of 4th Army he planned to shift divisions from Volhynia to the Dniester, but this proved impossible. All units were held fast by the continuous fighting in the half-circle around Luck. Therefore the seven divisions sent to the southern wing were used only to plug gaps in the line.⁶⁰⁷ Meanwhile the Russian leadership sent just three infantry and one cavalry divisions to their two southern armies.

incapable of further fighting; it had to be sent to Transylvania to rebuild. 61 ID was ready to follow in the same direction.

607One battered unit, 24 ID, was sent to Army Group Hindenburg in exchange for a German division.

Casualties of the Aus-Hung. Eastern armies

The casualties of the Aus-Hung. troops in June and July were enormous. On 4 June there were 620,000 infantry and 30,000 cavalry at the front; they lost 10,756 officers and 464,382 men. These figures include casualties in the actions of 28-31 July, which will be narrated later. They do not include losses of German troops, but do reflect those of the k.u.k. XII Corps. In detail, the k.u.k. units on the Eastern Front had the following losses from 1 June to 31 July:

	<u>Dead</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Ill</u>	<u>POW/Missing</u>	<u>Total</u>
Officers	746	2,756	2,891	4,363	10,756
Men	<u>21,328</u>	<u>113,315</u>	<u>69,171</u>	<u>261,563</u>	<u>469,382</u>
TOTAL	22,074	115,071	72,062	265,931	475,138

It is therefore understandable that in addition to the normal March battalions incorporated in both months and the "extra" Ersatz troops, which together totaled 260,000 riflemen, the allies had to bring up 19 infantry and 2 cavalry divisions to hold the front. Moreover, the line which had originally been 500 km long (from Pinsk to Czernowitz) was now another 160 km longer.

On 27 July, the eve of the new general offensive by the Russian Southwest Front, the Aus-Hung. Eastern armies held a line between Pinsk and Nw. Aleksiniec that bulged slightly to the west. The deepest Russian penetration from the old position was 70 km between Olyka and Zaturcy. Between Nw. Aleksiniec and Wisniowczyk the southern wing of 2nd Army and South Army still held their original positions. From Wisniowczyk the new front extended in a wide arc through Delatyn to the Romanian border at Jacobeny. The widest stretch of lost territory was 120 km between Bojan and Delatyn. The allied divisions were most thickly deployed along the arc around Luck, and on both sides of the Dniester. This corresponded to the troop concentrations of the Russians, who had in addition a mass of troops around Brody. Despite all the allies' plans for a counter-offensive, for now they were still purely on the defensive. Meanwhile the Russians intended that the offensive which was to start on 28 July would conquer Kovel and then unhinge the hitherto unshaken German front from the south.

During these weeks the staff at Teschen often considered a maneuver similar to those which the allies carried out in September 1914 after the actions at Lemberg-Rawa Russka and in November after the unsuccessful Battles of Warsaw and Ivangorod;

in each case they had regained the operational initiative after a wide-ranging retreat. Now, however, such a bold operation was too risky. The staff correctly doubted whether the Army had sufficient flexibility, and whether many of the troops had the moral stamina to endure a long retreat. Moreover, due to the ever-worsening shortage of agricultural produce and raw materials, it wasn't advisable to give up the farmland which had been recovered with so much toil and diligence, and now lay behind our defensive lines, or the oil fields of Galicia. And finally the Romanian situation made a retreat impossible. The anxious high command had to be aware that the Romanians would seize any opportunity - such as a retreat of the entire Aus-Hung. Army - to intervene. Thus the attention of Vienna, as well as of Berlin, was centered with concern on Bucharest. Because of the situation, the best for which the Central Powers could hope was that the skill of their diplomats and the desperate defensive fighting of their armies in the East could cause Romania to remain neutral.

After almost two months of a costly battle of endurance, the Russian leadership hoped to finally gain a decisive victory with the offensive that would start on 28 July, when the main effort would at last be made entirely by the Southwest Front. The advances of this Front to date had already considerably inclined Romania to favor the Entente, so a sweeping new success might finally overcome Romanian hesitation. Until 1916 Alexeiev hadn't attached much importance to winning over the kingdom on the Moldava. Now, however, he no longer seemed to scorn the assistance of the Romanian Army. They might be sufficient to tip the scales that would decide the war in the East in favor of the Tsar's armies.

The balance of forces in the East on 28 July⁶⁰⁸

In the following strength summaries for both sides, brigades are reckoned as half-divisions in strength.

THE ALLIES

Aus-Hung. Eastern front = 62 ID and 14½ CD

- . Army Group Archduke Karl = 25½ ID and 5 CD
 - . 7th Army = 5 ID (4 k.u.k., 1 German), 2 CD (k.u.k.)
 - . 3rd Army = 8 ID (6½ k.u.k., 1½ German), 2 CD (k.u.k.)
 - . South Army = 12½ ID (9½ k.u.k., 3 German), 1 CD

608TRANSLATOR's NOTE: In the original, this material appears in Beilage 27.

- (k.u.k.)
- . Independent 2nd Army = 6 ID (k.u.k.)
 - . Army Group Linsingen = 30½ ID and 2½ CD
 - . Group Marwitz = 6½ ID (3½ k.u.k., 3 German), 2½ CD (k.u.k.)
 - . 4th Army = 5 ID, 1 CD (k.u.k.)
 - . Linsingen's direct command = 16 ID (7 k.u.k., 9 German), 3 CD (2 k.u.k., 1 German)
 - . Group Gronau = 3 ID, 3 CD (German)
- German Eastern front = 41 ID and 8 CD
- . Army Group Prince Leopold = 12 ID
 - . Woyrsch's Army = 10 ID (8 German, 2 k.u.k.)
 - . 9th Army = 2 ID (German)
 - . Army Group Hindenburg = 29 ID and 8 CD
 - . 12th Army = 4 ID (German)
 - . 10th Army = 12 ID (11 German, 1 k.u.k.), 2 CD (German)
 - . 8th Army = 13 ID and 6 CD (German)
 - . Group Scholz = 8½ ID and 4 CD
 - . Group Mitau = 4½ ID and 2 CD

THE RUSSIAN ARMY (138 ID and 38½ CD)

- Southwest Front = 65½ ID, 21 CD
- . 9th Army = 12 ID, 4 CD
 - . 7th Army = 12 ID, 2 CD
 - . 11th Army = 12½ ID, 3 CD
 - . 8th Army = 9 ID, 3 CD
 - . Special Army = 8 ID, 3 CD
 - . 3rd Army = 12 ID, 6 CD
- West Front = 45½ ID, 6 CD
- . 4th Army = 23 ID, 5 CD
 - . 10th Army = 15½ ID, 1 CD
 - . 2nd Army = 7 ID
- North Front = 27½ ID, 11½ CD
- . 5th Army = 9½ ID, 3½ CD
 - . 1st Army = 6 ID, 7 CD
 - . 12th Army = 12 ID, 1 CD

VII. The Southwest Front and the Balkans through the End of July 1916

A. The Italian Counter-Offensive in the Sieben Gemeinde

1. Fighting in the second half of June

a. Army Group Archduke Eugene's new defensive front; the Italian plan of attack

On 17 June, Archduke Eugene's Army Group HQ began to prepare for the withdrawal of 11th and 3rd Armies into a newly-selected line of resistance which had in general been approved by the k.u.k. AOK: Mattassone-Valmorbia-Borcola Pass-Mt Cimone-Castelletto-Roana-Mt Interotto-C. Dieci-Civaron-Setole. The 59 ID and 44 LW ID had been selected to move to the northeast. After the general course of the line had been determined, the technical development of the new positions and the transport of the guns that were most difficult to move started on 18 June. The time for the actual withdrawal of the front remained open, and the two subordinate army HQ were asked for suggestions.

The intended line of resistance in XX Corps' sector was slightly modified in the next few days. Instead of positions directly north of the Posina, as desired by the high command, the edge of the heights north of the Laghi Basin were selected because it was easier to defend. If it turned out that the Italians opposite XX Corps weren't aggressive, then the peaks south of the chosen line - Mt Majo, Mt Seluggio and Mt Cimone - could be included in the defenses. Also it was decided to move the positions between Castelletto and Roana forward toward the northern edge of the Assa Ravine, so that the Italians could be kept from digging in here.

The behavior of the enemy and various reports made it seem possible that the Italians would open a general offensive before the front could be pulled back. If this happened, Army Group HQ was determined to accept the challenge to battle and to withdraw to the permanent position only after a defensive victory.

Units which went into reserve as the front was compressed would

first be used in part to secure the Army Group's wings in the Val Sugana and Adige valley; it was in these areas, where the Italians could deploy troops quickly, that Army Group HQ expected strong attacks. However, the Italian counter-offensive in fact would develop on the edges of the plateaus of Asiago and Arsiero.

In the first days of June the Italian high command had already gained the impression that their opponents' onslaught could be halted on the plateaus. Contributing to this feeling was the expectation of help from the relief offensive which on 1 June was promised by the Russians. Therefore in early June General Cadorna decided to send 5th Army, which had been assembling in the plains, to join the battle for the plateaus.⁶⁰⁹ This was the genesis of a plan for a major counter-offensive, which would be mounted from both wings so as to catch the advancing Austrian wedge in a pincers. However, the parts of 5th Army which climbed up to the plateaus were soon drawn into defensive fighting. Only on 13 June was the situation stable enough for G.Lt Mambretti, now commander of the "Troops on the Plateaus", to issue orders for the counter-offensive. However, these instructions weren't carried out as expected. By mid-June three corps of 5th Army (XX, XXII and XXIV) were engaged along the defenders' front. At this time, V Corps was stationed between the Vallarsa and the heights running west of the Val d'Astico, and X Corps was deployed along the latter valley. In an arc around the Sieben Gemeinde were the XXIV, XIV, XXII and XX Corps; the XVIII Corps was still in place in the Val Sugana and farther north.⁶¹⁰

Although the 1st Italian Army didn't actually start the counter-thrust until 16 June Cadorna's staff claimed in their report of 11 June that an "offensive operation" had begun. This premature announcement was due to pressure from the Russian high command and to domestic politics in Italy. A stormy session of the parliament, in which the misfortunes of the army on the plateaus were sharply criticized, led on 10 June to the fall of Salandra's "War Cabinet." Public opinion among civilians as well as in the Army urgently demanded a new course. Therefore Deputy Boselli, who on 15 June was commissioned to form a new government, received the report of the impending improvement at the front as a godsend.

Preliminary Italian attacks

The Italian's counter-offensive was preceded by thrusts in the

609Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, p. 343

610Capello, Vol. I, p. 262

Dolomites by their I Corps, which was supposed to threaten the rail line in the Puster valley. The ensuing actions there will be described in a later section.

Until now the Italian XX Corps had been defending the northern part of the plateaus with two divisions (4 and 25 ID). They now received a third unit (13 ID) as a reinforcement, and on 16 June they opened an attack in the area between the border crest and Mt Meletta. The northern wing of the Corps achieved success against the 2 Mtn Bde, which was stationed with five battalions and three mountain batteries on the Austro-Italian border west of Osteria alla Barricata. Here the terrain features rocky, broken highlands, covered moreover with woods and a thick undergrowth of bushes, all of which makes visibility difficult. The four battalions of 2 Mtn Bde at the front were spread thinly over the ground. The much larger Italian force broke through south of the ridge; then a company stationed on the Castelloni di San Marco was assaulted from all sides and destroyed. Here and in the Italians' initially successful attempt to widen the penetration northeast of the Mga. Fossetta, four mountain guns fell into the enemy's hands, although their crews fought on with rifles until the bitter end.

This small setback was significant, because it menaced the connection between the k.u.k. III Corps, engaged on the plateau, and XVII Corps in the Val Sugana. Therefore to support 2 Mtn Bde the HQ of III Corps sent 12 Inf Bde, whose leading troops moved up to the border ridge.

The lost ground was recovered in the next few days with spirited counter-thrusts, while all Italian attacks on the adjacent front to the south were repulsed. Then our troops reverted to the defensive because of the enemy's significant numerical superiority (they had 12 to 15 battalions available here), and because of the impending withdrawal of the battle-lines.⁶¹¹

On the other parts of the front there were only some local actions, and thrusts by individual Italian brigades or sometimes even individual battalions. Such enemy attacks were fended off at Mounts Castelgomberto, Meletta and Sisemol. On 17 and 18 June the k.u.k. 34 ID improved their position between Mounts Lemerle and del Busibollo; they repulsed three counter-attacks, took 850 prisoners, and occupied the summit of Mt Lemerle. Since 44 LW ID

611GM Rudolf Müller, commanding 12 Inf Bde, was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order for retaining the heights on the border.

had been ordered to the Russian front, in the night of 19-20 June their troops stationed on the Cengio plateau were relieved by 34 ID, and those holding positions in the adjacent valley were relieved by 3 ID.

An attack on 22 June by V Italian Corps between the Pasubio and the Vallarsa broke down into isolated local thrusts.

These minor attacks didn't give Army Group HQ the impression of a coordinated Italian counter-offensive; it seems that Cadorna was also confused by how his noisily-proclaimed operation was being carried out. At this time the 5th Italian Army still had four divisions available and by the end of the month would also have 48 ID, formed with troops who'd returned from Libya. On 21 June Cadorna offered the four divisions already on hand to 1st Army HQ, so they could increase their pressure against the Austrian front. On the 23rd G.Lt Pecori-Giraldi responded that he could use only two of the divisions, and that he still needed several more days to finish deploying his artillery.

This was the situation of the Italian Army when they were suddenly surprised by their opponents' withdrawal.

b. Occupation of permanent positions; the Italians make new thrusts

Because haste was needed to meet the needs of the endangered Russian theater of operations, the withdrawal of the Army Group's front was now carried out, based on the proposals of the two army commanders. In the night of 24-25 June the 11th Army was to go back with XXI and VIII Corps to their main position (Zugna Torta-Valmorbia-Pasubio-C. del Coston) and with XX Corps to the Posina line. The latter Corps would occupy their new line of resistance (along the edges of the Laghi and Arsiero basins) on the following night. During the first night the 3rd Army would go to an intermediate position (Punta Corbin-Canove-Asiago-Gallio-Mt Baldo-Cm. Maora); on the second night they would occupy their permanent position, a line from north of the lower Val d'Astico through Mounts Interotto, Zebio and Chiesa to Porta Lepozze (east of the C. Dieci).⁶¹² XVII Corps in the Val Sugana would evacuate only their foremost line west of Strigno; they would continue to hold their current positions on the slopes of the Civaron, then

⁶¹²This line was chosen in place of the one originally proposed, which ran slightly further to the west and would have linked up with XVII Corps on the C. Dieci.

along the Trt. Maso with a small bridgehead at Carzano and advanced outposts on the Cenon east of the Val Campello.

Rear guards would make the enemy believe we were still in our old positions, and would set off prepared explosions as soon as the Italians began to advance. On 24 June the withdrawal of the heavy guns and supplies was completed, while the light artillery stood ready to fire from the intermediate positions. Therefore Army Group HQ could order the withdrawal of the front to commence that night as scheduled.

Thanks to careful preparations and excellent deception measures, the disengagement of the troops took place unnoticed by the enemy. The Italians were still bombarding Mounts Sisemol and Cengio, the positions south of Arsiero, and Mt Priafora until noon on 25 June, and they were still shooting at the abandoned positions of the L-Sch Div in the following night.

The Italian reaction

In most parts of the front the Italians followed only hesitantly. The Italian commander on the plateaus didn't order his troops to advance until 7:30 AM on 25 June; an order two hours later to use caution further slowed down the pursuit.⁶¹³ At several points, especially in the Posina valley, the Aus-Hung. rear guards held the enemy at bay throughout the day. The destruction of roads and bridges also hampered the advance. The armored works at Punta Corbin, Casa Ratti and Cornolò were blown up, as were several large-caliber captured Italian guns for which sufficient means of transport weren't available.

There were rear-guard actions only along parts of the front where the Italians had already been preparing their offensive, such as on the northern part of the Asiago plateau and in the Vallarsa. Along the border ridge, on 26 June three or four Italian battalions used an envelopment attack to take the Cm. Maora from a rear guard of 2½ companies. Farther south the Italian 25 ID had been preparing to attack toward the Mt Castelgomberto-Mt Meletta area, and in the night of 24-25 June they had been advised of the retreat by Bosnian deserters. However, here as in other sectors of the Italian XX and XXII Corps their troops moved ahead through 26 June just slowly and cautiously, toward the unknown points where the new Aus-Hung. defensive line was situated.

613Capello, Vol. I, p. 266

Cadorna didn't give assignments to 1st Italian Army until the 27th. He wanted the Austrians thrown off the Asiago plateau and back into their positions of 15 May; on the left wing the Col santo should be taken as soon as possible. Constant pressure had to be exerted so that the Austrians couldn't dig in along intermediate positions. The pursuit would continue until sustained resistance made systematic preparation and the deployment of massed artillery necessary.

This order by Cadorna was based on his hope for a significant success. However, hope was soon shattered by the steadiness of the defenders, who were fending off the Italian assaults with unbroken spirit in their new, still incomplete positions.

Because of the withdrawal some units were able to go into reserve. In addition to the k.u.k. 9 ID, which hadn't been deployed, the reserves included 59 ID (which had been ordered to leave for the East), then 28 ID and 21 Inf Bde from 10 ID. The other brigade of 10 ID (the 20th) had to stay at the front for now with the still-threatened III Corps. The organization of Army Group Archduke Eugene was as follows.

- . 11th Army had XXI Corps (FML Guseck's Group, the L-Sch Div, 57 ID) between Lake Loppio and Mt Majo, and XX Corps (8 and 3 ID) from Mt Majo to the Astico. Six battalions were in the Army's reserve.

- . 3rd Army had I Corps (34 ID, 43 LW ID) from the Astico to the Val d'Assa north of Canove and III Corps (22 LW ID and 6 ID, with 2 and 8 Mtn Bdes plus 20 Inf Bde attached to the latter ID) from the Val d'Assa to the border crest; XVII Corps (181 Inf Bde, 18 ID) was in line up to the Fassana crest. In the Army's reserve were 28 ID and 21 Inf Bde (from 10 ID); 9 ID was also present, but it was preparing to depart.

- . VIII Corps HQ had left the line.

Fighting along the new line

Strong Italian forces advanced on 26 June into the Vallarsa, where they suffered significant casualties from the defenders' artillery fire. Here on 27 June parts of the Italian 44 ID, who were thrusting out of the Val dei Foxi toward Mounts Corno and Testo, also had bloody losses. The eastern wing of 37 Italian ID, after concentrating massive fire on the Zugna crest, threw the Hungarian Landsturm out of their foremost trenches and repulsed the immediate counterattack. The Italians tried on the 28th to build on this success, which by itself was insignificant, but they were defeated; during a severe storm they were caught in an artillery crossfire and then by a vigorous counterattack from

the defenders.

Also on this day an Italian attack collapsed in front of the Pasubio positions. The enemy did inch closer to the outpost line of the L-Sch Div in the Vallarsa; in the night of 28-29 June the Tyrolean sentries pulled back to the main line of resistance. However, since the Italians thrust forward in the same night, their withdrawal was costly. At dawn an Italian battalion appeared by surprise on the road into the Valmorbia work, and thus penetrated the line of resistance.⁶¹⁴ The Valmorbia garrison were trapped in their dug-outs by machine gun fire. Only the bold intervention of a Landes-Schützen company saved the situation in the fortification and thus in the entire Vallarsa sector. These troops burst out of a dug-out which the Italians had swept by and climbed onto the roof of the fort to liberate the garrison.⁶¹⁵ The Italians suffered heavy losses, including 4 officers and 200 men who had to lay down their arms; 7 machine guns were also captured.

In the last days of the month the positions of the Zugna Torta and Vallarsa lay under heavy fire from Italian artillery. On the Pasubio, where the opposing lines were within range of small-arms fire from each other, an Italian regiment attacked unsuccessfully on 30 June.

East of the Pasubio the Italians were unusually slow and methodical as they crossed the Posina into the short valleys that lead down from the north. Finally on 28 June a battalion tried, and failed, to take Mt Majo. On the next day two battalions attacked the southern part of the Cimone plateau, but were defeated by the Salzburg IR # 59 in a combined fire fight and melee. On 30 June attempts to attack the position south of the Borcola Pass collapsed.

The Italian thrusts west of the Astico had thus been conducted with weak forces, which gave HQ of the 11th k.u.k. Army the impression that the enemy was only probing for soft spots in the line. By contrast, the k.u.k. III Corps had been engaged in hot

⁶¹⁴When the war started the Valmorbia fortification hadn't been completed; since it lay in front of the defensive line, the Austro-Hungarians had abandoned it without fighting. Now it served as a strong point in the defenses of the Landes-Schützen Division.

⁶¹⁵1st Lt Alfred Enrich of L-Sch Regt # I received the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order for the recapture of the Valmorbia work.

actions since 27 June on the northern part of the Asiago plateau. Along this entire front the Italians, imagining they were in pursuit, rammed their heads against the new positions.

On 27 June heavy attacks involving regiments from four Italian brigades had already been shattered in front of Mt Rasta by the defensive fire of 43 LW Inf Bde; the defenders brought 530 prisoners back from the battlefield. On the next day a stronger attack by five Italian brigades had no better luck. In hot fighting on the slopes of Mounts Zingarella, Colombaro⁶¹⁶, Zebio, Interotto and Rasta the 22 LW ID and 6 ID repulsed all desperate attempts to advance into the positions, even though they weren't yet protected by sufficient barricades. Fighting continued here on 29 June. This time the heaviest action involved the position on the eastern slope of Mt Zebio. Again all of the Italians' efforts were in vain. The attacks slackened off on 30 June; 6 ID only had to repulse one heavy onslaught in front of Mt Colombaro. In the other sectors the Italians just mounted some weak thrusts, all of which collapsed under well-aimed defensive flanking fire from III Corps' artillery.

On 29 June individual Italian battalions in the Val Sugana began to thrust against the front in the valley and on the northern slope of the border crest, but didn't reach their goal. However, the k.u.k. XVII Corps was holding with weak forces an extended sector that was very important for the overall situation; therefore they needed a back-up. Although 9 ID was assembled behind the front, they were supposed to entrain on 30 June for the Isonzo. Instead, on the 28th the 55 Inf Bde of 28 ID was sent to the Val Sugana.

This measure again postponed the reorganization of the units of the k.u.k. 3rd Army, which had been planned since the withdrawal of the front. It had been intended to bring 28 ID under its normal parent HQ, III Corps. This would have made it possible to pull 2 and 8 Mtn Bdes from the front so that the former could join XVII Corps and the latter could enter the Army Group's reserves. The fighting which still continued on the plateaus at the end of the month, as well as the uncertain situation in the Val Sugana, postponed these necessary changes. Reserves couldn't be pulled from the front until substantial progress had been made in building up the positions.

The newly-chosen defensive front of Army Group Archduke Eugene

616The III Bn of IR # 27 turned back a deeply-deployed mass assault at Mt Colombaro.

had everywhere put a quick halt to the Italian "pursuit", actually just a slight advance which at its deepest point covered 7½ km of terrain which the Austrians had given up. The failure of the attacks which the Italians had conducted with only the support of light and medium artillery had ruined the hopes, which Cadorna still harbored on 27 June, that he could recover the positions lost in May at just one bound.⁶¹⁷

The following is a summary of the organization of the two sides in south Tyrol on 30 June.⁶¹⁸

THE k.u.k. TROOPS

11th Army

- . XXI Corps
 - . FML Guseck's Group = Lt Col. Drtina's Group, Major Friedl's Group, 28 Lst Inf Bde
 - . L-Sch Div = 98 L-Sch Bde, 88 L-Sch Bde
 - . 57 ID = 10 & 9 Mtn Bdes
 - . Corps reserves = 4 bns
- . XX Corps
 - . 8 ID = 180 Inf Bde, 58 Mtn Bde
 - . 3 ID = 15 & 5 Inf Bdes (latter in reserve)
 - . Corps reserves = 5 bns
- . Army reserves = 3 bns

3rd Army

- . I Corps
 - . 34 ID = 67 & 68 Inf Bdes
 - . 43 LW ID = 86 LW Inf & 59 Inf Bdes
- . III Corps
 - . 22 LW ID = 43 LW Inf & 18 Inf Bdes
 - . 6 ID = 11 Inf Bde, Col. Lunzer's Group (20 Inf & 8 Mtn Bdes), 2 Mtn Bde, 12 Inf Bde
- . XVII Corps
 - . 181 Inf Bde
 - . 18 ID = 1 & 13 Mtn Bdes
 - . Calamento Group
 - . Corps reserves = 3 bns
- . Army reserves = 14 bns

Army Group reserves = 1 bn

THE ITALIAN TROOPS (under 1st Army)

⁶¹⁷Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, p. 250

⁶¹⁸TRANSLATOR's NOTE - In the original, this information appears on Beilage 28. The information about the Italian units was corrected in the original in Volume V, p. 726 (under "Corrections to Volume IV").

- . Independent 37 ID = Bdes Mantova, Sicilia, Taro; 7 independent bns
- . V Corps
 - . 44 ID = Bdes Puglie, Volturno, Ancona, Verona, Sele; 6th Alpini Group; 3 independent bns
 - . 27 ID = Bdes Roma, Sesia
- . X Corps
 - . 35 ID = Bdes Ravenna, Cagliari; 3 independent bns
 - . 9 ID = Bdes Novara, Bisagno
 - . 20 ID = Bdes Catania, Pistoia
- . XXIV Corps
 - . 33 ID = Bdes Udine, Padova
 - . 32 ID = Bdes Modena, Perugia
- . XIV Corps
 - . 30 ID = Bdes Forli, Piemonte; 5th Bersaglieri Regt
 - . 28 ID = Bdes Arno, Lombardia
- . XXII Corps
 - . 29 ID = Bdes Acqui, Friuli
 - . 34 ID = Bdes Ivrea, Salerno
 - . 25 ID = Bdes Piacenza, Sassari
- . XX Corps
 - . 13 ID = Bdes Milano, Barletta, Arezzo, Benevento
 - . 4 ID = Bdes Bari, Rovigno; 14th Bersaglieri Regt
 - . Alpini Groups 4, 8 and "Stringa" (total of 17 bns)
- . XVIII Corps
 - . 10 ID = Bdes Siena, Campania
 - . 15 ID = Bdes Venezia, Jovio
 - . Group Cismon-Vanoi (with 5 bns)
- . Reserves
 - . 47 ID (Bdes Avellino, Campobasso) was behind XX Corps
 - . Bde Spezia was under HQ of the "Troops on the Plateau" (which controlled XXIV, XIV, XXII and XX Corps for 1st Army)
 - . Bde Bisagno was at the disposal of the high command and apparently later joined 44 ID.

2. The Defensive Battle of the Sieben Gemeinde, 1-24 July

a. Evaluation of the situation; decisions and preparations of both sides

The determined resistance of the k.u.k. troops had forced the Italian high command to realize that further attacks must be

prepared methodically. Such attempts seemed hopeless without using heavy batteries and trench mortars; however, the Italians had strong grounds for repeating their attack. Even though a renewed Aus-Hung. offensive from south Tyrol wasn't to be feared for now because of the heavy commitment of the Central Powers in the Russian theater of operations, the new positions of Army Group Archduke Eugene in Trentino were still more threatening than their starting points before the May offensive. Austrian occupation of the area from the Col santo to the summit of the Pasubio, of the Borcola Pass and the heights north of the Posina, as well as their new positions on the northern part of the Asiago plateau, all considerably increased the pressure from this "thorn in Italy's flesh." Before undertaking the planned attack on Görz, Cadorna wanted to gain the security he needed for his rear areas. Therefore he decided to renew the failed attempt to recover the positions of 15 May, this time with a systematic, well-planned assault. Thus he would put an end to the danger hanging over the northern flank of the Italian armies.

The goals of the new offensive remained unaltered: in the east the Kempel Ridge, from which the original position Cost' alta-Astico valley (west of the Cima di Campolongo) could be reached, and in the west the Col santo, which would then serve as a base for the recapture of the Mt Maggio-Mt Toraro-Tonezza Ridge area. These attacks would be associated with a long-prepared thrust over the Rolle Pass into the Fleims valley, whose success would greatly influence the situation southeast of Trent.

It was clear to the Aus-Hung. high command that after the termination of the offensive by Army Group Eugene the Italians could send units back to the Isonzo. Therefore 9 ID was sent to reinforce the badly-weakened 5th Army. From the incessantly renewed attempts throughout July by I Italian Corps in the Dolomites to move closer to the Puster valley, and from their daily bombardment of the railroad in the valley, it could be concluded that the Italians had significant reasons for disrupting troop transfers from Tyrol to the Isonzo. Since the geographical situation gave the enemy the advantage of being able to quickly move units on the inner side of the wide arc formed by the front, it was necessary for the Austrians to correctly observe the shifting of Italian reserves and then to avoid being surprised.

Neither the intercepted Italian radio broadcasts nor analysis of intelligence reports indicated a noteworthy shift of units from Tyrol to the Isonzo for now. In fact, by mid-July only four Italian brigades had taken this route. Therefore we could rather

certainly expect that the continuing Italian offensive against the Army Group, which was already clearly being prepared in the first days of July, would involve the strong forces available to 1st Italian Army on the plateaus and in the area Astico-Zugna crest. Moreover, three more divisions from 5th Army (the HQ of which was dissolved on 2 July) appeared behind the front of 1st Army at the start of July.

In this tense situation the Army Group, which had to anticipate giving up more divisions due to the continuation of the difficult campaign in Galicia, was still unable in the first week of July to initiate the urgently-needed ordering of the units, or the relief of those which especially needed rehabilitation. However, to create a reserve and thus make it possible to carry out reliefs later, on 1 July the Army Group HQ approved a suggestion by 11th Army that after completing the attack on the Pasubio (scheduled for 2 July) they would stretch the line of XX Corps west past this mountain; then it would be possible to relieve 57 ID from the front.

On 2 July the high command ordered that 43 LW ID should transfer to 5th Army on the Isonzo. Moreover, the Russians' renewed general offensive, which started on 3 July, immediately affected the Southwestern Front; on 4 July the high command ordered that I Corps HQ and 34 ID should be ready to leave for the northeastern theater of operations. These developments forced Army Group HQ to throw their last reserves into the front: 56 Inf Bde of 28 ID to replace 43 LW ID, and 21 Inf Bde to replace 34 ID.

b. Events in the first half of July

Large-scale fighting ceased on the Army Group's front on 1 July; there were only minor actions during the pause until the Italians resumed their counteroffensive.

11th Army

On the front of the k.u.k. 11th Army massive fire was opened on the positions of FML Guseck's Group on 30 June; it continued for 36 hours, but wasn't followed by an infantry attack. Italian attacks in the Vallarsa and on the Pasubio were repulsed on 1 July. On the upper part of the Pasubio, the long-prepared operation against the Italian position at the summit was carried out on 2 July under the leadership of FML Heinrich Goiginger. Col. Korzer's six-battalion strong Pasubio Group (10 Mtn Bde plus

some Kaiser Jaeger) was able to drive the Italians from their intermediate lines and into their main position; here, however, the numerically superior enemy offered bitter resistance. The Italian artillery groups between the C. di Mezzena and the Culma Alta laid down effective flanking fire, just as they had during the k.u.k. offensive; they again had a major impact. In the evening FML Goiginger pulled 10 Mtn Bde back to their starting points. Nevertheless the Italians, who had lost more than 400 prisoners in addition to men killed and wounded, for a long time had no more enthusiasm for attacking here.⁶¹⁹

In front of the eastern half of 11th Army the 27 and 35 Italian ID moved closer to the defensive front in the first days of July; an attack on the Cimone position failed. On the 3rd and 4th these divisions of V Italian Corps attacked Mounts Majo and Seluggio with strong forces after a heavy bombardment, but were defeated with significant casualties. Here also the Italians now reverted for the time being to the defensive, undertaking only local thrusts. Finally the planned troop movements and reliefs could be carried out on the Aus-Hung. side; they were finished by 7 July. 57 ID entered rehabilitation quarters in the Adige valley and was able to replenish the ranks, which had thinned so much during hard fighting in the high mountains. XX Corps extended their front to the west. FML Schönburg took over this Corps in place of Archduke Karl Franz Joseph, who'd been summoned to the Russian front.

3rd Army: 1-5 July

Meanwhile (on 3 and 4 July), in the sector of the k.u.k. 3rd Army divisions from V and X Italian Corps started an offensive against our III Corps in the area between Canove and the border crest. This first defensive battle of the plateau raged for eight days.

While minor Italian attacks were still taking place on 1 July against Mt Interotto, at the Cra. Zebio and south of the border crest, subsequently shovels, staples and boring machines were used here instead of weapons. The Italians had moved their lines forward to reduce the time when their attacking troops would be subject to the destructive defending artillery which dominated the area in front of the Aus-Hung. positions. The defenders spotted and fired at numerous guns being brought to the front,

⁶¹⁹On 1 and 2 July the 10 Mtn Bde lost 3 officers and 99 men killed, 10 officers and 348 men wounded. See Korzer, "Ein Angriff im Felsgebirge" (Mil. wiss. Mitt., Vienna, 1930: Issues 3 and 4)

including automatic batteries. Fire from Italian trench mortars was already noticeable on 5 July. The short period of time before the Italians renewed their attack wasn't sufficient for III Corps to make much progress in constructing positions in the hard granite. The defenders would have to await the new assaults in trenches which were mostly 50 to 100 cm deep, reinforced by piling up chunks of rock. Since the task of boring dug-outs had only just begun, the reserves sought shelter from enemy fire in crevasses in the rock, which were numerous here. The zones of barbed wire were insufficiently wide. Thus it's not surprising that III Corps suffered heavy casualties in the defensive battle. Also the attackers, who thrust ahead stubbornly without worrying about losses, would be able to penetrate some parts of the front. Thus the defenders would have to wipe out these local penetrations in hand-to-hand fighting or by counterattack.

The major Italian offensive was accompanied by diversionary attempts in the Val Sugana and the mountains farther north. South of the Brenta, two Italian battalions had already thrust onto the eastern slope of the Civaron on 1 July. An Italian attack in the valley was shattered on 5 July.

On the northern wing of the k.u.k. XVII Corps, where the Calamento Group held outposts on the Cenon with weak detachments, four to five Italian battalions made heavy attacks on 3, 4 and 5 July. The assaults were repulsed, but the Calamento Group had to pull back to the main position west of the Val Campella, because here they had a more secure connection to the Fassana front. These actions didn't succeed in diverting the Austrians, since they'd led to the deployment of just one battalion of the 55 Inf Bde, which was stationed behind the lines in the Val Sugana.

An Italian wireless message intercepted on 4 July provided proof that the anticipated major offensive on the plateaus was imminent.

Due to the lack of reserves, the situation of the k.u.k. 3rd Army was admittedly not rosy. However, on the Italian side a number of brigades had lost many dead or wounded soldiers in the recent fighting; now they were worn out and not at full capacity. A patrol of the Styrian LW IR # 26, consisting of one officer and six men, on 2 July captured 4 officers and 262 men in a raid. A similar *coup de main* by infantry and Upper Austrian Volunteer Rifles was likewise successful on the northern slope of the border crest. The Italian plan of digging in on the heights north of the Assa Ravine was frustrated once again, and cost the enemy a substantial number of prisoners. These were all good

omens for the upcoming actions.

3rd Army: 6-10 July

At 5:00 AM on 6 July the enemy began their artillery preparation, a massive effort involving batteries of all calibers. The trench mortars also began their work, and reinforced the drumfire that rained down the Aus-Hung. positions from 7:00 to 8:00 AM. Then the Italian infantry began to attack on the northern part of the Asiago plateau.

Overwhelming forces advanced against the 36 battalions of III Corps. On the northern wing of Italian XX Corps were three Alpini groups (17 battalions); next to them were the reinforced 4 and 13 ID, and finally 25 ID of XXII Corps, for a total of more than 70 battalions.⁶²⁰

The initial fighting flared up on the northern wing of the k.u.k. 6 ID, opposite which three or four Alpini battalions unsuccessfully attacked Mounts Campigoletti and Chiesa, and with special intensity on the southern wing of the Division where the positions between Mounts Zingarella and Zebio were the targets of stubborn attacks. Here also all the assaults were repulsed by defensive fire and hand-to-hand combat. Again the fighting was especially lengthy on Mt Colombaro, where the III Battalion of the Styrian IR # 27 fended off ten attacks in wild actions. Only at the junction of 6 ID and 22 LW ID (by 18 Inf Bde) were the Italians able to take a short stretch of the trench next to Cra. Zebio, after it had been thoroughly pounded by artillery and attacked five times by infantry. Farther to the south attacks were shattered on the slopes of Mt Dorole. The positions of 43 LW Inf Bde in the Mt Interotto-Mt Rasta area remained under continuous and heavy artillery fire.

A counterattack on 7 July to recover the lost stretch of trench didn't break through. Here the Italians wanted to expand the small area they had penetrated by committing strong forces (prisoners from three regiments were captured). Therefore from

620TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: In the original at this point there is a footnote bemoaning the lack of Italian documentation of the action. By the time Volume V was published in 1934, the authors had access to material which allowed them to clarify Italian strength and organization; the text here (including that for the Italian order of battle as of 30 June, in the previous section) reflects the corrections printed on page 726 of Volume V.

early morning the area around the Cra. Zebio was again subjected to concentrated fire. In the morning hours a strong attack developed; it was supported by two batteries which the Italians had brought forward to within storming distance. The assault soon collapsed. The defenders, however, renounced further attempts to regain the part of the trench lost on the 6th, since their new line on Point # 1706 west of the Cra. Zebio was substantially better.

Further attacks against 6 ID were broken up south of Mt Chiesa and in front of Mounts Forno and Zebio, as were new attempts by the Italians on this day to break over the Assa Ravine and into the front of 56 Inf Bde northwest of Canove.

The fighting died down on 8 July. In the early hours of the next day, however, an Alpini group of four or five battalions tried to break through with a compressed mass of troops between Mounts Chiesa and Forno. On the southern wing the line of Alpini riflemen was driven back to their own positions by the continuing accuracy of the fire from artillery and from the "Peterwardein" IR # 70. On the northern wing the enemy penetrated the line, but were driven out with a coordinated counterattack by the nearby reserves of the Laibach IR # 17, which completely restored the situation.

Italian casualties here were extraordinarily heavy, just as they had been the day before in front of Mounts Colombaro and Zebio, and at the Cra. Zebio. Several brigadiers were killed or wounded; hundreds of dead and many wounded troops were lying in front of the defensive front.⁶²¹

11-13 July

Nevertheless, after a one day pause the fighting began again on 11 July. This time XXII Italian Corps thrust against 22 LW ID.

Around 6:00 AM artillery fire opened up with its full weight against the entire front of the k.u.k. III Corps, and on the southern wing escalated to drumfire in the morning hours, while there was intense trench mortar fire against the Aus-Hung. positions on both sides of the Cra. Zebio. The infantry attack against the Mt Rasta-Mt Interotto front didn't develop until noon; the operation immediately broke down under the destructive fire of the defending artillery. The mass of attackers who'd

⁶²¹In these three days the Italians lost over 1500 dead and 5000 wounded (Schiarini, p. 125).

inched up close to the line of 43 LW Inf Bde - apparently two Italian brigades - remained pinned down in the Bosco-Camporevere area; in the afternoon they had to make a costly retreat back to the protection of their own position under flanking fire from the Aus-Hung. batteries.

Despite this severe sacrifice, the Italians resumed their attacks against 22 LW ID on 12 July. The northern wing of this Division, into which 20 Inf Bde had been inserted on 9 July, stood once again under very heavy artillery fire. In the afternoon Heights # 1706 west of the Cra. Zebio were subjected to massive, coordinated fire from artillery and trench mortars, which for a time fully covered the narrow summit with smoke and flames. Strong infantry forces attacked here toward evening. The gallantly fighting defenders of this sector were helped by reserves from neighboring areas, even though the latter were also under attack. The combined crossfire of the artillery pounded the zone where the enemy was advancing. All Italian attacks shattered on the exemplary cooperation of the defending units.

In the same way, Mt Rasta lay under heavy preparatory fire for several hours. In the evening the Italian infantry attack was delivered by rather deep ranks. However, under the flanking fire of two batteries of 22 LW ID from the north and of the batteries of 28 FA Bde from the south the attack collapsed with severe losses before the troops got to within storming distance.

On 13 July the Italians renewed their assault with undiminished stubbornness. Feint attacks on 6 ID were followed around 1:00 PM by concentrated fire against the front of 22 LW ID, which at 4:00 PM was narrowed down to strike Mounts Rasta and Interotto. The drumfire almost completely destroyed the positions and caused 43 LW Inf Bde significant casualties. However, the Styrians of LW IR # 3 and 26 were victorious against the infantry assaults in the afternoon and evening. The Italians also received a bloody rebuff in front of Mt Dorole and on both sides of the Cra. Zebio.

The first phase of the defensive battle on the Asiago plateau concluded with these actions in which the Italians gained no ground other than the stretch of trench by Cra. Zebio but suffered very heavy casualties. In the new line of resistance the "Iron Corps" had successfully defied a well-prepared assault that had been supported by all available military means, even though the positions were incomplete and soon destroyed.

Thereafter fighting in this area followed the familiar pattern of trench warfare. The Italians were busy constructing their lines

and seemed satisfied with the situation.⁶²²

c. The Italian attacks in the Vallarsa and the Posina basin (Battle of Borcola), 10-24 July

In the Vallarsa the Italians had dug in near the defenders' positions; the Valmorbia fort, which had been incorporated in the defensive front, was constantly a target for the Italian artillery. The line in the valley, strongly held by the enemy, was a jumping-off point for an advance out of the val dei Foxi against the western flank of the Pasubio defenses. On 9 July, continuing heavy artillery fire was directed against the position of L-Sch Regt # I between Mt Testo, Mt Spil and the Valmorbia fort; this was followed by infantry attacks at dawn on the next day. The Italians were easily repulsed in the valley; on the other hand, a thrust by two battalions against the advanced outposts on Mt Corno was temporarily successful. It ended, however, with the destruction of an Alpini battalion under a concentrated barrage from the defenders. 200 Alpini were left dead on the battlefield, while 10 officers and 416 men were captured along with 4 machine guns.

While there was now relative quiet in the battle zone west of the Pasubio, on 12 July numerous Italian batteries opened a heavy fire against the front of the k.u.k. XX Corps in the Pasubio-Borcola Pass-Mt Cimone area. Massed fire against Mt Majo was followed by an advance by some strong patrols, which however were chased away.

On 13 July the Italians opened an attack against the Borcola Pass. It was accompanied by thrusts against the advanced parts of the front north of the Posina River. Strong forces from V and X Corps were involved. The main assault was delivered by the eastern group of 44 ID (eleven battalions); the main body of this reinforced Division were supposed to pin down their opponents in the Pasubio-Vallarsa area. Farther east the 27 ID attacked out of the Laghi basin into the C. dei Laghi-Mt Majo sector. 35 ID would envelop Mt Seluggio from two sides; the other divisions of X Corps were preparing an operation against Mt Cimone. Between the eastern slope of the Pasubio massif and the Astico valley

⁶²²Cadorna reported that operations on a grand scale ceased on the Tyrol front on 9 July, and that the fighting between the Adige and Brenta commencing on the 10th had the character of a slow, methodical attack. (Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, p. 251)

there were 50 Italian battalions against the 22 battalions of 8 and 3 ID.

The first two strong Italian attacks failed east of the Borcola Pass and west of Laghi, where the renowned Kaiser Jaeger Regiments of 8 ID defended the positions with their customary stubbornness. Next came an unsuccessful night assault along the Borcola road. On 14 July the Italians dug in upon a rocky summit southeast of the Borcola Pass, which was recaptured the next day. No more successful were attacks on Mt Seluggio on this and the following day, or a night-time assault in this sector, or a thrust in the same night by significant forces from the Laghi basin toward the west.

Thus here, as on the Asiago plateau, the Italians learned by bloody experience that they'd need careful preparation to break the defenders' power of resistance. Therefore from 16 to 18 July guns of every caliber delivered heavy fire against the area east of Borcola Pass and against the forward positions on Mounts Majo, Seluggio and Cimone. The uninterrupted bombardment, which at times was very intense, made strenuous demands on the steadiness and spirit of sacrifice of the troops in the ruined positions, where ammunition, food and water could be brought up only at night.

On 17 July the deployment of the k.u.k. XX Corps was as follows:

- . 8th ID
 - . On the Pasubio - 58 Mtn Bde (four battalions of KJR # 1, two battalions of KJR # 2, two ski companies)
 - . The Borcola sector (under Col. Lercher) - Four battalions of KJR # 4
 - . The Mt Majo-C. dei Laghi sector - 180 Inf Bde (five battalions of KJR # 1, one of IR # 59)
 - . Divisional reserve - Two battalions of IR # 14
- . 3rd ID
 - . Mt Tormeno-Mt Seluggio sector - 15 Inf Bde (four battalions of IR # 50)
 - . Cimone sector - 5 Inf Bde (three battalions of IR # 59, one of IR # 14, two of IR # 21)
 - . Divisional reserve - One battalion of IR # 59
- . Corps reserve - Two battalions of IR # 14; one high mountain company.

On 18 July, after heavy concentrated fire by artillery and trench mortars, the Italians attacked toward the C. del Coston and Mt Majo with strong forces. Thrown back twice, they repeated the assault a third time; under the accurate fire of the Kaiser

Jaeger the enemy suffered heavy losses and withdrew to their own positions. On 20 July the Italians tried a final time to overrun the positions at the Borcola Pass in thick fog, but this effort also failed due to the watchfulness of the defenders.

In the following days the enemy evacuated the positions they'd used as jumping-off points and established their lines, especially in the Laghi basin, a kilometer away from the defenders' front. The Borcola offensive was given up.

In conjunction with the new offensive operations on the Asiago plateau, the Italian X Corps had meanwhile received instructions to capture Mt Cimone. This position lay far ahead of the rest of the defenses, and since its garrison could deliver very effective flanking fire on the neighboring sectors it was extremely annoying to the Italians; moreover, observers on the Cimone summit had a glimpse into the Italian plains. The defensive position on the smooth rock slope ran along the edge of the bogs which lined the valleys of the Rio Freddo and the Astico. A forward peak, Mt Caviojo, was in enemy hands. The summit of Mt Cimone itself was in front of our position; since on three sides it provided no cover from Italian artillery, it was held by just a strong sentry outpost.

The Italian 9 ID had inched closer to the positions of 5 Inf Bde from Arsiero and from the valley of the Rio Freddo (along the road from the valley to the Cimone slope). Parts of 20 Italian ID, which were supposed to support the attack by 9 ID, had already climbed from the Astico valley up the Tonezza road and on the adjacent heights until they were just under the defensive positions. The enemy's artillery fire opened on 21 July. All of Mt Cimone and the area as far as the Tonezza summit stood under a heavy rain of shells from many batteries, that were deployed in a half-circle from the Punta Corbin through Arsiero to Mt Aralta. On 22 July the fire concentrated on the southern part of the Cimone slopes, and on the 23rd it escalated to great intensity. Under this overwhelming, massive barrage the remnants of the small garrison of the Cimone summit abandoned their exposed outpost around 3:00 PM, so that the Italians were able to occupy the observation point. The attack was carried out by eight battalions of 9 ID plus parts of 20 ID against IR # 59; beset on three sides in their badly damaged positions, with hastily improvised dug-outs, the "Rainer" Regiment repulsed all assaults. Higher HQ then ordered the 59th to recover the important observation point on the Cimone summit, but their attempts on 23 and 24 July failed despite great heroism. Also unsuccessful was an Italian attempt to penetrate the Austrian lines on the Cimone slope on the 29th.

However, the last word hadn't been spoken. IR # 59 wasn't content with holding the Cimone position, which still menaced the Italian front despite the enemy's success on the summit. The Salzburg troops advanced their outposts right up to the northern edge of the Cimone peak. Here in the following weeks they prepared for a mine attack against the Italians on the summit.

d. The second Italian thrust against the k.u.k. III Corps, 22-24 July

After the first defensive battle on the plateaus died away, the Aus-Hung. leadership had the impression that the quiet on the front of III Corps would not last long, and that the enemy was making many preparations to resume their offensive. 11th Army HQ, which on 16 July also took over the sector of 3rd Army when that HQ left for the northeast, would have to repulse this offensive even though the forces in south Tyrol would be further weakened by the departure of 34 ID and 43 LW ID.

On 12 July the chain of command in Tyrol was reorganized.

Archduke Eugene's Army Group HQ took control over all the troops in the land. Thus they commanded Areas I (Ortler) and II (Tonale), 11th Army (to which Area III - south Tyrol - now belonged), and finally the Tyrolean eastern front (Areas IV and V) under the Corps HQ of GdI Roth which was the former HQ of the Tyrol Land Defenses. On 17 July the HQ of 3rd Army left for the Russian front. In general the organization of the Tyrol defenses would remain unaltered for some time. For now the 10 ID was left in III Corps. 57 ID, the Army Group's only reserve, was being rehabilitated; when this was complete they would relieve the L-Sch Div, which meanwhile had included the Zugna crest in their sector. Whether this relief and the long-planned troop transfers in III and XVII Corps could be carried out would depend on how long the pause in fighting continued on the Asiago plateau.

Intelligence reports presented a contradictory picture. On one hand, Italian radio broadcasts revealed that their XX Corps on the northern part of the plateau had been reinforced by six battalions.⁶²³ On the other hand, the 4 Italian ID with four brigades and a Bersaglieri regiment seemed to have gone back into the second line. Because the Italians had opened an offensive in the Fleims valley on 21 July, it seemed that new fighting could also be expected on the plateau.

Actually the HQ of 1st Italian Army had been ordered that before eventually going over to the defensive they should once more try to conquer the Kempel Ridge and Mt Cimone.⁶²⁴ The attack on Mt Cimone was assigned to X Italian Corps, which began to attack on 23 July as described in the preceding section; the decisive thrust on the northern part of the Asiago plateau was being prepared by the Alpini groups, and the assault on both sides of the Cra. Zebio by 34 ID. The other units on this front would accompany the offensive.

The onslaught caught parts of III Corps while they were regrouping. On 10 July the Army Group HQ had decided to implement their long-intended effort to bring the units into their proper order. Therefore first the 8 Mtn Bde was relieved in the Mt Zingarella area by IR # 55, and went into the Army Group's reserve at Levico. It's understandable that this relief was expedited so that a new reserve could take the place of 57 ID,

⁶²³It was inferred from an Italian broadcast on 18 July that the strength of their XX Corps was 7 infantry brigades, 18 Alpini battalions, 2 field artillery regiments, 10 mountain batteries and 10 siege batteries.

⁶²⁴Tosti, p. 158

which was being held ready to move to the Fleims valley.

8 Mtn Bde had just left the front when the Italian attack was unleashed at dawn on 22 July. Lively artillery fire against the entire front of III Corps was followed in the morning by diversionary assaults against the area on both sides of Mt Interotto. At the points along the front which the Italians intended to penetrate, the preparatory bombardment soon escalated to a heavy barrage. The most heavy fire from guns of every caliber - in part from the Val Sugana - descended on the northern wing of 12 Inf Bde (in the Mt Chiesa-border crest area). The diligent construction work by the troops of this Brigade from the Alpine lands now paid off. Their casualties were light, even though by noon the position had been hit by an estimated 30,000 rounds. Around 3:00 and 5:00 PM attacks by three or four Alpini battalions against Mt Campigoletti and north of Mt Chiesa were shattered. The fighting had often been man-to-man.

In the Corps' center the defenders' new switch positions west of the Cra. Zebio were almost completely destroyed by the massed fire of Italian artillery (they had again brought mountain guns forward to a range of a few hundred paces) and the concentrated bombardment of many trench mortars. Thus the enemy was able here to penetrate the front in the sectors of three companies. The immediate reserves counterattacked against this incursion, but were unsuccessful because on 23 July the Italians opened a new thrust to turn the penetration into a breakthrough. On this day attacks against the front of 20 Inf Bde on the slopes of Mt Zebio collapsed with heavy casualties; among the defenders the II Battalion of the Eger IR # 73 was particularly distinguished. Another massive thrust was checked west of Cra. Zebio, where the defenders were aided by Italian batteries that fired short and hit their own lines. Now the counterattack was renewed, and by the evening of 24 July it had restored the situation. With the exception of one short stretch, the lost trenches were back in the hands of the defenders.

Meanwhile fighting also continued on the northern wing of the k.u.k. III Corps. Here the Italians' preparatory fire began early in the morning of 23 July and soon reached great intensity. The gallant troops of 12 Inf Bde held on. They found that the massive bombardment was much stronger than they had experienced in the hell of Mt S Michele during the third and fourth Isonzo battles. FJB # 7 and parts of IR # 17 were in the sector that was most heavily bombarded. Between 6:00 and 10:00 AM three attacks by four to five Alpini battalions were shattered in the Mt Campigoletti area. An Italian surprise attack that night in

rain and fog was equally unsuccessful.

The heavy fire of the enemy artillery continued in this sector on 24 July. During pauses in the bombardment, the Italians tried four times to storm Mt Campigoletti and also sought to thrust along the border crest against FJB # 9. Again all attacks collapsed and the Alpini suffered heavy casualties, until after 10:00 PM when they fled back to their starting points. The conduct of our troops and officers, with effective support from accurate artillery, had once again enabled them to stand fast without flinching to the furious, desperate assaults by the Alpini.

The offensive activity of 1st Italian Army ended with the misfortunes of 24 July; fighting died down here into trench warfare.

In the period from 26 to 30 July the re-ordering of the Aus-Hung. defensive front on the Asiago plateau could finally be implemented. It was all the more urgent because on the 28th the high command scheduled the departure of 57 ID for the start of August. 28 ID, whose 55 Inf Bde was already stationed on the plateau, was inserted in the area from Cra. Zebio to the northern slope of Mt Zingarella, between 22 LW ID and 6 ID; this freed up 2 Mtn Bde, 20 Inf Bde and IR # 55. The now reunited 10 ID took over the former sector of 28 ID north of the lower Assa Ravine; 2 Mtn Bde went into reserve.

e. The Italian Fleims valley offensive, 21-27 July

Plans and forces

On 3 June the Italian high command had already instructed their 4th Army in the Dolomites that the planned counter-offensive of 1st Army on the Asiago plateau and toward Col santo should be accompanied by a thrust by the southern wing of 4th Army toward Cavalese.⁶²⁵ Therefore on 16 June the troops in the Primör (the Brenta-Cismon sector) were placed under 4th Army.

The Fleims valley had long been a goal of the Italian generals. From here a decisive thrust could be delivered over the Karer Pass toward Bozen or in general against the Adige valley, the only supply line to the front in south Tyrol; at the very least, the front of the Tyrol Defense Command in the western Dolomites

⁶²⁵Cadorna, "La guerra", Vol. I, p. 258

would be very effectively threatened. Therefore strong forces were assembled for this offensive. Alongside 17 ID with its two brigades (Calabria and Tevere) stood a mixed detachment under GM Ferrari (nine battalions plus several Alpini battalions). IX Italian Corps HQ at Agorda took over leadership of the operation.

Until now the Italians hadn't used strong detachments along this front. Here the Dolomite road from Fiera di Primiero over the Rolle Pass (1984 m) and some paths for pack animals (from the Agordo basin through Falcade and the San Pellegrino ridge at 1910 meters, and also through the P. Valles at 2032 meters) led into the upper Travnigolo valley. It was possible to go around the Rolle Pass from the west through the P. Colbricon (1902 m) on a path for pack-animals that led to Paneveggio. Only foot-paths led through the gaps in the primary chain of the Fassana Alps.

On the defenders' side, in Area IV the western sector from the Val Piana (where the front met that of 11th Army) to the southern slope of the Lusia Heights (2491 m) was held by 55 Mtn Bde with 16 companies, 33 machine guns and 27 guns.⁶²⁶ Their positions ran in a thin line along the Fassana crest to the Colbricon (2604 m), where they bent to the north; the positions crossed the Travino valley west of Paneveggio by the old Dosaccio fort and passed over the Klein Lusia to the sector boundary. The Rolle Pass was in no-man's land. The Italians were established north of the immediate area of the Pass, on the Castellazzo Heights (2333 m). The Austro-Hungarians had an advanced strong point on the Cavallazza Heights (2326 m) south of the Pass. This position was next to the Rolle Road, but could be attacked from all sides and was connected to the main defenses only by a trench on the P. Colbricon.

The sector from the Lusia Heights (2491 m) to the Buchenstein Valley was held by 179 Inf Bde. The southern part of their front ran over the C. di Bocche (2748 m), crossed the San Pellegrino valley at Fangho, and then went over the C. di Costabella (2738 m) to the Marmolata Glacier; 15 companies with 24 machine guns and 24 guns were the garrison of this part of the front. In the Marmolata sector, on the Fedaja Pass and on the Sasso di Mezzodi were stationed 8 more companies with 12 machine guns and 20 guns.

In all, at the end of June there were 6¾ battalions - mostly Landsturm - and 2160 Standschützen with 14 mobile and 57 fixed guns watching the Fleims valley front, which until now hadn't

^{626A} large number of the machine guns and of the guns (which were mostly older models) were immobile.

been involved in major fighting.

The planned Italian offensive was supposed to surprise their opponents,⁶²⁷ but the preparations didn't remain concealed from the Aus-Hung. commanders. The enemy's altered behavior and troop marches, the increased motor vehicle traffic on the Dolomite Road, the arrival of new batteries, and the increased skirmishing clarified the Italians' intentions, as did reports intercepted from their wireless broadcasts. Because of the fighting which tied down 3rd and 11th Armies and the lack of reserves, at first it was possible to shift only limited forces (2½ battalions and 24 guns) to the threatened front. They were followed on 19 July, when reports accumulated about an impending Italian attack from the Primör, by Major Schönner's Bicycle Battalion. Understandably the Army Group HQ hesitated to commit their last reserve, the 57 ID which was resting in the Adige and Sugana valleys, until the Italians had definitely revealed their intentions, because the attack could just as easily be launched in the Sugana valley.

The fighting

On 19 July the positions of Area IV were subjected to lively artillery fire, which rose to great intensity, especially against the C. di Bocche, the Cavallazza and the Colbricon, and was equally strong on 20 July. The Italians had planned to attack the Cavallazza this day, but couldn't because a thick screen of clouds covered the Rolle Pass. On 21 July the Italian IX Corps finally opened their assault. Under 17 ID, a regiment-sized group was supposed to pin down the C. di Costabella-Fangho front; the Tevere Brigade would attack over the P. Valles to the C. di Bocche; the Calabria Brigade would thrust from Rolle Pass toward Paneveggio, while one battalion shifted from the north toward the Cavallazza. Under Ferrari's Group, seven battalions advanced against the Cavallazza (six from the east and south, one from the southwest), while three battalions turned against the Punta Colbricon and the Colbricon Heights # 2604; strong Alpini patrols thrust against the Fassana crest.

The Italian attacks against the C. di Bocche gained no ground, and the columns advancing in the upper Travignolo valley could only establish themselves in front of the defenders' position. However, around 3:00 PM the tiny garrison of the Cavallazza (1½ companies, 8 machine guns, 2 old field cannon) which had already stood under heavy fire for two days, succumbed to envelopment

627Cadorna, Vol. I, p. 254

from three sides. In the evening of the first day of the attack the P. Colbricon and the Colbricon triangulation point were also in Italian hands.

This situation forced Army Group HQ to throw their last reserve into the fighting. Already on 21 July the 9 Mtn Bde and HQ of 57 ID were assigned to GdI Roth's Corps; 10 Mtn Bde would follow on the 22nd.

On 22 July further Italian attacks were directed against the C. di Bocche, the positions on both sides of the Travignolo valley and the blocking position north and west of the Colbricon triangulation point; all were shattered. Now Army Group HQ ordered that counter-measures shouldn't be restricted purely to the defensive, but that any favorable opportunity should be used to counterattack. However, at first only three battalions had arrived from 10 Mtn Bde. Meanwhile the Italians continued their offensive on the 24th. Since the enemy were feeling their way toward the thinly-held positions on the Fassana crest, it was necessary to occupy them in strength; as the battalions arrived they were sufficient for this purpose. However, a counterattack couldn't take place for now.

Renewed Italian thrusts on the new defensive front broke down with losses on 26 and 27 July; FML Heinrich Goiginger, the commander of 57 ID, had now taken over this sector. Very stubbornly the Italians renewed their attempts to break through on both sides of the road through the valley. The final attacks here collapsed in the nights of 28-29 and 29-30 July under the defensive fire of the Bicycle Battalion.

When a sharp operation on 30 July had moreover wrested from the Italians a summit of the C. di Ceremana which they had occupied, the enemy's Fleims valley offensive had run to ground. The main Aus-Hung. positions had been gnawed away only on the Colbricon, where additional fighting would take its course in the following months.

The suspension of the offensive operation in the Fleims valley marked the end of the counteroffensive which Cadorna had opened with such high hopes after the Aus-Hung. leadership, under pressure of events on the Russian front, had to surrender the initiative to him. The total losses of the Italian Army in the actions since mid-May were 788 officers and 14,665 men killed, 2844 officers and 73,798 men wounded, 1045 officers and 54,590 men missing; the large majority of the missing could actually be

found in Aus-Hung. prisoner of war camps.⁶²⁸

B. Events on the other sectors of the Southwest Front

1. Fighting on the subsidiary fronts in Tyrol

At the same time that heavy fighting raged in south Tyrol because of the Aus-Hung. spring offensive, positional warfare continued on the Tyrolean western and eastern fronts; it was interrupted only in some isolated parts of the line by larger Italian operations which were intended as diversions.

In the Ortler and Adamello sectors the usual small-scale actions in snow and ice began with the onset of more favorable weather. By the Ortler glacier the 53 Half Bde was able to score further success on the high ridge of the mountains with tireless activity. They took two high summits on 14 June. The operation continued with support from a mountain gun that had been brought with difficulty onto Mt Ortler; the Cristall summit (3480 m), from which worth-while observation of the Bormio was possible, was captured on 1 July. The effectiveness of the gun on the Ortler, which was joined by a second mountain cannon during July, compromised the situation of the Italians in the high passes south of the Ortler to such an extent that they left just a few observers in this area.⁶²⁹

In the Judicarien and in the Riva sector there were just some minor actions, in which both parties sought to inflict as much damage as possible upon one another.

In the Dolomites some intense but small-scale fighting broke out occasionally. Thus the Aus-Hung. positions on the crest and northern slopes of the Marmolata glacier were frequently the target of heavy fire and energetic attacks. Severe fighting raged in this icy world on 18 June and on 3-4 July; however the Moravian 1st Inf Bn 159 stationed here was able to repulse all attacks by the Alpini.

628Tosti, p. 159

629The first Ortler gun was hauled from an elevation of 1598 m to its position at 3860 m in two days. Transportation of the second gun was accomplished in one day. (Lempruch, "Der König der deutschen Alpen und seine Helden" (Stuttgart, 1925), p. 47)

Military operations on a larger scale developed from 5 June on both sides of the road from Cortina d'Ampezzo to Toblach (the "Strada d'Allemagna"). Here the Italian front, because of the configuration of the international border, came closest to the Puster valley and its important rail line. The villages of Toblach, Innichen and Sillian - as well as the railroad installations - stood every day under fire from heavy high-trajectory guns stationed in the area between Mt Piano and Lake Misurina; however, rail traffic was never seriously disrupted.

On 6 June the Italian I Corps opened an attack that, as revealed by a captured order, was supposed to lead to the capture of the Puster valley regardless of the cost.

FML Ludwig Goiginger's Pustertal Division, responsible for defending Area V, had more than 14 companies in the area under attack between the Fanes valley and the northern slopes of Mt Cristallo; they consisted partly of Landsturm troops and Stand-Schützen. During the fighting the garrison was reinforced by around 12 more companies. These weak forces were opposed by the three brigades of 1 Italian ID, responsible for the attack. The 2 Italian ID was supposed to pin down its opponents farther east between Mt Cristallo and the Carinthian crest.

From 6 to 24 June, on an almost daily basis, strong artillery fire alternated with infantry attacks in battalion or regiment strength against the Aus-Hung. positions at the eastern outlet of the Fanes valley, at Son Pauses, on the Croda del' Ancona, and in the Rufreddo valley where the Dolomite road crossed through the defenders' line.⁶³⁰ The fighting on 11 and 12 June was especially stubborn. At this time the enemy gained a temporary penetration, which was wiped out by a counterattack. A night attack was launched on 24 June against the Rufreddo position, but it also was shattered. This was the end of the unfortunate Italian operation, which had gained no ground toward the Puster valley, but had cost the attacking Italian troops heavy casualties.⁶³¹ The bombardment of the Puster valley continued; we responded with systematic fire directed against the center of the Italians'

630TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - The "Dolomite Road" is identical to the above mentioned road to Toblach, the Italians' "Strada d'Allemagna."

631"The Dolomite front, defended by veteran opponents who were schooled in mountain warfare, presented an impregnable bulwark to our gallant infantry." (Ministero della guerra, "Brigate di fanteria" (Rome, 1926), Vol. III, p. 52)

lines of communication at Cortina d'Ampezzo.

Mine warfare around the Schreckenstein

This warfare of small units reached great intensity in the Tofana sector, where the Aus-Hung. positions reached nearly to the Dolomite road. The granite towers of the Tofana summits (I, II and III) were in the hands of the Italians, but on the slopes of the rocky crags and in the fissures the defenders were still dug in, and they denied the enemy access into the Travenanze valley. Although a more tactically favorable defensive line lay west of this high valley, it was useful to menace the Dolomite road, which was especially important to the Italians, for as long as possible. Thus the summits of the Punta dei Bois (Schreckenstein, called Castelletto by the Italians), which appear like smaller brothers at the western foot of Tofana I, were of great importance. The Schreckenstein not only barred the approaches to the head of the Travenanze valley from the south; it also gave Tyrolean sharpshooters an opportunity to keep the terrain as far as the Dolomite road under accurate fire.

All attempts of the Italians to take this block of stone by storm had been bloodily repulsed; therefore since the start of January 1916 they had decided to try mine warfare.⁶³² They started to bore on 2 April, and made rapid progress on two tunnels. The eastern tower of the Schreckenstein would be blown up from the middle of one of the tunnels. The second one led up onto the Tofana slope, so that fire could be directed into the rear of the Aus-Hung. position.

The drilling couldn't remain concealed from the defenders, who in June anticipated that the explosion would take place any day and took some precautionary measures. First, however, the Italians made some diversionary movements. In the night of 8-9 July they attacked the Fontana negra between Tofana I and II, where the Kaiser Jaeger of Alpine Detachment III were vulnerable on both flanks and during the day were entirely cut off. Their defense was hopeless; after three hours of man-to-man fighting the Italians were masters of this position.

The eastern tower of the Schreckenstein was blown up early in the

632TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - According to Heinz von Lichem, the Italians had started to dig in this area in September 1915, but intensified their efforts starting in January 1916 ("Gebirgs-Krieg 1915-1918" [Bozen, 1988], Vol. III, p. 288).

morning of 11 July.⁶³³ However, the assault immediately afterward by five Italian battalions was not successful. Fire onto the rear from the second tunnel, which pinned the defenders in their caverns, finally caused the Schreckenstein to fall on 13 July.

In the night of 29-30 July the Italians sought to exploit their success by penetrating into the Travenanze valley. The attack by eight battalions at the head of the valley collapsed in front of the new switch position. One of the defeated Alpini battalions lost 8 officers and 138 men as prisoners, as well as many dead and wounded plus two machine guns.

Kaiser Jaeger, Landsturm, Bosniaks and artillery had done their best. Therefore the decision by GdI Roth on 16 July to construct the main position west of the Travenanze valley and evacuate the Tofana sector was carried out without interference.

2. Events on the Isonzo and on the Carinthian border in June and July

During the offensive from south Tyrol, the k.u.k. troops that had been left in Carinthia and the coastal lands stayed strictly on the defensive. They were ready, if the occasion arose, to start the pursuit if the enemy should withdraw, but this never happened. It is true that beginning on 22 May the Italians sent to the west no less than seven divisions and two infantry brigades plus several Alpini and Bersaglieri battalions as well as many batteries. However, they also left so many troops behind that they always remained stronger than the Armies of General Obersts Rohr and Boroevic.

a. The Isonzo battleground is temporarily a secondary front

Because the k.u.k. high command wasn't planning a thrust from the Isonzo, and in the course of the campaign in south Tyrol took two more divisions away from 5th Army, in mid-June this Army had just 96 battalions, of which half belonged to the Landsturm, plus 377 light and 109 heavy guns.

⁶³³The Italians used two drilling machines; the length of the tunnel was 507 meters. 2200 square meters of earth were hauled away. 35 tons of explosives made up the charge (Piero Pieri, "La nostra guerra tra le Tofana" [Naples, 1932]).

After a pause of almost four weeks, fighting now flared up again on the southern wing of 5th Army.

The situation between Mt dei sei busi and the sea had already been tense for many months. Our diversionary attacks around the middle of May had made the situation worse. Despite the partial success we had won, the enemy still always remained stronger, especially since the k.u.k. 5th Army continually had to give up units. The situation would have improved only if the parts of the enemy position that had been captured could have been incorporated systematically into our defenses. But there weren't enough troops for this job. The 106 Lst ID had held a very unfavorable line since their advance to the Adria Works and to the ridge at Monfalcone.

From 5 June, simultaneously with the start of the great Russian offensive in the northeast, the Italian artillery and trench mortars on the Isonzo became quite lively. There were weak enemy thrusts against 17 ID on 10 June, and at Monfalcone on the 13th; all broke down under the defenders' fire. In the evening of the next day all the artillery behind the southern wing of 3rd Italian Army opened very heavy fire, which soon escalated to true drum fire, against the sector of 106 Lst ID. As darkness fell, storming columns from the Italians' 14 ID and 4 CD advanced against the positions, which they penetrated at several points. The bitterest fighting occurred around the trenches on Heights # 70 east of Selz. Detachments of the Jicin Lst IR # 11 held fast to this sector, after throwing the enemy out of the trenches three times in hand-to-hand action.

Also on the southern wing of 106 Lst ID the Italian attackers pushed on until they broke into our forward positions at the Adria Works. The enemy had outflanked the weak garrison, and it was impossible to bring up supporting troops along the narrow lines of communication because of Italian interdiction fire. Therefore the remnants of the garrison had to pull back under cover of night to the main position at Bagni.

The fighting lasted longer on the Karst ridge north of Monfalcone. Here a brigade of 14 Italian ID attacked; in the sectors of three companies they penetrated the position we'd taken from the enemy in May. The Eger Lst IR # 6 was able to recover part of the trenches by morning. However, the Landsturm had suffered heavy casualties, and their situation remained very difficult. HQ of 111 Lst Inf Bde intended to counterattack with parts of k.k. Lst IR # 25; after sufficient preparation, they

were finally ready to start on 16 June. However, just as the batteries began to fire for effect, the Italian artillery, which numerically was much stronger, concentrated their fire upon the hotly contested ridge. The troops who were ready to attack suffered substantial casualties before they could begin to advance. The offensive which they carried out couldn't break through, and had to be abandoned in the night of 16-17 June. At the same time, VII Corps HQ ordered that no further attempts should be made to recover the lost parts of the forward positions. The enemy's superiority in numbers and weaponry in these actions was clearly evident; it would be necessary to be economical with our smaller resources.⁶³⁴

b. The gas attack on the Doberdo plateau⁶³⁵

Since the autumn battles the Italians had moved close to our positions on the Karst plateau, thanks to the perseverance of their sappers and the explosion of mines in numerous tunnels. Their trenches on average were 50 to 100 paces from our barriers, and in some places were within the range of hand grenades.

Plans and preparations

To create an endurable situation for the defenders, in the spring the HQ of VII Corps had already devised a plan to drive back the enemy and to move the positions forward to the Isonzo in the Mt S Michele and S Martino sectors. But there weren't enough units to implement the plan. Therefore Corps HQ reverted to the idea of a gas attack, which they'd first considered in November 1915; at that time 5th Army HQ had refused to go along. After many studies were conducted by observers at the scene since the start of March, it appeared that an attack by the two northern divisions of VII Corps in the chosen area was feasible; on 1 May the high command finally approved the operation. This was the first time that gas was employed as a weapon in the Aus-Hung. Army.

The main objective was to drive the Italians from Mt S Michele and the much-contested Heights # 197, and to move the battle line

634In three days of fighting 106 Lst ID had lost 70 dead, 785 wounded and 545 missing.

635A thorough account of this gas attack, written by Major Rendulic of the Army of the Austrian Republic, can be found in the Mil. wiss. Mitt. (Vienna), in the November and December issues of 1926.

forward to the Isonzo. It was hoped that besides giving a strong boost to Aus-Hung. morale and damaging the enemy, the operation would shorten the front and secure ground where it would be easier to construct defenses. To support the main attack, the southern wing of XVI Corps would also release gas; this would at least temporarily eliminate the Italian batteries, trench mortars and searchlights deployed in the Mt Fortin area and make it easier for infantry to dig after they reached their goals.

The foremost line of VII Corps left the Isonzo at the mouth of the Wippach and first ran along the northwestern slope and summits of Mt S Michele until it was just west of S Martino; then it bent toward Heights # 197 in the west. Without reaching this point, it bent again to run south toward Mt dei sei Busi (# 118). 20 Hon ID held the sector from the Wippach to the northern edge of S Martino, and 17 ID the line farther south. North of the Wippach, on the eastern bank of the Isonzo, was 5 Mtn Bde of XVI Corps.

Opposite 20 Hon ID and the northern wing of 17 ID the XI Italian Corps, with 22 and 21 ID, was stationed down to around the Sagrado-Doberdo road. The western bank of the Isonzo in the Mainizza sector was guarded by Finance Watch battalions. XI Corps possessed substantial reserves and artillery that was much stronger than ours.

It took many weeks to prepare the operation. Archduke Joseph entrusted leadership to the commander of 17 ID, FML Gelb; troops from 20 Hon ID and 5 Mtn Bde would be attached to his own. For the thrust on the Karst plateau an attack group was assembled in the rest camps behind the Vallone valley, with troops from 20 Hon ID and 17 ID. It consisted of

- . four battalions of 81 Hon Inf Bde (Hon IR # 1 and 3) under Col. von Sipos, which would attack from Mt S Michele toward Sdraussina, and

- . five battalions of 33 Inf Bde (IR # 61 and 33) under Col. Ritter von Hiltl, which would attack south of S Martino over Heights # 197.

The subsidiary assault from the area north of the Wippach would be carried out by infantry detachments of 5 Mtn Bde (mainly III Bn of LW IR # 23) plus pioneers armed with explosives. This group would follow the cloud of gas after it was released from canisters and cross the Isonzo to blow up Italian guns and trench mortars in the vicinity of Mt Fortin. After preparation of the gas attack was complete, our artillery would destroy the Isonzo bridges at Sagrado and Sdraussina, and prevent their reconstruction with continuous harassment fire by individual

batteries. To avoid alarming the enemy, there wouldn't be any special artillery preparation for the operation; however, when the infantry advanced the guns would be responsible for suppressing the Italian batteries.

The studies of the weather forecasters and the general preparations for the gas attack (including technical work in the trenches and training the troops) was complete on 10 June. Meteorological forecasts indicated that favorable wind and weather conditions for using gas would exist on the 17th and 18th, and again at the end of the month. The operation had to be scheduled for the end of the month because in mid-June the trained March troops were being incorporated into the units (as ordered by the high command), and because at least five days would be needed to construct and concentrate gas batteries from the chemical cylinders and other equipment at hand. Between 18 and 25 June about 6000 cylinders were brought up and installed in the foremost positions; along with other equipment, a total of 52 wagon loads had to be moved.

In the afternoon of the 27th and on 28 June long-range observers reported remarkable railroad traffic to the Italian front. On the 28th the enemy artillery increased their fire along the entire Karst front to an unusual degree. In the afternoon and toward evening thrusts by Italian storm troops were repulsed along all of the line. The enemy were only able to gain footholds in a small part of the trench at S Martino and on the Monfalcone ridge, where they used flame-throwers. These unexpected actions seriously endangered the planned gas attack. Thanks to self-sacrificing action by the infantry and technical troops it was possible to quickly repair all the damage. Despite the heavy bombardment, fortunately none of the emplaced gas cylinders had been hit; the enemy troops who'd temporarily penetrated the line at several points couldn't detect the measures we were taking.

In the evening of this critical day the commander of the special sapper battalion reported to VII Corps HQ that the weather forecast for early on the 29th was favorable, and that the wind would be blowing in the right direction for the gas attack. In case the enemy did plan to continue their thrusts, Archduke Joseph decided to take advantage of the weather situation to immediately open the attack. At 10:00 PM he ordered that the troops should be assembled. Since the weather continued to be favorable, shortly after midnight this order was followed by an alert to the HQ of FML Gelb's group. By 4:15 AM the troops were to be in their starting positions, ready to move.

The course of the fighting on 29 June

The morning of 29 June promised a clear, hot summer day. Then at 4:20 AM a report arrived that the wind had ominously and completely stopped on the plains north of the Wippach. Thus it became impossible to release gas from half of the batteries, which in turn made it impossible to carry out the secondary operation against the batteries and trench mortars on the other side of the Isonzo, which could fire effectively toward Mt S Michele and ruin the principal assault. Success was dubious, since it was no longer possible to throw the enemy back over the river in the sector between the Wippach and Sdraussina. VII Corps HQ had to decide whether to postpone the attack or to limit the operation to an attempt to slightly improve the positions while doing heavy damage to the enemy. There was a serious danger that the enemy would continue their own thrusts, discover our preparations for the gas attack, and break the gas cylinders, which would imperil the Hungarian troops. Therefore, Corps HQ sent instructions to the subordinate commanders that the attack would go ahead, but with considerably reduced goals. Around 5:00 AM, when the wind on the Karst plateau had turned in a favorable direction, rockets were fired to signal the start of the curtailed operation.

Because of the advancing light of day, and a little mist that lay on the heights, the rocket signals couldn't be seen by everyone. Some of the communications lines had been damaged and weren't back in service, so the gas wasn't released at the same time along the entire front. The process took place from 5:15 to 5:40 AM. Because the positions were so close together and there were gaps in the line of advancing gas, the poisonous screen mostly settled just behind the foremost Italian lines in a thick cloud. Soon after the gas was released the attacking groups began their advance. Army HQ had forbidden the troops to "run against any front that wasn't fully broken by the effect of the gas" and that infantry should advance only "where the weapon has undoubtedly been effective." This strongly hampered the units' impetus.

At the points where the gas was effective the enemy had taken to flight; however, there were many undisturbed islands of resistance which soon offered heavy opposition to the oncoming troops. After a short time the advance stalled. On the right wing, parts of 81 Hon Inf Bde were able to break into the first and second lines of the Italian positions, and individual assault detachments thrust in some places nearly to the Isonzo. In 33 Inf Bde, a battalion of IR # 39 took Heights # 197 by 7:00 AM; however, the left wing couldn't move forward against strong fire

from the enemy positions, which apparently hadn't suffered from the gas. The foremost attacking troops suffered heavy losses from being hit in the flank and rear by intact enemy machine guns (as on Heights # 197), or by concentrated fire from heavy and medium batteries and trench mortars. Toward noon they had to be taken back to their old positions. Some of the Hungarian detachments maintained themselves heroically in the midst of the enemy until evening, and then also moved back to their original lines.

The operation was made more difficult by the fact that it was the first time that the troops had carried out a gas attack; it is clearly apparent that there were many incorrect assumptions about the effectiveness of the gas. The previous technical instructions had given many leaders a definite picture that didn't correspond to reality; this was the cause of disappointments. The gas didn't work as quickly as indicated in the plan of attack. Many Italians fought for some time after they inhaled the poison. Moreover, as noted above the order to use caution in the attack hobbled the will of many commanders.

Although the original tactical goal of the attack hadn't been achieved, the moral success was significant.⁶³⁶ The excellent Italian troops deployed on Mt S Michele were completely taken by surprise; since they lacked adequate protective equipment, they suffered very heavy casualties.⁶³⁷

636An entry in the diary of Italian GM Francesco cav. Rocca, who was captured in Venetia in 1917, sheds some light on this. On 29 June 1916 he commanded Brigade Ferrara (22 ID of XI Corps), and wrote about the fighting on this day: "What a frightful thing is poisonous gas! We were taken by surprise at daybreak and were unable to take our revenge."

637Per the figures in "Riassunti storici dei corpi e comandi nella guerra 1915/1918", Vols. I to III (published in Rome by the Ministero della guerra - Ufficio storico), the total losses of XI Corps during the Aus-Hung. gas attack were 196 officers and 5937 men. The hardest hit was 10th IR of Brigade Regina (21 ID) on Heights # 197, which alone lost 34 officers and 1286 men killed, 14 officers and 162 men wounded or sick from gas, and 170 missing. The casualties of the Aus.-Hung. troops were: 3 officers and 33 men killed by gas; 4 officers and 182 men made sick by gas; 7 officers and 173 men otherwise killed; 4 officers and 745 men wounded; 5 officers and 416 men missing. The total came to 23 officers and 1549 men. Per Tosti (p. 168) the 21 and 22 Italian ID lost a total of 182 officers and 6700 men on 29 June.

The unbearable enemy pressure against this sorely-tried part of the front noticeably slackened. The ensuing quiet in the northern sector of the Karst provided an opportunity to restore and construct positions.

c. Fighting and troop movements on the Isonzo in July

While the Italian infantry in the Mt S Michele sector stayed very cautious for a long time after the gas attack, and the quiet wasn't often disturbed on the middle and upper Isonzo either, heavy new fighting developed on the southern wing of the k.u.k. VII Corps. The significant weakening of the k.u.k. 5th Army couldn't be concealed from the Italian leadership. They now chose to exploit this situation, and the relative balance of forces, by having the reinforced southern wing of their 3rd Army win important points along the edge of the Karst between Selz and the sea. Success would provide favorable conditions for a future offensive toward Trieste.

On the Aus-Hung. side the high command could count with certainty on the fact that after the Italian attacks were checked along the positions in the Alps near Trent the enemy high command would withdraw the majority of the units opposing Archduke Eugene's Army Group. Before the early approach of bad weather in the high mountains, these units would march to the original main front on the Isonzo for an offensive. There were many indications that this would happen. Reports had already arrived that Cadorna had pulled strong units out of the mountains into the Venetian plains so that they could be quickly shifted to the Görz area. Therefore the k.u.k. high command found it advisable to take two divisions from the Army Group in Tyrol to reinforce the Isonzo front as the latter became increasingly important. Along with several heavy batteries, the divisions would arrive in the area of 5th Army at the start of July.

Meanwhile on 28 June the Italian VII Corps began with great stubbornness to thrust against the remaining parts of the Italian trenches on the Monfalcone ridge still in our possession, as well as against the heights east of Selz and our positions on the hill on the coast near Bagni. After very strong artillery preparation, in the night of 28-29 June troops of 14 Italian ID stormed several company sectors on Heights # 70 east of Selz. At daybreak drum fire was directed against the entire front of 106 Lst ID, and during the morning attacks were renewed against the heights at Selz, on the Monfalcone ridge, and next to the coast at Bagni. In fighting which surged back and forth, the defenders were able to drive the enemy out of the areas they'd penetrated, but finally fresh Italian units entered the fight and dug in firmly. The fighting continued on 30 June without a decision. While the hill at Bagni stayed securely in our hands, on the

ridge at Monfalcone the Italians were gradually able in many tough actions to recover the trenches we had won in May west of Heights # 121.

At the start of July strong enemy forces thrust against our main position, but were shattered with very heavy casualties thanks to the stubborn endurance of the k.k. 110 Lst Inf Bde; on many days, such as in the evening of 3 July, the Landsturm had thrown back up to six strong attacks. Even in the night of 7-8 July, in which the exhausted troops were relieved, there was a serious attack by Italians with flamethrowers; like the assaults on previous days, it completely failed.

Both sides fought even more stubbornly and bitterly for Heights # 70 at Selz, because the attackers were thrusting in a direction where they could enter the rear of the position on Mt Cosich # 113, from which they could easily roll up the front. HQ of 111 Lst Inf Bde was supposed to lead a counterattack to drive the enemy away, but couldn't carry it out because the troops were exhausted after three days of costly fighting. Captured Italians warned of a general attack with new reinforcements. Therefore on 30 June the HQ of 5th Army ordered 187 Lst Inf Bde, which was held in readiness at Nabresina, to move to Kostanjevica and on 1 July to Brestovica, where they were placed under 106 Lst ID. On 1, 2 and 3 July parts of 111 and 187 Lst Inf Bdes counterattacked on Heights # 70, but gained just a little ground; therefore the sector from the Selz-Doberdo road to Sistiana was placed under FML Schenk, who arrived on 3 July with three regiments of his 9 ID.⁶³⁸

After parts of the Bohemian IR # 91 were in place, in the morning of 6 July the enemy was thrown from Heights # 70 in a skillfully led surprise attack without artillery preparation. Around noon, however, the five greatly diminished companies of the 91st had to give ground once more to an overwhelming thrust launched by Italian reinforcements. In the fighting to date in the Selz-Monfalcone area troops from five Italian divisions had been identified (from 14, 26, 23 and 49 ID plus the dismounted 4 CD).

In the afternoon the hotly-contested heights were stormed again, then lost once more. Thereupon 9 ID HQ ordered that the small penetration should be sealed off on all sides to prevent the enemy from expanding it. The exhausted troops of 106 Lst ID,

638TRANSLATOR's NOTE - As explained farther below, the fourth regiment of 9 ID (IR # 102) had been detached for service elsewhere on the Italian front.

who'd been very distinguished in these actions, had to be relieved by 9 ID, which meanwhile had all arrived except for IR # 102.⁶³⁹ In the Monfalcone sector 60 Inf Bde took the place of 110 Lst Inf Bde on 8 July; the garrison of the Selz sector now consisted of IR # 91 and Lst IR # 27 under 17 Inf Bde HQ. Until 9 July the 106 Lst ID occupied reserve camps behind the front; after the arrival at Comen of 43 LW ID (which also had come from Tyrol), the 106th marched to the area north of Trieste. From there, following orders from the high command, they began to entrain on 22 July for the Russian theater of operations.

On 6 July, Army HQ ordered the division of the Karst front into two sectors directly under their authority. Sector III.a, from the Wippach to a point northeast of Vermeigliano, was held by VII Corps (20 Hon and 17 ID). Sector III.b, farther south down to Duino, was held by 9 ID (which had been reinforced by 187 Lst Inf Bde plus k.k. Lst IR # 11 and 27).

In general, the fighting died down through 10 July. From around this time there was relative quiet along the Army's entire front. The greater strength which the Army achieved in the first half of July made it possible to hold units in their reserve - 24 Lst Mtn Bde behind XVI Corps' sector and 43 LW ID on the Karst plateau. On the other hand, in the second half of July the 187 Lst Inf Bde had to be given up. They had been in need of substantial rebuilding for some time, and therefore would be employed on the quieter front of 10th Army. To replace them, the fourth regiment of 9 ID (IR # 102) would join 5th Army.

d. Activity on the Carinthian front

Under the k.u.k. 10th Army, in May the 59 Mtn Bde - which had been placed temporarily under Sector II (92 ID) - again was commanded directly by Army HQ as Sector III. Thereafter 92 ID (led from 18 May by GM Edl. von Krasel) controlled just 26 Landsturm Mountain Brigade, although they also were responsible for training the Army's reserves and March troops. To replace the March battalions of 48 ID which had been called to Tyrol, as well as a battalion of k.k. Lst IR # 26 which had been infected with malaria, Army HQ set aside some new Army reserves; they were two battalions in the central Gail valley (k.k. Lst Inf Bns 10 and 149), and two volunteer rifle battalions at Tarvis (II Battalion of the Carinthian Vol. Rifle Regt and the Salzburg Vol. Rifle Bn). Around the start of June the 10th Army received the

639From 25 June to 9 July the 106 Lst ID lost 4700 men.

rebuilt IR # 28 from Bosnia and two very old 21 cm coastal mortar batteries.

Just as on the Isonzo, enemy activity on the front in Carinthia increased in the second half of June, no doubt in connection with the Italian counterattacks between the Adige and the Brenta. Around mid-month the weak units in Carinthia had to release available troops for the threatened front in the northeast. For this purpose Army HQ chose three battalions (III Bn/IR 96, k.k. 1st Inf Bns 150 and 153), which left the Army's area by the 17th. On this day GO Rohr, who the day before had been named commander of the k.u.k. 11th Army, handed over 10th Army on a temporary basis to his former Chief of Staff FML Scotti.

Starting on 20 June the situation became livelier on the Army's entire front. After the positions on the heights on both sides of the Plöcken Pass were bombarded for several days by heavy guns, on the 23rd detachments of the 26 Italian ID advanced against the Lahner Joch and the Klein Pal; under the defenders' fire, however, they soon fled back. Anticipating a stronger attack, Army HQ requested replacements for the three battalions they had just given up; for now, however, they were assigned just one battalion (V Bn/IR 14, from Tyrol).

Meanwhile the shelling of our strong points on the heights in the Plöcken area continued. On the 27th fire intensified against the heights immediately adjacent to the Pass. Aided by arriving fog, strong enemy forces began to attack. Alpini battalions stormed our positions on the Grosse Pal and the Freikofel four times. In places where the Italians managed to break in, the reserves of the garrison opposed them and succeeded - in bitter hand-to-hand fighting which lasted for hours - in throwing them out again. Battalions III/7 and III/57 were especially distinguished, as was the accurate artillery of 94 ID.

The rocky pyramids of the 2226 meter high Cellonkofel, which tower steeply west of the Plöcken Pass, once again stood under very heavy fire. Several hundred 30.5 cm shells pounded the summit of the mountain and covered it, like a volcano, in smoke and flame. Fighting raged along the entire front of 25 Mtn Bde on 29 June. From 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM many Italian attacks collapsed on the Klein Pal, the Freikofel, and the Grosse Pal. In the evening of this day all positions were still firmly in the hands of the defenders. However, since noon there had been no tidings from the Cellonkofel. Here during the bombardment the garrison had taken shelter in dugouts behind a rock wall; shrouded by smoke, they were taken by surprise when the enemy

infantry struck. There was a short but bitter fight, in which the garrison was overwhelmed. Only a few men, mostly wounded, saved themselves by climbing down the steep cliffs.⁶⁴⁰

By taking the summit of the Cellon the enemy enhanced their view of the Plöcken sector and the area behind it. However, since we still held the positions on the slopes the Italians' success had no particularly unfavorable effect on the defense. Any enemy advance could be hindered by a new position on the northern slope which blocked the steep routes by which they would have to climb down; also their garrison on the summit could be pinned down if necessary with artillery fire.

The fighting in the Plöcken area forced the high command to send 10th Army the reinforcements they'd requested. The cars with IR # 102 were pulled from the trains which were taking 9 ID from Tyrol to the Isonzo, and on 2 July the Regiment detrained at Hermagor in the Gail valley. Since new fighting broke out in the Fleims valley around 20 July before these troops could deploy, on the 25th the high command ordered them to return to Tyrol. Toward the end of July they were followed by Battalion V/14, which had been temporarily assigned to Carinthia. On the other hand, the first echelon of 187 Lst Inf Bde arrived in the Gail valley on 19 July. This unit became the second brigade of 92 ID.

Fighting had tapered off since the start of July. Not until the 18th did Alpini detachments again assault our positions on the slope of the Schwarzenberg east of the Mittagskofel (in the sector of 59 Mtn Bde). This led to hard fighting which lasted into the night of 18-19 July, and ended with the retreat of the enemy. Many corpses covered the battlefield; two machine guns and some special weapons were taken.

After this action there was no major fighting until the end of the month.

C. The Balkan Front from mid-May to the end of July 1916

1. Events in Albania

640156 men of the garrison (including 5 officers) were taken prisoner. Only 16 men came back.

In Albania the 14 Mtn Bde, which was instructed to occupy the Vojusa front, sent forward a battalion apiece to Fjeri and Berat at the end of May. The security of the river line was still entrusted to bands of Albanian volunteers, who hardly provided sufficient protection and weren't a serious menace to the enemy front. Yet at this time pressure on the inactive Italians was desirable, since trustworthy reports indicated that units were being sent to the main theater of operations from the harbor of Valona, where it was observed that fully-loaded ships were departing. In fact General Cadorna on 23 May had called back the 44 ID, and then 43 ID; their journey was now in full steam, and would be complete on 10 June.⁶⁴¹ In one of the last shipments, the Italian auxiliary cruiser "Principe Umberto" was torpedoed by the Aus-Hung. submarine "U.5" and went to the bottom with almost 2000 men of the 55th IR of Brigade Marche.⁶⁴² In general, however, this troop movement by sea wasn't substantially hindered by German and Aus-Hung. submarines, since the boats of the "Mediterranean Submarine Flotilla" from their bases at Pola and Cattaro were swarming through the Straits of Otranto for the war against the enemy's merchant shipping. The Straits had achieved great importance as the sally port into the Mediterranean, and were now the focal point of the naval war in the eastern part of that Sea. The combined Entente fleets were trying to seal off the Adriatic with increased patrol activity and by building barriers. Aus-Hung. flotillas mounted thrusts to prevent this, and thereby to keep open the route for submarines engaged in the shipping war as they entered and left the Mediterranean. In comparison with earlier and later periods of the naval fighting in the Adriatic, this was the time when the Navy won their greatest glory by a display of initiative and wonderful striking power.⁶⁴³

To threaten the Italians around Valona, at the start of June the k.u.k. AOK ordered that at least the entire 14 Mtn Bde should move forward to the Vojusa, and that if possible a second brigade should follow them over the Skumbi. The troops had also wanted to thrust to Valona ever since the capture of Durazzo; they

⁶⁴¹Cadorna, "Altre pagini", p. 181. XVI Italian Corps thereafter consisted of just 38 ID, 10th Bersaglieri Regiment, and three Territorial Militia regiments (# 38, 47 and 48) plus cavalry, artillery and technical troops; ration strength was around 100,000 men.

⁶⁴²"Brigate di Fanteria", Vol. III, pp. 105 ff. Kriegsarchiv (Marine-Archiv), "Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914-1918", p. 346

⁶⁴³"Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914-1918", pp. 360 ff. and 465

believed that the Italians, whose inactivity in the face of the Albanian bands was inexplicable, had little power of resistance. When however the commanders had to turn down these demands, the reason was solely the logistical situation, which made it completely impossible to supply sufficient forces south of the Vojusa for any length of time. The Italians' situation was much more favorable; their positions in the immediate vicinity of the Valona harbor were well supplied by an efficient and easily protected line of communication over the sea. The Italians were inactive mainly because of the limited goals which had been set by their own high command and were still in effect, as recently and clearly illustrated by the designation of their HQ as "Commando Truppe d'occupazione d'Albania." General Cadorna was also openly opposed to the grand designs of his allies in the Balkans.

By 12 June 14 Mtn Bde had occupied the Vojusa front from its mouth as far as Drizare in a 50 km long position; its principal points were on the heights of the Malakastra at Pojani, Levani-Petjani, Busmazi and on the Gradisca. The Italians stood on the south bank; they held a bridgehead on the north side only at Feras, which was repeatedly the scene of minor skirmishing until the end of June. Larger operations with the scanty units available were precluded because there was still high water on the Vojusa. However, also in July the quiet on the front was broken only by scuffles caused by feints. On the other hand the troops were already suffering greatly under the crippling heat and from the unavoidable malaria. Therefore in the first half of July the combat strength of XIX Corps declined by nearly 1300 men, primarily due to malaria.⁶⁴⁴ The losses of 14 Mtn Bde, which alone had lost 700 men, were particularly great. The first measure adopted to meet this danger, which threatened to increase, was a general re-grouping in the area south of the Skumbi. The battle groups pulled back from the low ground along the banks of the Vojusa to the heights along the valley, while securing and observing the river line would be undertaken only by sentries and patrols. Nevertheless the swamp fever had again made substantial inroads by the end of July. The weakness caused mainly by the disease now had all the more impact when some of men in the Albanian detachments serving with 14 Mtn Bde renounced their oath and deserted, so that these units would be of questionable assistance. The strength of the volunteers here had already sunk to 2300 men. However, also the six training battalions formed in north Albania had just 2400 volunteers, half

⁶⁴⁴On 1 July there were 32,092 riflemen with 18 machine guns and 129 guns. Ration strength was 100,672 men and 30,470 horses.

of their projected size. Since eagerness to fight was still quite evident among the "Skiptars", the problem appears to have been that they refused to accept the discipline of regular military service. Therefore the initiation of universal conscription, the goal of the high command, had to be postponed. The higher HQ also had to agree with the latest orders of 47 ID HQ, under which 14 Mtn Bde would withdraw behind the Semeni in the event of an Italian thrust over the Vojusa.

The generally unclear military situation in the Balkans was further complicated by uncertain political conditions in several Albanian territories, and above all in Montenegro. Although the Montenegrins had already turned in 81,000 rifles, it was estimated that there was an even greater number of concealed weapons in the country. The entire male population was still in place. After the end of May, when 28 Lst Mtn Bde was ordered to Tyrol, the mostly immobile garrison consisted of just 10,000 riflemen with four guns; potentially they could be opposed by more than 20,000 Montenegrins who were eligible for military service. Already at the start of June there were unmistakable signs of unrest developing in the Vasojevici area, accompanied by a revival of the flagging confidence of the local population that they would soon be liberated; as a preventive measure the most influential suspects were transported into the hinterland. General Radomir Vesovic, the former Montenegrin Minister of War, was being transported when he treacherously murdered the officer who was accompanying him and fled; this made it necessary to implement coercive measures, which for the time being were restricted to the northeast part of the country. Finally, when it was satisfactorily established that a general uprising was being planned for 28 June⁶⁴⁵, the AOK held ten battalions in march readiness and threatened to deport all men capable of bearing arms; however, for now there were disturbances only in the Kolasin district. Nevertheless discontent still simmered, as was proven on 5 July when a devastating assault was mounted on the Cetinje arsenal.⁶⁴⁶ In much of Albania bands of robbers were once

645"Vidovdan", the Serbian national day of remembrance for the Battle of Kosovo in 1389.

646TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - General Vesovic did organize partisan resistance. However, by December 1916 the estimated strength of the guerillas in Montenegro was only 300 men. See Dragan Zivojinovic, "Serbia and Montenegro: The Home Front" (in "East Central European Society in World War I", New York, 1965; p. 255). Zivojinovic tries to depict a large-scale popular movement, but his admission that the insurgents had just 300 men shows that discontent hadn't led to an uprising of the

again active.

Under this stormy sky it is no wonder that differences of opinion about the political handling of the conquered territories intensified between Teschen and the Ballhaus-Platz. The politicians considered assigning the Montenegrin border areas inhabited by Arnauts to a future Albanian state; Conrad, however, would consent to a purely Albanian administrative district only if Montenegro was annexed and the idea of an independent Albania abandoned. The k.u.k. government however adhered to their previous plans for settling political questions in the Balkans, and threw out opposing reports from the military side.

2. Situation and prospects of both sides

In early July some intelligence reports received at Teschen indicated a large-scale Entente operation in the Adriatic was possible. Although the high command considered this unlikely, they still were forced to hold all available combat-ready units in the area of the Cattaro harbor, and to make sure that the troops in the coastal defenses were on the alert. Meanwhile, however, reports accumulated that there would soon be a general offensive by the Army of the Orient from Salonika; the main blow would be directed toward Monastir, and an attempt would be made to establish a connection with the Italian units at Valona. It was also known that the French were hoping for an Italian thrust that would gain ground on the Albanian coast, while General Cadorna supported only restricted action there. His government at Rome, however, intended to take part in any offensive from Salonika by assigning a brigade to the Orient Army. It was significant that Essad Pasha had offered his assistance but was refused by the Entente on the grounds that his previous activity in his homeland had left "a deep trace of concealed but irreparable resentment." Finally the AOK learned that G.Lt Sir William Robertson, Chief of the British General Staff, wanted to make the impending campaign in the Balkans dependent upon the intervention of Romania. At the very least all these reports indicated that an attack by the Entente, probably with the assistance of Romania, was becoming increasingly likely.

On 22 July GFM Mackensen, who had to be concerned about the Danube front due to the signs of Romanian preparations to intervene, asked the AOK at Teschen about the defensive measures

size which the Austro-Hungarians were fearing.

in Transylvania. He had to be told that there were field works just on the most important transportation routes and that only some reinforced Gendarmerie and Finance Watch troops would be available to delay the initial enemy advance. At the same time the commander of the German-Bulgarian forces asked that the k.u.k. XIX Corps should undertake a diversionary advance toward Valona to keep Italian troops from joining with the Serbs stationed at Korca. The right wing of the 1st Bulgarian Army by itself was too weak to prevent this, since it consisted of just one infantry regiment without artillery, which moreover was spread out over a wide area. Just as in mid-May, GO Conrad had to respond again that if the Salonika Army attacked, the XIX Corps with its very insufficient forces was still incapable of any serious thrust; they could cover the right wing of Mackensen's Army Group only in the area west of Lake Ochrida, and even then only in conjunction with Bulgarian troops.

Meanwhile General Joffre had proposed a large-scale offensive by the Orient Army and asked how General Sarrail could cover the imminent Romanian mobilization and cooperate with the Russian and Romanian armies.⁶⁴⁷ Meanwhile England had also decided to take part, and a Russian brigade had been shipped just at this time to Salonika. From the forces now available, General Sarrail intended to deploy the Serbs west of the Vardar, with their center in line northwest of Vodena; they would deliver the main blow through Huma, which would be supported by the Russian brigade and at least one French brigade in the direction of Ljumica. The English units, stationed in the sector between the Vardar and Lake Doiran, would only make feint attacks. The French farther east (in the Dova tepe sector) would remain on the defensive. Planned movements by the right wing in the Rupel-Poroj area toward the Strumica valley were also intended only as a diversion. On the other hand, all "available" troops should thrust ahead either in the area of Lake Doiran or toward Macukovo; for this purpose a French division in the Ismailli-Causica area would be relieved by the English.

Thus General Sarrail hoped to not only tie down the majority of the German-Bulgarian units on the Macedonian front, but also to seriously threaten them even before the intervention of the Romanians. After a conference on 22 July the high commands of the Entente declared that they were in full agreement with the proposed measures, except that they also wanted an attack from the English sector (Lake Doiran-Vardar); finally, the beginning of the great offensive should if possible be scheduled for 1

647 French Official History, Vol. VIII, pp. 511 ff.

August.

At the end of July the Bulgarian commanders were also working on plans for an offensive, under which the right wing of their forces would advance to Florina and the left to Lake Tahino. After initial opposition, the German OHL now indicated their agreement.⁶⁴⁸ So both sides were preparing to attack in the Balkans, which naturally led to a noticeable increase in tension on the Macedonian battle front.

VIII. Problems Regarding Military Command in the First Half of 1916

In the final chapter of Volume III of this work, we presented a full account of the development of the plans of the Central Powers' for the military operations of 1916. The allies in their victorious course from Gorlice to Pinsk had thrown the Russians far back and apparently reduced their capability to attack so much that nothing had to be seriously feared on this front. After the slate had also been wiped clean in the Balkans, Conrad proposed a decisive operation in the southeast, against Italy. He requested German assistance for this purpose. After the overthrow of the Apennine Kingdom he was prepared to supply Aus-Hung. divisions for an attack on the Western front, where the final battle would take place.

Falkenhayn, however, wasn't prepared to accept Conrad's proposed schedule for the overthrow of the members of the enemy coalition. He held that the time to seek victory in the West had come, now that Serbia had been conquered. He regarded England as his principal enemy, but first had to overcome the French Army before mounting the final action against Great Britain. But simultaneously with the attack on France he wanted to initiate unrestricted submarine warfare against the island Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons.⁶⁴⁹

Concern to preserve the neutrality of the United States of North America caused Reichs-Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg to postpone the unrestricted U-boat campaign until the start of April.⁶⁵⁰ The plan for attacking France, however, remained in place. Yet this

648Falkenhayn, "Heeresleitung", pp. 217 ff. and 239

649Falkenhayn, "Heeresleitung", p. 181

650Kuhl, "Weltkrieg", Vol. I, p. 374

wasn't envisioned as a decisive offensive. Falkenhayn chose the fortress of Verdun as a point which French honor demanded to be defended regardless of circumstances, and where he could establish a "blood pump." He hoped that fighting here would last as long as possible, and that German casualties could be held down to a ratio of 2:5 against those of the French.

After overcoming six weeks of tension between the two men, at the start of February Conrad met Falkenhayn at Pless to once again discuss the proposed operations for 1916, and again had his suggestion turned down. Thereafter he prepared for an offensive against Italy with Aus-Hung. divisions alone.

Thus in spring 1916 the military leadership of the Central Powers carried out separate operations. The two states had won the initiative with their attacks, because the Entente powers after long conferences at the start of December 1915 had finally agreed only that their combined general offensive wouldn't begin until summer. The French and English were to start on 1 July, the Russians around two weeks sooner. However, the advantage of the Central Powers was offset by the failure to coordinate the time and direction of their separate attacks. They had forgotten how they had won enormous amounts of territory from Russia by cooperating in summer 1915, and how the victories that followed against Serbia were due to the united efforts of German, Aus-Hung. and Bulgarian divisions! The error which they committed in the first half of 1916, violating the basic rules of military leadership, would have serious consequences.

Results of the campaigns

The course of the Aus-Hung. spring offensive against Italy and the reasons why it was prematurely terminated have already been discussed. Much more questionable than the success of this offensive was the result of the bloody contest around Verdun. The attacks starting on 21 February took place only on the eastern bank of the Meuse, and weren't extended to the western bank until March. Several works on the fortress' northern front were taken. But the attempt to conquer the city, which was the goal of the commander of 5th Army (the German Crown Prince), didn't succeed.⁶⁵¹ This was due primarily to the extraordinarily stubborn French defenders. However, it was due also to the fact that Falkenhayn, who was more interested in a drawn-out battle

⁶⁵¹Rosner, "Erinnerungen des Kronprinzen Wilhelm" (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1922), pp. 204 ff. Kronprinz Wilhelm, "Meine Erinnerungen", p. 161.

that would damage the French than in the possession of Verdun, would only release the reserves in instalments.

On the same day (24 June) when Falkenhayn ordered attacks in front of Verdun to be limited, his Western opponents began the six days of artillery preparation for their great offensive on the Somme. On 11 July, when the German OHL ordered the Crown Prince's Army Group to stay "strictly on the defensive", it was no longer in the power of the Germans to stop the fighting in front of Verdun because the flames of the battle, now stirred by the French, continued to burn.⁶⁵² At any rate, Falkenhayn's hope that he could bleed the French white while keeping German casualties down to a ratio of 2:5 wasn't realized. By the end of July the Germans had lost 252,000 men by Verdun and on the other side the French had lost 288,000.⁶⁵³

The attack out of south Tyrol against Italy had to be halted because of the Russian relief offensive, whose great success surprised friend and foe alike. The heavily threatened Eastern front cried out for reinforcements. However, the Germans' assault on Verdun was also affected by Brussilov's advance, because units had to be taken from it and sent to support their hard-pressed ally.

When the French and English began to attack on the Somme on 1 July, the Central Powers were being pushed hard on all the principal fronts. About 52 Entente divisions struck on both banks of the Somme against a 30 km sector held by the German 2nd Army with only 8 divisions plus 4 more standing right behind in reserve. Although the location of the offensive had been clearly revealed during the six days of the intense Anglo-French barrage, Falkenhayn hesitated to bring forward the reserves stationed farther north. Therefore with their first assault the enemy made a dangerous penetration, which the French south of the Somme soon widened to 7 km. German casualties on the first day of the battle were 50,000 men. The English alone, according to the figures of Winston Churchill, lost 60,000 troops. When the Germans brought up their reserves they were able to seal off the penetration in heavy fighting. However, the English and French continued the "attrition battle" by committing reinforcements and using enormous amounts of ammunition; a prolonged battle developed on the Somme, which consumed large forces and didn't die out until November.

652Kuhl, "Weltkrieg", Vol. I, p. 425

653Wendt, p. 243

Thus at the end of July the Central Powers were under stress such as they had never hitherto experienced during the World War; at all points they had lost the initiative to the enemy. This unfavorable situation had come to pass primarily because the Central Powers had failed to act together, using their available forces according to a mutually-agreed plan. Cramon asserts that "this sin against the Holy Spirit of military leadership led to a crisis in which perhaps the war could have been lost."⁶⁵⁴ After the war the measures of both Chiefs of Staff were understandably subjected to quite sharp criticism.

An evaluation of Falkenhayn's generalship

Most of the attacks have been directed against Falkenhayn's generalship. Almost without exception they have charged that he never intended to completely destroy the enemy with his offensives, but rather was usually content to only inflict "sufficient" damage as seemed appropriate in the context of each situation.⁶⁵⁵ Thus in summer 1915 after the breakthrough at Gorlice he wanted to stop the offensive after each of its phases, and it was only due to the insistence of Generals Conrad, Hindenburg and Mackensen that the advance was in each case allowed to continue. In similar fashion during the Balkan campaign of 1915 Falkenhayn's main goal was merely to restore the land connection with Turkey; he attached little importance to the complete destruction of Serbia, or to driving away the Entente divisions that had landed at Salonika.

This style of waging war, which rightly gained for Falkenhayn the title of a "strategist of attrition"⁶⁵⁶, was most plainly illustrated by his attack on Verdun. If in fact the time had come for an offensive to seek a decision against the Western powers at the start of 1916 - about which opinions are divided -

654Cramon, "Bundesgenosse", pp. 57 ff.

655Only GdI von Zwehl seeks to defuse the charges against Falkenhayn in his biographical study "Erich von Falkenhayn" (Berlin, 1926), pp. 222 ff.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - Most studies since this volume was published (in 1933) have been equally critical of Falkenhayn. A significant exception was Norman Stone, who wrote in 1975 that "Falkenhayn was a modern general, and had a more sensible view of the war than either Ludendorff or Conrad. He knew that great maneuvers, as in past wars, could not fit in with present circumstances." ("The Eastern Front 1914-1917", p. 178)

656Delbrück, "Ludendorff, Tirpitz, Falkenhayn" (Berlin, 1920)

then the selection of Verdun as a target has in general been judged correct, but only if the idea had been to capture the fortress by a simultaneous assault on both banks of the Meuse.⁶⁵⁷ To carry the operation out merely to bleed the French Army has been judged an error by all military analysts.⁶⁵⁸ The casualty figures cited above support their opinion. A devastating judgement was rendered by G.Lt Kabisch, who wrote: "Falkenhayn failed at Verdun in the first place because the course of his career didn't allow him time or opportunity to develop the psychological skills necessary for a wartime leader, and also because his character made it impossible for him to devote all his energy and will to reach an objective that he selected and fought for on a grand scale."⁶⁵⁹

Despite the criticism of Falkenhayn's generalship that swelled after the war, in July 1916 not all the influential men in Germany were prepared to judge him. Nevertheless, his star was definitely setting, and forces were already at work that would secure his demotion.

An evaluation of Conrad's generalship

GO Conrad possessed all the qualities of a commander which, according to the preceding section, were lacking in the German Chief of Staff. It was surely the correct strategy when, after the victories in Russia and Serbia, he wanted both Central Powers to deploy all available units against Italy to drive that country's army off the field. GdI von Kuhl, whom we can characterize as a competent judge in questions of strategy, wrote that despite some reservations "the combined attack by the Central Powers against Italy would have been the best decision."⁶⁶⁰ The question of whether the Italians would have completely left the ranks of the enemy after their army was overthrown can hardly be answered with confidence, because of their maritime and economic dependence on Great Britain.

657Kabisch, "Streitfragen des Weltkrieges 1914-1918" (Stuttgart, 1924), p. 229. [Ritter], "Kritik des Weltkrieges von einem Generalstäbler" (Leipzig, 1920), p. 161. Kuhl, "Weltkrieg", Vol. I, p. 379.

658K.F. Nowak, "Die Aufzeichnungen des General-Majors Max Hoffmann" (Berlin, 1929), Vol. I, p. 116. Moser, "Ernsthafte Plaudereien über den Weltkrieg" (Stuttgart, 1925), p. 146. Zwehl, p. 197. "Kritik des Weltkrieges", p. 164. And so on...

659Kabisch, "Streitfragen", p. 238

660Kuhl, "Weltkrieg", Vol. I, p. 380

However, the elimination of their army would itself have been a significant advantage in preparing for the decisive battle of the Central Powers in France, for which substantial parts of the Aus-Hung. armed forces would then have become available.

Doubts that his ally would cooperate in the offensive against Italy had led Conrad nearly from the beginning to reconcile himself to an offensive on just the Folgaria and Lavarone plateaus, rather than a much more effective double attack from Tyrol and the Isonzo. Yet it cannot be denied that even this limited thrust, as we have demonstrated, was a partial success. The fact that it hadn't been exploited by the time when Brussilov broke through in the northeast (which made exploitation impossible) was due in the first place to the unusual snowfall which delayed the operation, and then to its excessively methodical implementation. Neither of these factors can reasonably be blamed on the k.u.k. high command.

Another charge that is hardly sound is expressed as follows by Kabisch: "Conrad's Italian war and Falkenhayn's battle at Verdun lacked a firm foundation, because the Eastern front wasn't a secure wall."⁶⁶¹ It is true that the Italian war, in its entirety, led to a weakening of the Eastern front; it's also true that the departure of many troops recruited in the Alpine lands deprived this defensive front of an especially useful support. However, for the south Tyrol offensive itself only the following Aus-Hung. units were pulled from the Russian theater of operations: four infantry divisions, one Landsturm mountain brigade, and several smaller groups in the total strength of another division. These units were partly replaced by two Landsturm divisions. In addition the German OHL recalled three of their divisions from the area south of the Pripyat. On the other hand, by 1 June the combat strength of the troops on the Eastern front under the k.u.k. AOK had risen to 620,000 men, who weren't substantially outnumbered by the 600,000 infantry and 60,000 cavalry whom Brussilov commanded when the heavy fighting started. The high command could after all make a case that literally no other battles of the World War began with the defenders in such a numerically favorable situation as those of Luck and Okna. Moreover it should be noted that the only German-Alpine troops who'd been sent to the south Tyrol offensive were those of IR # 14 and 59 (both parts of 3 ID).

⁶⁶¹Kabisch, "Streitfragen", p. 224. See also (among others): Moser, "Plaudereien", p. 155; Zwehl, p. 197; "Kritik des Weltkrieges", p. 169

Finally, it can be demonstrated that the Russian attack was by no means a surprise to the defenders, who could almost predict the hour at which it would begin, and that the commanders awaited the first Russian onslaught with confidence.

In this volume we have narrated with the greatest possible objectivity how nevertheless it was possible for such a heavy setback to develop that it greatly influenced the course of the entire war. We concede that the offensive capability of the Russians shouldn't have been underestimated after the stubborn attacks which they carried out around New Year's Day in Bukovina and then in spring at Lake Narotch. However, we must assert that it would have been contrary to all the rules of strategy if the Aus-Hung. high command hadn't sought to assemble all available units for a decisive thrust in the direction they had chosen while leaving what appeared to be a sufficient number of troops on the defensive front. It was a far greater "sin against the spirit of strategy" that the Central Powers had concentrated the available units at two points instead of one.

Tactical reasons for the defeats

Now we will glance at the reasons why the various disappointments and setbacks occurred on the battlefields themselves. The principal problem during the south Tyrol offensive was that in the fighting of the year 1915 the troops had - in general correctly - become accustomed to regarding systematic artillery bombardment as a pre-condition for a successful attack. Concern that they were leaving their own artillery too far behind diminished the *elan* which was the key to success in fighting Italians. The operation was conducted under the understandable but at times incorrect watchword that casualties were to be avoided at any price. Both factors misled the generals into methodical procedure that prevented them from exploiting their initial, mostly brilliant, success.

At Verdun the narrowness of the attacking front and the dubious policy of releasing reserves in dribblets led to defeat. However, as we already noted, the conquest of the fortress wasn't Falkenhayn's intention. He expected his troops to shed their blood in streams for a very hazy objective. This was too difficult a test even for the best army in the world.

For their defensive operations, the Central Powers had made an unfortunate choice - a rigid front in which the first line was built up as strongly as possible. The lessons learned as a result of this choice were especially bitter at Luck and Okna.

However, even on the Somme the Germans fought under the same system after the lessons of the Brussilov offensive were available; their tactics were no longer suitable against the enemy's new methods of attack. We will have an opportunity to explain the changes in tactics in detail at the start of the sixth volume.

Growing shortages of manpower and supplies

While the situation on the Aus-Hung. battle fronts was very tense in the high summer of 1916, the same was true in the homeland, from which the armies had to obtain the resources to carry on the battle.

The great loss of manpower in the first half of 1916 greatly exacerbated the already existing problem of finding replacements. At the start of April the authorities had already initiated new drafts from all age categories, while restricting exemptions. They had also decided on another "exchange" of men between the rear areas and the front lines (see Part II.a.1). At the same time the frequency at which March battalions were sent to the front was reduced from a month to six weeks.

The extremely heavy losses on the Russian battlefields in June and July soon made it necessary to quickly provide replacements to avoid having to dissolve individual regiments. Serious consideration was given to extending the obligation to serve in the Landsturm to 17 and 55 year-old men. Also it was questionable whether the harvest, which was already eagerly anticipated, could be brought in because it didn't seem possible to grant furloughs of sufficient length to the men needed for this purpose. With great exertions, and by mustering men from all yearly classes, it was finally possible to create a series of "extraordinary" March battalions for the most-threatened front in the northeast. Afterward it was even possible temporarily to once more send a series of (admittedly weak) March battalions to the field every four weeks, without having to call upon 17 year old men.

But even the increased flow of manpower from the interior was insufficient to prevent the decline in strength of the Aus-Hung. Army. From 1 June to the end of July it shrank from 3,517,000 to 3,171,000 men (a loss of 346,000). The combat strength, which had reached its greatest height at the start of April 1916 when there were 1,158,000 infantry and cavalry, was no more than 927,000 on 1 August; moreover, it was continuing to fall. The loss of guns and machine guns was also great, and added to the

burdens of industry. Although the armament factories at this time had nearly reached their maximum output, it wasn't until December that the field army once again had nearly as many guns and machine guns as they did on 1 June.⁶⁶²

Despite energetic measures, the shortage of raw materials was already becoming very serious. It was becoming more difficult to feed the armies and the home front, even though preparation and distribution of foodstuffs, above all bread, had long been systematically organized; this involved rationing and the use of other substances in bread production to conserve as much grain as possible.⁶⁶³ Until now only the import of a considerable amount of grain from Romania had made the food shortage manageable. Due to the daily increasing tension in the relationship with Bucharest, however, the disappearance of this source also had to be anticipated, along with a predicted decline in the harvest at home.

Almost all aspects of economic life - involving both production and distribution - had become subject to central control, which had made it possible to alleviate somewhat the effects of the blockade that nevertheless were becoming ever more noticeable. At this time especially the need to obtain scarce metals such as copper, lead, tin and zinc led to unprecedented government intervention in the economy, with the implementation of measures which hitherto had only been contingency plans.⁶⁶⁴ Nevertheless industrial output in the Danube Monarchy, stimulated by the needs of war, had steadily increased and by the middle of 1916 had nearly reached its zenith.

The economy in Germany, similarly to that in Austria-Hungary, was operating feverishly. The only difference was that the German war industries also had to assist the less economically advanced allies, the two Balkan states.

All in all, the general military situation of the Central Powers and their two allies in the Balkans was critical. On the Western front fighting raged at two points, the Somme and Verdun,

662On 1 June 1916 there were 5800 guns and 4900 machine guns (including immobile fortress cannon and infantry guns); on 1 December 1916 there were about 5800 guns and 4800 machine guns of all types.

663Loewenfeld-Russ, "Die Regelung der Volks-Ernährung im Kriege" (Carnegie-Stiftung, öst-ung. Serie; Vienna, 1926), pp. 141 ff.

664Riedl, "Die Industrie Österreichs während des Krieges" (Carnegie-Stiftung, öst-ung. Serie; Vienna, 1932), pp. 291 ff.

consuming Germany's forces. In the southwest the situation had become somewhat quieter in the Sieben Gemeinde and the Sugana valley, but flames were rising in Friauli which heralded the start of another assault against the Isonzo front. Also in the Balkans, after a pause that had lasted for months, new fighting was impending; the Bulgarians as well as the Entente army - the latter reinforced by the Serbian divisions - were preparing plans for an offensive. On the Eastern front south of the Pripyat the commitment of many German and Aus-Hung. divisions had firmed up the front, at least in Volhynia. However, exhausting actions were continuing here and the 27th of July was the eve of a new general offensive by Brussilov's armies, strengthened with fresh divisions including the Guards.

Much was at stake during this offensive, because the Romanians stood in the background. Under constant pressure from the Entente they were leaning more and more to the side of the multi-state enemy coalition. On 26 July Ambassador Czernin sent a report that summarized his impressions from Bucharest as follows: "It is not yet a *fait accompli*, and the Minister President [Bratianu] doesn't intend to intervene in the immediate future. Whether and how long neutrality is maintained depends ultimately on military events."⁶⁶⁵ The directors of military operations for the Central Powers had the same impression, although Conrad felt that danger from Romania was more imminent than Falkenhayn did. Both Chiefs of Staff were agreed that only an obvious success in east Galicia could prevent the Kingdom on the Moldau from intervening. However, all attempts to carry out a powerful counterattack had come to nothing because the divisions that were brought up had to be used to fill gaps in the line. In the immediate future there could be no change to this policy of striving just to prevent further disaster on the Eastern front.

The Central Powers entered the final days of July under stormy skies.

IX. Appendix

Major troop movements by rail, 6 December 1915 to 31 July 1916

In the original, this material makes up Beilagen 5 and 19. The months shown are those in which the movement was initiated.

DECEMBER 1915

. From Italy to the Balkans: 14 Mtn Bde from Prvacina to

665"Österreichisch-ungarisches Rotbuch bezüglich Rumäniens", pp. 46 ff.

Zelenika (62 trains)

- . Movements behind the Balkan front
 - . Group Zhuber - From Megjegja to Zelenika (74 trains)
 - . Artillery - Same itinerary (73 trains)
 - . Bde Sreith - Same itinerary (42 trains)
 - . Bde Lörinczy - In Bosnia from Mostar to Zelenika (20 trains)
 - . Bde Schiess - From Megjegja to Zelenika (44 trains)
 - . The Fortress Inf Bde - Same itinerary (39 trains)
 - . 20 Lst Mtn Bde - Same itinerary (49 trains)
- . German unit leaving the Balkans: 107 ID from the Banat to Auschwitz (51 trains)
- . From Italy to Eastern front: 9 Inf Bde from Volcjadraga via to Zuczka (18 trains)
- . Behind the Eastern front: Sub-divisional units (50 trains; involved parts of 51 ID; 9, 10 & 202 Bdes; IR # 50 & 57, etc.)

JANUARY 1916

- . Behind the Balkan front:
 - . Bde Hausser - From Megjegja to Zelenika (42 trains)
 - . XIX Corps HQ and supporting units - Same itinerary (184 trains)
- . German unit leaving the Balkans: XXII Res Corps HQ and supporting troops from Indjija to Salzburg (125 trains)
- . From the Balkans to Eastern front:
 - . Group Fülöpp from Orsova to Kolomea (10 trains)
 - . 21 Lst Mtn Bde from Bos. Brod to Monasterzyska (13 trains)
- . Behind the Eastern front:
 - . Three cavalry rifle bns plus artillery from Kiwercy to Brody (26 trains)
 - . 40 ID from Brody to Kolomea (70 trains)
 - . 2 CD from Brody to Buczacz (14 trains)
 - . 24 ID from Brody to Monasterzyska (57 trains)
 - . 21 ID from Brody to Zaslawna (68 trains)

FEBRUARY 1916

- . German unit leaving the Balkans: 11 Bav ID from Versecz to Salzburg (74 trains)
- . From the Balkans to the Isonzo: 62 ID from Sl. Brod to Prvacina (54 trains)
- . From the Balkans to Tyrol: 57 ID from Belgrade to S Michele (68 trains)
- . From the Eastern front to the Isonzo: 21 Lst Mtn Bde from Stanislau to Prvacina (32 trains)
- . From the Eastern front to Tyrol: 3 ID from Kowel to Neumarkt (65 trains)
- . Equipment and supplies from the homeland to Tyrol (540 trains)

- . Artillery from other fronts to Tyrol (282 trains)
- . Behind the Italian front (Carinthia-Tyrol): 48 ID from Ob. Drauburg to Neumarkt (83 trains)
- . Behind the Italian front (Isonzo-Tyrol): III Corps HQ etc. from Opcina to Bozen (99 trains)
- . From the Balkans to Eastern front: 53 ID from Sl. Brod to Kowel (55 trains)
- . From Transylvania to Eastern front (Brody): 70 ID (45 trains)

MARCH 1916

- . German unit leaving the Balkans: Alpenkorps from Nish to Auschwitz (116 trains)
- . From the Balkans to the Isonzo: 22 Lst Mtn Bde from Sl. Brod to Podmelec (15 trains)
- . From the Balkans to Tyrol:
 - . VIII Corps HQ & supporting units from Belgrade to Matarello (47 trains)
 - . 3rd Army HQ & supporting units from Sl. Brod to a point south of Bozen (4 trains)
 - . 2 Mtn Bde from Sl. Brod to S Michele (14 trains)
- . From the Eastern front to the Isonzo: 34 ID from Zborow to Prvacina (65 trains)
- . From the Eastern front to Tyrol:
 - . XVII Corps HQ & supporting units from Kowel to Auer (12 trains)
 - . I Corps HQ & supporting units from Brody to Bozen (24 trains)
 - . 43 ID from Kozowa to Neumarkt (61 trains)
 - . 10 ID from Luck & Rudnia to Pergine (72 trains)
- . Behind the Italian front (Carinthia-Tyrol): 44 ID from Tarvis to Bruneck (84 trains)
- . Behind the Italian front (Isonzo-Tyrol):
 - . 18 ID from Volcjadraga to Neumarkt (61 trains)
 - . 28 ID from Ob. Laibach to Lavis (36 trains)
 - . 22 ID from Opcina to Matarello (34 trains)
 - . 6 ID from Volcjadraga to Trient (35 trains)
- . German units leaving the Eastern front:
 - . 1 ID from Maniewiczzy to Krymno (73 trains)
 - . 22 ID on same itinerary (78 trains)

APRIL 1916

- . German unit leaving the Balkans: 103 ID from Gjevvgjeli to Auschwitz
- . From the Balkans to the Isonzo: 24 Lst Mtn Bde from Sl. Brod to St Daniel (18 trains)
- . Behind the Italian front (Isonzo-Tyrol):
 - . 8 Mtn Bde from Podmelec S Michele (20 trains)

- . 34 ID from Prvacina to a point south of Bozen (68 trains)
- . 21 Lst Mtn Bde from Prvacina to Bozen (13 trains)
- . Behind the Eastern front:
 - . IX Corps HQ etc. from Luck to Zborow (15 trains)
 - . 13 ID from Maniewiczy to Halicz (63 trains)
- . German unit leaving the Eastern front: 3 Gd ID from Zborow to Auschwitz (69 trains)

MAY 1916

- . Behind the Italian front (Isonzo-Tyrol): 9 ID from Volcjadraga to Matarello (75 trains)
- . Behind the Eastern front: 13 ID from Monasterzyska to Luck (68 trains)

JUNE 1916

- . From Balkans to Italian front: 28 Lst Mtn Bde from Sarajevo to Trient (12 trains)
- . Behind the Italian front:
 - . 61 ID from Laibach to Trient (31 trains)
 - . 9 ID from Lavis to Nabresina (50 trains)
- . From Italy to Eastern front:
 - . 61 ID from South Tyrol to Stojanow (61 trains)
 - . 48 ID from S Michele to Kamionka-Strumilowa (59 trains)
 - . 44 ID from South Tyrol to O Radna (69 trains)
 - . Heavy artillery from South Tyrol to Kolomea & Nizniow (68 trains)
 - . 59 ID from South Tyrol to Nadworna (66 trains)
 - . VIII Corps HQ & supporting units from South Tyrol to Nadworna (18 trains)
- . German units from other fronts to the East:
 - . X Corps HQ with 19 ID plus supporting troops from Sosnowiec to Kowel (83 trains)
 - . 20 ID plus Marwitz's HQ from Brest-Litovsk to Kowel (122 trains)
 - . 105 ID from Nish to Podhajce (72 trains; FAR # 259 didn't move until July)
 - . 43 Res ID from Auschwitz to Sokal & Stojanow (74 trains)
 - . 11 Bav ID from Brest-Litovsk to Lubitow (120 trains)
- . Behind the Eastern front (Austrian):
 - . 29 ID from Brody to Maniewicze (51 trains)
 - . 79 Inf Bde from Nizniow to Borsa (8 trains)
- . Behind the Eastern front (German units):
 - . Bdes Jachmann & Biss plus Bernhardi's HQ from Brest-Litovsk to Rozisszce (87 trains)
 - . 108 ID on same itinerary (45 trains) (along with HQ of 9 CD, the rest of which traveled overland)
 - . Reinforced 1 Cav Bde on a varied itinerary (23 trains)

- . Reinforced 3 Cav Bde from Wlodawa to Vladimir-Volynsky (12 trains)
- . 107 ID from Brest-Litovsk to Powursk (48 trains)
- . 22 ID from Zabkowice to Krasne (63 trains)

JULY 1916

- . Behind Italian front:
 - . 43 ID from South Tyrol to St Daniel & Nabresina (68 trains)
 - . 187 Lst Inf Bde from Nabresina to Villach (16 trains)
- . From Italy to the Eastern front:
 - . 34 ID from Matarello to Borsa & Körösmezö (77 trains)
 - . 3rd Army & I Corps HQ plus supporting troops from Persen to Stanislau (14 trains)
 - . 106 ID from Nabresina to Brody (57 trains)
- . German units from other fronts to the East:
 - . "Karpathenkorps" from Auschwitz to Borsa (73 trains)
 - . IV Res Corps HQ etc. from Belgrade to Leordina (3 trains)
- . Behind the Eastern front (Austrian):
 - . 202 Inf Bde & Rus' Detachment from Kirlibaba to Worochta (22 trains)
 - . Kranz's Bde from Havasalja to Nadworna (6 trains)
 - . Half of 33 ID from Brody to Radziechow (20 trains)
 - . 24 ID from Nadworna to Wlodawa (and thence to Hindenburg's front; 72 trains)
 - . 1 Lst Cav Bde from Sokal to Zloczow (13 trains)
- . German units behind the Eastern front:
 - . Reinforced 37 Inf Bde from Turyjsk to Maniewicze (24 trains)
 - . 108 ID by different itineraries to Kowel & Bubnow (99 trains)
 - . ID Clausius from Brest-Litovsk to Kowel (39 trains)
 - . 119 ID from Zabkowice to Ottynia & Jezupol (49 trains)
 - . 1 Res ID from Wlodawa to Podhajce (50 trains)
 - . Some Landsturm battalions from Auschwitz to Stanislau (9 trains)
 - . 121 ID from Brest-Litovsk to Lubitow (46 trains)
 - . 86 ID on same itinerary (83 trains)
 - . 10 LW ID from Brest-Litovsk to Vladimir-Volynsky (41 trains)
- . From Eastern front to Transylvania: 11 CD from Kowel to Des (39 trains)